



Moral Nihilism as Reflected on Bryan Mills in *Taken 3*

A FINAL PROJECT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For Strata-1 Degree in American Studies

In English Department, Faculty of Humanities

Diponegoro University

Submitted by:

Arief Abdurachman Hidayat

13020113190044

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY

SEMARANG

2020

MORAL NIHILISM AS REFLECTED ON BRYAN MILLS IN

TAKEN 3 MOVIE

Written by:

Arief Abdurachman Hidayat

NIM: 13020113190044

is approved by project advisor,
on 12 December 2020

Project Advisor,



Rifka Pratama, S.Hum., M.A.
H.7.199004282018071001

Head of English Department



Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A.
NIP. 196408141990011001

VALIDATION

Approved by

Strata 1 Project Examination Committee

Faculty of Humanity Diponegoro University

On

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

Man Jadda Wa Jadda

(Umar Bin Abdul Aziz)

The greatest person, is the one whose helpful to others.

(Muhammad Rasulullah SAW)

You give but little when you give of your possessions It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

(Kahlil Gibran)

You may see me struggle but you will never see me quit

(Anonymous)

*This project is dedicated to
My beloved mother and myself
To everybody who supported me complete this project*

ACKNOWLEDEGMENT

Praise be to Allah SWT, who has given strength and true spirit so this final project on “Moral Nihilism Reflected on Bryan Mills in Taken 3” came to a completion. On this occasion, I would like to thank all these people who have contributed to the completion of this final project.

The deepest gratitude and appreciation is extended to Rifka Pratama, S.Hum., M.A., - my advisor-who has given her continuous guidance, helpful correction, moral support, advice and suggestion, without which it is doubtful that this final project came into completion.

My deepest thank also goes to the following:

1. Dr. Nurhayati, M.Hum., as the Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
2. Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A., as the Head of the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.
3. All of the lecturers in the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University who have always never been given up to teach us all.
4. My beloved mother, Sri Darmiyati, for being the best motivator and the role model of my life.

TABLE OF CONTENT

TITLE.....	i
APPROVAL.....	ii
VALIDATION.....	iii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
1. INTRODUCTION.....	8
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	10
3. RESEARCH METHOD.....	13
4. MORAL NIHILISM ON BRYAN MILLS.....	15
5. CONCLUSION.....	18
APPENDIX.....	19
REFERENCES.....	23

ABSTRACT

This extended essay concentrates on the movie, *Taken 3*, which focuses on Bryan Mills' character & behavior. In this study, the purpose is to analyze Bryan Mills as a character as he is proven to be one of the nihilist. The writer uses library research to obtain data from trusted books, e-books, journals, articles, online documents, and also reliable websites are used as supportive data. In writing this project, the writer will prove what are the causes and consequences why someone can be nihilist on a character in the film *Taken 3* named Bryan Mills based on Error Theory from J.L. Mackie. Not only will he dig up the cause and effect of a nihilist, the writer will also analyze the psychology of Bryan Mills as a nihilist based on Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger.

Keywords: Moral Nihilism, Nihilism, Error Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

Moral nihilism, which is also known as ethical nihilism, is the view that first developed originally by J.L. Mackie in his 1977 book *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* that explained that there's no exact right and wrong when it comes to ethics. "Nihilism" means "nothing," so with such nihilists there is no exact term of inherently moral or immoral, other than what is assigned by people and even their own selves. This would also mean there is no such a thing as universal "obligation."

These kinds of belief are also happened to be in some media, including movies. A movie can represent something. How it is represented or portrayed has its own meaning for the viewers.

There are many functions of movie as an entertainment; one of them is to bring people its feeling of experience in the story. Its' story enlightened a lot of new knowledge to people. But in contrary, it also affects our mindset and perspectives, which lead people to many kinds of belief.

In the movie, there is also such a thing as moral nihilism on being a part of interesting ideas which the actors must act. In order to solve the lack dissonance that happened in the Bryan Mills' complicated inconsistent characteristic, they brought moral nihilism inside the point of view of the character itself. According to Festinger (1957), an individual who experiences inconsistency tends to become

psychologically uncomfortable, which is why the writer is interested to analyze a character named *Bryan Mills* on the movie *Taken 3*.

About the *Taken 3* movie, it tells a story of Ex-Police Operative Bryan Mills (Liam Neeson) and his ex-wife, Lenore (Famke Janssen), when they are enjoying reconciliation, but a sudden turn of event sees Lenore is suddenly brutally murdered by some unknown forces behind it. Bryan is framed for the crime and flees, with the CIA, FBI and police all in hot pursuit. For the last time, he set to plan his revenge and using his particular skills into hunting down Lenore's real killers, and to protect the one important thing left in his life: his daughter, Kim (Maggie Grace).

Bryan Mills' character on movie *Taken 3* is one of a kind people who is actually evolved and then later become a nihilist. With the character tends to be confused on how to bring justice around his problems with gangsters. The writer will be focusing on moral nihilism reflected on *Bryan Mills* in the movie *Taken 3*, supported by Error Theory from J.L Mackie on the cause and effect of people why they become a nihilist and also with additional psychological approach of Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger (1957) in order to analyze the psychology condition of *Bryan Mills* as a nihilist.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Error Theory

Error theory is a cognitivist form of moral nihilism. It is the view that any ethical statements can be proposition or hypothesis, but that doesn't mean that they are all cannot be true, means that there is nobody that actually deserves to make one. The moral error theory originates with J.L. Mackie (1977) in his book *Truth, Probability, and Paradox* (1973) with the idea of moral statements tend to make reference to the existence of certain kinds of properties or facts in the reality.

When we use moral language, we are not merely expressing our attitude towards uncertain, we are attempting to describe facts about reality, something that happened differently to each of humans. The latter implies that there is no such a thing as properties or facts. Therefore, all moral statements are false, attempting to establish properties or describe facts that do not exist.

For example, compare morality statement with 'witch' statement. When we make statements about witches, our statements are clearly descriptive. When the people named certain individuals as witches, they were attributing to them certain features – magical powers, say – constitutive of witch hood. Yet there are no individuals with such powers. So all witch-talk are fails to refer, and just a thought of a delusional, so anytime someone names someone else a witch, what that person says is false.

2.2 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving contradictory attitudes, beliefs or behaviors according to Festinger (1957). This produces a feeling of discomfort leading to an alteration or a sudden change in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance that the person feels. For example, when people smoke (behavior) and they know in reality that smoking is bad and causes cancer (cognition).

Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory also suggests that every human has an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). Attitudes may change because of certain factors within the person. An important factor here is the principle of cognitive consistency, the focus on Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. This theory starts from the idea that people seek consistency in their beliefs and attitudes in any situation where two cognitions are inconsistent.

Leon Festinger (1957) proposed cognitive dissonance theory, which states that a powerful motive to maintain cognitive consistency can give rise to irrational and sometimes maladaptive behavior. People hold different kind of perceptions about the world and themselves. When they clash, diversity is evoked, resulting in a state of tension known as cognitive dissonance. As the experience of dissonance is unpleasant, people is so motivated to reduce or eliminate it, and finally achieve a consonance. Those experience result many violent methods to resolve their own

problems. The theory is so related with the Error theory by the Cognitive Dissonance condition as a result of the Error theory which is proven that a nihilist generally intend to solve his inconsistency on their cognition in any process, including violence.

2.3 Movie Theory

According to Bordwell & Thompson, there are 4 important elements of film which is the pillar source on film making. These 4 elements also important in order to analyse the content of the film itself;

- **Mise-en-scène (meez-on-sen)**

Mise-en-scene is associated with cinematic element which its functioned is to maintain the process of film making (Pratista, 2008: 61). Setting, costume, makeup, lighting, and acting are the important points that are reside in mise-en-scene.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Method of Research

In this study, the writer uses library research to collect sources for the analysis.

According to Wellek and Warren:

Since the majority of students can find their source materials in libraries, a knowledge of the most important libraries, and familiarity with their catalogues as well as other reference books, is undoubtedly in many ways, an important equipment of almost every student in literature (1997:58).

Library research obtains sources through printed and new media such as books, e-books, journals, and website. In order to complete this study, the writer uses those trusted sites and sources for the analysis.

3.2. Method of Approach

To analyze Bryan Mills' nihilist characteristic and behavior, the writer uses psychological approach from Festinger, L. (1957) for this study based on his book called *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Festinger, L. believes that every person has an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). This theory starts from the idea that people seek consistency in their beliefs.

4. Moral Nihilism on *Bryan Mills*

4.1. The Beginning of Moral Nihilism

On the two previous movies of the *Taken* movies trilogy, Bryan's character can be described as a ruthless fighter, but he's also a good father. Bryan also has many bad experiences with gangster and mafias, all caused by his dirty work in the past. In this movie plot, the director wants to show that his traumatic experiences as a vital role in the story. While the experiences itself brought himself into a nihilist in his characteristics. Bryan, in the movie, tends to confused about what happened and results in bringing the mafias and gangster as the one who murdered his ex-wife.

It can be showed from the *Picture 1* that his daughter is the only one who he trusts the most. His expression shows that he either confused or angry to the murderer. The word "it looks like i did it" in the *Picture 2* indicated that he confused about exactly who did the murder.

These expressions of confusion are related to *Dissonance Condition* from the theory of Cognitive Dissonance by Festinger. The condition is unpleasant, that is what Bryan Mills' felt according to the expression. And when it's true it is unpleasant, the victim will try to eliminate or reduce it. The example of elimination in Bryan Mills' case is he unspokenly chooses to become an avenger because of his ex-wife murder, and driven by his own wrath.

Even though he chooses to avenge his ex-wife murder, he still did the right thing. Examples; giving cops about murder information, celebrate his daughter's birthday even it is too early, make sure his daughter is the priority number one to be saved. The first proven he is a nihilist contained in this movie is that Bryan didn't trust Police to bring the justice he want. It can be seen in *Picture 3*. When Bryan asks "what is number one priority for you officer?", The cop reply "Bring the true murderer for you", and Bryan reply more by "But mine is my daughter". After those words he's seemingly to choose his own path to bring his own justice, and said good luck for the cop.

It may a contradictory statement that people don't trust police much and then they tend to choose their own path to bring their own justice. But tragically, it is a fact. For more example is when starving people chose to do protest to their government rather than wait and trust for the good change ran by their own government. Government is created to be trusted by their people, yet many of them chose to become the contrary of it.

4.2. The Cause of Moral Nihilism on Bryan Mills

Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger indicated that Bryan Mills' past brought him as a nihilist. Both in statement and condition, his traumatic past of experiences once again is the reason why he chose the wrong way as an avenger of his ex-wife murder rather than trust the police to solve the case.

Look at *Picture 4*, it is shows that he believed that Oleg is the problem. But in the end the truth is come out like at *Picture 5*, his feeling suddenly turning into his own wrath. He shows both happy and irony expression on his face. In the end, he knew that all he did is wrong, but he chose to ignore that by focusing on his kidnapped daughter.

It proves that *Bryan* has a cognition inconsistency problem which is like what Error Theory said. J.L Mackie (1977) in his Error theory said that cognitive problems result a situation which is only the person themselves understand what they must do to bring “rightfulness”. This statement is as contradictory on what he’s actually doing. If Bryan chose the truly “Right” path, he would have to join the cops to find the true murderer rather than seeking by himself.

4.3. The effect of Moral Nihilism

According to Festinger on his Cognitive Dissonance Theory, A nihilist may causing people become ruthless and tend to do violence to solve his problem. In *Picture 6*, we can see that Bryan in the end try to threaten Stuart, the main antagonist on the movie, he is also the reason why Bryan did the wrong path by killing the Russian mafias men and Oleg, their boss. Even though his daughter said to him to stop the violence, he still said ruthless words to him.

“I know you a lot people, with a good lawyer, you’ll get out of jail, in a few years. Then I’ll come for you. I’ll find you. And we both know what is gonna happen.”

It was Bryan’s statement to Stuart in the end of the story.

4.4. More Moral Nihilism in the Movie

Bryan with his mafia background is not the only situation which proves him a nihilist, but his daughter is also experience it. When in the story tells us that Kim was pregnant, and once in the restaurant she wants to tells his father about it. But, she decides that she lied about it because she is afraid of his father to tell it. The reason why she was afraid is because his father words when he saw a child on the scene in the restaurant. Look at *Picture 7*.

“Poor Lady. That is going to be serious trouble in few years.”

Bryan’s words about a troublesome child in the restaurant made Kim is afraid to tell him that she is pregnant. It is also proves that *Bryan* is truly a nihilist.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion about this extended essay is that Moral Nihilism may be caused by Cognitive Dissonance experience that happen in many peoples. In this example, one of them is like Bryan Mills character on the *Taken 3* movie. The theory by Festinger also explains that Bryan have a troublesome experiences in the past that may cause do violent in the future, like in the movies. This traumatic experience is the key of reason on why *Bryan* is confused about what is right and is wrong between him.

Bryan Mills' amorality is also reflected by how he is never questioning himself when killing people, getting his own revenge, doubting the cops' righteousness. Those all examples are the indication of someone who is a moral nihilist. The egoism of his character is also directed dominant in the story, when the time he never gives a slight chance for the Russian gangsters to give their own reasoning before killing them. His behavior of being zero empathy and driven easily by revenge as a motive and also breaking morality that he had before reflected it all. Bryan Mills' proves himself as a nihilist and also experiences amorality, and egoism as the forms of moral nihilism.

APPENDIX

[Picture 1]



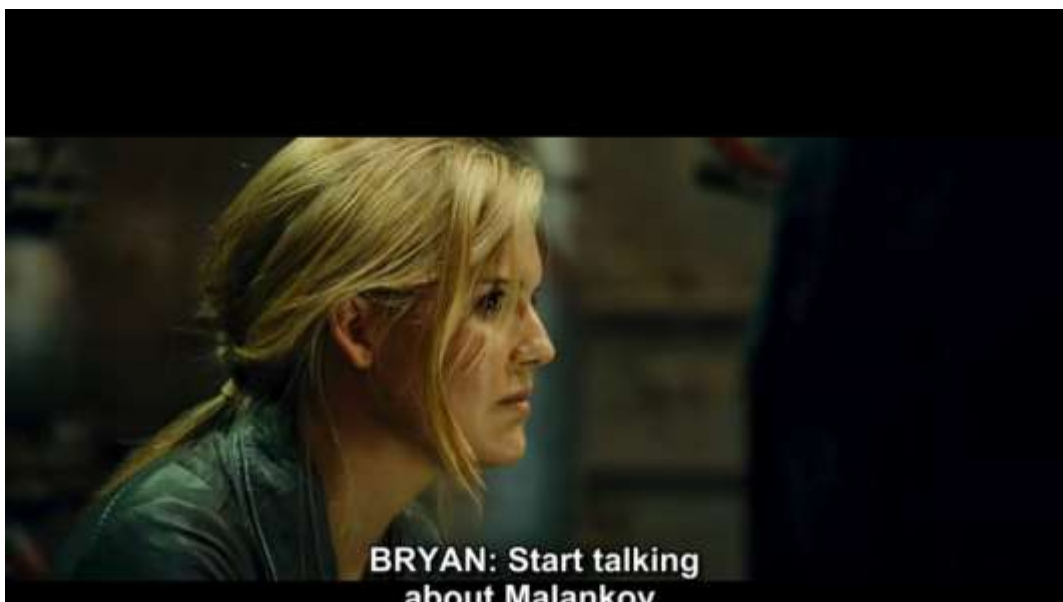
[Picture 2]



[Picture 3]



[Picture 4]



[Picture 5]



[Picture 6]



[Picture 7]



REFERENCES

Casetti, Francisco (1999). *Theories of Cinema, 1945–1995*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Cognitive Dissonance by Saul McLeod published 2008, updated 2014.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. California: Stanford University Press.

<http://e-journal.uajy.ac.id/821/3/2TA11217.pdf>. Pusat Apresiasi Film. Retrieved on September 29, 2016.

Mackie, J.L (1977). *Truth, Probability, and Paradox* (1973). Oxford University Press, ISBN 0-19-824402-9.

Taken 3 Official Trailer by FilmIsNow Movie Trailers account
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0EPt7-J1eY> Retrieved on October, 6, 2016.

Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1977.