

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

All human beings are created equal, which means that they have the same rights without looking at differences in race, religion, or sex; besides, they have the same desire to be able to do whatever they want. However, one thing that makes them different is the ability to achieve their desire. Human desire needs an aid called freedom. This fact has some relationship with the existentialists' thought. 'Existentialism is a 20th-century philosophical movement which assumes that people are entirely free and thus responsible for what they make of themselves'. (<http://www.hyperdictionary.com/dictionary/existentialism>). Existentialists believe that man must make his own values and possesses the complete freedom to choose. 'That is why existentialists focus primarily on matters such as choice, individuality, subjectivity, freedom, and the nature of existence itself. The issues addressed in existentialist philosophy involve the problems of making free choices, of taking responsibility for what we choose, of overcoming alienation from our lives, and so forth' (http://atheism.about.com/od/existentialism/a/introduction_2.htm).

One of the greatest writers in world literature who deal with existentialism is Fyodor Dostoevsky. He was born in 1821 in Moscow and considered ‘a forerunner of existentialist thought; yet, he attained profound philosophical and psychological insight which anticipated important developments in twentieth-century thought, including psychoanalysis and existentialism’.[. \(http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/dostoevskybio.html#BiographicalInfoEssay\)](http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/dostoevskybio.html#BiographicalInfoEssay). His novel, Poor People has been chosen to be analysed seeing that it is his first novel which deals with existentialist ideas and was ‘praised for his social awareness by Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848)’
[. \(http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/dostoevskybio.html#BiographicalInfoEssay\)](http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/dostoevskybio.html#BiographicalInfoEssay), ‘father of the Russian radical intelligentsia and the principal champion of the realistic and socially responsible new Russian literature’
[. \(http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/B/Belinsky.html\)](http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/B/Belinsky.html).

In Dostoevsky’s Poor People, existentialistic ideas can be seen through the protagonist’s characteristics in his relation with his society which show that freedom is worth fighting for because it is a precious thing in fulfilling his desire in life. His choice in fulfilling his desire later brings about some consequences to be endured.

After reading the novel, I choose theme to analyse as it is the most prominent literary aspect in the novel. In Dictionary of Literary Terms, it is stated that ‘The theme is the central and dominating idea in a literary work and the message or moral implicit in any work of art’. (Shaw, 1972:378). And I will analyse the theme through the portrayal and actions of the protagonist by using existentialism theory which

primarily focuses on theistic existentialism, a thought founded by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard.

In theistic existentialism it is said that ‘every human’s aware about his own freedom although he might choose wrongly which causes him to surrender himself totally to God’ (<http://atheism.about.com/od/typesofexistentialism/a/christian.htm>) and ‘having a personal relationship with God superseded all set moralities, social structures, and communal norms’ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_existentialism). And I use the theory of theistic existentialism to make me understand more about freedom in the novel which is closely related with the theme in my analysis.

Statement of the Problem

The problems that will be analysed in this thesis are:

1. What is the theme in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Poor People?
2. How does the portrayal and actions of the protagonist help to reveal the theme?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of doing this analysis are:

1. To analyze the theme in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s Poor People.
2. To show how the portrayal and actions of the protagonist help to reveal the theme.

Method of Research

The method of research used is library research. First of all, I read the novel as the primary text. Then I gather and search for some information needed for the thesis from some references and materials from the Internet to support the analysis of the primary text. Afterwards I apply Existentialism approach which primarily focuses on Theistic Existentialism to have a better understanding about the theme which is the most prominent literary aspect in the novel. Finally, I draw some conclusions.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three chapters, preceded by the Preface and the Abstract. Chapter One consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the analysis of theme in Fyodor Dostoevsky's Poor People. Chapter Three consists of the conclusion of what has been discussed in the previous chapter. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the synopsis of Poor People and the biography of Fyodor Dostoevsky.