

SELF DEVOTION TO BEAUTY AS A FORM OF HAPPINESS IN JOHN GALSWORTHY'S QUALITY

^aDiah Ikawati Ayuningtias, ^bDivya Wenanda

^{a,b} English Study Program, Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences
University of Trunojoyo Madura

Abstract

The Quality by John Galsworthy tells much about Mr. Gessler, a boot maker, who devoted his life in making high quality boots. He considered good boots an art. An art is the representation of beautiful things. A Beautiful thing gives pleasure which means bringing happiness to someone. Mr. Gessler devoted his life to make only good boots because he found happiness in it. He even sacrificed all his possession, including his life for good boots. At the end he died in starvation because he did not have money for eating.

Keywords: Beauty, Happiness, Quality

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to present the analysis of a self dedication to the beauty as a form of happiness in John Galsworthy's *Quality*. The term happiness refers to the general desire to gain a particular type of fulfillment. (Wang, 2009, pp. 243–244). The desire to keep making high quality boots as a form of happiness can be seen in John Galsworthy's short story *Quality*.

This short story tells about shoemakers, Mr. Gessler and his brother, who made a high quality shoes. For him, quality is number one. Mr Gessler always used high quality material including leather for the shoes that his customers ordered.. That was why he refused the mass production shoes done by shoe factory that were mushrooming at that time.

Because of his high standard in making shoes, The Gesslers had to struggle to survive their business in a hard competition with shoes factory which produced shoes in mass production. They even had to sacrifice their properties and their lives in order to maintain his high standard. At first, the Gesslers had to sell one of their shops. Then, they let themselves be lack of money. At the end of the story it is told that Mr. Gessler died because of starvation.

This article will analyze what has been done by Mr. Gessler in relation to the concept of happiness and identity. It tries to reveal the reason why Mr. Gessler was working hard to maintain his high standard in shoe making which led him to a sorrow that caused him to death.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Happiness

Happiness is the important aspect in human's life. Human being continuously seeks happiness in their life. Hence, happiness is the goal of every action that human being take. (Kenny, 2007, p. 220). Betham and Aristotle have different view about

happiness. For Betham, happiness is pleasure, and their relation is cause and effect. The value of each pleasure was the same regardless its cause. On the other hand, according to Aristotle, the activity enjoyed was with happiness, hence the value of happiness was the same as the value of the activity enjoyed (Kenny, 2007, p. 221).

Pleasure is a kind of sensation whose source can be from many things, including eating, drinking, the achievement, kindness to animals, or belief in the favor of a supreme being (Kenny, 2007, p. 221). Happiness can be from both individual and social factors. Research on happiness reveals that the individual factors that bring happiness can be associated with many desirable attributes such as positive self-views, sociability, prosocial behavior, and creativity, as well as successes across major life domains such as work, love, and health (Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener 2005, cited in (Stets & Trettevik, 2016)); whereas the social factors can be in the form of people's higher position in the stratification system along such dimensions as race/ethnicity, education, income, and marital status (Schnittker 2008a; Yang 2008, cited in (Stets & Trettevik, 2016, p. 1)).

Aristotle proposes two features that are built into the notion of happiness. The first is that happiness is as the end of certain act that one take, rather than a means. In this feature, what is thought as a form of happiness such as being rich, famous, or possessing something becomes the goal of an action. In addition, Aristotle insists that happiness is pursued for its own well-being. The second feature of happiness is self sufficient which refers to some good or set of goods that makes life worth living in itself. For the second feature, happiness can be found in certain object that makes the owner feel that his life is worthy whenever he can have it. In addition, Aristotle concludes that happiness must have the properties of independence and stability (Kenny, Anthony; Kenny, 2006, p. 14).

Concept of Beauty

The term "beauty" has been defined since centuries ago. Hume defines beauty as an order and constitution part that is fitted to give pleasure and satisfaction to the human being's soul. Pleasure is the essence of beauty. (Kenny, 2007, p. 251). A beautiful object will give pleasure to its audience as well as satisfaction to the creator. When giving a judgment whether an object is beautiful, Kant writes that judgment of beauty is based on feeling, specifically feelings of pleasure. The pleasure should be disinterested, which means that we find pleasure in something because it is beautiful. It is not that we say something beautiful because we find it pleasurable (Mcmahon, 2005, p. 31).

One object that represents beauty is art. Art is the expression of the artist's emotion. The purpose of art is the production of beauty (Kenny, 2007). People always find beauty in art. Hence, art brings pleasure to the consumer as well as the producer. Since it brings pleasure, seeing an art makes people happy.

DISCUSSION

John Galsworthy's *Quality* tells about a shoemaker, Mr. Gessler. He, with his brother, made high quality shoes. In the past he was the shoemaker of the Royal family. He made boots using high quality material, and never let others do or help him in the process of making boots. It is because he wanted to guarantee that the boots would be the best and fit to the customers.

He would never have tolerated in his house leather on which he had not worked himself. Besides, they were too beautiful—the pair of pumps, so inexpressibly slim, the patent leathers with cloth tops, making water come into one's mouth, the tall brown riding boots with marvelous sooty glow, as if, though new, they had been worn a hundred years

"Ah! Mr. Gessler," I stammered, "but your boots are really too good, you know! See, these are quite decent still!" And I stretched out to him my foot. He looked at it.

"Oh! Mr. Gessler," I said, sick at heart; "how splendid your boots are! See, I've been wearing this pair nearly all the time I've been abroad; and they're not half worn out, are they?"

For Mr. Gessler, his hand-made boots is art. He enjoyed making them. He never thought that it was difficult to make them himself even though he was getting old and weak. He was happy making the boots.

I remember well my shy remark, one day, while stretching out to him my youthful foot:

"Isn't it awfully hard to do, Mr. Gessler?"

And his answer, given with a sudden smile from out of the sardonic redness of his beard: "Id is an Ardt!"

Without a word he would leave me, retiring whence he came, or into the other portion of the shop. And I would continue to rest in the wooden chair, inhaling the incense of his trade. Soon he would come back, holding in his thin, veined hand a piece of gold-brown leather. With eyes fixed on it, he would remark: "What a beautiful piece!" When I, too, had admired it, he would speak again. "When do you want dem?" And I would answer: "Oh! As soon as you conveniently can." And he would say: "Tomorrow forndnighd?" Or if he were his elder brother: "I will ask my brudder!"

For Mr. Gessler, boots is an art. Art is something beautiful, which gives people pleasure. Pleasure is happiness. Mr. Gessler finds a pleasure whenever he sees his high quality hand-made boots. Making good boots gives him happiness, and then makes his life worthy. As it is proposed by Aristotle that the second feature of the notion of happiness is that happiness can be found in certain object that makes the owner feel that his life is worthy whenever he can have it.

Since he found happiness in making beautiful boots as he called it an art, Mr. Gessler dedicated his life in making high quality boots. He did not care whether or not there are people ordering his boots. He was just willing to make good boot from beautiful and selected leather. Because his dedication, he was lost in the tight competition with big firms which produced shoes in mass production. Slowly he lost his customers. There were fewer and fewer people going to his shop to order boots.

"Dey get id all," he said, "dey get id by advertisement, nod by work. Dey dake it away from us, who lofe our boods. Id gomes to thisó bresently I haf no work. Every year id gets lessó you will see "Dey get id all," he said, "dey get id by advertisement, nod by work. Dey dake it away from us, who lofe our boods. Id gomes to thisó bresently I haf no work. Every year id gets lessó you will see." And looking at his lined face I saw things I had never noticed before, bitter things and bitter struggleóand what a lot of gray hairs there seemed suddenly in his red beard!

In fact, Mr. Gessler feels sad because of losing his customers. Nevertheless, he did not want to lower his standard in making boots. Making high quality and beautiful boots was his pride. And he did not want to lose it just because of following the market demand. Mr. Gessler showed his self respect by maintaining the quality of the boots he made. Mr. Gessler's decision shows us that he has dignity. Dignity, besides contentment, is elements of happiness. It is stated by Mill that "happiness according to Mill, involves not just contentment, but also a sense of dignity; any amount of the lower pleasures, without this, would not amount to happiness" (Kenny, Anthony; Kenny, 2006, p. 31).

"Id 'urds you dere," he said. "Dose big virms 'ave no self-respect. Drash!" And then, as if something had given way within him, he spoke long and bitterly. It was the only time I ever heard him discuss the conditions and hardships of his trade.

Mr. Gessler's dedication on beautiful good boots was costly. Since making good boots was expensive, Mr. Gessler only made it by order *"He made only what was ordered, never taking ready-made shoes down from the shelf."* His lesser customer ordering boots made him unable to earn his living. At first, he had to sacrifice his properties. He had to give up one of his shops because he could not afford it. He had to sell one of his shops, and lived together with his brother in his small shop.

To get away from his reproachful eyes and voice I hastily remarked: "What have you done to your shop?"

He answered quietly: "Id was too exbensif. Do you wand some boods?"

At last, Mr. Gessler had to sacrifice his life for his good boots. He let himself starving because of having no money to buy food. He was in starvation when people found him dead in his shop, while holding his boot. This condition shows that Mr. Gessler was willing to suffer to maintain the quality of the boots he made. He never felt sad because of it. He felt sad because no people wanted good boots.

"Oh!" he answered; "dead."

"Dead! But I only received these boots from him last Wednesday week."

"Ah," he said; "a shockin' go. Poor old man starved 'imself."

"Good God!"

Mr. Gessler was willing to sacrifice his life because he found pleasure whenever making beautiful boots. It means that his happiness lies on making high quality boots. He found so much pleasure in high quality boots that he even did not care on him himself. All he wanted was making good boots. The money he got from the buyer was used for his business.

"But starvationó!"

"That may be a bit flowery, as the sayin' isó but I know myself he was sittin' over his boots day and night, to the very last. You see I used to watch him. Never gave 'imself time to eat; never had a penny in the house. All went in rent and leather. How he lived so long I don't know. He regular let his fire go out. He was a character. But he made good boots.

CONCLUSION

Happiness involves dignity and contentment. These two elements can be found in Mr. Gessler. He had dignity in making high quality boots and found contentment in it. He found pleasure and satisfaction in himself whenever he made good boots for his customer, which brings him happiness. This made him determined to dedicate his life in making good boots. His total devotion has caused him ignore one of his basic needs to life, that is food. He spent all of his money got from his selling boots on leather, the material of the boots, and the rent of his shop, place where he can do his business. What happened to Mr. Gessler has affirmed that beauty gives people pleasure which makes people happy. Once a person gets happiness in his life, he feels enough that he is willing to sacrifice other things.

REFERENCES

- Kenny, Anthony; Kenny, C. (2006). *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Utility*. UK: Imprint Academic.com.
- Kenny, A. (2007). *Philosophy of the Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.
- McMahon, J. A. (2005). The Significance of Plato's Notions of Beauty and Pleasure in the Philosophy of Kant. In *Greek Research In Australia* (pp. 27–34).
- Stets, J. E., & Trettevik, R. (2016). Happiness and Identities. *Social Science Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.04.011>
- Wang, S. (2009). *Aquinas and Sartre on Freedom, Personal Identity and the Possibility of Happiness*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press.