ANDREW BECKETT’S FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN JONATHAN DEMME’S *PHILADELPHIA* MOVIE (1993): AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to analyze Jonathan Demme’s Philadelphia movie by using Individual Psychological Approach. The objectives of the study are to reveal the structural elements of the movie and to reveal Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights. The result of the study hopefully gives a great contribution to the knowledge development of literary work study and deeper understanding about the movie from individual psychology perspective.

This study is qualitative in the form of library. The objects of the study are “Philadelphia” movie and the movie script. The primary data: dialogs, events, settings, and technical elements are taken from the movie and the movie script, the secondary data: the biography of the author, the psychological perspective, and website about the movie script are taken from other sources. The data are collected through library research and analyzed with descriptive qualitative analysis by using Adler’s book entitled: “Theory of Individual Psychology”.

The analysis of structural elements reveals the good quality of the narrative and the technical elements of Philadelphia movie that makes it a real life-like movie; the narrative elements develop alive and interesting characters, plot, point of view, theme, message, and cast; the technical elements apply representative and appropriate settings, lighting, camera distance shots, costume and make-up, figure expression and movement, editing, and sound.

Based on the psychological analysis, Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights is reflected through his striving for the right to work as manifested in: (1) his suing against his employer Charles Wheeler for firing him because of AIDS, (2) his desperate seeking for a defense lawyer, (3) his hardworking preparation for the trial process, and (4) his genuine testimony in the trial process. Though he finally dies for his AIDS, Andrew Beckett’s striving works well; the jury ordered Charles Wheeler to pay more than $5,000,000 for back pay, loss of benefits, damages related with mental anguish and humiliation, and punitive damages.

Key Words: Human Rights, Individual Psychology
1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study  Everyone has the same rights as they are endowed by God without distinction of any kind, including the right to work. In Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Lewis and Skutsch, 2001: 971) it is stated that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. However, a violation of the right to work is still found in some areas.

One of the forms of the right to work violation is illustrated in Jonathan Demme’s Philadelphia movie. It exposes a discriminatory treatment towards an AIDS-infected person. In the movie, the AIDS-infected character Andrew Beckett who worked as a lawyer for Wyant, Wheeler corporate firm, was fired after his employers Charles Wheeler and friends knew that he had AIDS. As it was a form of discrimination, he then filed a lawsuit against his employers for the discriminatory firing and won the case, though finally died for his AIDS complication.

As a product of technology, a movie often reflects the real situation and condition of the society; some filmmakers often take the crucial issues happening in the surrounding society as the theme of their movies. This makes some movies look true to life, including Philadelphia movie. As it is, according to Jonathan Demme, inspired by his AIDS-infected friend Botas, apart from the claim of Boyers’s family that story of the movie is similar with the case of the AIDS-infected attorney Geoffrey Bowers, Philadelphia does picture the real life problems of an AIDS-infected person, especially in the state of Philadelphia, who often experiences discriminatory treatment in some areas.

In the light of Individual Psychology, the major character Andrew Beckett’s characterization does picture the real image of an AIDS-infected person’s personality traits. As a matter of fact, a person with AIDS is still rejected, regarded as inferior, and becomes the target of prejudice and discrimination by the society because of misconception about AIDS. In
Philadelphia movie, the major character Andrew Beckett’s fight against his employers Charles Wheeler and friends’ discriminatory treatment was a matter of individual psychological reaction.

Based on the description above, the researcher is interested to analyze Jonathan Demme’s Philadelphia movie, specified to the major character Andrew Beckett’s fight for the right to work, from individual psychological perspective. For this purpose, the researcher puts her research title: ANDREW BECKETT’ FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN JONATHAN DEMME’S PHILADELPHIA MOVIE (1993): AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH.

**Problem Statement** The problem statement of the research is formulated as: How are the structural elements of Philadelphia movie evolved? How is Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights reflected in Philadelphia movie? **The objective of the Study** The study is aimed to reveal the structural elements of Philadelphia movie and to reveal Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights.

**Limitation of the Study** The structural elements which are analyzed are limited to the narrative elements and the technical elements; the character who is analyzed is Andrew Beckett, a gay and AIDS-infected lawyer who experiences human rights violation; the human rights is limited to equal treatment in employment; and the approach is based on psychological book entitled Individual Psychology by Adler.

**Benefit of the Study** The expected theoretical benefit of the study is to contribute to the knowledge development of literary work study on Jonathan Demme’s Philadelphia movie; the expected practical benefits are to give deeper understanding about the movie from the aspect of individual psychology and to give input to other researchers who are interested in analyzing Philadelphia movie.

**Literature Review** The research concerning with the analysis of Philadelphia movie among others are: ANDREW BECKETT’S STRUGGLE FOR BETTER LIFE IN JONATHAN DEMME’S PHILADELPHIA MOVIE:
A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH by Jana Utami Muhayati (Ahmad Dahlan University, 2006) which focused her analysis on Andrew Beckett’s struggle for better life and resulted in the eradication of the discrimination of AIDS; STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF GAY AND AIDS-INFECTED PERSON OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN JONATHAN DEMME’S PHILADELPHIA MOVIE: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH by Sandra Hapsari (Semarang University, 2007) which focused her analysis on Andrew Beckett and his defense lawyer Joe Miller’s struggle for human rights and resulted in the eradication of the discrimination toward a gay and AIDS-infected person; and STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN JONATHAN DEMME’S PHILADELPHIA MOVIE: AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH by Nur Anik Bahagiawati (Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, 2009) which focused her analysis on the major character’s personality and his struggle for equality in employment.

This research is different from the three previous research in that it focuses on the analysis of the major character Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights, especially the right to work, from the perspective of individual psychology.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Type of Research The research is a qualitative study in the form of library; it is to observe a movie as a literary work. The Research Object The objects of the research are Philadelphia movie and the movie script. Type of Data and Data Source The primary data consist of dialogs, events, settings, and other supporting technical elements which are taken from the movie and the movie script; the secondary data consist of the biography of the author, the psychological perspective, and website about the movie which are taken from other sources related to the primary data. Method of the Data Collection Both the primary data and the secondary data are collected through library research; the researcher reads the script while watching the movie, finds out the important data, sorts and arranges the data based on their classification, and develops the data in relation with the problems of the study. Technique of
**Data Analysis** The data are analyzed by using descriptive qualitative analysis; the researcher interprets and analyzes the data according to the context by using individual psychological approach based on the book entitled: “Theory of Individual Psychology” by Adler.

3. **UNDERLYING THEORY**

a. **Notion of Individual Psychology**

Adler in Feist (1985: 64) states that individual psychology insists on the fundamental unity of personality. Adler in Hjelle and Ziegler (1992: 139) adds that individual psychology depicts the human being a single, indivisible, self consistent, and unified. In short, individual psychology refers to the fundamental unity of every human personality depicting behavior, indivisibility, and self consistent in relation to the final goal of superiority.

b. **Basic Principles of Individual Psychology**

According to Adler in Hjelle and Ziegler (1992: 141-146), there are six basic principles of Individual psychology, they are: inferiority feeling and compensation, striving for superiority, style of life, social interest, creative self, and fictional finalism.

1) **Inferiority Feeling and Compensation**

Every human being has a feeling of inferior due to disease, abnormal physics or mental, incapability to do something, as well as inferior from birth. Many efforts, such as heightening self confidence, being brave and unashamed, believing in own self, are done as compensation to minimize the inferiority feeling.

2) **Striving for Superiority**

Striving for superiority is a kind of motive to become superior from being inferior. It is the fundamental force in life; without striving for superiority one’s life would be unthinkable. When it is done selfishly for the sake of one’s personal goal by ignoring others, it is destructive. Instead, when it is done cooperatively for the sake of one another’s goal, is constructive.
3) **Style of Life**

Style of life refers to the flavor of a person’s existence encompassing the unique patterns of traits, behaviors, and habits, determined by a specific inferiority and its compensation. It reflects and influences on how an individual leads a life, interacts with others, and so forth. There are four styles of life: the ruling type, the getting type, the avoiding type, and the socially useful type.

4) **Social Interest**

Adler in Feist (1985: 71) defines social interest as attitude of relatedness with humanity on general, as well as empathy for each member of human race. Hjelle and Ziegler (1992: 147) confirms that social interest reflects that humans are social creatures. All people have social interest; some have normal social interest, some others have lack of social interest.

5) **Creative Self**

Creative self means the influences of any environment toward a person in solving or overcoming the problem of life. By environment it refers to the surrounding people, situation, and condition. So, the environment is an important factor that affects people in solving the problems of life.

6) **Fictional Finalism**

Adler in Hjelle and Ziegler (1992: 153) theorizes that our ultimate goals (those goals which give our life direction and purpose) are fictional goals that can neither be tested nor confirmed against reality. So, fictional finalism is a people’s dream about the future life. Though unreal, it can grow people’s encouragement and motivation for a better future.

c. **Structural Elements of Movie**

Both movies and novels have structural elements. They are different in that novels only have narrative elements while movies not only have narrative elements, but they require technical elements as well.
1) Narrative Elements

Narrative elements are the internal structure of the story. They describe the story parts, arrangement of the parts, and how the parts are related. The narrative elements of movie consist of: character and characterization, plot, point of view, theme, message, and cast. The narrative elements have important roles in the movie making as they support the story of the movie to look real, alive, and interesting (Koesnosoebroto, 1988: 37-88).

2) Technical Elements

Mise-en-scene is the most familiar technique of cinema which refers to everything put before the camera in preparation for filming. According to Phillips (2005:11), it originally means a director’s staging of a play. According to Bordwell and Thompson (1990:127), it means “staging in action”. It encompasses so many elements that contribute to the look and meaning of a scene. They include: setting, lighting, cinematography, costume and make-up, figure expression and movement, editing, and sounds.

d. Theory of Human Rights

Human rights are the basic rights which belong to every human being and they are possessed since someone is born. In Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Lewis and Skutsch, 2001: 969) has convinced that everyone has the right for life, liberty and security of person. However, in some areas there have been some discriminatory treatments against a gay and an AIDS-infected person.

1) Discrimination of AIDS

AIDS or the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is an extremely serious disorder that results from severe damage to the body’s defense against disease, linked with the sexual encounters of the victims with the agent possibly entering the blood stream through the anus. HIV positives suffer a lot of discrimination in occupation and public services.
2) Discrimination of Gay

Gay is description term which means homosexual (Windy, 1997:134). In society, homosexual is regarded as an unacceptable sexual behavior because it is against norms and values that can affect mental and physical disturbance. Consequently, the gay people experience discrimination in their lives, including in occupation, salary and job.

e. Theoretical Application

The analysis on the major character Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights in Philadelphia movie uses individual psychological approach covering some stages: firstly, the researcher notices the action and dialogues of the characters; secondly, the researcher studies the theory of individual psychology; after that, the researcher makes the relation between the analysis of the character’s action, dialogues, and thought and the theory of individual psychology.

4. RESEARCH FINDING

This research concerns with the analysis of Jonathan Demme’s Philadelphia movie in order to reveal the structural elements of the movie and the major character Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights. The analysis of the structural elements includes the analysis of the narrative elements and the technical elements. The analysis of Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights includes the analysis of the discrimination he experiences in the work place and his fight against the discrimination viewed from individual psychology.

The analysis of the narrative elements of the movie reveals some findings. First, the major character in Philadelphia movie is Andrew Beckett and the minor or supporting characters among others are Joe Miller, Miguel Alvarez, Charles Wheeler, and Walter Kenton; both the major and the minor characters’ physical, mental, and behavioral traits are easy to catch as they only have one outstanding trait or feature and tend to stay the same throughout the story. Second, the plot of the movie story is developed by using the combination of progression and flashback through which the story flows in
such a real life-like story that makes the movie alive and interesting and enables the audience to get the whole features of the characters and the story more completely, from the beginning to the end of the story. Third, the point of view used in the story is the non participant or the third person point of view; the narrator is not involved in the story, but each character represents his/her own perspective. Fourth, the theme of the movie is justice for all; everyone has the right to equal justice, including an AIDS-infected person. Fifth, the message the director Jonathan Demme wants to convey through his movie is to suggest the audience to treat an AIDS-infected person as equally as a normal person. Sixth, the movie casts some famous and brilliant actors and actresses: Tom Hank (Andrew Beckett), Denzel Washington (Joe Miller), Antonio Banderas (Miguel Alvarez), Jason Robards (Charles Wheeler), Robert Ridgely (Walter Kenton), Joanne Woodward (Sarah Beckett), Mary Steenburgen (Belinda Conine), and many others.

The Analysis of the technical elements of the movie yields some findings. First, the setting of the movie is quite representative; some representative places such as Joe Miller’s Law Office, Action AIDS Office, Mellon Bank Building, The Pharmacy, and Philadelphia City Hall are taken as the setting of place and the setting of time revealed in the movie which illustrated the situation and condition in the periods between 1984 and 1989 is also quite representative as in that periods of time, the issue of AIDS became the hottest issue. Second, the movie mostly uses fill lighting as it is categorized as a classical movie; most scenes are much displayed in black or dark image in order to bring an image that the movie is classic. Third, the camera distance applied by the director of photography can be classified into seven types: extreme long shot to picture a barely visible human figure, long shot to picture a prominent figure with background domination, medium long shot to picture a human figure at the same distance as nonhuman subjects, medium shot to picture a human figure with the camera frames from the waist up, medium close-up to picture a human figure with the camera frames from the chest up, close-up to picture a figure clearly, and extreme close-up to picture a figure
with singling out a portion of the face, isolating a detail, and magnifying the mime. Fourth, the costume and the make-up of the actors and the actresses of the movie are very appropriate; the costumes are designed in line with the setting of time and place, as well as the profession of the characters; the appropriate make-up is applied to the face of the actors and actresses in line with the characters’ personality traits and physical condition they play. Fifth, the figure expression and movement are well-performed; the characters’ facial expressions and appearances really look natural as if they were not acting. Sixth, the editing is done well; the editor joins the shots, the end of one to the beginning of another well; the editor changes what is suitable and possible to change. Seventh, most of the music in the movie is played soft-pop-jazzy in order to support the classical image of the movie; the sound of the music is dolby stereo so that the audience can hear the music from many sides clearly.

The individual psychological analysis reveals some findings related with the major character Andrew Beckett’s individuality as a gay and an AIDS-infected person. First, Andrew Beckett feels inferior as reflected through his concealing about his gayness and AIDS in front of people, especially people in the office, which is merely due to lack of social factors; many people still regard gay as an unnatural lifestyle and shun those whom they know to be infected AIDS that lead them to behave a gay and an AIDS-infected person as the target of prejudice and discrimination; he concealed his gayness and AIDS in front of Charles Wheeler and friends after hearing their jokes about a gay’s sexual orientation. Second, Andrew Beckett’s striving for superiority takes in the form of fighting against the discriminatory treatment; Andrew Beckett sued his employers Charles Wheeler and friends for firing him because of AIDS and he succeeded in convincing the jury that his firing was a violation of human rights principles. Third, Andrew Beckett’s lifestyle is gay and socially useful type; Andrew Beckett lived his partner Miguel Alvarez but he was infected with AIDS when he had relationship with a gay he met in the gay movie theater. Fourth, Andrew Beckett’s social interest takes in the form of establishing a good relationship with other people by being kind, friendly,
easy-going, loving and caring. Fifth, Andrew Beckett’s creative self is shown through his strategy to make his suit against his employers succeed as reflected through his effort to make Joe Miller willing to be his defense lawyer and his hardwork to prepare himself with law materials and evidence for the trial process. Sixth, Andrew Beckett’s fictional finalism takes in the form of his future expectation that he will always do his best for Wyant, Wheeler corporate firm as reflected through his consistent and absolute performance in handling the case; Andrew Beckett’s expectation did not coincide with the reality since he had been fired because of AIDS, not because of his incompetence.

The human rights violations analysis provides some findings related with the discrimination against a person living with AIDS and a gay. First, Andrew Beckett as an AIDS-infected person experiences a discriminatory treatment in the work place as reflected through his firing because of AIDS by his employers; Andrew Beckett was fired as soon as his employers had already known that he had AIDS. Andrew Beckett also experiences a discriminatory treatment in social service as reflected through the availability of a room in the library specified to a person with AIDS; Andrew Beckett was offered to read in a private research room by the librarian when he was sitting in the same room as normal people used to sit. As a matter of fact, Andrew Beckett does not experience a discrimination treatment in the family life; all of his family members, including his mother, father, brothers, sisters, and brothers and sisters in law, had known that he had AIDS, but they did not put him away. Instead, they loved and cared of him equally as other members of family as if he had not had AIDS as reflected through their support to his decision to sue against his employers for firing him because of AIDS, not only before the trial of his case but also during the trial process; they were only deeply concerned with his condition. Second, Andrew Beckett as a gay, as a matter of fact, does not experience any discriminatory treatments in the work place, public services, as well as in the family; there was no scene in the movie entailing people’s discrimination against Andrew Beckett as a gay; he only became the target of people’s prejudice as reflected through people’s jokes about gays’
sexual orientation as done by Charles Wheeler and friends, Joe Miller, and some people in the café, and also reflected through the demonstration of antigay people in front of the court when Andrew Beckett was about to have the trial process.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the structural elements of Philadelphia movie and the individual psychological analysis on the major character Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights, the researcher comes to conclusions. First, the structural elements of the movie reveals the good quality of the movie as manifested through its alive and interesting narrative elements and its representative and appropriate technical elements; the narrative elements develop flat characters, combination of progression and flashback plot, a non participant or third person-point of view, a justice for all-theme, an equal treatment toward a person with AIDS-message, and some famous and brilliant cast; the technical elements apply some representative settings, lighting, camera distance shots, costume and make-up, appropriate figure expression and movement, editing, and sound. The people’s high appreciation in Academy Awards also proves the good quality of the structural elements of the movie. Second, Andrew Beckett’s fight for human rights as an AIDS-infected person is reflected through his striving for the right to work as manifested in: his suing against his employers for firing him because of AIDS, his desperate seeking for a defense lawyer, his hardworking preparation for the trial process, and his genuine testimony in the trial process. With a great support from his family, Andrew Beckett’s striving for the right to work works well; most of the jury agreed that Andrew Beckett’s firing was discrimination against a person living with AIDS for which Charles Wheeler and friends were ordered to pay totaled more than $5.000.000 for back pay, loss of benefits, damages related with mental anguish and humiliation, and punitive damages; Andrew Beckett was finally dead for his AIDS complication after the trial process had been over. Third, apart from people’s prejudice, there is no evidence found in the movie indicating a discriminatory treatment toward Andrew Beckett as a gay.
REFERENCES


