

Epistemological Idealism in David Hare 's Stuff Happens

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Abstract

This study aims to present a theoretical overview of the critical notion of idealism in addition to the relevant concepts and terminology that are closely related to the current study like definitions, nature, classification and types of idealism. Then, the related definitions, kinds and theories associated with idealism are highlighted. It deals with the concept of idealism as an ideology that may be used by politician to impose other sub ideologies like; power, dominance or even to get resolutions of invasion other countries. The present study investigates the ideology of idealism in the British play "Stuff Happens" by David Hare.

1. Introduction

This study aims to present a theoretical overview of the critical notion of idealism in addition to the relevant concepts and terminology that are closely related to the current study like definitions, nature, classification and types of idealism. Then, the related definitions, kinds and theories associated with idealism are highlighted. It deals with the concept of idealism as an ideology that may be used by politician to impose other sub ideologies like; power, dominance or even to get resolutions of invasion other countries. The present study investigates the ideology of idealism in the British play "Stuff Happens" by David Hare.

2. Idealism: Definitions and Nature

The basic function of language as an important part of human life, whether verbal or nonverbal, is to interact and communicate. However, nowadays, the language is not anymore a mere tool for the functions of communication and passing information, it goes beyond these functions, as (Hayashi and Hayashi 1997: 42) mention, to altering, escorting people, and realizing the power and dominance of socially. Language, in critical studies, is a carrier of ideologies that is used to form social structures within society and a way of distributing dominance hierarchies and power by embedding ideologies whether overt or covert. However, language is not powerful by itself; rather it is powerful by the hands of the powerful people who use it as a weapon.

Abdul Rasheed (2015: 14) indicates that theatre performance has a “clear-cut artistic, intellectual, dramaturgical, theatrical and ideological directions”. He (ibid.) also states that playwrights embed their “intention/thematic concerns and activates the theatre director’s vision”.

The play worker or producer “must not deduce his business from the play’s surface. He must make a leap to the inward meaning and use the play’s surface as expression” (Knight, 1998: 43). In spite the fact that dramatists and scholars indicate the existence of close and inseparable

relationship between drama as a text and drama as a performance, i.e., some see that the process of interpretation of the words on a page. However, the performance involves the characters physically and emotionally in a different way compared to simple texts. Short (1996: 168) points out that the drama as a dramatic text is “the literary genre which is most like naturally occurring conversation” as it consists an interaction largely based on the principle of character-to-character as (Styan, 1975: vii) states “[...] drama is not made of words alone, but of sights and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationships and responses”.

The final elements of any theatre performance, such as the plot, conflict, genre, language, theme and sub-themes, and character types, should reflect whatever ideologies whether covert or overt (Abdul Rasheed, 2015: 15). All these must go along with physical properties such as costumes, make-up, props, lighting, set design in addition to any artistic qualities the performers do such as speech delivery, movements, tempo, rhythm, picturization, composition and so on. For the purpose of the research, drama as text is essentially an authentic play that was written for being performed on the stage, presumably it carries ideological purposes such as political power, discrimination realism or idealism.

Etymologically, the origin of the word of ‘idealism’ comes from the English language that is Idealism. The first philosophically usage of this word was in Leibniz in the early 18th century. Leibniz uses this term and applies it to Plato's thoughts, which contradicts Epikuros materialism. By contradiction, idealism is the key concept to get into the true nature of reality (Lavinel: 2003). From the 17th century until the beginning of the 20th century, this term has been widely used in the classification of philosophy.

Robinson (2020: 1946-54) defines idealism as “any view that stresses the central role of the ideal or the spiritual in the interpretation of experience. It may hold that the world or reality exists essentially as spirit or consciousness, that abstractions and laws are more fundamental in reality than sensory things, or, at least, that whatever exists is known in dimensions that are chiefly mental—through and as ideas”.

Ward (1966) defines idealism from political point of view as “any political theory which in its particular conception of the nature of man, politics, and society, by effect or by design resolves any seeming contradiction between existing impulses in the empirical world and the historical attainability of a rational and moral order derived from universally valid abstract principles.”

The encyclopedia of Marxism defines idealism as “a thought process of how the material world adheres to ideas.”. it adds that scholars who are idealists “follow a certain ideal concept (ex. faith) and understand everything from its adherence to that concept.”

Idealism as a thought process is considered as contrast to materialism in a way of creating ideas out of the material world. Such created ideas are “constantly changing and being remolded by the differences and changes in the material world” rather than concrete and fixed. It can also be understood as “the practice of understanding abstractions through other abstractions; where an abstraction is something that does not necessarily have basis nor relation to reality, but only exists in relation to other abstractions. The primary concern for the idealist is to create concepts that adequately explain (and change of viewpoint of) the world as we know it.”

Idealism in Fine Arts can be seen as the “treatment of subject matter in a work of art in which a mental conception of beauty or form is stressed, characterized usually by the selection of particular features of various models and their combination into a whole according to a standard of perfection”. It could be seen that idealism refers to any theory or system that maintains that the real aspects are of the nature of thought or object of external perception that consists of a set of ideas and beliefs, moreover, the tendency or attempts to represent and portray things in

an ideal form or shape, or as they might or even should be rather than as they are, with emphasis on values and morals.

There are different kinds of idealism; metaphysical, epistemological, subjective, objective, personal, transcendental, actual, absolute and pluralistic. This study is concerned with epistemological idealism.

2.1. Epistemological Idealism

This kind of idealism has “both negative and positive components.” The negative component of this kind is a ‘localized skepticism’ while the positive component is the “counterbalanced” depending on “epistemological and ontological commitments in a different locale.”

This type of idealism assumes “strong direct and incontrovertible cognitive access” to people’s mental states, knowledge, and ideas. This knowledge represents the negative element because it is at best “derivative and probable” rather than “primary and certain”. De Vries (2009: 211)

3. Data and Analysis

The British playwright David Hare is noted for his deftly crafted satires examining British society in post- world War II era. This play is written about the_Iraqi War. Hare presents it as "a history play" that deals with current history. The title is quoted from Donald Rumsfeld's reply to prevalent looting in Baghdad: "Stuff happens and it's untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things.”

The play expresses a mixture of views, with arguments for and in contradiction of the war on Iraq. It blends re-creations of real speeches, meetings, press conferences and dramatized versions of secretive meetings between members of the Bush and Blair governments. The play also contains global figures such as Hans Blix and Dominique de Villepin. Stuff Happens is considered one of the most inspiring political dramas to occur in modern memory.

Extract 1

An Actor: January 29th 2002 : George Bush uses his state of the union address to ramp up the rhetoric. The President's chief speech – writer, Michael Gerson, calls this:

Bush: Iraq continue to flaunt its hostility towards America and to support terror. states like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger.

All nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer.

History has called America and our allies to action. Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. we have known freedom's price. We have known freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory.(p: 32-3)

An actor starts the extract referring to specific dates, places and figures to provide the audience with a kind of historical background and prepare them to the coming events.

In his speech, Bush states Epistemological idealism since he depends on what is existing only in his mind. From this perspective, he believes that Iraq was a terrorist ally that form a menace to America. Other countries do not believe Bush's claims and do not believe he knows what he is doing. After the private meeting between Bush and Blair at Bush's ranch to confer the problems about the Middle East. Bush considers that since Afghanistan is done they should just pass to Iraq as a second stage. Blair attempts to convince Bush that the backing from the UN is required before Iraq invasion. The British think that there is no adequate evidence that Iraq represents a serious threat to be capable to invade it legally.

He devoted the use of epistemological idealism revealing the knowledge that constructed out of his sense impressions and imposes upon others. From this perspective, he behaves by virtue of his authority and assumed faith.

Bush assertively thrives in convincing the Congress with his idea without the opportunity to negotiate by saying "History has called America and our allies to action", this sentence is a very clear example of fake idealism which represents a mean to enhance the position of the USA.

This use serves the purpose of persuasion. As a political leader, Bush may adopt the character of a protagonist in this case. His choices are believed to be right, and they apparently serve a good ethic political result and worldwide peace.

Being the head of the nation, of the American people, Bush prefers his own political movements afterward the 9/11 occurrences as rational resolutions to lead his society to advancement.

The writer deftly elucidates America's fears and paranoia after 9/11 world and the irrationality of conquest through his skillful use of all the critical and pragmatic strategies.

Extract 2

Bush attends the graduating class of 2002 at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Material music.

An Actor: In June 2002, President Bush takes the graduation class at West Point. In his address , he repudiates one of the core ideas of the United Nations Charter, which forbids the use of force not undertaken in self- defence .He introduces a concept new in international law: the doctrine of the pre- emptive strike.

Bush addresses the seated graduates.

Bush: For much of the last century, America's defence relied on Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. But new threats require new thinking. Deterrence- the promise of massive retaliation against nations- means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies. We cannot defend America by hoping for the best.(**ibid: 46-7**)

This extract starts with special celebration, which is a graduation of a Military Academy. An actor is speaking first with references to specific dates, characters and places. The prominent figure here is Bush who gives a speech in this occasion. The writer skillfully makes use of this occasion to express Bush's aims and intentions. By this introduction, the writer adapted the

audience to what is coming. Hare ends this section with a striking concept "pre-emptive strike" which is a preface to his intention to invade Iraq without a resolution from the UN.

In the first part of his speech, Bush uses Epistemological idealism to reflect what exists in his mind. Hence, he could not attain an agreement from the UN to attack Iraq yet. He thinks that he must find new kind of thinking which suits the new styles of menace.

The key purpose behind the use of different linguistic strategies is to follow the track to war. The writer is objectively cautious in the material

He uses, so as to reveal the hidden ideology in Bush's speech. Perhaps the main goal is to make president Bush looks as bad guy, while Tony Blair is attached more tribute than he is due and frequently revealed to be the victim of Bush's squirm maneuvers. The writer surely portrays Powell as a more heroic character than he worth to be; he is the wise and restraint figure. Hare may make Powell to represent the administration's sole voice of reason for much of the play.

Extract 3

AN ACTOR: The president is moved to an underground bunker at Strategic Command, Offutt Air Base, Nebraska. At his own insistence, he is flown back to the White House, whence he broadcasts live to the nation at 8:30 p.m.

BUSH: We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. None of us will forget this day. Yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.

(Exhausted STAFF gather in shirtsleeves to hear the president)

AN ACTOR: He then addresses his team in the Presidential Emergency Operations Center:

BUSH: I want you all to understand that we are at war, and we will stay at war until this is done. Nothing else matter. Everything is available for the pursuit of this war. Any barriers in your way, they're gone. Any money you need, you have it. This is our only agenda.

(The STAFF dissolve)

AN ACTOR: On Iraqi television a spokesman for Saddam Hussein declares:

IRAQI S'MAN: The massive explosions in the centers of power are a painful slap in the face of US politicians to stop their illegitimate hegemony and attempts to impose custodianship on peoples. The American cowboy is reaping the fruits of his crimes against humanity

AN ACTOR: BLAIR: This is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism, but between the free and democratic world and terrorism. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our American friends. We will not rest until this evil is driven from the world.(**ibid:17**)

This extract describes what happened in 9/11. The writer refers to the precise times when the planes attacked the twin towers and the Pentagon. This was the reason to the War on Terror between "the free and democratic world and terrorism".

Bush uses epistemological idealism to shape the world according to what is exist in his mind only. The function of this use is to exaggerate the threat that Iraq forms as a terrorist country. He

tries to give trivial reason to consider Iraq a menace, and how to exploit such a threat to attain the American aggressive goals.

Bush breaches the maxims of quantity and quality since he was more informative than required and his speech lacks evidence. He gives false reason so as to exploit the accident of 9/11 to construct a legend of war on terror for the sake of domination.

The function behind this use is to hide America's actual aims for war. They use Saddam Hussein's dictatorship with his people to mark him as a terrorist who must be dethroned in order to end the tension and threat in Iraq and the Middle East.

Bush tries to make glory around his personality and decisions, and depicts the decision of war against Iraq as the only solution to end terror in the world and to show that the Arab homeland is innately constructed as so far from "globalized, affected modernism. And the perfect solution is the war on Iraq to bring democracy and liberty to the country.

The writer devotes the Iraqi spokesman's speech to reflect his viewpoints concerning the decision of war against Iraq. He explained that all the silliness of Bush's fake causes could not be inferred as evidence that Iraq is the hand of terror. All the reasons just clarify Iraq's opinion that America have strong enemies because of its intrusions in others' matters - and thus it is worthy of that hit. Hare also tries to explain how Bush cunningly depicts a model of the meetings that ends with the agreement that war against Iraq signifies a war on terror and that all countries must participate in this war.

The first supporter to Bush's government is Britain according to Tony Blair declaration. Blair uses absolute idealism since he expresses reality according to his spiritual unity. The function of this use is to exaggerate his attitude and look like a hero or a great leader.

They pretend to have the desire for freeing Iraqi people and setting an end to their problems, harassment and tyranny for more than twenty-five years.

Hare recovers the duality of America's attitudes. Through the play he raises a question about how the American government has not observed that Saddam Hussein is a dictator and tyrant only beyond the 9/11 attacks. On the contrary, America supported and armed Saddam Hussein throughout the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1989).

4. Conclusions

It is concluded that there are inspected the use of epistemological idealism as an ideology to get hidden goals in the British play *Stuff Happens*. It is used in to serve specific function. It exposes that the pragmatic function which dominates the data under study in the British play is dominance, imposing opinions on others and deception. Since the play deals with prominent politicians, who represent the most effective states in the world, this triggers the fact that such figures tend to abuse their authorities to affect others decisions.

Epistemological idealism represents a curtain to hide the real intention of decisions makers in the world and misled other nations. In this way, resolutions of war and destruction are made by using fake excuses.

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