

## Andrew Ryan's Ideology of Individualism in *Bioshock: Rapture*

Muhammad Hilfi Adanni

### Abstract

Ideology is a set of belief that determines how we act and think. Everyone in this world has an ideology that they hold tight unconsciously. Ideology in literature is planted in the characters of the story. In the *Bioshock: Rapture*, Andrew Ryan, the protagonist is depicted heavily to have an ideology of individualism. By using Louis Althusser's theory of ideology the writer will examine the ideology of Andrew Ryan. The result will be divided into three part, background of the character, the ideology of the character, and the factors that shape it.

**Keywords:** Ideology, Individualism, Literature, Bioshock: Rapture

### I. Introduction

Ideology is the way individual, group or society look at the world in a form of ideas or beliefs. It affects how we act and think. Our ideology is our most closely held set of values and feelings, and it serves as the filter through which we see everything and everybody. Ideology in an individual or group can exist both consciously and unconsciously. "They do not know it, but they are doing it." (Karl Marx, 1867: 49) Ideology is often adopted as a theme in many forms of media like movies, books, music, and video games. In the *BioShock: Rapture* science-fiction novel set in the [BioShock](#) universe based on a video game with the title of Bioshock, The protagonist, Andrew Ryan possess ideology of individualism. He believes in an individual's worth, values, and independence that if they work hard without society or governor intervention they can achieve their goals and desires.

Individualism is a belief that emphasizes on the values of an individual. It promotes self-reliance and liberty. Individualism urges that the interests of individuals should come before state or collective groups. "It postulates that the individual is supremely important, that the individual life is an end in itself, not to be used by collectivist leaders for the sake of -common- goals." (Robert Villegas, 2015: 11). Individualism is often described as a

# Compendium: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies

## Vol. 1, No. 1, 2017

Available online at: <http://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/compendium>

---

counterpoint of altruism, collectivism, authoritarianism. People who adopt individualism see that their lives belong not to anyone else but only to them alone, thus they shall be free to make their own judgment and act based on it, to pursue their dream without anyone bothering them, to relish the result of their efforts without anyone demanding them to share it.

There are numerous studies discussing BioShock as the subject of the study. The topics mainly discussed in those studies are objectivism and dystopia. *A Man Chooses, A Slave Obeys: BioShock and the Dystopian Logic of Convergence* by Jessica Aldred and Dystopia (2011), and *Alternate History and the Posthuman in Bioshock* by Lars Schmeink (2009) discuss the dystopia setting of Bioshock, which is Rapture, a city under the sea. *The Architecture of Bioshock as Metaphor for Objectivism* by Brittany Kuhn; *Battle for Galts Gulch: Bioshock as Critique of Objectivism* by Joe Packer (2010) analyze Bioshock from the aspect of Objectivism, a philosophical system developed by Ayn Rand.

In this paper, the writer will discuss the ideology of one of Bioshock's characters, Andrew Ryan. What factors could possibly shape Andrew Ryan's ideology of Individualism. The writer will limit the object of study on the factors that created Andrew Ryan's ideology of Individualism and the reasons why Andrew Ryan acts in a certain way. The objective of the study is to analyze the factors and reason that created Andrew Ryan's ideology and action using Louis Althusser's theory of ideology

According to Louis Althusser (1968), Ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real condition of existence. He explains that every aspect in our lives is based on Ideology. Ideology appears in our subconscious as belief, hope, purpose, and dream but it is not false consciousness like Marx says. Someone's ideology is highly influenced by condition and situation around them but it is not the real reflection of the situation that they live in. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of

individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.

Althusser(1968) states that Ideology has a material existence, which is apparatus. There are two kinds of apparatus that determine how ideology is injected and how it works, which are Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) works violently by force using government institution such as police, military, court, and prison, including the abducting of activists that are against it. Meanwhile Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) works persuasively by using education, society, religion, family, culture and media

## **II. Method of Study**

Method of study determines how the data is collected. It may be defined as methods and techniques that are used for writing a research paper. The method that I use in this research paper is qualitative method. The reason why I believe that qualitative method is the most suitable method for this paper is because qualitative method provides a way to analyze and comprehend the issue on this research paper on a much deeper scale.

According to Kothari, Qualitative method focuses on the qualitative aspects of a case. For instance, it is best used on type of research that investigates the causes of human behaviors, what makes them act and think in a certain way. To figure out the fundamental and hidden reasons, purposes, motives and desires from a person, qualitative method is essential.

The main source of data for this research paper is Bioshock: Rapture, a book based on a video game. It is written by John Shirley under the supervision of Ken Levine, the original screenwriter of BioShock. This book is an adaptation of BioShock's backstory that serves as a prequel to the video game. In addition, supporting data are collected from books, e-books, articles, journals and internet to strengthen the arguments on this research paper.

To analyze the data I use Louis Althusser's theory of ideology that I obtain from a book with the title of *Literary Theory: Anthology* second edition, edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. In this case, Louis Althusser's theory of ideology will work as a guidance in writing this paper. Every argument made in this research paper will be based on the theory.

### **III. Result and Discussion**

This part will be divided into three points. The first point will describe the background of Andrew Ryan as depicted in the book, the second point will discuss the ideology of Andrew Ryan, and the last will examine the factors and events that shape Andrew Ryan's ideology.

#### **A. Background of Andrew Ryan**

Before Andrew Ryan came to America, his real name was Andrei Rianofski. He was born from middle class people on 1911 in a village near Minsk in the Russian Empire. His father was a businessman, until the Bolshevik revolution happened and his father business was destroyed. Andrei's father, Pyotr Rianofski was known in his village, on the outskirts of Minsk as an anti-communist person. He opposed the government's ideology of communism and he even dared to speak up against the Reds. Because of this, many who had once been their friends started to leave them and called them "betrayers of the People's Revolution"

On one cold morning Andrei and his father stood in the train station waiting for a train to take them to Constantinople, after last night his father had heard from a priest that the purge is to begin today. Andrei heard someone was calling his father's name. It is his father's cousin Dmetri and his wife Vasilisa. Apparently, the soldiers were looking for them. He begged Andrei's father to help them, give them money to bribe the soldiers but Andrei's father said that he cannot help them because they (Andrei and his father) needed every ruble to make their way to Constantinople. A soldier called out to Cousin Dmetri in the distance, asking to speak with him.

**Compendium: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies**  
**Vol. 1, No. 1, 2017**

Available online at: <http://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/compendium>

---

Andrei's father hissed Cousin Dmetri to stop talking and leave them. The train came, they hopped in and found their seat on the wooden benches near the window. From his seat little Andrei watched Dmetri and Vasilisa talking to the Red soldiers. His father asked him to look away, but Andrei could not do it. As the train started to leave, the soldiers shouted and knocked Vasilisa with his rifle. Dmetri could not move when he had a rifle pointed to his head and then the soldier pulled the trigger. Little Andrei was shocked to see such horrible scene. Again his father said to look away. He heard Vasilisa's crying and then followed by the sound of two gun-shot.

Moving to America, land of freedom, Ryan is grateful for the fortune and fame that he got from his brilliance mind, hard works and strong will. He owns a coal and oil company. However, America still does not fulfill Ryan's desires of a perfect place to live. Instead, it makes him despise the idea of collectivism. Ryan calls people who gain advantages from other people's work parasites. "What is the difference between a man and a parasite? A man builds, a parasite asks, 'Where is my share?' A man creates. A parasite says, 'What will the neighbors think?' A man invents. A parasite says, 'Watch out or you might tread on the toes of God'" (Bioshock: Rapture p. 370). Ryan once had a private forest owned personally by him. A group of people then came to him asking him to build a public park there. They declared that the land is belonged to God. He was extremely furious when the government backed up by people tried to claim his forest. In response, Ryan set his forest on fire so the 'parasites' could not have it.

The war that is going on in Europe makes the tax in the United States skyrocketing. The states demand financial aids from big business men like Ryan. They insist that it is the way for them to show loyalty and contribution to the United States. Of course Ryan is reluctant to give them what they want. With his little help he gives to the Allies in the war, the states grow suspicious of which side that he supports. Perhaps the most defining moment that forces Ryan to create Rapture, a place of utopia where one can achieve individual freedom and success by hard work, free from the interference of government and society is the bombing of Hiroshima

and Nagasaki. For him, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki marks the end of his patience with the 'parasites.' He says that the parasites will take everything from everyone undeservedly, and if they cannot seize it, they will destroy it.

### **B. Ideology of Andrew Ryan**

Andrew Ryan's ideology draws heavily from Individualism. He values an individual's value and interest more than anything. He believes in *a Great Chain of Industry*, a collective efforts of people created when everyone strive for their interests that will shape an ideal society. For Ryan, self-interest is the foundation of economy and it motors the wheels of business. His extreme devotion to self-interest clearly indicates that he is an individualist.

Altruism, an idea that emphasizes individuals to benefits others is the root of evil Ryan says. "What is the most vicious obscenity ever perpetrated on mankind? Slavery? Dictatorship? No! It's the tool with which all the wickedness is build. Altruism" (Bioshock: Rapture, p. 296). He despises people or institutions that benefit undeservedly from others. He believes that if someone wants to have something he or she has to earn it through hard work. Throughout the book, Ryan never gives anyone anything more than he or she deserves. He never gives bonus or tips to their employees. He exactly pays what they are worth.

One thing that Ryan hates the most is the Government tentacles that grasp individual's personal freedom. Since he came from Communist Russia he's already familiar with it. The government put censor on everything they deem to be unfit. They make regulations that restrain individual's right and force it to the people. These conditions obstruct invention, innovation and growth. Taxes for Ryan is a symbol of government's oppression to individuals' efforts. The government forcefully takes the wealth of their people and if they refuse the government will use their power to make sure they get it. Andrew Ryan's father was once jailed for his reluctance to pay taxes.

### **C. The factors that shape Andrew Ryan's Ideology**

# Compendium: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies

## Vol. 1, No. 1, 2017

Available online at: <http://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/compendium>

---

As Louis Althusser says that there are two kinds of apparatus that can affect someone's ideology. One of them is Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) that works persuasively by using education, religion, family, culture and media. I believe that Andrew Ryan got the notion to dislike authoritarianism and communism when he was still young from his father. His father hates the communist government of Russia that control all their people and disrespect individual's right. It really comes as no surprise, since family is the first place where socialization takes place. His father consciously and unconsciously put his thoughts to little Andrei, shaping him just to think and act like him.

The moment when Andrew Ryan witnessed his relatives died on the hand of communist government is the turning point where he made up his mind. Referring to the theory that I wrote above, someone's ideology is highly influenced by the condition and situation which they live in. Andrew had experienced such dreadful memory, watching his relatives murdered in front of him. He had lived in a situation where freedom does not exist, where government's hands and eyes are around him. Intense government's control and lack of personal freedom makes Andrew Ryan despises authority and values personal freedom even more. It clearly shows correlation but not real reflection to the situation that he lived in.

The event where Andrew Ryan burns down his forest shows how he copes with the situation which he live in by acting against it instead of embracing it. In *The Jewish Question*, Marx defends the Feuerbachian idea that men make themselves an alienated (imaginary) representation of their conditions of existence because these conditions of existence are themselves alienating. Andrew Ryan feels alienated in this highly demanding society, so he creates his own thoughts and actions based on the contrary of those situation.

Wars bring destruction and pain. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for Ryan is a symbol of government's outrageous authority that forces Ryan to find a way out of their fangs. He decides to create Rapture, a safe haven based on his

ideal place to live, which is a place free from social and government intervention. The fact that he comes up with this idea is a reaction of what he has seen and been through. Rapture is a reflection of his ideology, which is he acquired from the conditions which he lives in.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Having done analyzing the ideology of Andrew Ryan in the *Bioshock: Rapture* by John Shirley, I come to a conclusion that individualism ideology that Andrew Ryan has, is caused by several factors. Pointing out Louis Althusser theory of ideology, the first one comes from Andre Ryan's father. He learns his distrust against the government from his father. The next one is from the imaginary reflection of the situation that he lives in. The last is government's repression that creates Andrew Ryan to think in the way that contradicts the government ideas.

#### **References**

- Kothari, C.R. 1990. *Research Methodology Methods & Techniques (Second Revised Edition)*. New Delhi: New Age International
- Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital Volume I*. German
- Rivkin, Julie et.al.2004. *Literary Theory: An Anthology Second Edition*. USA: Blackwell Publishing
- Shirley, John. 2011. *Bioshock: Rapture*. USA: Tor Books
- Villegas, Robert. 2015. *Individualism*.USA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.