

Exploration of Post-Modern American Rationalism Through Rational Choice Theory in***Finders Keepers*****¹W. Jefflims Samraja,**

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The basic tenet of American rationalism as an intellectual movement against Puritan values insists that rational thoughts based on logical deduction influence the behaviour of an individual. As a broader philosophical framework, human behaviour in rational choice is informed by the socio-political, and economic conditions of the society and culture at large. In the post-modern world, rationalization of thoughts among the population is for their economic benefit, utility and the lack of self-analysis prevalent in their rational choices. Rational choice as a foundation of the individual decision-making process is employed when the individual is presented with alternative choices in the socio-economic context. The paper is an attempt at the application of the traditional Rational Choice Theory to the character of Pete Saubers in the novel *Finders Keepers* by Stephen King. Through the application, the interconnectedness of morality and rationality situated within the culture of American rationalism is explored as the character has to make multiple rational choices in morally dilemmic situations. Stephen King

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depicts the character with the evidence of rational choices which results in a series of unfortunate events. The choice of the character in the novel portrays the rational reality of the postmodern American society. This research conceptualizes the rational choices of the character Pete Saubers to highlight the thoughts behind the rational choices, their lack of self-consciousness and resultant self-driven thought.

Keywords: Rational Choice Theory, Self-thought, Self-Analysis, American Rationalism, Post-modernism, Contemporary Literature.

The word rationalism is base for this research paper thus the effects of rational define the thoughts of the characters irrespective of their situation. The evolution of the word rationalism traces back to the time of Puritanism. Faith and ancestral beliefs raise several questions for the common people. During the early days, people were afraid to express their own logical reasoning and it paved the way for the word rationalism. This word is a common term and it was developed further by the own disciplined people accordingly. Rationalism is a complicated word and it is defined as an intellectual discourse. It is a controversial point for an argument and it can be defined in multiple ways. Most of the disciplines claim rationalism and they differ slightly between the disciplines. Disciplines such as philosophy, economics, decision theory, and psychology claim the word rationalism and develop their own definitions For example, animal behaviourists claim to measure degrees of rationality in animals (Kacelink). People abode by the ancestral and religious faith until the born of rationalism thought. It is also a philosophical movement which gained momentum during the seventeenth century which is notably known as the Age of Reason. It starts developing in the Age of Enlightenment. The seedling for the revolution thoughts is put forth by Rene Descartes. The word rationalism has different opinions or definitions from the different scholars across scholars' domains. The economist Robert Frank

states “The concept of rationality contains several definitions and meanings. The strengths and weaknesses depend on their own respective field. The simple fact is that rationalism is a simple concept and no other competitor has overtook them” (45).

Rationalism is the logical reasoning of a person which can differ from person to person because of their situation which may differ from person to person, thoughts influence the person with their thoughts which influences the positive or negative side of the person and it may affect society or other people due to his decision which influence by logical reason of his mind and decision may be based on his experience. Stephen King in most of his novels has induced rationalism in most of his characters as this novel progress the evident presence of nationalist thoughts influencing the storyline can be seen in an obvious way. The situation of the character brings out precise rational thought of the character through the decision taken by the character.

Stephen King designed a character named Pete Sauber a young boy whose family struggles in economic ways His father is a victim of the Mercedes massacre. His father could not make his family's ends meet. The author provides him with such a worse situation and he lets him find a long-hidden treasure from a tree trunk which was hidden by Tom Saubers and he stole this thing from a renowned writer. When Pete Saubers finds the creepy box. He breathes heavily and he is unaware of things and dangers of the treasure he finds in it. He thinks only about the present situation and he opts to get an Easy way out of his family situation. As Mancur Olson has already put it in his seminal work:

The only requirement is that the behaviour of individuals in large groups or organisations of the kind considered should generally be rational, in the sense that their objectives,

whether selfish or unselfish, should be pursued by means that are efficient and effective for achieving these objectives. (65)

Peter Sauber is a young boy who has a lot of difficulties living his day-to-day life and the treasure makes him make rational choices for the betterment of his family which makes him aware of the consequences which would be later induced in his family life as well. He is the primary decision when he finds out about the treasure and his further processing of the treasure. He has some beliefs and desires from his daily life since his family suffers from a poor economic situation and he feels sorry for his family situation. He is a kid with no idea how to restore his family's economic situation but the treasure he finds is like a fortune to him He always waits for a miracle to happen in his life that all his family wealth will be restored. The desires of his mind make him covet the treasure and takes the initiative to resolve his problems with the help of the treasure. Stephen King provides the worst situation to handle desires with rational thoughts.

Once or twice Pete had played with the idea of turning the notebooks over to the police, even though that almost surely meant his parents would find out where the mystery money had been coming from. The notebooks were, after all, evidence of a crime as well as a literary treasure. But it was an old crime, ancient history. Better to leave well enough alone. (96)

It is evident that Pete wants to inform the police about the treasure but his rational choices disturb or the consequences of his past deeds disturb his choices to be perfect and he makes a rational choice for his own self-benefit way.

Susan Hurley and Mathew Nudds make a similar statement that “in application to human beings, different disciplines use ‘Rationality’ in different senses; some focus on rational behaviour and others on the rational process, in line with different assumptions and purposes. As a result, there is a danger of talking at cross purposes in inter- disciplinary discussion” (6). The treasure discovery is unexpected and it is going to be a turning point in their life until he discovers cash form the box he is overwhelmed by the gift and he plans to use the treasure.

Pete turned back to the trunk and grabbed one of the bank envelopes. The flap wasn’t sealed. He flipped it up with a finger that felt numb, even though the temperature now had to be riding right around the forty. He squeezed the envelope open and looked inside.

Money.

Twenties and fifties.

‘Holy Jesus God Christ In Heaven’, Pete Saubers whispered. (53)

The treasure he finds is going to get him into a tough phase. The boy needs money to take care of his family and to have a stable economy over the family. The decision he is about to take may have an impact rest of his life. The universal fact is that the treasure found always has a negative impact on the life of a person who finds the treasure mostly during the later part of his life. Already Peter Sauber's life is a miserable one and these treasures made it even worse and affected the whole happiness of his family. “Or was it? Suppose the money really was a pirate treasure, only from the bank robbers instead of buccaneers but then why was it in envelopes, like for withdrawal? And what about all those notebooks?” (54). The treasure made Peter Saubers think about the history of treasure, or he began deeply analyzing the treasure. It's natural for a

simple young boy to find a treasure. He is aware of the consequences of the discovery of hidden treasure because someone wants to hide it for their future use some may come in search of it. So, he tries to deconstruct the truth and belongings of the treasure. As summarized by Elster, “rational choice theory conceives the actor as a decision-maker who successfully achieves three optimizing operations: 'finding the best action, for given beliefs and desires; forming the best-grounded belief, for given evidence; and collecting the right amount of evidence, for given desires and prior beliefs” (4). According to Rational Choice theory, Peter Saubers is the decision maker in this scenario because he is the one who found the treasure. Though Pete is a school boy the decision he makes with treasure is valid. His action makes him find the treasure and his desires make him make choices associated with his desires.

Two months later, after the obligatory pre-release counselling and shortly before his job at the MAC was scheduled to begin, He walked through gate A and back into the free world. In his pockets were his earnings from thirty-five ears in the dyehouse, the furniture workshop, and the library. It amounted to twenty-seven hundred dollars and change.

The Rothstein notebooks were finally within reach. (137)

This treasure is stolen from the notable author who resides in the suburbs of the city. Morris with a gang broke into the house and looted his money and unpublished writings which are so valuable. After hiding they looted the things. He is put in prison for rape allegations. When he is released from the prison. He comes in search of the treasure and he finds that its missing. This is the major the major trouble for his treasure which costs him the suffering of the whole family. The sociologist Tibor Rutor in his article brought forward that “The sociological relevance of these insights is that one should expect Rational Choice Theory models to be more applicable in less urgent, high-cost, more unexpected situations” (8).

The release of Morris from prison creates an unexpected situation. It costs Peter Saubers the life-threatening of his family members, which is a high cost. As a young boy, his choice is to have the treasure for himself to support his family but Morris finds out about the treasure story of Peter Saubers. According to Ronald A.Kieve, a Rational actor should have the attributes of,

- (1) [who] can always make a decision when confronted with a range of alternatives; (2) [who] ranks all the alternatives facing him in order of his preference in such a way that each is either preferred to, indifferent to, or inferior to each other; (3) [whose] preference ranking is transitive; (4) [who] always chooses from among the possible alternatives that which ranks highest in his preference ordering; and (5) [who] always makes the same decision each time he is confronted with the same alternatives. (558)

Peter Sauber is a perfectly rational actor because his decision is an alternative to the preference to change his lifestyle and his family. He chose the decision in spite of his possible attributes to go the other way around. His decision is mainly based on his welfare thought. “He wasn't sure exactly what crime he could be charged with not receiving stolen property, surely, because he hadn't received it, only found it –but he was positive that trying to sell what wasn't yours had to be some kind of crime” (98). The situation of Peter Saubers determines the choice he takes because of the poor economic situation of the family and as a family is struggling with debt. For his family to survive he has to find some help as a school kid he is unable to find any job and it's a hard thing for him to support his family. So, when he discovers the treasure, he makes the decision that the situation insists him to take it rather than to abide by the law of the state. The research concludes that Saubers is the ideal character who represents rational choices. His choices are mostly rational with no moral values. The treasure makes him take a decision which has no moral values and Pete's choices show us that it is for his own benefit to help his own

family to sort out their economic condition. His thoughts are mostly practical. He thought of consciousness but still went with his rational thoughts.

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