

Persistent Doubts and Uncertainties of Evelyn's Despair in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* Movie Script

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Abstract

This article explores how the movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, written by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, depicts existential despair through Evelyn Wang's persistent doubts and uncertainties. As the story unfolds, Evelyn is thrown into the multiverse, where she encounters numerous versions of herself, overwhelming her with never-ending possibilities. These encounters lead her to question her choices, as well as her sense of purpose and self-worth. The ongoing uncertainty about which version of herself is "right" or "real" drives Evelyn into a state of existential despair, intensifying her feelings of hopelessness. By applying Kierkegaard's theory of existential despair and qualitative method, this research analyzes how Evelyn's internal conflict reflects the dread and disorientation that emerge when individuals face the uncertainty of their existence. In conclusion, through an examination of Evelyn's perception of freedom and identity, also shaped by her doubts, the psychological and philosophical weight of uncertainty in the quest for authenticity and purpose are underscored further.

Keywords: Daniel Kwan, Daniel Scheiner *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, Existential Despair, Persistent Doubts and Uncertainties

INTRODUCTION

Real-world events are reflected in literature, and movies are among the literary works that capture the everyday facets of life, including existential. When people worry about their existence throughout their lives, Kierkegaard claims that existential despair is a social phenomenon (Farr, 2021; Shanthi and Gonsalves, 2021). Their concerns about the purpose or worth of their lives cause them to feel uneasy afraid, and anxious (Taghizadeh, 2023; Roy & bin Che, 2023).

Persistent doubt and uncertainty is one of the characteristics of existential despair. It arises when individuals realize that even if they have free will to choose, they also have to bear the consequences of their own choices. No one is responsible except for themselves. Individuals realize that every choice has its consequences. However, they will not know the consequences until they experience them (Kierkegaard, 1980; Pasopati et al., 2024).

Daniel Scheinert and Daniel Kwan wrote the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. Published on June, 22, 2022. It is an action science fiction film that draws viewers in with its imaginative narrative structure and insightful in-depth reporting on its deep theme. The researchers wish to examine how Evelyn's characters as suggested by Søren Kierkegaard depict the idea of existential despair through her ongoing struggle with freedom.

A Chinese-American immigrant named Evelyn Wang is the main character of the movie. She must balance between her family and her job. Because of this Evelyn's life is a cycle of unfulfilled expectations and unrealized dreams that ultimately result in existential despair. Evelyn had to bear the burden of her life. She is on the edge of an existential crisis and is so overwhelmed by life's absurdities that she is tempted to give up (Kwan and Scheinert, 2022). In order to stop a villain named Jobu Tupaki, Evelyn is later thrust into a multi-dimensional adventure in which she must speak with parallel versions of herself.

Throughout the film Evelyn frequently has to make tough choices. She frequently questions her own ability to defeat Jobu Tupaki and bring her child back without losing herself in the process (Kwan and Scheinert, 2022). The researchers selected this film and theory for their

analysis because people struggle to cope with ongoing doubt and uncertainty which is a common occurrence in daily life (Hanson, 2021; Pasopati et al., 2024).

Individuals frequently struggle with decision-making because they are unsure of the best course of action and do not want to disappoint themselves or others with their selections (Farashifah et al., 2025; Rafiuddin et al., 2025). Consequently, researchers examine how Evelyn's character depicts a recurring sense of doubt and uncertainty throughout the films plot and how it impacts her relationship and personal growth. In order to demonstrate Evelyn's struggle with freedom researchers utilize movie script examples that include dialogue gestures and dialogue.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the movie script *Everything Everywhere All at Once* by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert from the perspective of existential philosophy, specifically the existential despair theory of Søren Kierkegaard. The focus of the analysis is Evelyn Wang's ongoing skepticism and doubt as she makes her way through the multiverse. This study examines how Evelyn's exposure to countless versions of her life shows her internal conflict and results in a crisis of identity and meaning by closely analyzing significant scenes and dialogue from the script. Her ongoing self-examination of her identity, her past decisions, and the meaning of her present life all point to a deeper existential anxiety. The study demonstrates how these enduring uncertainties are similar to Kierkegaard's idea of despair, which is the state that results from a person becoming acutely conscious of the difference between possibility and reality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Evelyn's Existential Despair in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

Evelyn Quan Wang who suffers from existential despair is the main character of Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert's movie. The movie explores Evelyn's existential despair through her enduring uncertainty and doubt. Because it affects her so much that she becomes desperate, she finds it difficult to make decisions for herself and other people because she is unsure of her ability to make choices and handle the consequences. The following quotation demonstrates Evelyn's ongoing struggle with freedom.

Data 1

"Evelyn sits and looks down at years of tax documents and old receipts. Picking up one of the receipts, she decides which pile to place it on. She changes her mind and holds the receipt in the air, frozen by indecision." (Act 2)

Evelyn is busy with a lot of things on her hands, she contemplates which one should be finished. However, she cannot choose and keeps changing her mind. She cannot make a decision about which of her tasks should be finished first. Although one thing for sure is she has enough, she wants it to be done without actually doing it because it drains her energy and mind. If only someone could do it instead of her, but it has to be done properly because she cannot rest assured if she does not do it herself (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 2

"Check the pot in 5 minutes. My father hates overcooked noodles. And which paint did you use?" (Act 2)

Even if she is busy, Evelyn still manages to think about other things. Remembering that her father prefers overcooked noodles, to not disappoint him. She also makes sure Waymond uses the right paint to paint the wall. She has so much things to take care of and she has to make sure everything is according to her plan and preference. Even if she feels struggling to keep up with the chores, she tries her best to get it done every day (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 3

“Remember? We told Ms. Deirdre Joy would come to avoid any more miscommunications so Becky is going to help watch Gong Gong.” (Act 4)

Waymond reminds Evelyn that they have promised to bring her children to help them translate. However, it seems that Evelyn forgets that due to the fact that Joy brings Becky, her girlfriend. It makes her feel uncomfortable knowing the relationship between them. Evelyn rethinks her decision about whether she and Waymond should bring Joy and leave Becky with Gong Gong or just go by themselves. However, it would be a hassle to explain it to Gong Gong, and he might be mad because of it (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 4

“You know I always mix the words. “He”, “she”. In Chinese, there is one word, tā?, so simple. The way you two dress, I don’t think I’m only one calling him “he”... I mean her “him”... ” (Act 4)

Evelyn might have accidentally called Becky “he.” However, rather than being apologetic, she becomes defensive and says that it is easier in Chinese since there is only one word to refer to someone whether it is a female or male which is “tā.” She also brings up the way Becky and Joy dress up is also the reason people misgender them. She does not feel remorse at all, because that is what she knows in her household. She feels Becky and Joy are the ones who are being unusual because it is not suitable with the values she believes in (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 5

“But your father... sometimes I wonder how he would survive without me...” (Act 7, Scene 1)

Evelyn then continues to yelp about her husband. She wonders how her husband could survive without her. It is since she thinks that she takes care and leads a lot of things in the house. She thinks she is responsible for her whole family because as a mother she has done so much for her family. It seems hard for her to trust her husband could do something without her. She sees him as someone who depends on her, and who needs her leads (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 6

“She is surrounded by the chaos of her apartment...” (Act 11)

Evelyn feels overwhelmed by her surroundings. At this point, she starts to feel exhausted physically and mentally. Her mind and apartment are in disarray. She realizes that she has done so much in a day that it makes her worn out. From dawn to dusk without a break doing chores, counting her receipts, and her laundromat business. She feels weary doing it all alone, but she wants to make sure she does it properly. After all, she is the “leader” of the family (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 7

“If I have to think about one more thing today my head will explode.” (Act 13)

Evelyn admits that she has a lot of things in her mind such as receipts, her child, her husband and so much more. If she has to think about another thing, she believes that her head will explode as she already thinks too much. She understands but she cannot keep her mind at ease. She cannot relax and take a break because time does not wait for her. Therefore, she does not want to waste any time by doing nothing even if it means it takes up a lot of her mental energy (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 8

“Mrs. Wang, I’m sure you have a lot on your mind, but I cannot imagine anything mattering more than this conversation we are having right now concerning your tax liability...” (Act 16, Scene 1)

Deirdre tries to give her the benefit of the doubt since Evelyn might have something else in her mind. However, she assures her that this tax problem matters more for now than any other problem that she might have. However, it seems that Evelyn is distracted by another matter in her mind. The problems in front of her are definitely more important but she just cannot get away from other things in her head. Alpha Waymond does not make it better by appearing so suddenly, making her more confused and dizzier (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 9

“I know you have a lot of things on your mind, but nothing could possibly matter more than this...” (Act 16)

Evelyn is being dragged by Alpha Waymond to another universe. He explains that her universe and the other universe are in danger. He tries to convince Evelyn that this problem matters more even if she has another problem. Just like what Deirdre said a minute ago, both statements make her confused, about which one she should be paying attention to. The other universe is in need of her to help them or her universe where she needs to help herself concerning her problem with Deirdre. (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 10

“Shhhh, I think my other husband is messing up the audit—” (Act 16)

Evelyn is back with Alpha Waymond but she confuses herself again because she thinks her husband in her universe is messing up the audit, while actually Waymond is trying to help her negotiate with Deirdre. She thinks Waymond cannot do anything to help her, she sees him as a nuisance who might make the negotiation worse. She is too occupied with Alpha Waymond to actually put her mind to the matter. She does not recognize if only she pays attention to what Deirdre says, it can be resolved well. However, she is stuck in both universes without actually making a decision (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 11

“Tomorrow is better...” (Act 17)

When Waymond successfully persuades Deirdre, she gives Waymond and Evelyn another chance to submit the receipts by tonight. Evelyn tries to negotiate that it would be better tomorrow since she has a party to celebrate New Year which she thinks is more important. She still tries to prolong the chance given to her. She thinks the party is more important because she has planned it before and she does not want to ruin it. However, it could not be extended because responsibility should come first, and Waymond feels grateful to Deirdre to give them another chance (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 12

“I’m not ready to fight yet.” (Act 18)

Evelyn sees Deirdre walking towards her. She thinks that she is about to be hit or confronted. She feels scared and not ready for her confrontation. She is not ready, to face her responsibility. She wants to run and ignore it instead. However, the situation cannot be avoided because there is nowhere for her to run. She feels cornered and it feels that she has no choice but to face her fear (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 13

“You told me to do it!” (Act 18)

After she realizes that she punches Deirdre in the face, she starts to become unsure and blames Waymond. She says that Alpha Waymond tells her that she will know when she is ready and has to fight. She thinks this is the moment. However, she is not sure now that the consequence is not under her imagination. She thinks after confronting the problem in front of her, she should be okay. She recklessly punches Deirdre in response, thinking it would be a great way to overcome her fear. Unfortunately, she guesses wrong (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

Data 14

“We made a vow!” (Act 18)

Evelyn discovers that Waymond is trying to divorce her. She feels betrayed and disappointed. She does not expect that Waymond will try to divorce her. She also mentions how his brother also gets separated and now he also thinks that it is okay even though they have made a vow to each other. She cannot believe that Waymond wants to leave her, after all, she has sacrificed and given him many things in life. Waymond has let her down, he just adds another problem to weigh on her mind (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022)

Data 15

“No! This is crazy...why can't your Evelyn do this?” (Act 24)

Alpha Waymond explains to Evelyn that she needs to do verse-jumping soon to defeat her enemy. She needs to learn it now or they would be in trouble. Evelyn thinks that it is such a hassle, and why Alpha Waymond does not ask Evelyn from his universe to do it instead of asking her. She feels it is such a big responsibility to save the world and fight this evil villain. She could barely survive her problem in her universe, and now someone just tells her that she has to do more for the other universe (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022).

The Significant Relations between Existential Despair and a Sense of Meaninglessness

Fear of certain external threats is only one aspect of despair; another is a deep internal turmoil that arises from realizing one's freedom and duty to make important decisions in life (Farashifah et al., 2025; Kierkegaard, 1980; Rafiuddin et al., 2025). People begin to doubt their own purpose or meaning when they are unable to make a meaningful decision, which results in a sense of meaninglessness (Kierkegaard in Mulenga, 2021; Rafiuddin et al., 2025). The questions indeed keep attacking people when they have to decide various important ones. Those indeed shape their meaninglessness against many things.

Uncertainty emerges when people recognize that even though they have the ability to choose. Then, they must also deal with the fallout from their decisions. Nobody is accountable to no one but themselves. That is how responsibility works through existential matters. People understand that every decision has consequences as the outcomes. However, they will not be aware of the repercussions yet (Kierkegaard, 1980; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025). One main idea is to stop and think rather than merely going with the flow. People need to remember, remind, and re-shape their purposes every time such existential questions come.

As a result, people commonly live with ongoing uncertainty and doubt. Additionally, this gets worse when they understand that there are limited resources that affect their freedom. They are still being pressured even after they have made decisions. Having their own opinions also puts pressure on them since people might question them again. It causes them to feel more unsure of their decision-making abilities (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025).

According to existentialism, people will always be haunted by questions of life until they die. Those keep coming more and more, asking people to reconsider their own conscience regarding any faced problem. Indeed, despair and meaninglessness will always come as well. However, people still have something to hold (Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025). That is hope to get a better current and future condition. It is why people also depend more on

religions since they know that by hoping, life will not easily stop, but it continues again and again.

Evelyn's Persistent Doubt and Uncertainty in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

This section explores how Evelyn's persistent doubt and uncertainty in *Everything Everywhere All at Once* reveals factors that indicate existential despair. These aspects are further explained as follows:

In **Data 1**, the dialogue above indicates Evelyn's persistent doubts and uncertainties. It can be seen from the way she is confused about which pile of receipts she should start first. She keeps changing her mind showing how doubtful she is. Not to mention her mind is also clouded with other chores that she has to do making her feel more uncertain to actually start. This point emphasizes how she cannot focus her mind on one thing because she is too indecisive to make a decision as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025).

In **Data 2**, the quotation points out how Evelyn feels doubtful and uncertain. Before she can finish her receipts previously, she moves on to worry about another thing. It seems that her mind cannot catch a break because she keeps going back and forth just to make sure everything is done properly. She feels uncertain of herself whether she already does a good job or not as her role in the family. Thus, she always tries to make sure everything is done accordingly even if she is in doubt as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

In **Data 3**, the text illustrates Evelyn's persistent doubt and uncertainties. When Waymond reminds her that they have promised Deirdre to bring Joy to help them translate, Evelyn feels baffled because it has slipped off her mind. It shows how her head is always in chaos and in doubt because now she does not really want to do it as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition. She does not like the idea of leaving Joy's girlfriend, Becky, with her father. This makes her uncertain with her initial decision (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025). Both options seem to be a hassle for her. It is either she cannot communicate properly with Deirdre or she has to allow and accept her daughter to date a girl.

In **Data 4**, the quote above can be categorized as persistent doubt and uncertainties. Evelyn feels uncertain about the way Joy confronts her when she misgender Becky. She thinks nothing is wrong with the way she calls her. She feels it is just a minor error since it is easier for them to just call each other in Chinese terms. She then proceeds to mispronounce her pronouns a couple of times, indicating she is in doubt about what to call her (Kierkegaard, 1980; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025).

In **Data 5**, the dialogue initiates how Evelyn experiences both persistent doubt and uncertainties when she starts to question her husband's ability to live without her. She feels doubtful seeing her husband acting so silly and naïve in this life as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition. She sees herself to be someone who is in charge and has an important role in the family. She is uncertain whether he could even do something without her help, let alone survive without her (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

In **Data 6**, Evelyn's action above points out how she is both doubtful and uncertain. She feels cornered and crowded as if her apartment reflects her thoughts. Both of them are in chaos because she cannot stop thinking. She feels in doubt about her life; about her role as a mother, daughter, and wife. She feels uncertain about what has gone wrong as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition. However, it seems that she cannot always make the right choice for her family. One of them will always be unhappy. She is not sure which option she should go for (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

In **Data 7**, the text above shows Evelyn's persistent doubts and uncertainties. She realizes how stressed she is and she just cannot seem to take a rest. She feels uncertain whether she has done the right thing by doing everything all at once. However, she feels she has done the right thing because there is no time for her to rest, she has to make the most out of it. Therefore, she feels doubtful about her decision (Kierkegaard, 1980; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

In **Data 8**, that dialogue underscores how Evelyn feels doubtful and uncertain. Deirdre confronts her for not listening to the conversation. However, Evelyn feels uncertain, because her mind is somewhere else. She is confused about whom to listen to. Alpha Waymond says that the universe is in danger, but her problem with Deirdre regarding her receipt might be more important. She is not sure how to respond to them (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

In **Data 9**, the text above indicates Evelyn experiences persistent doubt and uncertainties. Just like before, when Deirdre confronts her saying that the matter in front of her is more important. The same goes with Alpha Waymond, he says that the world is in danger and it is her responsibility to stop it. She is not sure that there is anything she could do that would help to save the world. She is doubtful of herself to make a decision over those two options (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025).

In **Data 10**, the dialogue above figures the persistent doubt and uncertainties of Evelyn. She cannot make up her mind to listen and focus on one conversation. She thinks her husband is the one who is trying to mess up the audit. However, even if she looks worried that Waymond might make it worse, she just cannot get her focus back on the conversation with Deirdre. She is still stuck with Alpha Waymond in the other universe talking about a different matter that makes her feel doubtful and more confused (Kierkegaard, 1980; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025).

In **Data 11**, Evelyn's action indicates persistent doubts and uncertainties. She realizes that she has been given another chance by Deirdre. However, she still feels doubtful as to whether she is able to finish it or not. She also remembers that she has planned a New Year party and it might take up her time preparing it tonight. She feels unsure whether she can do and complete both actions at the same time (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Rafiuddin et al., 2025; Wijaya et al., 2025). Therefore, she asks Deirdre to extend the time, showcasing her fear and inability to make up her mind.

In **Data 12**, the dialogue from Evelyn showcases her persistent doubts and uncertainties. She is unsure of herself to face Deirdre when Deirdre comes back. Evelyn thinks she is going to be confronted or even worse punched, she thinks she has said something wrong that offends her previously. She feels scared and indecisive to do something as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition. She stands there to herself thinking that she is not ready. However, she also does not want to move. She wants to confront her fear, but at the same time, she feels scared and doubtful whether she can handle the consequences or not (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023).

In **Data 13**, the dialogue illustrates Evelyn's persistent doubts and uncertainties. When she does confront her fear, thinking that it is time for her to fight. She punches Deirdre without thinking. However, afterward, it shows how Evelyn does not calculate her action and the consequences as an inclination not to believe or accept the condition. Now that the damage is done, she is uncertain whether she has made the right choice or not (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025). Therefore, she blames Alpha Waymond for encouraging her to take that step, it indicates how she feels doubtful of her choice and ends up blaming someone.

In **Data 14**, the text above can be categorized as persistent doubts and uncertainties. Evelyn feels doubtful of herself and Waymond after she finds out that Waymond wants to divorce her. She is confused about what makes Waymond think that it is okay to have a divorce.

It makes her feel unsure and makes her marriage fall apart as a sign not to believe or accept the condition. She asks herself what goes wrong or maybe she does something wrong (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025).

In **Data 15**, the quotation above points out that Evelyn experiences persistent doubts and uncertainties. Her action indicates doubt when she asks Alpha Waymond to make his Evelyn do it instead of her. She cannot seem to be sure when Alpha Waymond says she is the right Evelyn to defeat the evil villain, Jobu Tupaki. Evelyn feels she is not the right one to fight Jobu as a sign not to believe or accept the condition. She doubts herself, she can barely talk to Deirdre regarding her receipts let alone defeating an evil villain. She is uncertain about Waymond's decision to choose her, she is more uncertain in herself to actually do what Waymond says (Kierkegaard in Shea, 2023; Mulyanto et al., 2025; Pasopati et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

As Evelyn Wang explores a bewildering multiverse, her enduring doubt and uncertainty are highlighted in the movie script *Everything Everywhere All at Once* by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert. As Evelyn is thrown into innumerable alternate universes, she starts to doubt her identity and the purpose of her life. With every new version of herself, she questions the purpose of her life and whether any of her decisions were ever sufficient or correct. Her sense of identity and direction are disrupted by this continuous uncertainty, which leads to a never-ending internal struggle. Her confusion and emotional detachment are only intensified by her problem in the multiverse. The existential struggle to find stability in an unstable world where the pressure to find meaning is complicated by limitless possibilities is reflected in Evelyn's experience. Her experience shows how unresolved doubt can lead to despair, but it can also be a necessary step in facing oneself and redefining one's own truth.

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