

A Journey of Finding Existence In Relation To Love Life As Portrayed in Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*

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ABSTRACT

*The existence of one person is an absolute aspect for human beings to acknowledge. It is a portrayal of one's life purpose. Self-existence is not easily obtained, and it requires a long process of self-discovery. One of the ways to find one's identity could be perceived by the journey of love, as experienced by the main character in *Sputnik Sweetheart*, namely K. Love has an important aspect in determining one's life. The Author, Haruki Murakami, became popular after writing many topics about the search for identity with the touch of Surrealism and Nihilism in his works. This research examines the search for self-existence from the narrator's love experiences, K. It also aims to explain types of love according to Ancient Greece, how Eros collides with Platonic love through the lens of the main character, and the types of love aforementioned connected with the journey of self-discovery. By reading this research, the readers will have comprehensive knowledge about understanding self-discovery through love. The journey of love in one's life could be the purpose of life because love colors life, and it is the principle of self-discovery.*

Keywords : existence, love, Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik Sweetheart*

INTRODUCTION

Some people live their lives without paying any attention to the meaning of existence and live in an empty world. Some others live their lives wondering and thinking about the importance of existence, while others have already understood the meaning of their existence in life. Existence is the basic thing people have discussed, and it has been one of the most important issues for a long time. Many people are trapped living their lives as the dead. The dead mean the ones living their lives without any desire and choices for life. One does not seem to get the meaning of their life because one is not aware of one's existence. Who am I? What am I searching for? Where am I headed? These questions become the basic questions related to the purpose of a person's existence because there are many people who do not have any purpose in life. People live their lives without any directions or ambitions to reach their goals because they do not have enough motivation to live their lives. People without any ambitions or motivations to live are more likely to feel empty.

Understanding who one is and why one exists in this world will lead to the conclusion of what one's life should be. When one has a purpose in life, one can finally figure out one's self more. It is related to self-awareness. Self-awareness means one has a clear perception of one's strengths, likes, feelings, also one's purpose of existing in one's self. One of the factors is

feeling love towards someone. One cannot take love easy for the existence of one's life. Love can be the most important thing that can change one's life. To make choices that exist in one's life, one has to understand what one wants in life. The choices can be with whom one should love, how one should love another, or how to keep love or let the love go.

The concept of love has been an eternally elusive subject. It is a definition and meaning that philosophers, psychologists, and biologists have been seeking since the beginning of time (Chapman, 2011:3). The theme of love can be learned through characters in literary works such as novels, poems, and films. All themes in literary works that include love as the main conflict in stories are still favorable and viral in society.

According to Greek philosophers, there are five types of love: Storge, Agape, Philia, Eros, and Platonic love. In brief, Storge is the love of community and family that end up in a sexual relationship. Agape is sacrificial love, God's love. Philia is the love of the soul, love of friendship, and family. Eros is romantic love.

Most people presume that they can feel love and lust interchangeably and that sexual desire is a part of love itself. People also often mistake sexual desires for love. However, being sexually attracted to someone else does not necessarily mean that someone is in love since being in love does not require someone to be involved in sexual activities with someone s/he loves. If someone is in love with someone else, without being sexually attracted at all, that someone feels something called Platonic love.

Platonic love is a part of Eros without sexual desire and intimacy. Platonic love can grow between two people of opposite genders as an intimate friendship. Love is something abstract that cannot be defined with words unless one puts some feelings through the words.

Love is also something inexplicable. To love and to be loved are two important things in one's life. In this world, love is usually generalized as a passionate sexual desire between two human beings. Love is also often considered something that can bring happiness. In fact, love is not merely about happiness. If people talk about love, it can also lead to more discussion about pain and loneliness as the consequences of knowing and feeling love itself.

In *Sputnik Sweetheart*, the issue of existence becomes the central point of one of the main characters' life K. K is the narrator of a love story with Sumire as a narratee who falls in love with a woman named Miu. K merely lives his life as a life that leads him to whatever destiny is. For most of his life, K has lived a solitary life and only befriends books and music. His life seems meaningless since he does not have any purpose and does not even know how his life should be. Surprisingly, love happens and changes his life. K

finally falls in love with a girl who happens to be his only best friend, Sumire. After knowing Sumire intimately and intensely, K begins to be aware of his own existence. He finally opens his eyes and thinks about who he is and what his purpose in life is. Loving Sumire also leads him to choose which love he should continue to pursue since there are two kinds of love, Eros and Platonic love existing in K's life. On one side, K wants Sumire to be his lover; however, on the other side, K has to subdue his sexual desire towards Sumire so that he can maintain their friendship as the main purpose of his life. The conflicts in K's life push K to choose which one is the most important for him. Choosing one of two means that K finally realizes his existence. He can think and choose the most considerate choice that will lead him to his purpose in life. In the end, K has a process within himself to declare his existence by feeling the love as the main point to help him discover himself and what he wants in his life. Pointing out love life as the main factor in finding one's existence makes the writer interested in analyzing those points based on the novel *Sputnik Sweetheart*.

1. REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

It is important to review some key ideas related to Eros and Platonic love in Haruki Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*. The love that the writer will analyze is supported by using an intrinsic approach and an extrinsic approach. Also, the writer will explain about stages of finding existence and how to describe the action as love itself.

1.1 Theme

The theme is one of the intrinsic elements of fiction, along with plot, character, conflict, and setting. A theme needs not to be a moral or a message; it may be what happens to add up to what the story is about (Kennedy, 1987:161). The theme is the center of the story. One story should be useless if the theme never exists. It is also impossible to find any stories without a theme in one story.

The use of the title helps people know or guess what the theme of the story is. People usually get interested in a novel because people find the theme they like or want to know more about. People are also interested in a certain book because the title either depicts a theme that they like or makes them curious. Human experience can be related to spiritual experience. It might be the search for identity as a human. For example, in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, the main character is a human who takes journeys to experience many new things in life in order to pursue his identity as what he means to be.

1.2 Conflict

Conflict in a story is supported by the actions of the characters. The character holds an important role in order to make conflict real. Usually, in one story, there are two kinds of characters; protagonist and antagonist. The protagonist means the hero or heroine of a story. This

character basically has a good and kind personality and always gives positive actions in a story. Compared to antagonism, the antagonist is the villain in a story, and the antagonist has the opposite character from the protagonist. In a simple story, such as children's bedtime stories or stories for introduction to fiction or literature, usually, people are given a story with external conflict that conflict consisting between the protagonist and the antagonist. The purpose of creating conflict is to show how the character escapes from a situation that he or she does not want to happen. A story cannot run well if there is no tension or something that comes up along with the story. This reason makes the author of a story create conflict in order to make a story as if it is alive. The conflict in one story can bring the readers to have feelings such as curiosity, sadness, and sorrow.

1.2.1 Internal Conflict

Conflict is divided into two parts; internal conflict and external conflict. The writer uses the theory of internal conflict to support her theories. The problem that the character has to deal with is not related to other characters since it only exists in the character's mind. This type of conflict always happens in real life, even in little things such as a decision on what to eat, what to wear, what time to sleep, and what time to study. In an internal conflict, the character has to improve himself or herself to be a better person or to prepare himself or herself well if the same conflict happens next time. The act of blaming themselves may also be an important factor that makes the conflict continue to exist. Even though inner conflict can merely be experienced by an individual or a certain character, the cause can come from the outside. It happens when a character cannot meet the high expectations from society when s/he cannot be what other people expect. This factor may disturb the character's psychology and make the character trouble her or his own mind.

1.3 Existentialism Approach to Literature

Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism, and people call it "subjectivity," using the word as a reproach against us (Kaufman, 1956:3). One has his own life, which means man possesses a subjective life. Existing means one can have one's own project of life before a man finds one's existence, and it means one is nothing in this world. Existentialists believe that a particular individual creates his destiny of his own, and his choices are his own to decide. Existence is related to discovering one's self as the object of nature. The goal of knowing one's existence is to get the meaning of life. In principle, having existence means having freedom in life. Freedom means openness, readiness to grow, flexibility, and change in pursuit of greater human values. Making decisions among choices that exist in one's life also becomes the concern of dealing with one's existence other

than freedom. Choices appear when one knows what life one wants to have. In fact, having choices in life is not an easy task to do. Someone has to know one's existence.

1.3.1. Existentialist Crisis

There are three types of crises: developmental crisis, situational crisis, and existentialist crisis. The first is a developmental crisis. It is a crisis that usually occurs in events that produce an extreme response. Developmental crises can happen in happy moments or sad moments of one's life. For example, the birth of a child and acceptance of getting hired. The second is a situational crisis. It refers to the events when one does not know how to control and react to events such as physical injuries and the death of beloved ones. The last is the existentialist crisis. It happens because one realizes there is no meaning in one's life or questions one's basic values or spiritual beliefs. The existentialist crisis is characterized by escalating inner conflicts related to issues of purpose in life, responsibility, independence, freedom, and commitment. The existentialist crisis also refers to meaninglessness. Meaninglessness portrays the human being whose life without meanings, goals, values, or ideals seems to provoke considerable distress (Yalom, 1980:422).

1.3.2 Self-discovery and Awareness

Self-discovery and awareness of one's self are significant. The existentialist encourages the increase of one's self-awareness. This leads to an emphasis on choice and responsibility and to the view that a worthwhile life is one that is authentic, honest, and genuine. It takes courage to discover one's center of one's being and to learn how to live from the inside. One also means being aware of how one impacts the success of the interaction and relationship or how one may influence one's work. It recognizes one's own biases by tracing himself to his origins, through reflection, and by noticing one's own behavior - and then intentionally seeking a way forward that positively impacts the interaction and relationship.

1.3.3 Existential Loneliness

Existential loneliness is different from loneliness. While loneliness is considered as the feeling of loss and emptiness, in brief as a negative thing, existential loneliness is an unavoidable condition of humanity. In this part, loneliness from an existential perspective has a different meaning. From an existential perspective, the lonely individual seeks to grasp some meaning in the face of life's impermanence, the anguish of human freedom, and the inevitability of death). In existential loneliness, loneliness is considered the experience of searching for what one is not and what one lacks in life. Loneliness from an existential perspective also leads one to make a decision in one's life as the result of own freedom.

1.4 Love

There are many kinds of love, such as Eros, Philia, Agape, Storge, and Platonic love. One can express love with a lover, a partner, a community, parents, or even God. Love is something abstract that can lead people to have a better life. Being in love with Phaedrus, an Athenian aristocrat in Plato's dialogues is like being in an inspired state of madness; this is positive in terms of what a lover can do for his beloved (Sulaiman, 2009:79).

Judging by the literature, even scholars find defining love difficult. Love is something inexplicable, but everyone seems to think that it is easy to define whether or not he or she falls in love with someone else. Actually, what is love? Many philosophers and psychologists have already researched love. When it comes to love, love has its condition before it can be decided as love. There is a condition that is called the condition of the possibility of love. There are at least two requirements. First, in love, there must be two objects which feel incomplete and seek someone to make each object feels complete. As a single human being, one must feel the condition when he or she feels incomplete. The feeling of being incomplete is different from loneliness. When someone feels lonely, it means one is in desperate need of being with someone. So, in this case, the existence of someone else is very demanding to another. When there is the possibility of love, the object is not only another human being; it may be another side of that person or the alter ego of the person. So when it comes to love, the understanding of who feels love accurately has to be understood. Love is not only for two persons or beings but also for one person. In oneself, there have to be at least two personalities or alter egos.

1.4.1 Storge

Storge is parental love. Parental love is a form of love as rich and complex as the others, and that is felt by children toward parents, by siblings, and by people who just become attached to each other in this peculiar, habit-influenced, and way (Protasi, 2008:71). Storge happens because habit and intense communication are built between people. Storge usually exists between family members because of the intense communication and the feeling of comfort. The core of Storge is about self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is the act that never considers the advantages and disadvantages of one another.

1.4.2 Agape

Agape is an expression of love from humans to God. Agape sees God as the highest form that loves people unconditionally. Three loving attitudes: that of God toward us, that of us toward God, and that of us toward humanity (Protasi, 2008:72). The relation between God and humans are the most important focus in Agape. Agape believes that maintaining a good relationship with God is paramount to human

beings. If people can do it, Agape also believes that they will have a better relationship with other people.

1.4.3 Philia

Philia is related to friendship. Philia happens in people without paying attention to the specific opposite gender. It is not an intimate love between two people. Philia can also exist in a community. Philia or Phileo is the most general form of love in the Bible. Christian people have their own law, which is love for others.

1.5 Eros

Eros is a kind of love that has been discussed and researched by many scientists for a long time ago. Eros is related to erotic actions and feelings. Eros is deeply involved in the human discovery of its own finitude and thus also in its need to relate to infinity. It is also in this context that the relation to the body is complexified (Bornemark&Schuback, 2012:8).

In literary works, Eros has always been an everlasting theme that is favorable and demanding for everyone. It is like Eros is something that never dies. Normally, people can realize when Eros happens in themselves or other people around them. There is always the beginning when Eros decides to stay and grow between two persons.

When a couple meet for the first time, the attraction can be instantaneous. They may describe the meeting as “a shock to the system”, or “electric”. Could this be love at first sight? Or is this merely a biological response? In fact, research does find that a person’s eyes do change when they see something they desire. (Chapman, 2005:5)

As Chapman says, Eros happens when two persons attract one another. They see each other through their faces and their bodies so that the feeling of interest appears. Eros is also related to romantic feelings and sexual attraction between lovers. So, in short, in Eros or romantic love, there are three stages of Eros: attraction, attachment, and for some, detachment (Fisher, 1994:60).

1.6 Platonic love

The name and the concept of Platonic love come from Plato, who is one of the most important Greek philosophers. Platonic love always relates to one of the greatest works from Plato, Symposium. Plato's Symposium is a series of speeches on love given at a party in ancient Greece. Platonic love has the same factor as Eros; it is romantic love. There are also three stages in defining Platonic love based on romantic feelings like attraction, attachment, and detachment. However, Platonic love does not glorify sexual feelings or sexual desire as the main core of

this love. The concept of Platonic love is widely understood as an intimate companionship or relationship, especially between two persons of the opposite gender, that is characterized by the absence of sexual involvement; a spiritual affection (Cuttjohn, 2012:43). On the surface, Platonic and Philia are similar since they focus on friendship. However, the basic difference between Platonic love and Philia is the sex between two persons who deal with those loves. As Cuttjohn says, Platonic love is an intimate relationship between two opposite sex without sexual involvement, while Philia is also an intimate relationship without focusing on what sexes or genders are between two persons. One interesting fact about Platonic love is he thinks that love is reflected in love experiences or love stories between teenagers or adults nowadays. It seems impossible for two persons of different sexes to get along together without the feeling of Eros.

Platonic love focuses on the love of beauty itself as an individual compared to sexual desire. Platonic love is the love of the idea of beauty, seen as terminating an evolution from the desire for an individual and the love of physical beauty to the love and contemplation of spiritual or ideal beauty (Cuttjohn, 2012:43).

2. ANALYSIS

In Eros, there are three stages defining romantic love as the root of Eros while Platonic love describes the important thing of mind to mind relationship. The writer will discuss a journey of finding existence in relation to love life as portrayed in Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*. The writer will analyze the indicators of Eros and Platonic love that have ever existed in K's self. After that, the writer will discuss the most important kind of love K has after he has collision in himself about his Eros and Platonic love. In the end, the writer will conclude and explain how K's concept of love and his unrequited love towards Sumire leads him in his finding of existence through the explanation based on the novel *Sputnik Sweetheart*.

2.1 The Kinds of Love K Has

One cannot neglect the fact that love turns into complicated matter when there are some conflicts in one's soul. A collision between different kinds of love in one's self becomes serious matter of life and the collision can see through K's love life story. K is the main character in *Sputnik Sweetheart* and he is also the narrator of the story stated Sumire, K's only bestfriend, as the narratee of her love story. As told before, K is the one who has collision. K has Eros and Platonic love towards Sumire.

2.1.1 Eros

The love collision appears when K meets Sumire for the first time. After that, all aspects of Platonic love and Eros mix intensely in K's soul and mind. From the first time they met, they have the same connection that leads them to be close friends: books. Both K and

Sumire love books. They have the same hobbies and this first meeting leads them to a close friendship they have never imagined before. Since then, K finds Sumire attractive and different from other girls he has ever met before. K can sense something different and unique in Sumire, and that makes K fall in love with her.

“ I might as well just come right out and say it. I was in love with Sumire. I was attracted to her for the first time we talked, and soon there was no turning back. For a long time she was the only thing I could think about. ” (Murakami, 2011:6)

K states that he is in love with Sumire and there is no turning back. Bringing Eros into his feeling leads to the collision after K finally knows he can not always control himself to have sexual desire and sexual attachment to Sumire. On the other hand, he knows that he has to keep his friendship with Sumire with another kind of love, Platonic Love. Eros is identical with the arousal of sexual feelings and desire towards another person. This feeling also caught K. K and Sumire always having intense communication and face time together. The desire of wanting to touch Sumire haunts K every time he meets and thinks about Sumire. Eros also leads K to the feeling of having Sumire as his lover. The expectation of getting married together is also the goal of feeling Eros. Eros considers another one as her or his lover so that it is possible for K hopes Sumire can be his lover and he can marry Sumire in the end.

I imagined how wonderful it would be if indeed we could be lovers. I longed for the warmth of her skin on mine. I picture us married, living together. But I had to face the fact that Sumire had no such romantic feelings for me, let alone sexual interest. (Murakami, 2011:58)

The sexual desire K has felt towards Sumire also becomes an important aspect in defining Eros itself. The feeling of touching Sumire's body and the feeling of having sex with Sumire used to be imagined by K. K's sexual desire is shown when K helped Sumire move to her new apartment. Sumire took K's hand and squeezed it gently after they finished arranging her room. K could not help but imagine her body, while Sumire did not have any clue what K was imagining.

It is considered normal for K to be sexually attracted to Sumire since they spend a lot of their time together, so day by day the feeling of love grows in K. The first step of defining Eros is proved in this novel. It is an attraction. It is shown when K met Sumire for the first time as explained before. Attachment in Eros is usually connected to sexual desire. Eros is a root in erotic feeling so that the feeling of

sexual desire leads to the need to attach and to be attached to someone one loves. As his feelings grow, K finds himself craving bodily contact, even if it's just holding Sumire's hand or leaning on her shoulder. However, K is afraid to do these actions because it will lead to the sexual desire he is afraid he cannot control when he is with Sumire. Perhaps, K can control his actions toward Sumire; however, his genital part can not be controlled easily in front of her.

His genital response towards sexual attachment was given by Sumire when Sumire touched and squeezed K's hand. However, Sumire thinks it is not an expression of love, she does it because she considers K as her best friend. The actions that are based on Eros naturally connect to the biological perspective towards sex itself. That it is natural for K to have sexual desire towards Sumire.

When Sumire disappears in Greece, K does not feel any attachment and togetherness in the relationship. K tries to look for her and collect all information about her missing. K feels detachment from Sumire when he knows there is no possibility to keep in touch with Sumire anymore. At that time, K is brokenhearted not because Sumire rejects her, but because Sumire leaves him without a trace.

2.1.2 Platonic love

Meanwhile, Eros flares up in K, he also has concerned about his close friendship with Sumire. The writer will explain Platonic love which becomes an important feeling K has towards Sumire and how it happens will be clarified here. Platonic love is related to intimate friendship. It is about the closeness of two different souls because emotional intimacy includes in Platonic love. Platonic love is classified only between opposite gender. As stated before, K and Sumire are best friends since they were in college. They have emotional intimacy between them. Emotional intimacy between them concludes in the way of their same level of understanding, and support, and the most important one is trust. The level of trust that K and Sumire have become the private and authentic trust that no one can have unless they are the ones who give trust to one another. K has always been an introvert since he was a child. He has never been attached to others and has never been able to trust anyone. However, befriending Sumire changes his life. In Sumire, K finally finds someone he can trust. K opens his life only to Sumire. Also, Sumire trusts K more than anyone. She opens up about her doubt about life, dream, and love only to K. Even Miu, the woman Sumire loves, does not have the same level of trust Sumire has given to K.

“But why did you call me?” ...

“You were the only one I could count on.”

“But you’d never met me.”

“Sumire trusted you more than anyone else.” (Murakami, 2011:107)

This conversation happens between K and Miu when they are in Greece in order to find the missing Sumire. Sumire always tells Miu about K and she only trusts K so Miu explained why she can trust K to look for Sumire instead of calling Sumire's parents. The same level of trust is gained between Sumire and K because they feel intimidated by getting closer day by day. K and Sumire share the same important concern in life so both of them feel the same trust by telling their concern about life. K has a concern about his existence in life so he talks to Sumire and it leads to the closest answer K can get.

Still the basic question tugged at me: Who am I? What am I searching for? Where am I headed?

The closest I came to answering these question was when I talked with Sumire... Unlike other people she *honestly, sincerely*, wanted to hear what I had to say. I did my best to answer her, and our conversations helped me open up more about myself to her-and, at the same time to myself. (Murakami, 2011: 58)

Because they trust each other, it is easier for K and Sumire to open up and build emotional attachments. Platonic love always glorifies the satisfaction of the soul and the reach of completeness between souls like K felt towards Sumire. Besides trust, the same level of understanding is also an important aspect of Platonic love. Only Sumire knows about all of K's relationships with women. Even with that, Sumire is still fine; however, she just warns K when K tells about his sex life with his student's mother. K also understands Sumire's feelings towards Miu. Whenever Sumire comes up with questions about sexual desire and love, K tries to explain in detail what Sumire wants to know. As close friends, K and Sumire seem to understand each other's feelings well. It is proven when K tells Sumire about his relationship with his student's mother and when Sumire tells K about the feeling she has for Miu. Only Sumire can make K feel comfortable. Understanding each other leads to the conclusion that K and Sumire feel comfortable with each other. The last aspect of Platonic love that is also important to be explained is supported. The support that K always gives to Sumire is a reflection that their friendship is important for their lives because they consider each other a soulmate. When Sumire tells K that she is in love with Miu, K tries to understand and gives the support she needs. K still cares about Sumire even though his love is not reciprocated. K always answers the phone whenever Sumire calls,

wondering and asking some particular questions related to her life. K also gives Sumire an understanding of the feeling of love itself. K states that if Sumire easily concludes she is in love with Miu, there is some misunderstanding about love itself. K tries to give a deep analysis of something Sumire cannot understand.

“So you’re sure what you feel for Miu is sexual desire? I asked.

“Hmm... It explains everything. Why I don’t want to have sex with any guys. Why I don’t feel anything. Why I’ve always thought I’m different from other people.”

“Any explanation or logic that explains everything so easily has a hidden trap in it. I’m speaking from experience. Somebody once said if it’s something a single book can explain, it’s not worth having explained. What I mean is don’t leap to any conclusions.” (Murakami, 2011”52-53)

K gives Sumire support to have love towards Miu however K does not want Sumire gets a hidden trap from her minimal understanding of love itself. K wants Sumire to have real happiness from love even if the happiness is not from him. Another support K gives to Sumire is when Sumire cannot write a line for the novel she is working at. Sumire has a passion for being a novelist; however, after meeting Miu and loving Miu, she cannot pursue her dream as a novelist, she lost herself. K brings other good perspectives and tries to positive impact on Sumire. Then Sumire becomes more human. She can dress well and she has a job instead of working brutally in her apartment to write a novel.

“I don’t know. Thinking of the bright side. You’ve quit smoking, you’re wearing nice clean clothes-even your socks match now-and you can speak Italian. You’ve learned how to judge wines, use a computer, and at least for now go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning. You must be heading somewhere.”
“But I still can’t write a line. ” (Murakami, 2011:61)

Trust, understanding, and support are the attentions K can give to Sumire. K feels and does these things regularly and permanently to the one and only Sumire in this world.

2.2. Conflict between Eros and Platonic love

It is apparent that K is madly in love with Sumire; however, his feelings are not that simple since he has two types of love collide within him: Platonic and Eros. on one side, K cares about Sumire and cherishes their intimate friendship. On the other side, K longs for sexual activities with Sumire In many works of Murakami including *Sputnik Sweetheart*,

Murakami always describes one's self as an empty shell; a lonely human being that exists in a city that is overpopulated by people. It is the irony that one experiences daily. K, in this novel, also categorizes himself as a lonely human being. He maintains his relationship with others since he was a child. K does not let anyone enter his life before he met Sumire for the first time. A lonely life seems normal and fine for K.

The upshot of all this was that when I was young I began to draw an invisible boundary between myself and other people... My only passion were books and music. As you might guess, I led a lonely life. (Murakami, 2011:55)

From the aforementioned quotation, it can be inferred that K has had a lonely life since he was young. K has experienced enough bitterness that makes him detach himself from the people around him. Since he was a child, K did not have affection and love from his family members. As a child, the need for affection is a must for psychological matters. However, K did not get any real affection from them. His mother, father, and big sister had their own business to take care of. As the youngest member of his family, K was abandoned. He did not feel the existence of another human being mattered in one's life.

We lived together under one roof, but my parents and sisters were like strangers to me, and I had no idea what they wanted from life. And the same held true for them- they didn't have any idea what kind of person I was or what I aspired to. (Murakami, 2011:56-57)

K's only companion was his dog. Unfortunately, it died in the next few years. He does nothing else besides reading books and listening to music since books and music are the only things that can fill the emptiness within. However, since he met Sumire, his life completely changed. K tries to find the completeness of another human being. He tries to open his life to Sumire so that emotional intimacy was grown since then. In one's life, one often gets misunderstandings which one has to come first: the satisfaction of sexual desire or building emotional intimacy.

2.2.1. Collision between Eros and Platonic love

While two kinds of love collide within K, he finally chooses Platonic love and has to sacrifice his Eros towards Sumire. K considers that sexual desire is not as important as the feeling of completeness in a soul that Sumire brings to his life. Although K cannot express his sexual desire towards Sumire, he can endure

it. Although Eros and Platonic love are the roots of romantic love, a collision between these two kinds of love cannot be hidden.

3.3. Finding Existence through K's Love Life

Worrying and wondering about the purpose of his existence in this world becomes the most important concern for K. As stated before, K has lonely life since he was a child. Also, he does not seem to have any goals in life or a desire to pursue his dreams. As K describes himself in some lines from Pushkin, a Russian poet, he states that he does not have any reason why K has to be himself in this world.

As Pushkin put it:
He had no itch to dig for glories
Deep in the dirt that time has laid. (Murakami. 2011:57)

Compared to Sumire who aspires to become a novelist, K does not have any certain dream. K is not fully aware of his existence. K does not think that his existence matters. Even though K does not have a passion for History, K did not have a clue and planned by majoring in History when he was in college. He felt that it was an engrossing subject. Then he graduated from that university and ended up as an elementary school teacher. Again, it is not his dream to be a teacher. Although becoming a teacher has never been his aspiration, however, being a teacher helps him to discover himself. He has found other feelings he has never felt before like respect and affection from his students whom he meets every day.

I hadn't planned on being a teacher, but after I actually become one I discovered a deeper respect and affection for the profession than I ever imagined I'd have. More accurately, really, I should say that I happened to discover *myself*. (Murakami, 2011:57)

Existentialism is a perspective saying that life is a project of one's self and one has to choose whatever one wants to be. In existentialism, one has concern more with Being than with Knowing. So how one's framework is built by choices is the most important thing in existentialism. K begins to realize the importance of his existence and the meaning of his life through Sumire. Sumire's presence has made profound changes in his life. Moreover, the story behind Sumire's missing also makes K chooses what kind of human he wants to be. To prove that one can know the reason why he exists in this world is related to self-awareness. Before K finally reaches the "self-awareness" stage, K has to go through the "existentialist crisis". As a human being, K finds himself befriending loneliness which leads him to a meaningless purpose of living.

K isolated himself from books and music. He limits himself to adapt and communicate with other human beings.

3.3.1. First Stage: Existentialist Crisis

The first step for K to find his existence is an existentialist crisis, which can arise from K's loneliness and isolation. Also, from K's experience, before knowing Sumire, K does not seem to have any purpose; however, it all changes after K meets Sumire. Sumire helps K find the meaning of his life or Sumire gives K's life a meaning.

3.3.2. Second Stage: Self-Awareness

Self-awareness in oneself gives freedom. Freedom in oneself can be reached when there is openness and readiness to grow. K can get to the "self-awareness" stage because of his willingness to open up to Sumire. K also feels that it changes his perspective to see more value since his world is opened by Sumire's existence in his daily life. Sumire makes K aware that he is capable of feeling something else, other than plain loneliness. K gets to experience the joy of falling in love and the pain that follows. When K knows Sumire was missing in Greece without saying any clues to him, K went to Greece immediately. Although when she was in Europe with Miu on a business trip, she still wrote letters to K and told about her experiences and feeling when was with Miu in Europe. After K goes to Greece and looks for Sumire with Miu, they do not have a good result. Sumire disappears and no one can reach her.

In the end we never found out what happened to Sumire. As Miu put it, she vanished like smoke. (Murakami, 2011:173)

The pain and loneliness K gets after Sumire was missing in Greece makes him more aware of what he wants in his life. Although K is still in pain, K finds that Sumire helps him again to discover himself even after she missed him. The painful experience makes him realize that Sumire is the one he will choose among others. K realizes that he cannot live a single day without Sumire. After her missing, K finds that Sumire is special and priceless in his life.

All over again I understood how important, how irreplaceable, Sumire was to me. In her own special way she'd kept me tethered to the world... Without even trying, we grew close. Like a pair of young lovers undressing in front of each other, Sumire and I exposed our hearts to each other, an experience I'd never have with anyone else, anywhere. We cherished what we had together, though we never put into words how very precious it was. (Murakami, 2011:177)

K eventually discovers the pain that is hard for him to endure unendurable: the pain of losing his only best friend, Sumire. To know that Sumire is gone and to forget that Sumire has ever existed in his life are the saddest experience K has to face. He feels deep loneliness compared to his childhood experience before he met Sumire. He feels loneliness wrests his precious thing in the world. K has to survive along with himself. Loneliness is an absolute fact one cannot deny, even K also cannot replace loneliness itself.

But all I felt was an incomparable loneliness. Before I knew it, the world around was drained of color. From the shabby mountaintop, the ruins of those empty feelings, I could see my own life stretching out into the future... No sign of life at all... and I was stuck. I'd have to survive on my own. (Murakami, 2011:176-177)

By understanding his existence, K also notices that Sumire's existence in his life is irreplaceable. K realizes his existence is nothing unless he can be together with Sumire, even in a dream, K realizes how powerful Sumire's existence is in his life.

I dreamed that someday there'd be a sudden, major transformation. Even if the chances of it coming true were slim, I could dream about it, couldn't I? But I knew it would never come true. (Murakami, 2011:177)

After K goes back to Japan, finally K decides to choose what he wants to be. It deals with his love life as the main concern about proving his stance on his existence in the world. K has a former girlfriend in order to eliminate his sexual feeling toward Sumire. She is one of his student's mothers. In existentialism, one can see many choices in his life. As K experiences the pain and loneliness after Sumire's missing, K faces many choices related to how he continues his life. His love story is the main concern K has to face in order to choose what he stands for in his own life. Besides Sumire, K has a former girlfriend in order to fulfill his sexual desire for Sumire. Sexual interest becomes an important aspect of his life. However, after Sumire's missing, he has to choose either Sumire or his sexual need. These choices show up in K's life. As an existentialist, K becomes aware of what he has to choose in order to survive in this world. K's former girlfriend happens to be an older woman and she is the mother of K's student. If K does not fall in love with Sumire, perhaps he will easily fall in love with a well-shaped and perfect-looking woman like her. K's girlfriend also needs K to have her sexual needs met, since her husband rarely comes home. One day, after Sumire's missing, this woman called K and asked him for some help related to her son,

Carrot. K sees Carrot as a reflection of himself: lonely and meaningless in life.

His name was Shin'ichi Nimura, but his classmates had nicknamed him Carrot. I usually called him that, too. He was a quiet boy, hardly ever speaking more than was necessary. Never got into trouble. But he lacked initiative and never once raised his hand in class. (Murakami, 2011:183)

The resemblance between Carrot's life and his makes K understand Carrot's life is similar to his life when he was a child: lacking affection from both parents because his parents are immersed in their works. As Carrot's teacher, K thinks that it is his obligation to talk to Carrot about his tragedy and his choices in life after the tragedy. After getting a call from Carrot's mother saying that Carrot shoplifted, K tries to talk openly with Carrot about his feeling and Sumire. K considers Carrot as his reflection facing an absurd life he does not understand yet at his young age Then K decides to cut off his relationship with Carrot's mother.

"I think it'd better for us not to meet anymore," I came right out and said...

"I've given it a lot of thought," I said. "I don't think it's right that I'm part of the problem. I can't be part of the solution if I'm part of the problem. It's better for everyone that way." (Murakami, 2011:199)

It shares both sides' advantages. For K himself, he finally chooses Sumire and he will wait for Sumire to come back. K finally sacrifices his sexual desire. In the end, the search for his existence only concludes that K knows how worthy he is what he needs, and what he needs is Sumire.

Truthfully, at that time I wasn't thinking about everyone. I was thinking only about Sumire. Not all of *them* there, or all of *us* here. Only of Sumire, who wasn't anywhere. (Murakami, 2011:201)

After K finishes the search for his existence, he cannot stop his life. He has to continue his life with or without Sumire. It is true that Sumire helps him for searching who he is. After his experience in love, K realizes something about how he reacts toward life itself. K realizes this is not the end of his life.

So that's how we live our lives. No matter how deep and fatal the loss, no matter how important the thing that's stolen from

us... even if we are left completely changed, with only the outer layer of skin before, we continue to play our lives this way, in silence... Repeating, often adroitly, the endless deeds of the everyday. Leaving behind a feeling of immeasurable emptiness. (Murakami, 2011:206-207)

Existentialism helps one discover himself. One existence teaches one about something one cannot deny. After knowing his existence and even chasing what one wants in life, in the end, a human being will reach loneliness. From lonely to being lonely in the end is an absolute concept of existence itself. Immeasurable emptiness is the end of the search for his existence. K perhaps will find and meet Sumire someday; however, in the end, he cannot be with Sumire forever. His absolute existence is loneliness. It is absolute and it is incomparable with everything that came into one's life, temporarily.

“And it came to me then. That we were wonderful travelling companions but in the end no more than lonely lumps of metal in their own separate orbits... When the orbits in these two satellites of ours happened to cross path, we could be together. Maybe even open our hearts to each other. But that was only for the briefest moment. In the next instant we'd be in absolute solitude. Until we burned up and became nothing. (Murakami, 2011:117)

3.3.3. Third Stage: Existential Loneliness

Existentialism and loneliness are two inseparable points in searching for the meaning of one's existence. Rather, existential loneliness is a way of being in the world. It is the experience of discovering one's own questions regarding human existence. From an existential perspective, the lonely individual seeks to grasp some meaning in the face of life's impermanence, the anguish of human freedom, and the inevitability of death. Through K's experience, one can infer that to prove our existence also means to understand loneliness as a part of discovering himself, not as the act of not knowing who he is and what he is searching for. Loneliness is part of knowing his existence matters in his own life. Loneliness and existentialism are identified and explained through K's kinds of love.

Even if the pain follows when K cannot express his sexual desire as his love for Sumire, K has his own way to eliminate his sexual feeling toward Sumire: He tries to sleep with other women. Unfortunately, sleeping with other women does not make K forget Sumire. It is only Sumire that he can think about.

In order to erase the pain and, I hoped, eliminate any sexual tension between me and Sumire, I started sleeping with other women... For whatever reason, though, some women were attracted to me, and I discovered that I let things take their course it wasn't so hard to get them to sleep with me. These little flings never aroused much passion in me, at most a kind of comfort. (Murakami, 2011:59)

The need for sexual attachment from Sumire haunts him all the time. It is painful not being able to express his sexual passion toward the one he loves. However, in order to maintain his friendship with Sumire, K sacrifices his sexual desire. The reason why K chooses to keep his Platonic love is loneliness. Everyone in this world is born completely lonely. It is considered normal when one desires another human being to complete him or her. One is able to feel complete when one is in love or one gets attention from another. When K knows Sumire, he is afraid of being lonely. He cannot deal with his loneliness any longer. He feels Sumire helps him to live as a whole. Sumire reflects the beauty of one's soul that Platonic love offers to a human being. As a matter of fact, Sumire has already changed K's life to be better because he knows he is no longer alone. Knowing there will be someone who stays beside him throughout his life makes K willing to choose Platonic over Eros. K erases his sexual interest in Sumire. In the end, K knows after this collision happens in his life, sex can make him feel lonely. It is reflected in K's sex life. He cannot neglect his sexual need, so he starts to sleep with other women. Unfortunately, it does not matter how many women he has slept with, he is still incomplete. There is a void within him that cannot be filled by any of those women. For K, sex is merely a temporary pleasure. To experience ultimate happiness, one has to know and understand another soul. Along with Sumire, K gets to experience emotional intimacy, the intimacy that he cannot get from merely having sex. K considers Sumire his soulmate because he puts his trust, understanding, and support only for Sumire. He does not want Sumire to leave him alone.

The pleasure of having sex is the contemporary feeling one can have. K can have sex with another woman and he can endure the pain because the joy that sex brings to his life is easily beaten with the close intimacy. It also proves that when a collision appears, Platonic love can be an everlasting feeling of love that K feels towards Sumire. After Sumire vanishes, K realizes that he loves Sumire and that his feeling is far more than physical attractions. When he is not with Sumire, he longs for Sumire's existence because Sumire is the only one who can make him feel complete. When Sumire has gone, he also

realizes that their friendship is more important to him than his sexual feeling toward Sumire.

All over again I understood how important, how irreplaceable, Sumire was to me. In her own special way she'd kept me tethered to the world. (Murakami, 2011:177).

CONCLUSION

Sputnik Sweetheart is one good example describing finding existence from love experience. In many of his works, Haruki Murakami brings existence and loneliness as central issues of humans. It is also related to the main character in the novel *Sputnik Sweetheart*, K. By knowing and understanding the purpose of his life, K knows his existence will lead him into a meaningful life.

The central focus on finding K's existence is on the kinds of love K has. There are two kinds of love that support K's existence; Eros and Platonic. To love and to be loved by his only best friend, Sumire, are K's dreams since K met Sumire for the first time. By explaining Eros, the writer proves that romantic feelings towards Sumire will lead K into sexual desire. To prove there is romantic love between two, there are three stages: attraction, attachment, and detachment. However, there is a problem with K's feelings. It is K's feeling towards Sumire as the best friend, named Platonic love. Platonic love also contains romantic feelings and emotional intimacy toward two opposite gender; however, having Platonic love means there is no sexual desire involved in one's relationship. K has conflicts about which one he has to choose in order to help him find his existence in life. After a collision between Eros and Platonic love happens in K's life, K finally chooses Platonic love so that he can keep Sumire in his life. K understands that Sumire is irreplaceable. Although Sumire disappears after being rejected by Miu, K still loves Sumire. Finally, K realizes his own freedom, even though he is lonely now compared to his childhood life. Before K reaches the conclusion that loneliness is one of the meaningful aspects of one's life, there are three stages to prove that one finally finds his existence. There are existentialist crises, self-awareness, and existential loneliness. K finds loneliness as he understands his being in this world. No one can replace Sumire in K's heart and K will wait for Sumire whenever it is while he makes peace with loneliness as he knows his existence by having choices and freedom to make his own project of his life.

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