

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

In living everyday life, humans are always preoccupied with various activities. The busyness that is faced later will arise some problems so that inevitably humans themselves must be able to overcome with decisions that are sometimes confusing. For this reason, there is a need to be careful in handling problems that arise at any time, because the actions taken by humans will later affect themselves. But everyone realizes that when making decisions they always hope to get the truth.

Problems inherent in humans and the attitude taken is a life struggle. Human awareness that is able to recognize and realize itself is very necessary in a time of life, because this will bring up a reflection so that it can make the right decisions. When a person fully uses his consciousness, he has actually attained life existence. This is what became the journey of human history by getting the truth that was in all the decisions he made.

Existentialism views humans as open. This means that humans are an unfinished reality, which still has to be formed. In essence humans are bound to the surrounding world, especially to fellow humans. Existentialism puts pressure on concrete experiences, existential experiences. Existentialism is one of the schools of philosophy that has a great influence in the world of literature. This flow developed in France and Germany in the 20th Century. These developments are motivated by major events in world history including the first world war and the communist revolution. The two major events caused the world situation to become uncertain. The outbreak of the first world war ultimately destroyed the continuation of civilizational stability towards truth and freedom, peace and prosperity as the age of enlightenment emerged. In addition, the communist revolution in Russia succeeded in bringing down the spirit of political stability, the spirit that the revolutionary era had ended. With the weakening and fall of so many external structures of power such as the economy, politics, and intellectual property of the power, the entire structure begins to lose its legitimacy, and its power over individuals cannot be tolerated. Everywhere there is a crisis of value so that people begin to forget their individuality. This situation

encourages existentialists to renew the search for meaning for human existence by returning to man as the center of true philosophy and as the only legitimate power (Lavine, 1984: 314). Thus existentialism was born as a school of philosophy that examined the nature of human existence in the world as well as an answer to the existential crisis that hit humans.

Kierkegaard is one figure who is always restless and contemplates the existence of oneself in making decisions. The life struggle that goes through often experiences anxiety (angst) or fear (fear) when facing problems that demand to make decisions. He felt that because indeed to get a truth must be able to decide from various choices in order to get the truth he believed.

Anxiety and fear will always appear in every individual. Everyone must feel, whether when they were young, adults or in old age. If we look at Kierkegaard's own life there are two events that influence his theory and existentialism thinking. First is the sin of curses imposed on his family. The entire Kierkegaard family - namely his mother and younger siblings - died except his father and himself. He believed that it was a punishment from God imposed on his family.¹⁰ Besides that, a father who was known to be very pious and obedient to Christian teachings turned out that Kierkegaard saw the ugliness of his father that his personality was contrary to what was often preached in the church- church. (Thoman, 2005)

The second event, regarding the period of teenage romanticism. Regina Olsen, Kierkegaard's lover, was decided by him for no apparent reason, even though both of them had been engaged for three months. The cry of the lover and the request of Regina's father were unable to change the decision which had become the attitude of truth according to Kierkegaard. Until the end of his life Kierkegaard did not look for a replacement for Regina and he was satisfied with life which was sometimes tinged with attitudes that were difficult for reason to understand. For him that was the truth he believed.

Kierkegaard realizes that each individual has their own truths, truth is indeed subjective. According to him, this subjective truth is a decision and attitude that hits reality. Decisions taken are felt directly by the individual concretely (Robizek, 1990). Unlike the objective truth, this truth cannot be ascertained with certainty. Humans do expect that truth, but unfortunately humans cannot own it. For this reason, according to Kierkegaard, objective truth cannot be known by humans, humans are only able to approach that truth. Only God has and knows objective truth. This is the reason why

Kierkegaard is more concerned with subjective truths. This concrete truth directly hits the individual itself. While objective truths are only absurd and individuals cannot reach and know their objectivity at any time.

Subjective awareness will lead to a full awareness of the truth in him as well as making the existence of oneself as a whole. For that a person who believes in subjective truth should run away from the crowd (public). This is what becomes the basis of Kierkegaard's next after believing in subjective truth, which is an authentic subject, in the sense of being authentic, pure in himself (an sich). To be an authentic self there needs to be an individual identity itself, not someone else or community (Hardiman, 2005)

Kierkegaard strongly criticizes individuals who dissolve in the crowd (public). The public is said to be an abstract and vague identity because it is a collection of several identities. So that if someone is in the crowd then his identity is not visible, there is only an unclear status. For Kierkegaard to be an authentic self individuals must run away from the crowd. So that his identity is very clear. Someone who wants an authentic self must leave the public because it is only a place for individuals who are afraid of their identity.

Life's experience could be material thoughts which generates idea to change people's lives better. But the idea will not return as a result if it's not published. Many ways to publish ideas or thoughts of a human being, one through literature. According Semi (1988: 8), literature is the result of creative work of art whose object is human and to use language as a medium. Literature is a literary or artistic expression of the fact and imaginative as the embodiment of human life through the language as a medium and a positive impact on people's lives (Mursal Esten, 1978). Literary work is divided into two, namely nonfiction and fiction. Type of nonfiction literary work is a biography, autobiography, essays, and literary criticism. While the type of fiction is prose, poetry, and drama (Djojuroto and Pangkerego, 2000). Drama or play as a literary work is a depiction of human life forms with high artistic value. According to KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), Drama is composition of poetry or prose that is expected to describe the life and character through behavior (acting) or dialogue is staged.

One influential playwright in the development of drama and often referred to as "the father of realism" is Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen was a playwright of which the most played in the world after Shakespeare and one of the founders of Modernism in

theatre. He was born on March 20, 1828 in Skien, Norway. Ibsen came from a wealthy family, his father, Knud Ibsen (1797-1877) was a wealthy merchant and his mother, Marichen Altenburg (1799-1869) was the daughter of one of the richest merchants of Skien. When he was eight years old, his father went bankrupt and became an alcoholic. This makes his work so pathetic and realist because of his life experience. Ibsen came up with the idea of the reality of what happened outside the palace. The issues that he poured in the drama is often about moral conflicts that occur in the society so that its influence is so strong until now. During his life, he dedicated himself to write, and he was involved in 145 plays as a writer, director, and producer. Even on his dedication, Ibsen was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1902, 1903 and 1904. His works include *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Emperor and Galilean*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts*, *The Wild Duck*, *When We Dead Awaken*, *Pillars of Society*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Master Builder* and *John Gabriel Borkman*.

In 1868, Ibsen decided to move to Germany and wrote one of his most famous works: the play *A Doll's House*. First shown at December 21, 1879 at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, Denmark. In 2006, 100 years of the death of Ibsen, *A Doll's House* being the world's most performed play for that year. The story of A Doll House inspired by true story of Ibsen friend, Laura Kieler, that signed an illegal loan for her husband TB treatment. Laura has also requested Ibsen to help her scandal, but he was not able to help her. Nevertheless, Ibsen makes the story of Laura as a successful drama and even UNESCO has recommended for inclusion in the Memory of the World Register in 2001.

A Doll House is divided into three acts. Starting with Nora that comes with many Christmas gifts. And Torvald, Nora's husband, calling him "little squirrel" and taunted him about all the money he spent for Christmas. Nora felt no problem with it because her husband had to get a promotion at the bank where Torvald work and felt no need to worry for spending money. Then the maid came to tell that Nora had guests, Mrs. Kristine Linde, Nora old friend who came to find work. In their conversation, Nora tells its secrets to protect his family. When Torvald ill, Nora had to borrow money which is intensely disliked by her husband by forging her father's signature. And for many years he was secretly working and saving to repay (*A Doll's House*, 1879).

The climax of this drama is when Nils Krogstad, one of the bank employees to be fired by Torvald, came and threatened Nora about lies that she has made. Krogstad

threatens that he will not tell Torvald as long as he can still work. After Krogstad leaves, Nora try to convince her husband not to fire Torvald but he refused because he thought Krogstad disrespect him in front of other bank personnel. Nora felt the dilemma and contemplating ending her life to save her husband from a sense of shame for what he had done in the past. Until finally a letter from Krogstad come and dismantle all past Nora. Torvald-too angry to know it, he referred to Nora as a woman who is dishonest and immoral and said that she does not deserve to raise their children. A maid came up with a new letter from Krogstad stating that he would not reveal more about their family problems. Torvald also feel safe with a statement from Krogstad so he pulls back all the harsh words spoken to Nora. He realized that he was filled with anger and was not aware of all the efforts Nora made to save their families. But Nora begins to realize that her husband is not the man who as she thought, loved her sincerely as she loved her husband. At that point, Nora felt that he had only a doll that does not have the right to think and act in accordance with her wishes. Finally he decided to leave Torvald and her children as the best way to look for her new life.

A Doll House by Ibsen has elaborated on the role of woman as wife and mother who ultimately made the decision to abandon its responsibilities to choose freedom of his life. This is contrary with the moral responsibility of a woman who married. Character of Nora as the central figure as a benchmark change thought of a woman in that time. The subjectivity of a Nora in seeing one's life is symbolized as a restrictive doll in her own home. So she thought of ending her role as a doll and tried to find freedom of her will. Existentialism became the key word in this research. This is based on the notion of existentialism, is a philosophy which an individual humans choose his will without any true or false values in the decisions taken. As did Nora in *A Doll's House* is leaving his role to fulfill his freedom which is a contradiction with the reality because existence means to act in accordance with 'I' as individuals who existence (Harun Hadiwijono, 1975).

The conflicts that exist in a Nora like seeing the struggle of a woman as opposed to necessity as a housewife. With such a conflict, so many studies linking *A Doll House* with feminism. The author feels in the twenty-first century, the position of women has had a considerable portion of society. So, the issue of feminism in *A Doll House* is not relevant anymore. It is precisely the role of Nora as human beings who have the freedom to determine his life is interesting to discuss. The notion of a Nora is interesting to be related to her decision to leave her role as a housewife. The

subjectivity of Nora to take off his responsibility and choose the freedom to determine his true identity to be the reason for researcher took this research. And existentialism is a philosophy that explains the existence of a human individual freedom and choice. So, the researchers want to discuss about the subjectivity of Nora who live by taking rational decisions for herself as humans coexisting. Based on the background of the study, it becomes the main reason of choosing this thesis entitled **“NORA’S SUBJECTIVITY IN IBSEN’S *A DOLL’S HOUSE* (1879): AN EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH.”**

B. Problem Statement

The topic of this research is about the existentialist approach in the play *A Doll’s House* by Ibsen. It is conducted to answer the questions:

1. How does Nora reach her existence reflected in A Doll’s House play?
2. What is the impact on the existence of subjectivity of Nora reflected in A Doll’s House play?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the objectives of the study in this research are:

1. To describe how Nora reach her existence reflected in A Doll’s House play.
2. To find out the impact on the existence of subjectivity of Nora reflected in A Doll’s House play.

D. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the researcher focuses on analyzing the subjectivity of the main character (Nora) which is created on A Doll’s House by Henrik Ibsen. And it was conducted by existentialist approach.

E. Benefit of the Study

The research is expected to give benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

The writer wishes that this study can impart a new contribution and information the larger body of knowledge, especially the literary study on A Doll’s House play (1879).

2. Practical Benefit

This study is whised to give deeper understanding and enrich both knowledge and experience especially for the writer, generally for other students of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta and also can be used as reference by other university students who are interested in literary study on A Doll's House play (1879) based on the existential approach

F. Paper Organization

The research paper of "Nora's Subjectivity In Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879): An Existentialist Approach." The organization of research paper is given in order to make reader understand the content of paper. The paper is organized into six chapter, as follows: Chapter I contains introduction which consists of the background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, limitation of the study, benefit of the study, and paper organization. Chapter II is literature review. It consists of previous study and underlying theory (**existentialism in literature, literature and idea, existential teory by Kierkegaard**). Chapter III concerns with research method. In this chapter, it concludes the type of the study, object of the study, type of data and data source, method of collecting data, credibility of data, technique of data analysis. Next, Chapter IV describes structural elements analysis. It contains character and characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view and style. Chapter V explains about existentialist analysis and discussion. The last Chapter VI represents conclusion and suggestion.