

**SEARCH FOR MEANING OF EXISTENCE  
IN STEVENSON'S *KUNG FU PANDA* (2008):  
AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE**



**RESEARCH PAPER**

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by

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of Study

*Kung Fu Panda* is a 2008 American animated comedy blockbuster. It was directed by John Stevenson and Mark Osborne, produced by Melissa Cobb, the screenplay is by Jonathan Aible. The film was produced by DreamWorks Animation's studio in Glendale, California, distributed by Paramount Pictures release at June 13, 2008. The movie that has duration 92 minutes premiered in the United States on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2008 and Indonesia on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, publicized work on the film began before October 2004. This Film takes on animation Movie genre and English language as the dialogue, by the sound mixing DTS, SDDS, Dolby, Digital Sonics-DDP and kung fu fighting soundtrack, this movie can present the emotional play and powerful animation.

As the screen play of *Kung Fu panda* movie, Jonathan Aibel is known as the writer and the director of great movies in America. Aibel has written some movies they are *Monster vs. Aliens* (2009) (screen play), "A.U.S.A." (1 episode, 2003), *Till death do us part* (2003) TV episode (writer), "king of the hill" (11 episodes, 1997-2000), *Nancy Boys* (2000) TV episode (writer), *Naked ambition* (2000) TV episode (writer), *Cotton's plot* (1999) TV episode (writer), *Revenge of the Lutefisk* (1999) TV episode (writer), *Sleight of Hank* (1999) TV episode (writer), "Platypus Man" (2 episodes, 1995), "MADtv" (1995) TV series (unknown episodes), *Blazing dragons* (1996) (VG) (writer).

*Kung Fu Panda's* existence began when the panda (Po) has dream about master of Kung Fu, at the first part of the movie present about contrary of how the big fat panda can be a master of Kung Fu. In reality certain the big and fat no have ability in sport even in the Kung Fu. But behind of this the big fat Panda (Po) has potential Kung Fu that anybody

did not know his ability, All of people know the ability of Po when he was chosen as a dragon warrior as the fear of jade palace by free of Tai lung. At the first time Po surprised because has been chosen to be dragon warrior by point of master Oogway but master Shi Fu and the five did not agree that panda has Kung Fu ability because panda is big and fat that contrary with Kung Fu master in general. In fact master Shi Fu and the five was wrong, they need to believe can train panda. Believing is one important thing to reach goal. In the fact panda could train well by unique stimulus that is food, it means each people is unique, they has specialty in their talent and how to improve it, and they just need to believe on it. Finally panda can be Kung Fu master and have the right to receive dragon scroll. Surprisingly when po opens the dragon scroll he finds blank scroll just the mirror of his face actually blank scroll adapts the philosophy come from china that is Tao and Buddhism. The highest level in the Tao view and Buddhism is blank, someone could go to nirvana if he has got zero level, and the lever here is nothing. At the same time Po need a time to understand what's the meaning the scroll. Po can reach the meaning when his father explains the secret ingredient soup was nothing that is adapt in the dragon scroll are someone become special if they think they are special. Finally Panda can defeat Tai lung by the Wuxi finger-hold.

*Kung Fu Panda* has received positive reviews from critics. Rotten Tomatoes reported that 89% of critics gave the film positive reviews, based on 156 reviews. The film has an approval rating of 74% from a select group of critics and an approval rating of 92% from users of the site. *Metacritic* reported the film had an average score of 73 out of 100, based on 33 reviews. Richard Corliss of *Time Magazine* gave the film a positive review, stating the picture "provides a master coursed in cunning visual art and ultra-satisfying entertainment". *The New York Times* said, "At once fuzzy-wuzzy and industrial strength, the tacky-sounding *Kung Fu Panda* is high concept with a heart," and the review called

the film "consistently diverting" and "visually arresting". Chris Barsanti of *Filmcritics.com* commented, "Blazing across the screen with eye-popping, sublime artwork, *Kung Fu Panda* sets itself apart from the modern domestic animation trend with its sheer beauty, the film enters instant classic status as some of the most gorgeous animation Hollywood has produced since the golden age of Disney. The *Chicago Tribune* called the film "one of the few comedies of 2008 in any style or genre that knows what its doing" (Rotten tomatoes Press release, 2009).

On other hand some people judge that this movie is significantly mock the symbol national of china, with the animated of panda than has green eye present the symbol of crossbar devil and Satanism, the good character shouldn't be reflected with symbol of crime like devil, then why the Panda's father is duck? Those were mocking the china's people. Many china's people think that panda not only china's symbol but also Panda is symbol of china's people so Po in the *Kung Fu Panda* was considered as mocking china's people and their country (Mahasampatti, 2009).

The film currently garners an 89% "Certified Fresh" approval rating from review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes. *Kung Fu Panda* opened in 4,114 theaters, grossing \$20.3 million on its opening day and \$60.2 million on its opening weekend, resulting in the number one position at the box office. The film has resulted in DreamWorks' biggest opening for a non-sequel film, highest grossing animated movie of the year, and the third-largest weekend overall for a DreamWorks animated film, behind *Shrek the Third* and *Shrek 2*, with the budget \$130,000,000 kung fu panda can get royalty \$631,908,951 (Internet Movie Database).

DreamWorks Animation's *Kung Fu Panda* leads the field with 17 nominations out of 27 overall for the studio, including Best Animated Feature, and individual nominations for character animation, character design, directing, music, production design,

storyboarding, voice acting and writing. Walt Disney Animation Studios and its Best Animated Feature “Bolt” received 9 nominations and Pixar Animation Studios and its Best Animated Feature “Wall-E” received 8 nominations. Completing the Best Animated Feature category is Sony Pictures Classics *Waltz with Bashir* and Sherman Pictures/Lama Films “\$9.99” (Adams, 2008).

*Kung Fu Panda* has three points which make the researcher interested in this movie. The first is character of po itself, the character of po is contradict with reality. The character of po describes as big fat panda that many people know that big fat is not sporty and does not have talent to be master of Kung Fu. The contrary in this movie, panda could be master of Kung Fu by unique training stimulus, if the five trains with focus in the object, panda must focus on the food. It is becomes one important point that many people cannot reach their dream if they are did not belief on their self and that is depend on what they chose in this life.

The second is moral spiritual in this movie, first is the speech by Panda’s father that “The secret to be special is you have to believe you're special” po almost pessimist can understand the dragon scroll, but when his father give him advice that are the secret ingredient soup is nothing, the secret to be special is you have to believe you’re special” right after this Po understand to see the positive aspect of him If he think he is special, it is motivate him selves to do more.

The third is about the story *Kung Fu Panda* contributes plus score to this movie, the funny thing and joke construct perfectly make this movie fresh to watch. The art direction, the voices, the character animation, the comedy, the action scenes, the opening 2-D cartoon sequence, the heart it all works Beside funny and joke this movie build with the wise advice that can be understood easily in each scene. That point makes this movie successfully impressed by audience so they can comprehend the story fully based on the

pole they were, and could make audience enjoy and receive the message easily in this movie.

Search for meaning of existence become an issue chosen by the researcher in this movie. All people always will face many choice in life, and will decide what they want to chose based their belief in their experience. Po as the one major character implies its phenomena, why the director chose Po that has performance big fat and gigantic panda as Kung Fu master in this movie, why the gigantic panda can defeat Tai lung that has strong performance, what does Po's existence mean? And the other hand why he receive blank dragon scroll, all aspect around Po (panda) can represent what the meaning existence and the choice in every part of life that builds by the director John Stevenson in *Kung Fu Panda Movie*.

Motivated by the fact mentioned above, the researcher is eager to explore the Message Existentialist that build in this movie entitled **“SEARCH FOR MEANING OF EXISTENCE IN STEVENSON’S KUNG FU PANDA: EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE”**.

## **B. Review of Previous Study**

The writer has found other researcher, who can show the originality of the writer study

The essay entitled *Belajar Dari Kungfu Panda*, written by Hertanto M. (2008) In this essay, Hertanto argues about what is learned from *Kung Fu Panda* movie. The first point he presents one message that can be learned in kung fu panda movie that are the speech from Po's father *The secret to be special is you have to believe you're special* Po almost giving up when he can find the meaning from blank dragon scroll, the advice from his father make Po understanding what the intention of the dragon scroll itself that is Po will be special if he thinks he is special then he need to believe. Second point is catch the

dream, Hertanto explains the negative thinking will block the dream as the example Po who has gigantic, hard to move can reach his dream because of his believe, and always look at the future like the Master Oogway said that yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery and now is a gift, Third he proposed that someone can't train someone else before he believe the talent and ability that people. Fourth every individuality learn with their way, as like as the Shifu find the Panda could train by food, *Panda* could be same with the five, such as every child have different character because of their different experience so the training to the children can be same.

The researcher above is different from the writer here, because the data are different; while the essay written by Hertanto concern on the main messages in the *Kung Fu Panda* movie takes by his argument, its different from the researcher because the researcher try to find the meaning of life based on existentialism. The similarities of the first study are having same approach for analyzing that is existentialism approach. Than the second writer Hertanto takes *Kung Fu Panda* as his object that is same as the researcher.

### **C. Problem Statement**

The problem that will be analyzed in this thesis is based on the background explained before. In order to reach the goal, the writer chooses the following problem statements is how Po as the main character of *Kung Fu Panda* movie searches for meaning of existence directed by John Stevenson.

### **D. Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study will be as follows:

1. To analyze the movie based on its structural elements that helping the researcher to identify how the movie represents the Stevenson's meaning of life.

2. To analyze *Kung Fu Panda Movie* based on Existentialist Perspective that helping the researcher to describe the Stevenson's meaning of life.

### **E. Limitation of the Study**

This study has wide scope and it is impossible for the researcher to handle the entire problem. Therefore, the researcher limits the problem in the meaning of life of Po (as the major character) on *Kung Fu Panda Movie* based on Sartre's Theory of Existentialism.

### **F. Benefit of the Study**

It is understood that everything done has advantage. Different activities have different advantage whether theoretical or practical advantages. In this study the researcher expects that the research paper has some benefit either in theoretical or practical:

#### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

- The result of the research paper can be used as input in Existentialism Theory.
- The result of the research can be used as the reference for those who want to conduct a research in Existentialism approach of literature analysis.

#### **2. Practical Benefit**

- To enrich the researcher's knowledge and experience dealing with Existentialist Perspective.
- To give a deeper understanding in literary field as a reference to the other researcher in analyzing the movie into different perspective.

### **G. Research Method**

#### **1. Type of Study**

This research is called descriptive qualitative research because the writer analyze the data come from script of *Kung Fu Panda Movie* by using methodology of literature as the references.



## **2. Object of the Study**

The object of the study is applying the existence theory to analyze the meaning of life in *Kung Fu Panda* movie based on Existentialist Perspective. The writer want to reach the goal of this study is how the meaning of life occurs in the *Kung Fu Panda* movie written by John Stevenson.

## **3. Type of the Data and the Data Source**

The types of data are scene, image, cinematography, music, animation, story and the text of a particular film. The data source can be classified into two categories, primary data and secondary data source.

### **a. Primary Data Source**

The primary data source of the study is the *Kung Fu Panda*. The source of data of this research is discourse of script entitled the *Kung Fu panda* movie directed by John Stevenson.

### **b. Secondary Data Source**

The secondary data source are taken from the other data which have relation with the study like a biography of the author and the other relevant information that is got from book, internet, article, journal, and the other relevant sources.

## **4. Technique of the Data Collection**

In conducting this study, the writer uses the techniques as follows:

- a. Note taking
- b. Scene capturing

While the steps which are used by the writer are as follow:

- a. Watching the movie.
- b. Reading the script.

- c. Classifying the data.
- d. Browsing in the internet to look for related information such as movie script, movie's identity, public response, etc.
- e. Reading relevant books.

## **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

In analyzing the data, the researcher use descriptive analysis. It means that the researcher interpret the text and the context. Then, the researcher uses the data to find the meaning of life existence written by John Stevenson.

## **H. Paper Organization**

Paper organization consists of five chapters and each of them subdivided into subsequence divisions. The paper is arranged as follows: Chapter I presents an introduction which consists of background, problem statement, literary review, objective of the study, limitation of the study, benefit of the study. Chapter II discusses underlying theory which consists of the identity of *Kung Fu Panda Movie*, synopsis of kung fu panda movie, notion of existentialism. Chapter III presents the Structural analysis of *Kung Fu Panda Movie*. Chapter IV presents the Existentialist Analysis result, and Chapter V presents conclusion and suggestion.