ALIENATION IN THE MAIN CHARACTER IN JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD* NOVEL

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University in a partial Fulfillment of Requirements to Obtain a Sarjana Degree in English Literature Study Program

Written by:

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ENGLISH LITERATURE STUDY PROGRAM

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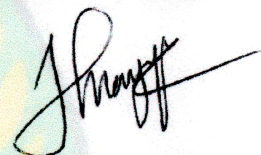**HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY**

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With reference to the letter of the Dean Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University No: 249/UN4.9.1/KEP/2021 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the undergraduate thesis draft by Nurwahidah (F041171503) to be examined at the English Literature Study Program Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, 16th May 2023

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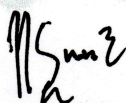**First Supervisor**

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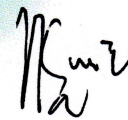
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THESIS

ALIENATION IN THE MAIN CHARACTER IN JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD* NOVEL

BY

NURWAHIDAH

Student Number: F041171503

It has been examined before the Board of the Thesis Examination on Friday, 9th June

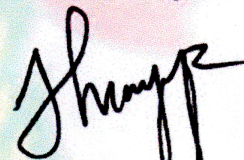2023 and is declared to have fulfilled the requirement

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AGREEMENT

Today, Friday 9th June 2023, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by NURWAHIDAH (F041171503) entitled, **ALIENATION IN THE MAIN CHARACTER IN JACK KEROUAC'S *ON THE ROAD* NOVEL,** submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

Makassar, 9th June 2023

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DECLARATION

The thesis by **NURWAHIDAH** (F041171503) entitled, **ALIENATION IN THE MAIN CHARACTER IN JACK KEROUAC'S** *ON THE ROAD* **NOVEL,** has been revised as advised during the examination on Friday, June 9th 2023 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

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Title of the Thesis   : Alienation in the Main Character in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* Novel

Department/Faculty   : English Literature Study Program/Faculty of Cultural Sciences

Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by herself. This thesis does not contain any materials have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except the quotations and references.

Makassar, 9th June 2023

Nurwahidah

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Makassar, 9th June 2023

The writer
Nurwahidah

ABSTRACT

NURWAHIDAH. 2023. *Alienation in the Main Character in Jack Kerouac's On The Road Novel.* (Supervised by **Burhanuddin Arafah** and **Andi Inayah Soraya**)

This study aims to describe the alienation of the main character in literary work entitled *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac. The objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the reflection of Sal's alienation in the novel entitled *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac*,* and (2) to identify and classify the alienation of Sal Paradise in the novel entitled *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac using the theory of Melvin Seeman.

This study uses the theory of alienation by Melvin Seeman to analyze the various types of alienation experienced by the main character and structuralism approach using to emphasize the intrinsic elements of literary works such as characterizations, plot, setting and themes. Then, the research method used by the writer is qualitative and descriptive analysis to identify the alienation experienced by the main character.

The results of this study indicates that in *On The Road,* Sal by his experiences as a main character in the novel, faces various alienation before and after the journey. It starts from the beginning appears of divorce slump and meeting Sal and Dean, and then the road influences sexual freedom, taking drug, getting drunk and wild party, and then the emptiness of life that felt by Sal, until Sal must choose between his hero worship of Dean's madness or true friendship. The alienation of the journey to the main character is leading him to many experiences in his life such as powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement.

Keywords: Alienation, Sal paradise, *On The Road*

ABSTRAK

NURWAHIDAH. 2023. *Keterasingan pada Karakter Utama dalam Novel On The Road oleh Jack Kerouac* (Dibimbing oleh **Burhanuddin Arafah** dan **Andi Inayah Soraya**)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan keterasingan tokoh utama dalam sebuah karya sastra dengan judul *On The Road* yang ditulis oleh Jack Kerouac. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut: (1) untuk menganalisis refleksi keterasingan Sal dalam novel berjudul *On The Road* karya Jack Kerouac, (2) untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengklasifikasikan keterasingan Sal dalam novel berjudul *On The Road* karya Jack Kerouac menggunakan teori dari Melvin Seeman

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori keterasingan oleh Melvin Seeman untuk menganalisis jenis keterasingan yang dialami oleh karakter utama dan pendekatan strukturalisme digunakan untuk menekankan pada unsur-unsur intrinsik karya sastra seperti penokohan, plot, latar dan tema. Selain itu, metode penelitian yang digunakan penulis yaitu analisis kualitatif dan deskriptif untuk mengidentifikasi keterasingan yang dialami karakter utama.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam novel *On The Road,* Sal dengan pengalamannya sebagai tokoh utama di dalam novel, telah menghadapi berbagai keterasingan dari sebelum perjalanan dan setelah perjalanan. Itu dimulai dari awal mula munculnya keterpurukan perceraian dan pertemuan Sal dan Dean, dan kemudian pengaruh jalanan kebebasan seksual, penggunaan narkoba, mabuk dan pesta liar, serta kebosanan hidup yang dirasakan oleh Sal, sampai akhirnya Sal harus memilih antara kepahlawanannya yang memuja kegilaan Dean atau persahabatan sejati. Keterasingan dari perjalanan tokoh utama membawanya dalam banyak pengalaman hidup seperti ketidakberdayaan, ketidakberartian, ketiadaan norma, isolasi dan pengasingan diri.

Kata Kunci: Keterasingan, Sal Paradise, *On The Road*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer discusses about introduction, which consists of background, identification of problem, scope of problem, statement of problem, objective of writing and sequence of writing.

1.1 Background

Social life is full of problems, how to relate agreeably one to another, how to reach the obsession in the social life that is full of competition and development and so on. An individual seems to try every possible way of dealing with such problems. If an individual perceives that it is powerless, or it could not live in harmony with community, it will result in alienation.

Alienation is characterized by withdrawal. For a few people, withdrawal can be the best solution to escape from an immediate problem, as when one leaves the scene of riot. In addition, alienation may happen as the end result of a long series of attempts to overcome frustration through problem solving.

However, withdrawal in fact is not the best solution to escape from a current problem, since he will become more and more depressed. An alienated person usually feels weak or it is in a weak position that nobody appreciate, moreover, if it is alienated because of it jobless or poor condition, as stated by Harmon (1973: 11),

> To be alienated or isolated means to be estranged from one's society. In past era, those who were alienated often came from the ranks of the poor, unemployed and minority groups. They were alienated because obstacle, usually economic, did not permit them to live a life that had any purpose.

The alienated person is not born alienated nor does he choose alienation. A social being, every person needs others to live with. The people want to be socially accepted by others. The most terrible thing in life is to find someone alone and lonely among the fellow beings. Yet, many people are forced to be alienated. They are put in such situation that finally causes their alienation from the community or even from themselves.

According to William Henry Hudson (1960: 10), *literature* is the expression of life through the medium of language. Literature can be regarded as something important since it contains about life, people, thought and their feelings about life. It means that to understand literary work is also to understand the existence of human life with their entire life problems that are attached to them. This is relevant to Laurenson (1972: 16) who states:

> We learn both of the nature of society and the ways individuals experienced it, through the fictional characters who see and record not only the reality around him, but their hopes, wishes, dreams and fantasies – the inner life of the characters.

As one of literary works, novel tells an important thing in life of people or character created by the author. Broadly defined, a novel is a book-length story in prose, whose author tries to create the sense that while we read, we experience actual life (Kennedy, 1991: 213). The realities of human life can be found in a novel which can be discovered in the problems and conflicts presented either inside the character's soul, or between the characters and environment, in the performance of various themes.

One of the best American novelist, writer, poet and part of the Beat Generation is Jack Kerouac. Kerouac is now considered one of America's most important authors. The spontaneous, confessional prose style inspired other writers, including Tom Robbins, Lester Bangs, Richard Brautigan, Hunter S. Thompson, Ken Kesey, Tom Waits and Bob Dylan. Kerouac's best known works are *On the Road, The Dharma Bums, Big Sur* and *Visions of Cody* (Charters, 2003: 45). Moreover, his writing often reflects a desire to break free from society's structures and to find meaning in life.

Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* is about the narrator Sal Paradise; embarking on a personal journey across America in order to understand if living life is possible solely in pursuit of the ragged and ecstatic joy of pure being. Set in a post-world war II scene, the exuberant yet dramatic natures of the settings are essentially used to allow an insight into Kerouac's central idea, of "Beat", his personal search for freedom and enlightenment in a conventional, highly conformed society. Kerouac also brings in ideas such as self-discovery and adventure and these ideas are expressed through the way, in which the lead characters, Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise venture cross-country, attempting to escape the "repressive" East, to find the promise of freedom from Mexico and road itself.

Therefore, the novel was chosen by the writer as an object in this thesis entitled *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac. In this research, the writer focuses on the alienation analysis of the main character in the novel. The writer interest to analyze *On The Road* novel as research material because first, the writer is interested in the author's life experience and wants to know deeper on Beat Generation lifestyle

because the author is one of member of that movement. The second reason is the absence of research using the Seeman's alienation theory in this novel, especially in alienation of the main character. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for the writer in reviewing this alienation by using the Seeman's alienation theory. The writer chose "*Alienation in the Main Character in Jack Kerouac's On The Road Novel*" as the title of this thesis.

1.2   Identification of Problem

After reading the Jack Kerouac's novel *On The Road,* the writer found and identify some problems below:

1.   The influence of Beat Generation

2.   Bohemianism experience

3.   American road trip

4.   Social Alienation

1.3   Scope of Problem

As already mentioned, there are various problems that can be analyzed in the novel of Jack Kerouac entitled *On The Road*. However, this study focuses on the main character's alienation in the novel.

1.4   Statement of Problem

Based on the identification of problems, the writer formulated the statement of the problem as follows:

1.   How is alienation reflected in the novel *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac?

2.   What are types of alienation found in the novel *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac?

1.5   Objective of Writing

According to the statement of the problems above, the writer determines two objectives of research, as follow:

1. To analyze the reflection of Sal's alienation in the novel entitled *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac.

2. To identify and classify the alienation of Sal Paradise in the novel entitled *On The Road* by Jack Kerouac using the Seeman's alienation theory.

1.6   Sequence of Writing

This research contains five chapters. First, Chapter one is an introduction. It covers the outlook of the whole writing which includes, namely background of writing, identification of problem, scope of problem, statement of problem, objective of writing and sequence of writing. Second, Chapter two explains the literature review which provides review of some previous studies and applies some theories to support this analysis. Third, Chapter three consists of the kind of methods the writer uses in analyzing the novel, including method of collecting data and method of analyzing data. Fourth, Chapter four is the analysis of the main character alienation in the novel *On The Road*. Fifth, Chapter five is the conclusion and suggestion for the readers is involved in this chapter of the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer explains previous related studies, structuralism approach, and theory of alienation.

2.1 Previous Related Studies

Description of the previous related studies are reviewed in this section. This is useful to compare those studies with this one. This previous related studies which has been written in different theory and yet same object or the novel. Additionally, there are also previous related studies which has been written in same theory however different object or novel. So, the writer presents some previous related studies that can be used as references to support this research, namely Misriadi Afandi (2014), Zunita Aprilia (2017) and Andi Abualief Amrullah (2017).

First, the thesis entitled *The Adventure of The Main Character in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit* is written by Misriadi Afandi (2014) student of Hasanuddin University Makassar. He analyzes a novel by J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit. His thesis focuses on analyzing the relationship between the main character and other characters and the changes of the main character's nature in each stage of the journey. Then, the author used the structural approach, which is structural approach is an approach that only focuses on the intrinsic elements that construct a literary work.

Meanwhile, another thesis comes from Zunita Aprilia (2017), the student of English Department, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya who wrote her thesis entitled "*Bohemian as Sal Paradise's*

Experience in On The Road Novel by Jack Kerouac". She analyzes a novel by Jack Kerouac, On The Road. The aim of her thesis is to describe how Sal Paradise perceives the experience before doing journey and to explain the experience that is experience in doing journey. This thesis uses phenomenology theory which is focused on Sal Paradise as first person who experiences in his life.

The last is study from Andi Abualief Amrullah (2017) student of Hasanuddin University under the title *The Analysis of The Characters in Denis Lehane's Novel Shutter Island.* This study aims to explain the characterization of Shutter Island and also explains on how the main character's internal conflict influence his performance in the story. This study uses a structuralism approach.

Based on the description above, the writer concludes that the similarities and differences between the previous related studies and the research of the writer are found in research object, approach focus and theory used in the analysis. Meanwhile, the similarities that exist in previous related studies are discussing the analysis of the main characters that occur in literary works, and one of the previous related studies has the same object with the writer and two previous related studies has same approach.

While the differences in research can be seen in terms of the object of research and the method of analysis. In this study, the writer focuses on the alienation of main character in the novel *On The Road* by using a structuralism approach. The difference that distinguishes previous related study is the different research objects and approaches. Therefore, the results of this study are absolutely different from the analysis in previous related studies because the writer chose to

analyze about *Alienation in the Main Character in Jack Kerouac's On The Road Novel.*

2.2   Structuralism Approach

Structuralism first comes to prominence as a specific discourse with the work of a Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, who developed a branch of linguistics called "Structural Linguistics". The study of Saussure could not be separated from the linguistic aspects, so his ideas about structuralism are related to the language.

Structuralism, as developed by de Saussure, consists in viewing abstract linguistic objects (especially meanings, but everything that he calls linguistic reality) as values of elements of the system of the expressions that make up language (Peregrin, 1995: 86). Structural approach in language means that the approach that considers language as a system with certain characteristics. It means that the language can be used to analyze the system of signs or symbols in various aspects.

In this research, the writer used a structuralism approach. It is a literary approach that give attention to literature, regardless of the extrinsic aspects of a literary work. According to Aminuddin (1987: 52) that literature is a verbal structure which has its own autonomy apart from other elements outside it. Structuralism is focuses on literary text and intrinsic elements as the major analysis to understand the meaning, the message, and the value that are informed in the text.

In addition, Semi (1993: 67) says that literary work as creative ones have to be seen as independent creation free from other elements outside of themselves. So,

the writer analyzed this thesis by using this approach, focuses some elements inside it which build up the work itself. Therefore, structural approach is one of the literary approaches which analyze the elements from inside of the literary work.

Literary works have several elements like character, plot, setting, theme and so on. Those elements are called the structure of story text. Wellek and Warren explain it as follows:

> Structural approach, which consists of material and structure of text of the literary works. The material includes elements that are called formal. While a structure is a concept including both content and form so far as they are organized for aesthetic purpose (1956: 140-141).

So, it can be concluded that the structural approach to the study of literature that works analyzing the structure elements that build literary works from the inside such as characters, plot, theme, setting and so on, as well as finding the relevance or relationship of these elements in order to achieve unanimity meaning.

2.2.1 Intrinsic Elements

Structural element used to split the structural after the analysis to make it more arranged in a simple element. Those elements include the character, plot, setting and theme is explain as follow:

a. Character

Character is one of the most important elements in literature. Character holds the main role in a story of literature such as novel, drama and poem. Characters as the person that presented in the literary work, that their appearance is interpreted by the reader as being endowed with desires, motivation and emotional qualities that are expressed in their saying and action in the story.

Character is related to the opinion of Abram (1981: 20) that characters as the person presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say, they dialogue and what they do the action.

Another idea about character remarked by Perrine is as follows:

An author may present his character either directly or indirectly. In direct presentation, he tells us straight out, by exposition or analysis, what a character is like, or has someone else in the story tells us what he is like. In indirect presentation, the author shows us the character in action, we inter what he is like form what he thinks or says or does (1974: 68).

In story of the novel, there are two kinds of character that can be seen in the story. They are main or major character and supporting or minor character. A major is the central figures or the focus of the story. Usually, major character emerged from the beginning to the end of the story. On the other hand, minor character is a character that only accompanied or followed the existence of the main character.

Based on the explanation, the writer understands that the character is the most important in literature. Character is created by the author to get better understanding through the description above, the reader must able to understand what the character's do. So, a story can be told interesting when it depends on the play the characters, because the characters are the key of the way of story life. In this case someone, things although the author can be the character.

b.   Plot

Plot is an important element of literary work, because the plot tells the important events that occur in a story. The structure of action is used to indicate

almost any kind of action that found in a story, including the closed, the open and the straight narrative with little or no serious complication (Bocker, 1963: 91).

There are some elements which are included the parts of plot according to Sumardjo and Saini (1991: 51).

1. Exposition is the first elements as the introduction in which the author introduces the characters, scene time and situation.

2. Complication is the advanced introduction that depicts how new conflict is increased in intensity until they reach a climax.

3. Climax is the continuation of complication. It is where the complication comes to further development and to a moment of crisis.

4. Resolution shows how the conflicts are resolved. All the problem of the story which is emerged by the characters will end.

5. Conclusion is the last situation of the whole characters and be the end of the story.

So that, the writer concludes that plot is the sequence of event in a work of literature formed by stages event that has a causal relationship. Plot is also an important element in literature for clarity about the linkages between the events depicted in literature facilitate, the understanding of the reader in the story are displayed.

c.   Setting

Setting is not only related to place, time and event, but it also related with tradition, characters, social behaviors and people perspective by the time when the story is written. According to Aminuddin (1993: 67) that setting is background

events on the literature as place, time and also event, and fiscal and psychological function. It can be the nature, political, temporary environment including everything that characters know and own. It is including the time, location and everything in which a story take place and initiates the main backdrop and mood for a story.

Setting has been referred to as story world to include a context beyond the story. It is also including the background, namely aspect of atmosphere, a series of details, nuances which give a certain shape to theme and plot.

According to Stanton (2007: 35) that setting is the environment that surrounds an event in the story, the universe that interacts with the events that are taking place. Backgrounds can also intangible fixed times (day, month and year), the weather or period of history.

So that, the writer understands that setting can be categorized into three parts, namely the setting of the place, setting of time and setting of atmosphere. A story in the novel must happen in certain time and place because it is very important thing in a story. With setting, people who read a novel know when the event occurred in the society or the situation of place where the character live and could know where the characters are.

d.   Theme

Theme can be represented as a view about life and how people behavior. The theme is not intended to teach or peach. In fact, it is not presented directly at all. People extract it from the characters, action or setting that makes up the story. In other words, the writer must figure out the theme in it. The theme is generally

have the character of neutrally, in means that author do not mention it directly, hence, reader is free to determine it by himself from the story according to his understanding of the fiction.

According to Nurgiyantoro (1998: 70) that the theme can be seen as the basic story or general basic idea of a novel. It means that the story once the story's main goal. If development continues at the bottom of the story, it is intended that the basic, common basic idea or something human being want to put forward to be accepted by the reader.

The theme of a literary work is always associated with the meaning (experience) or life. The presence of the theme in a literary work is one element in building a story together with other element to form a unity. The theme is often also referred to as the basic story according to Sudjiman (1990: 79) that the theme is the nation, idea or the main thought in both the revealed literature and that has not been revealed.

Based on that, the writer conclude that the basic idea of theme is the stories that expose the fundamentals of the development for a story that animates the whole story, as well as being the starting point of the author in the work of creation. Themes cannot be separated from the problems or life which recorded by the literary work.

2.3 Theory of Alienation

The word alienation, originated from a *Latin* noun alienation which in turn is derived from a Latin verb *alienare* meaning to 'take away', 'remove', or 'cause a separation to occur', was initially popularized in theological writings.

The term of "alienation" has become a common feature in our life nowadays. It is a term which most people understand in terms of their acquaintance with the writings of certain philosophers, psychologists and sociologist whose uses of the term are most significant.

The dynamic terms of alienation has also interested many psychologist and sociologist to see alienation not only as a social phenomenon but also mental. As an American social psychologist Melvin Seeman who is known afar for his research in social alienation, published his paper, "On the Meaning of Alienation", in 1959. Seeman pointed out the insights of Marx, Emile Durkheim and others to make what is often thought a model to identity the five major features of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social-isolation, and self-estrangement.

2.3.1 Powerlessness

Alienation in the sense of a lack of power has been technically defined by Seeman as "the expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks." Seeman argues that this is "the notion of alienation as it originated in the Marxian view of the worker's condition in capitalist society: the worker is alienated to the extent that the prerogative and means of decision are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs". More succinctly, Kalekin-Fishman (1996: 97) says, "A person suffers from alienation in the form of 'powerlessness' when she is conscious of the gap between what she would like to do and what she feels capable of doing".

In discussing powerlessness, Seeman also incorporated the insights of the psychologist Julian Rotter. Rotter distinguishes between internal control and external locus of control, which means "differences (among persons or situations) in the degree to which success or failure is attributable to external factors (e.g. luck, chance, or powerful others), as against success or failure that is seen as the outcome of one's personal skills or characteristics". Powerlessness, therefore, is the perception that the individual does not have the means to achieve his goals.

More recently, Geyer (1996: 24) remarks that "a new type of powerlessness has emerged, where the core problem is no longer being un-free but rather being unable to select from among an over-choice of alternatives for action, whose consequences one often cannot even fathom". Geyer adapted cybernetics to alienation theory, and wrote it.

2.3.2 Meaninglessness

A sense of meaning has been defined by Seeman as "the individual's sense of understanding events in which he is engaged". Seeman (1959: 786) writes that meaninglessness "is characterized by a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about the future outcomes of behavior can be made." Whereas powerlessness refers to the sensed ability to control outcomes, this refers to the sensed ability to predict outcomes. In this respect, meaninglessness is closely tied to powerlessness; Seeman (1959: 786) argues, "the view that one lives in an intelligible world might be a prerequisite to expectancies for control; and the unintelligibility of complex affairs is presumably conducive to the development of high expectancies for external control (that is, high powerlessness)".

Geyer (1996: 24) believes meaninglessness should be reinterpreted for postmodern times: "With the accelerating throughput of information […] meaningless is not a matter anymore of whether one can assign meaning to incoming information, but of whether one can develop adequate new scanning mechanisms to gather the goal-relevant information one needs, as well as more efficient selection procedures to prevent being overburdened by the information one does not need, but is bombarded with on a regular basis." It is like "information overload" or the so-called "data tsunami" are well-known information problems confronting contemporary man, and Geyer thus argues that meaninglessness is turned on its head.

2.3.3 Normlessness

Normlessness (or can be referred to as anomie) denotes the situation in which the social norms regulating individual conduct have broken down or are no longer effective as rules for behavior. This aspect refers to the inability to identify with the dominant values of society or rather, with values that are perceived to be dominant. Seeman (1959: 788) adds that this aspect can manifest in a particularly negative manner, "The anomic situation […] may be defined as one in which there is a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviors are required to achieve given goals". This negative manifestation is dealt with in detail by Catherin Ross and John Mirowski in a series of publications on mistrust, powerlessness, normlessness and crime.

Normlessness derives partly from conditions of complexity and conflict in which individuals become unclear about the composition and enforcement of social

norms. Sudden and abrupt changes occur in life conditions, and the norms that usually operate may no longer seem adequate as guidelines for conduct. This is a particular issue after the fall of the Soviet Union, mass migrations from developing to developed countries, and the general sense of disillusionment that characterized the 1990s. Traditional values that had already been questioned (especially during the 1960s) were met with further skepticism in the 1990s, resulting in a situation where individuals rely more often on their own judgment than on institutions of authority: "The individual not only has become more independent of the churches, but from other social institutions as well. The individual can make more personal choices in far more life situations than before" Halman (1998: 100).

These choices are not necessarily "negative": Halman's study found that Europeans remain relatively conservative morally, even though the authority of the Church and other institutions has eroded.

2.3.4 Social Isolation

Social isolation refers to "the feeling of being segregated from one's community". Neal and Collas (2000: 114) emphasize the centrality of social isolation in the modern world: "while social isolation is typically experienced as a form of personal stress, its sources are deeply embedded in the social organization of the modern world. With increased isolation and atomization, much of our daily interactions are with those who are strangers to us and with those whom we lack any ongoing social relationship."

Social isolation therefore deprives the individual of this "social meaning structure", contributing to meaninglessness, normlessness, and powerlessness.

Social isolation has been treated as a distinct phenomenon, or it has been combined or equated with other states relating to human apartness. The literature is replete with a variety of definition of social isolation, many of which are interrelated, synonymous, or confused with other distinct but related phenomena.

Tightly linked with social isolation is the need for social support, which is the social context or environment that facilitates the survival of human beings by offering social, emotional, and material support needed and received by an individual, especially one who is chronically ill. Although social support literature has focused on the instrumental and material benefits of support, recent literature on social isolation relates isolation more to the negative feeling state of aloneness. This feeling is associated with deficits in social support network, diminished participation in these networks or in social relationships, or feelings or rejection or withdrawal.

2.3.5 Self-estrangement

Self-estrangement is one of an elusive concept in sociology, as recognized by Seeman, although he included it as an aspect in his model alienation. Some, with Marx, consider self-estrangement to be the end result and thus the heart of social alienation. Self-estrangement can be defined as the psychological state of denying one's own interests – of seeking out extrinsically satisfying, rather than intrinsically satisfying, activities (Kalekin-Fishman, 1996: 97). Thus, It could be characterized as a feeling of having become a stranger to oneself, or to some parts of oneself, or alternatively as a problem of self-knowledge, or authenticity.

Seeman recognized the problems inherent in defining the "self", while post-modernism in particular has questioned the very possibility of pin-pointing what precisely "self" constitutes. Gergen (1996: 125) argues that: "the traditional view of self as contrary to society is deeply problematic and should be replaced by a conception of the self as always already immersed in relatedness. On this account, the individual's lament of 'not belonging' is partially a by-product of traditional discourses themselves". If the self is relationally constituted, does it make sense to speak of "self-estrangement" rather than "social isolation"? Although the concept of self-estrangement has not weathered postmodern criticisms of essentialism and economic determinism well, the concept still has value if a Lacanian reading of the self is adopted. This can be seen as part of a wider debate on the concept of self between humanism and anti-humanism, structuralism and post-structuralism, or nature and nurture.