

## EXISTENTIALISM IN THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD MOVIE

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### *Abstract*

The difficulty to find meanings of existence and life is a piece of ourselves. Studying existentialism through a movie is suitable for people in general—who in most cases suffer from an existential crisis. This study focuses on the two main protagonists from the movie *The Worst Person in the World* (2021). To conduct this research, a descriptive qualitative methodology is adopted—in which the two main characters' words and behaviors are the first things to look at while examining existentialism concepts. The data is described based on the existentialism theories of Jean-Paul Sartre, Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, and Albert Camus. As shown in this study, Aksel entered the ethical stage by taking several long-term commitments, whereas Julie had lived her life in both the aesthetic and ethical stages. Due to Aksel's persistent anxiety about death, he chose to rely on ephemeral things to survive. The absurdity in the movie depicted Julie's anxieties. By exploring the similarities and contrasts of Julie and Aksel's existentialism concepts, we can better understand that human beings are unable to avoid the anguish and uncertainty in life. To deal with it is to learn more about ourselves and the most significant thing is to acknowledge a higher authority than oneself—which is God.

**Keywords:** Existentialism, Movie, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Camus

### INTRODUCTION

Boulé & McCaffrey in *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema: A Sartrean Perspective* (2011) explained that in the context of the absurd or contingency, philosophy has a positive role to play in art and film (in the tradition of epistemological inquiry), but this role is decidedly passive and “descriptive”, even post-epistemological in that the absurd and the contingent are by definition explainable phenomenologically, with no need for “proof”, more a matter of “silence”, and as Sartre puts it, “in the realm of what is not” (Sartre, 2007:80). Similarly, movies can be used to demonstrate philosophical issues in a way that makes even the most obscure philosophical notions understandable. It can be identified in two ways, according to Pamerleau (2009). The first one is through “its ability to deliver realistic narratives” and the second is by “directly depicting characters, events, and viewpoints using a variety of the medium's visual and auditory elements”.

He also argues that films can trigger a wide range of intellectual and emotional responses.

Directed by Joachim Trier, written by himself and Eskil Vogt, *The Worst Person in the World* (2021) became a movie that depicted how people deal with an existential crisis in modern times. Divided into prologue, twelve chapters, and epilogue, then with a narrator who directly talks about the life and thoughts of the characters—watching the movie was nearly like reading a romance novella with deep substance and delightful humour inside. It tells a chronicle of Julie's contemporary life for four years before and after she is turning thirty in Oslo. The struggles she faced about a career path, family, relationship, and her own existence made the movie that have a duration of more than two hours such an awakening for the audience. Although Julie is the center of the movie, Aksel's presence is undeniably prominent. His character draws the audience to rethink the actual meaning of life—which can be different for each person. Both roles have significant impacts throughout the movie and left memorable perspectives about love, self-consciousness, life, existence, and death.

The major characters in the movie reflected the idea of existentialism which is familiar to human social lives nowadays. For example, the freedom that Julie has—where she can easily determine what she wants to do even though in the end she is trapped inside it—unfortunately, it is also make her unable to commit to her decisions. Sartre claims that "you are free" because you always have a choice, "therefore choose," rather than the freedom to do anything. However, due of the anxiety and anguish—this causes people to escape and continue living inauthentic lives. Man is free when his consciousness recognizes there is a need, when he defines a purpose for himself, and when he commits to do something (Manzi, 2013). Therefore, the main evidence that Aksel's character exemplifies the meaning of freedom in Sartre's philosophy is the part where he chose to work based on a passion he has pursued since he was a young age as well as where he desires to engage on a long-term relationship with just one person.

The difficulty of finding meanings of existence and life is a topic that cannot be erased from human beings, it is as far as a part of ourselves. This research focuses on Julie and Aksel's statements and behaviors as two individuals in their late-30s and mid-40s as well as the factors that are related to their existential crisis. In addition to analyzing, interpreting, and describing the concept of existentialism found in the two characters in the movie, this study attempts to support and evaluate the idea of existentialism reflected through them. Studying existentialism through a movie that has a close connection with philosophical ideas is suitable in this modern era and for people in general—who in most cases struggle with an existential crisis. This study can assist the reader in comprehending existential issues. Furthermore, by learning the similarities and differences between Julie and Aksel's existentialism concepts, we can gain a better understanding that human beings cannot escape from the anguish and uncertainty in life. Therefore, to deal with these dreadful things is to learn more about ourselves, accept our flaws, and seek out or acknowledge a higher authority than oneself, which is God.

## THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### Existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophy that concentrates on the unique human experience and the life's meaning. It also emphasizes the absolute freedom of each individual, as opposed to putting one's faith in a deity or other higher powers. Additionally, it stresses that each human-being has their own free will, existence, and ability to choose how to live their lives and discover their purpose. According to existentialism, we cannot escape suffering and the certainty of death. In sum, existentialism is the philosophy of existence, the nature of human existence, its value, and its meaning (Panza & Gale, 2008:1). It is the philosophical movement which emphasizes the individual and rejects the idea of absolute reason, existentialists either theists or atheists also reject traditional religious systems.

Existentialism has assumed profound dimensions in our modern emotional and spiritual belief systems and can be found in nearly all aspects of our culture—particularly art, literature, and psychology (Kanaly & Slater, 2003). In other words, existentialism is the practice of philosophy as “care of the self” (*epimeleia heautou*), its focus is on the proper way of acting rather than on an abstract set of theoretical truths (Flynn, 2006:1). The core of existentialism is a rejection to belong to any school of thought, a denial of the sufficiency of any body of beliefs—especially systems, and a strong discontent with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and disconnected from life (Kaufmann, 1956:12). Existentialism achieved its pinnacle in the years following Second World War and is now regarded as a widespread phenomenon in Western culture (Flynn, 2006:104).

### Sartrean Existentialism

Existentialism, according to Sartre, is a doctrine in which existence precedes essence. His idea is that humans exist first, and they create themselves by selecting themselves. They define themselves when they act; in other words, there is no distinction between *being* and *doing*. Furthermore, human acts and choices are always defined within a certain circumstance, and human beings are free and hence responsible within that situation—which is merely one of the characteristics of the human condition (Boulé & McCaffrey, 2011:2).

Man becomes conscious of his freedom—for Sartre, through anxiety. This anxiety is understandable in light of man's situation in a universe interpreted by existentialism. Since he is not defined by any previously given essence or human nature, each person is what he makes of himself and, as a result, is responsible for what he creates (Stern, 1967:62). Man "is nothing but the sum of his acts", and he exists only to the extent that he accomplishes his project and thus himself (Stern, 1967:65-66). If man becomes what he is as a consequence of his choices, and those choices are based on freedom, the responsibility that comes with freedom becomes obvious, and this responsibility explains the anxiety that comes with our consciousness of freedom. However, in Sartre's

philosophy, this responsibility is even broader than one might think, because by making a choice, a person engages not just himself, but all men, the entire human race. Sartre expresses his belief and attempts to provide a philosophical foundation for it by saying, "I am responsible for myself and for all men, because by choosing myself, I choose man as I want him to be" (Stern, 1967:70-71).

### **Kierkegaardian Existentialism**

According to Kierkegaard, we should make choices that most reflect the characteristics of our individual—concrete selves. Both the fixed and the potential aspects are equally important to concrete selves. Instead, they accurately represent both parts in their choice (Panza & Gale, 2008:210). Assuming a passive or fatalistic attitude toward one's existence, whether consciously or unconsciously—driven by a misunderstanding of the nature of one's agency—is what Kierkegaard defined as despair. Despair can be defined as the inability or unwillingness to be the self that one is willing to be more or less of what one is as a self, because one's idea of oneself is always in some manner chosen (Kosch, 2006). Furthermore, for Kierkegaard, anxiety is described by experiences of emptiness. These allow one to "establish oneself" in the lack of meaning and prevent anxiety by doing so (Grøn, 2008:2-3).

Kierkegaard developed a three-part analysis of human existence that adds to life's meaning. The first category, which is the aesthetic one, is more individualized and serves to satisfy the urge for self-indulgence in humans. In the ethical stage, man tries to pinpoint specific absolute values that he can control himself by. However, ethical people encounter some issues at this point because all efforts ultimately result in despair. Therefore, a firm belief in God's existence is required. Based on the religious stage, one must have been guided by divine providence if they desire to understand the true purpose and worth of life (Naem & Janoory, 2019).

### **Camusian Existentialism**

Existentialism is also well known for being developed by Albert Camus. His concepts were widely used by scholars to include existentialism into their work. He states that "Whatever we may do, the excess will always have its place in the heart of man, in the spot where isolation is discovered. We all have our places of exile, our sins, and our devastation inside us. But our goal is not to release them on the world; it is to combat them in ourselves and in others" (Priyadharshini, Mohan & Hassan, 2022). For Camus, since God (if he exists) cannot defend His creation, each individual human being must take responsibility for their actions. However, it is impossible to understate the fundamental importance of religion for a person's psychological health and epistemic knowledge of reality. Given that humans are made up of both material and spiritual entities, religion satisfies their desire for spiritual fulfillment (Igbafen, 2009).

By the middle of the 20th century, he had established and developed the twin philosophical concepts of "The concept of absurdity" and "The notion of revolt". The

Absurd can be described as a metaphysical conflict that arises from the presence of human consciousness and its relentless quest for pattern and life's meaning. Revolt is a term that describes both a sequence of determined action and a state of mind. It can manifest in extreme ways, such as terrorism or a reckless and uncontrolled egoism—both of which Camus rejects (Chukwuma, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach. It is a technique in which a speaker or subject who can be observed describes the data in speech or writing. The data collected from the narrative and conversations of the main characters was obtained as textual evidence by reading the movie's English subtitles extensively and intensively. The depiction of existentialism is explored and examined based on the characterization or point of views of Julie and Aksel as main characters and the plot, setting, also theme in *The Worst Person in The World* movie. The other method is library research, which uses sources from both printed and online media. The purpose of this study is to identify, analyze, and describe existentialism's ideas using the main characters as illustrations.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Existentialism Concepts of Julie and Aksel

The narrator of the movie starts telling a story about Julie in the prologue part of *The Worst Person in the World* (2021) film. Julie felt disappointed in herself. At first, everything seemed easy, but as time passed, the world's rapid pace gradually left her feeling overwhelmed. Julie originally pursued a major in medicine, but she suddenly realized that a human's "soul" is her passion—it is the mind that intrigued her, not the body. After carefully discussing it with her personal psychologist, she eventually made the decision to transfer her degree to psychology.

The meaning of Sartre's "**existence precedes essence**" is first we need to grasp that life has no inherent meaning and is absurd, then understand the meaning of complete freedom, and therefore, start to make choices (Sabagh, 2021). Thus, this has related to how Julie defines her essence by allowing herself the freedom to do whatever she wants. She is a woman who is fearless, adventurous, and enjoys trying also learning new things. Despite all of her positive characteristics, this particular confusion inside herself also contributes to the essence of her personality. She makes it abundantly obvious that she opposes social standards that demand her to get married and have kids. Julie defines her essence not only by the freedom she has but also by being self-aware about herself—she wants to know and learn about it and the life she is living in.

For Sartre, existence manifests itself in the choices of actions, anxiety, and the freedom of will. Our existence is completely free, and being fit entails living our lives in complete freedom. Although each of us has the **responsibility** of determining the future, the future is uncertain, and we have no escape from **anxiety** and despair (Bhandari,

1968). That, however, is the same thing that Julie had gone through since the beginning of the film. She has the freedom to choose whatever ways she wants to reach out to the future, but the future is uncertain and full of complications which later make her become anxious about it. Julie is conscious of her flaws and it is that makes her aware of her freedom. Due to Julie's confusion about herself, life's purpose, what she wants to accomplish in the future, and how she should keep herself on the same "track"—thus, she tries a variety of things that pique her curiosity. Julie's inability to commit brings to mind Kierkegaard's view that the **aesthetic stage** of existence is marked by seeking pleasure, switching activities, and lack of commitment. Even while the aesthetic stage appears to be joyful, it is actually filled with **despair**. If boredom is allowed to develop, it will surface and manifest as despair. Hence, the unceasing activity and pursuit of pleasure (Davis, 2020:151). Since Julie doesn't want to commit, she lives her life in a perpetual search for happiness and pleasure, which falls under the aesthetic stage.

From a younger man, a professor, to a model in her photography class, she finally ended up meeting Aksel at a party. Aksel is a cartoonist and comicist. They appeared attracted to each other after only one gaze as if they had fallen in love at first sight when they first met. In reality, Julie was fairly knowledgeable about Aksel's occupation and how sexist his caricatures are. Later, after having sex and engaging in more intimate conversations, the two of them ultimately became closer. Aksel offered Julie the option to decide if their relationship was a serious thing or not. Despite the fact that she has commitment issues that prevent her from being in a serious relationship for a long time, Julie goes through each relationship with different man by offering her partner her whole love (through physical) and trust—perhaps, just a half of it. She ultimately made the choice to stay with Aksel for a considerable amount of time once in her life. This is clearly visible from her choice to move and settle down in Aksel's apartment. Through this commitment, Julie started to try to live in the **ethical stage**. Julie adheres to one of the "standard" forms in society since it is expected that one is serious and committed to just one person. Additionally, from the very beginning of the movie, Aksel also leads an ethical stage. He has devoted his life to turning drawing—a passion he has had since childhood, into a career. Kierkegaard explains that in the ethical stage, people start participating in society by making personal, social, and/or professional commitments to the moral standards that have been established (Asmiliasari, 2011).

They both decided to establish a steady relationship. Aksel introduced Julie to his close friends in Chapter I "The Others". He invites Julie to stay at the house of one of his friends who is married and has children. Julie, unfortunately, became too sensitive as a result of their meeting rather than feeling more at ease. Julie experienced a number of the questions and remarks to be very unsettling, but she also realized that in Aksel's circle, these things were absolutely common. Due to the obvious significant generational gap between her and them, Julie found it challenging to truly fit in.

Sartre argues that there are numerous pathways open before us, and we must choose one, but because we are unable to choose the other possibilities, we are always in

a state of **anxiety** (Bhandari, 1968). Therefore, this also could explain why after Julie did or tried many things, she was still unsure about her choices which made her become anxious most of the time. Julie experienced a moment where many kinds or forms of feelings struggled on her chest and head when she noticed how famous and successful Aksel as a comicist or artist was. After she chatted for a while with his colleagues, she became aware of something that she still did not know what she wanted to do and that was different from Aksel who seemed to already know what he wanted and did for the rest of his whole life. She felt overwhelmed and suddenly wanted to escape from the “tightness” she felt when she was surrounded by people who have jobs or positions that are prominent there.

After leaving the event of Aksel's most recent comic book, in Chapter 2 "Cheating", Julie wandered along and thought about a lot of things for about three minutes in the movie. She appeared to be contemplating her own life. She still has trouble deciding what she wants to do in the long run; more specifically, she is unsure of what she needs to do. Thus, Kierkegaard emphasizes that taking a risk cannot guarantee certainty. The paradox's unintelligibility is nonetheless unavoidable and cannot be overcome or mitigated. It is in constant conflict with intelligence, a source of suffering and passion, bringing the most complex knowledge to the level of the simplest, and both to nothing; the question at hand is eternal happiness, and its acceptance by faith does nothing to lessen its offense to reason (Blackham, 1961:4).

Julie expresses herself openly regarding her views about her position in the world. She did not feel like a “main character” but more like a “supporting character”. She has yet to find a definite purpose in her life, despite not knowing what her “main role” will be. Even though she tried a variety of things, she still has no idea what she did and what things she should focus on, then ended up in a deep side of confusion inside herself. Therefore, Julie defines herself as a human being who only *being* and *existing* without having a commitment in life as shown in Datum 1 below.

**Datum 1**

*Julie* : “I feel like a spectator in my own life. Like I’m playing a supporting role in my own life.”

**(01:03:31-01:03:38)**

The conclusion of the one monologue in Datum 1 as described—based on what Sartre says, according to him, “Man is only what he does. Man becomes what he chooses to be.” Furthermore, Sartre distinguishes between *being* and *existing*: one is said to *be* if one chooses to act; one is said to *exist* if one chooses not to act. Since a person's state of being can only be established by their actions and deeds, they must actively choose to carry out their desires and intentions. Sartre refers to this as commitment (engagement): Without commitment to social, political, and moral beliefs, it is impossible to define oneself. Acts are phenomena that can be proven, whereas intentions are meaningless. As

a result, a person who is unable to make a decision is engulfed in a sea of confusion. Only by defining oneself can one create a meaningful destiny (Critical Essays Sartrean Existentialism: An Overview, n.d.).

Later in the film, by a mere chance, she ended up at a wedding party where no one she knew was in because of her bewilderment. Until then, Eivind—who was also at the party—felt drawn to her existence. Julie starts to interact closer with Eivind, he was one of the people Julie felt at ease with because he did not inquire about the issues that had been troubling her for so long.

Julie has been described as a brilliant woman since the beginning of the film. She was able to rapidly catch up with the majors she tried, even though the three of them were distinctive. In Chapter 3 which has the same title as Julie's article, she asks Aksel to read and remark on the article she wrote, "Oral Sex in the Age of #MeToo" about women's sexual desire. However, she was insecure about it. In spite of that, Aksel gave his honest opinion on the article, even complimenting Julie's idea as original and well-written (albeit he disagreed with some of the points made). It is clear from how soon this article was discussed in the Facebook group after Julie published it on the website.

The movie's narrator presents a brief glimpse into Julie's family ancestry in Chapter 4 "Our Own Family". Whereas almost all of his grandmothers lived in a divorced or widowed status even one of them died at a fairly young age. Including Julie's mother, Eva—who divorced her husband when she was thirty. The behavior of Julie's father toward her is also reflected in this part. Julie had called to invite him to dinner to celebrate her birthday, but her father always had or created reasons to not come. In the end, it was Julie and Aksel who visited her father at his home—with a new wife and a daughter. Although Julie's father has obviously distanced himself from her, however, Julie still wants to be close to him. This might also be the reason Julie struggled for a while to fully accept the male presence in her life. Her life still has an "empty space" that contains the figure of a father. The absence of a father figure made her have a tendency to easily switch from one male to another in a relationship.

**Absurdity** is illustrated by two occurrences in the movie. The first one is in Chapter 5 "Bad Timing", Julie accidentally met with Eivind and his girlfriend at the bookstore where she works. After a brief exchange, Eivind invited her to meet him in the cafe where he works as a barista. Julie's thoughts and emotions were drastically affected by that encounter, specifically, after something really bizarre and absurd occurred the following morning—the world came to a halt at minute 00:53:27 until 00:58:38, exactly when Julie turned on the light in Aksel's kitchen. Julie began to gain confidence in the decisions she was about to make with Aksel and Eivind at this point. When the world stops moving, Julie and Eivind have complete freedom from the morning until dawn, even though the day in actual reality does not change at all. The day continues on and changes as usual only in their magical realism world, which is absurd but feels real at the same time.



Before Julie made the decision to split things with Aksel, she knew she would be devastated. She also knew how much she loved Aksel, which is why she kept buying time with Eivind. Julie confessed her all followed by a great anguish that engulfed her heart and mind. She must overcome her despair and confront Aksel's direct emotional impact in order to gain her freedom—to be with Eivind. She portrayed both Kierkegaard's concept of **freedom**: freedom as the ability to act in accordance with one's intentions and freedom as the ability to generate intentions that are not predetermined by earlier events. The argument is that we are only willing to embrace freedom in the first sense, not the second, and that only freedom in the latter sense supports assigning responsibility. We may adopt an aesthetic outlook but not an ethical one (Kosch, 2006).

Furthermore, Sartre refers to "**bad faith**" as when we spend our lives based on prefabricated narratives rather than our own decisions. When we hide our agency over our situation, we are said to be behaving in bad faith. We dismiss our complicity in our circumstances or the decisions we have made or will make (Thomson, 2021). Therefore, what Julie did in fact is bad faith. She did not explain completely the reasons behind her decision: her brief two encounters with Eivind, her overabundance with career or future, her anxiety with marriage and having kids, and her internal struggles with her father. She hides it as an act to gain the freedom she wants and did not want to take any responsibility for it by explaining the truth.

The lives and characteristics of Eivind and Sunniva (his ex-girlfriend) are described in Chapter 6 "Finmare Highlands" in a quite concise way. There are no related things in this section that deal with Julie. Nevertheless, in this chapter, there are significant elements of Sartre's **subjectivity**, which can be observed through Sunniva and Eivind. Sunniva, in particular, stands out as a character who is highly aware of the problem of climate change and takes action to minimize its effects. Her personality demonstrates how she pursues life among Kierkegaard's **ethical** and **religious stage**. The ethical stage is only a transition stage and therefore its highest expression is repentance from a negative action, this is where people have decided what they will do and what they will be. At this stage they are brave to make a commitment that appropriates universal moral values in society (Suryani, Damara & Agung P., 2019). For example, how passionate she is about yoga and diet. Maintaining a healthy body and diet are two important characteristics of the ideal individual in society. Sunniva made the decision to become a physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy person. This brings us to the religious stage when Sunniva's awareness of the value of spirituality is presented through her involvement and development as a part of a Sami spiritual community.

Moreover, in Chapter 7 "A New Chapter", Julie's new life and relationship with Eivind are once again explained. Since they both agree that "overpopulation was the reason for everything falling apart," they both opposed having kids. However, Julie was aware it was not the sole reason. Similarly to Julie, Eivind's father did not show up at all on his birthday. Since the two of them lack a father figure and neither wants to get

married and start a family, this also could explain why Julie chose Eivind rather than Aksel. When she was with Eivind, she felt as though she could relate to a lot of things.

In Chapter 8 “Julie's Narcissistic Circus”, the absurd episode that occurred from Julie's hallucinations resurfaced. When the two of them were talking with Eivind's friends in the living room, Julie ate Eivind's "magic mushrooms" which acted as the catalyst for it. Indirectly, this chapter reveals Julie's deep and subjective inner self. From minutes 01:18:57 until 01:21:28, absurdity in the form of magical realism reappears, with the focus on Julie, and clearly portrayed her various forms of anxiety. Her hallucinations began after she ate the mushrooms, her feet stepped on the short waves and beach sand, then she eventually fall and landed on the large red carpet in the center of the room. She first saw Eivind and his two mates, but she suddenly saw the people seated around her whose presence contributed to the “development” of her personality. Aksel momentarily makes an appearance. He shared the same existence as Julie's father where the two of them were sitting on the sofa chairs surrounding Julie's presence.

Quickly, Julie felt her body become fat and wrinkled because of aging. It could be an indication that one of Julie's worries is becoming old and unattractive at this moment. Many people who had known or were close to her began to grope her terrifying figure, inch by inch. On the other hand, she was entirely naked in reality, yet her body did not change in the least. After that, Julie opens her legs wide and removes a tampon stained with menstrual blood, and throws it to her father's face, which she imagines is sitting in one of the seats surrounding her. Julie's additional concerns or anxiety regarding pregnancy or childbirth are reflected by this action. She smeared her cheeks with her menstrual blood in real life, just like she did in her imagination. The comical figure Bobcat—which Aksel invented—also appears to highlight how he teases and humiliates Julie while she is holding a child. Bobcat seemed to represent Aksel's darkest inner self—the side that troubled Julie.

Chapter 9 “Bobcat Wrecks Xmas” focuses further on Aksel's misogynist side and gives an overview of an extremely unsettling debate between Aksel and Marthe Refstad, a feminist figure who—just like Julie—was also upset by Aksel's works. Marthe makes an effort to make it very obvious how wholly wrong the morals found in his comic books are. She made an effort to remind Aksel that, for example, rape victims might have unpleasant memories triggered by what he drew. However, Aksel utterly made an effort to justify himself by arguing that we can decide not to be offended by his works.

For Sartre, self-deception is a form of **bad faith**. It refers to the behavior and choices we do in an attempt to deny our freedom. We try to get away from the responsibility of freedom and the anguish we experience by acting in bad faith (Brandenburg, 2019). That explained what exactly Aksel did in the interview. Aksel defends his label as a "misogynist" or "sexist" by arguing that art should be messy and free, and that it should also be a form of therapy in which he could expose his dark sides. However, Aksel refuses to be labeled a "sexist" with his arguments that a writer cannot be solely responsible for his own creation. Therefore, he had already committed an act of bad

faith. He values freedom by making all of his own choices, but he doesn't want to be held responsible for the consequences of his choices as shown in Datum 2 below.

**Datum 2**

*Aksel* : "One author cannot be held solely responsible. I think art has to be messy and free. It has to be a bit dangerous to be fun. I want art to be a form of therapy where I can express and work through all my unacceptable thoughts and my darkest impulses."

(01:26:10-01:26:32)

In Chapter 10 "First Person Singular", Julie meets Aksel's friend—Ole, at the bookstore where she still works. He told Julie that Aksel had pancreatic cancer and was undergoing treatment. It was because of this information that Julie suddenly turned moody and emotional when she saw Eivind reading a slip of paper where it contained her writing which she had actually thrown in the trash. She let out her pent-up emotions on Eivind, cursing and blaming him for something that was not relevant. Additionally, in **Bad Faith**, we place blame on external factors for our circumstances and choices. We will go to any length to avoid responsibility and the reality that our lives are exactly as we have planned them (Brandenburg, 2019). This could also lead to why Julie blamed Eivind because of her insecurity. It makes her selfish and attempted bad faith where she blamed someone else or something external, rather than to control herself to not do or said horrible things.

Aksel's character appears more in the final three chapters of the movie. In Chapter 11 "Positive", Julie attempts to take a pregnancy test because she does not feel well and it unexpectedly comes out positive. She did not immediately tell Eivind about it but instead met Aksel at the hospital. The two of them strolled outside into the park and engaged in substantial discussion. Aksel's ideas and perspectives on life and death are covered further in this part. **Consciousness** or **being-for-itself** and what Sartre refers to as **being-in-itself** which is defined as "being what it is not and not being what is" are inseparable from one another. Being-in-itself has no within which is opposed to a without and which is analogous to a judgment, a law, and a consciousness of itself (Rostovskyte & Bielskis, 2014). Therefore, Aksel represents being-in-itself. In which he can live his life without involving many other people or requiring for-itself to simply being and existing. Even so, his life as a being-in-itself appears to have limitations. The "world I knew had disappeared" and Aksel no longer desired the same or exhilarating sense of living more freely. His existence is mainly for himself, and he uses music, comics, movies, and literature to make himself comfortable, productive, and in ease.

Even though Aksel felt agony because of cancer, he chooses to live his life with the things that can still help him to survive. Therefore, in addition to the nothingness and anxiety Aksel suffers, he also has values that drive him to live, even though doing things that other people would consider insignificant and pointless. He struggled, but he lived his life only for himself—for the least. Aksel makes clear one of his difficulties in

knowing his actual purpose in life. He was anxious about many things to the point that he was afraid that they would turn out to be fallacies. In fact, most of the things he did wrong were not the core of his anxiousness all along. The angst felt he struggled with is caused by his anxiousness that things could be wrong or he could make mistakes. That is why he suffered from **anxiety**, he continually worried about negative possibilities in life that made him later fall into the **despair** he created himself as shown in Datum 3 below.

### Datum 3

Aksel : *"I wasted so much time worrying about what could go wrong. But what did go wrong was never the things I worried about."*

(01:45:06-01:45:14)

In Datum 3 above, Julie did also tell Aksel of the results of her pregnancy test and still asks if she deserves to be a mother or not. After Julie returns from the hospital, she then tells Eivind that she is pregnant. Neither of them thought that this would happen. Julie ambiguously told Eivind that she would think about what she did about it. However, Julie's ultimate action is not at all addressed in this part. It was not until the Epilogue that made clear the notion about Julie and Eivind's separation.

Moreover, Aksel's monologue below said how terrified he is of death. Everything he had is just *that*. **Nothingness**, according to Sartre, is the root of **anxiety**. It comes from the awareness that we exist but that we may cease to do so, that we may die. Anxiety brings the existence of the self and its world to the surface and complicates it (Davidson, 2002). Even though life is absurd, Aksel is at least sure about his life since he gave it a purpose all by himself and did not rely on anybody else—not even God, to give it meaning. He realized that there is no such thing as absolute right or wrong, that life is what you make it, and that death was just waiting for him as shown in Datum 4 below.

### Datum 4

Aksel : *"In recent year, I reached a point in life when suddenly it just happened. When... I began to worship what had been. And now I have nothing else. I have no future. I can only look back. And it's not even nostalgia. It's... fear of death. It's because I'm scared. It has nothing to do with art. I'm just trying to process."*

(01:40:58-01:41:49)

**Anxiety** is included as a person's "axis" in determining his own choices and freedom. Julie below proves that her own self is shaped by the choices she has already chosen. This shows that she has the freedom to choose something good for herself. She still trying to find herself beside her facticity or the past—which is presented to us as given, that which surpasses us or that transcends us and over which we have no freedom. Camus, however, argues that part of what makes something so-called **absurd** is the fact that we are unable to establish meaning. Additionally, he addresses such appearances in terms of weariness, anxiety, strangeness, nausea, and mortality at one's

own death (Polzler, 2018). As a result, Camus' idea of existentialism might be used to describe Julie's struggle to understand and determine the meaning of her life as an absurdity as seen in Datum 5 below.

**Datum 5**

*Julie* : "I feel like I never see anything through. I go from one thing to another."

(01:50:46-01:50:49)

In the final chapter "Everything Comes to an End", Julie and Aksel reconnect and eventually keep in touch. The two of them drove to Aksel's parent's home, the place where Aksel spent most of his childhood. The two of them did not go inside, just on the outside where Aksel was sitting on the stairs and Julie was busy capturing her last moments with Aksel with the camera. As indicated in the previous chapter, In his book *What is Subjectivity?* (2016) Sartre explains that you are because of your own choice, therefore you, man or woman, are a project that has a subjective existence. At that point, we become aware of the truth of who we are, which frequently bewilders us. The knowledge of this reality changes how we relate to ourselves. Julie and Aksel do not demonstrate significant behavior that indicates **subjectivity** in their lives. Despite this, Julie's actions—empathetic toward Aksel's struggle due to the awful illness he is suffering from—make Julie have a subjectivity principle. Otherwise, how caring and loving Aksel toward Julie is also counted as a form of subjectivity he did despite it is only to an individual. When Ole updated Julie through a call that Aksel would not be able to stay alive until evening, Julie remained restless the entire day. In the morning when she wanted to take a shower, she suddenly started bleeding due to menstruation which led to the fact that she was not actually pregnant—perhaps it was this fact that made Julie decided to break up with Eivind.

In the Epilogue, Julie makes the decision to become a photographer. She also caught sight of Eivind, his wife, and their baby through a window where she was working. Having children was something Eivind had previously decided against, but he has since altered his mind. Moreover, Julie was spotted alone in her own apartment, with no other male or partner in view. We can infer that Julie finally decided to put herself and her career first rather than a relationship. Julie entered the ethical stage when she decided to commit herself to focus on one occupation and made an effort to minimize establishing romantic relationships. She was once an aesthete, then became the ethicist at the final of the movie.

Since the two major characters in the movie do not reveal any aspects of their spirituality or relationship with God, it might be inferred, in keeping with the Kierkegaardian concept of existentialism—that two things are required for someone to be released from **despair**: he must first comprehend what it means to be himself and then seek out the ultimate remedy in a source higher than himself which is God (Grunthaler, 2013). The despair they experience and suffer may not only come from their

difficulty in determining their identity and the meanings of life, but also the absence of God's involvement inside themselves and throughout their lives. The existence of **God** is the only matter for Kierkegaard that has the potential to be more meaningful. The subjective benefits of such belief are significant, yet the objective search for this fact through philosophical reasoning may or may not disclose the truth of God's existence. In fact, he advocates faith in God not because it is true in an objective sense, but rather because the manner in which we hold this faith affects the entirety of our lives meaning (Pamerleau, 2009:16).

## CONCLUSION

The difficulty of finding meanings of existence and life is a topic that cannot be erased from human-being, it is as far as a piece of ourselves. *The Worst Person in the World* (2021) clearly depicted the ideas and actions that lead to existentialism concepts. This study attempts to support and evaluate the idea of existentialism through which Julie and Aksel are reflected. After examining the major characters' concepts of existentialism, it can be concluded that Julie allowed herself permission to be self-aware of the value of freedom as she came to understand the essence of her existence. However, the tendency to constantly seek pleasure and fulfillment without desiring to commit—places her in the aesthetic stage of life (the aesthete) at the beginning of the movie. Nevertheless, Julie also demonstrates how she is attempting to shift and begin seeking meaning in her life by adhering to the "normal" standards of society, which require her to commit to a single partner and focus on a specific line of work. On the other side, Aksel has lived his life in the ethical stage. He had already made a long-term commitment to making his hobby of drawing into a career, and he also did not live life merely for momentary pleasure. He is in a relationship with someone for serious purposes, such as getting married and starting a family—which is not the same as Julie. Moreover, it was discovered that his dread of dying was one of his most dominant anxieties. His anxiety about death made him dwell on ephemeral things in order to survive. Due to his pessimistic nature, he only acts in his own self-interest and only does things for himself.

Furthermore, their inability to discover true meaning in life may be a result of God's absence from their lives and it clearly shows that both Julie and Aksel portrayed atheistic existentialism, in which they focus on the quest for a more direct relationship of existence with *Being*. In contrast, this cannot be claimed as one of the primary causes of a person's suffering due to his or her existence and way of life, because this may also be related to their psychological or mental state and other external factors. Although there are several differences in the struggles that the two main characters experienced and the solutions they come up with, their common lack of clarity about their ultimate purpose and meaning in life is nevertheless revealed to be what connects them. Studying existentialism through a movie is suitable in this modern era and for people in general—who in most cases suffer from an existential crisis. Therefore, by learning the similarities

and contrasts between Julie and Aksel's existentialism concepts, we can gain a better understanding that whether or not we believe in God, have faith, or do not believe in God at all, we as humans must understand how each of us can never truly avoid the anguish, absurdity, and uncertainty in life. Thus, the ideal way to deal with these dreadful things is to learn more about ourselves and accept our flaws rather than “throw out” our misery and desperation to other people, and the most important thing is to seek out also acknowledge a higher authority than oneself, namely God.

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