

**COPING BEHAVIOR OF GUIDO OREFICE
IN ROBERTO BENIGNI'S *LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL* (1997):
INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**



Research Paper

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By:

FITRI MEYLIANA

A 320 060 020

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY

MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Life is beautiful (La Vita e Bella) the Grand Prix winner at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, is much like two movies in one. In tone, temperament, and intent, they are vastly different, one is poignant and powerful, and the other is light, airy, and a little silly. It is directed by Roberto Benigni and the producers are Gianluigi Braschi and Elda Ferri. The script is written by Vincenzo Cerami and Roberto Benigni him self. Roberto Benigni also the main character of this movie. Simona Paggi is the editor of this movie. It distributed by Miramax Film (USA) and releases in Italy on 20 December 1997, also in some other countries like United States on 23 October 1998, Australia on 26 December 1998, United Kingdom on 12 February 1999, New Zealand on 5 March 1999 and Thailand on 19 March 1999. The duration of this movie is 116 minutes and it is a movie which is using 3 languages; Italian, German and English. (James Berardinelli, 1998)

The movie is the product of Italian comic sensation Roberto Remigio Benigni, born on October 27th 1952. Early years Benigni was born in Misericordia, a frazione of Castiglion Fiorentino, province of Arezzo (Tuscany) and raised in Manciano. In 1958 Benigni's family moved to Vergaio, near Prato. When he was fourteen he joined the circus,

where he learned some gymnastics and pantomime. His popularity increased with another Arbore's show, *L'altra domenica* (1978), in which Benigni portrayed a lazy film critic who has never watched the movie he is called to speak of. As a Filmography or director, he has made several movies such as: *You Upset Me* in 1983; in 1984 he made *Nothing Left to do but cry*; *The Little Devil (Il piccolo diavolo)* in 1988; in 1991 *Johnny Stecchino*; *The Monster (Il Mostro)* in 1994; *Life is Beautiful* in 1997; in the beginning of 20th century in 2002 he made *Pinochio*; and his latest movie *The Tiger and The Snow (La Tigre e la neve)* in 2005 (Jennifer Rosenberg, 1997).

Life is beautiful is a tragic movie which made in comedy package. This movie tells about a smart and funny Jewish man name Guido Orefice (Roberto Benigni) who came to Arezzo Italy in 1939 to open a bookstore. He was accompanied by his close cousin name Ferruccio Pappini (Sergio Bini Bustric). In Arezzo he stayed in his uncle's house, Eliseo Orefice or Uncle Leo (Giustino Durano). Before open a bookstore, he works as a waiter in Grand Hotel, one of great and famous hotel in Italy. Someday, he met a smart, rich and beautiful woman name Dora (Nicoletta Braschi, real wife of Roberto Benigni). He spellbound with her and they have several occasions to meet in unexpected moment until finally they fell in love each other. They decided to live together and make small happy family, without Dora's mother blessing. She left her rich fiancé and all of her luxury to live together with Guido and got gift from God, a five years old handsome

and cute boy name Joshua (Giorgio Cantarini). They lived happily together for a while until the tragic time came into Dora's life. She lost her lovely husband and son when she got her mother's blessing. They brought into the custody by Nazi's soldier. To show her love and loyalty as a wife and mother, although she is not a Jewish, she begged and insisted to follow inside the train and go to the Nazi concentration camp where her husband and son will be there too with an expectation she will meet them.

In the concentration camp, the men and women were separated so they could not meet each other, just a couple of second they meet when down from the train. Little and innocent Joshua who knows nothing, asked to his father where they are. To calm his son down in order to make him not afraid, finally Guido had to lie to Joshua that they were in a really fun place and follow a fascinating game which is the winner who gets 1000 point first, will get the first prize that is a real tank, Joshua's favorite toy. Little Joshua trusted his father and he had great enthusiasm to follow that game which is the fact that they were in a place of horror and death.

In that place, the healthy men work all day long melting down metal for weapons in a fire place and of course with a high temperature. The women also work all day long to wash the clothes and do more things. While those who are too old or too young are sent to the shower which is that is a gas chamber that will kill them all. Uncle Leo becomes one of the victims of the cruelty of Nazi in the gas chamber. Joshua who should been in the gas chamber too, saved because of his stubborn to take a bath. That

was the suffering of Jewish in the concentration camp, but Guido never gave up saving his son and lovely wife. During in the concentration camp, Guido always making some lies to his son. For example, when one of the Nazi's soldiers read the cruel rules in that place that must be obeyed, Guido admit that he could speak German and translated it into their own language. Guido, who really did not understand about it, arranged the rules in the custody into the rules of game to win a real tank. He did it in order to make his son believed that there is a game for him and of course with his funny expression. Always lying that he did to hide the cruelty from his son. He did everything to save Joshua's life like brought him inside the German's children in order to make him not alone and tasted a lot of delicious food. He did it also in order that he could watch and took care of him.

When the activity of Nazi revealed by the government, Guido hid Joshua in a box at the corner and forbad him to get out till the condition really empty outside and he obeyed his father. That's a pity of Guido, when he tried to save his wife, he captured by the Nazi's soldier and shouted till the death comes to him. At the end of the story, Joshua really rid on a real tank and met his lovely mother.

The film was financially successful, earning 23 million euro in Italy (1997-1998). In the United States, the film earned \$59 million. The film currently holds a 78% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The

movie was shown at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, winning the Grand Prize of the Jury. It also won the Academy Awards for Best Music, Original Dramatic Score and Best Foreign Language Film and Benigni himself won Best Actor for his role. The film was additionally nominated for Academy Awards for Directing, Film Editing, Best Picture, and Best Original Screenplay. Despite a strong performance at the box office, many reviewers were critical of the film for its use of humor in describing the Holocaust (Jennifer Rosenberg, 1997).

Public and reviewers have their own responses to this *Life is Beautiful*, both positive and negative. On the positive side, there are Matthews and Janice Fernheimer. Matthews gives his opinion that Guido has great bravery to mix comedy and tragedy. Although it can be serious things which can make some people against it and give negative responses, but he has dared to minimize cruelty to absurdity or improbable things. Janice Fernheimer also has her own opinion that there are so many moviegoers enjoyed *Life is Beautiful* because it displaces reality and make this movie more interesting to watch and enjoy also not difficult to handle.

On the negative side, there are Steve Wulf and Grace Russo Bullaro. Steve Wulf gives his opinion that the movie history does not really a truth and Benigni still strives for historical accuracy to prove that this movie is based on real story and it can be a minus value for him. Then, Grace also has her negative opinion that with the displacement of

Holocaust into comedy, not only disturb the child's development but also the viewers or moviegoers will have incomplete understanding about the Holocaust. (Valerio Ferme, 2005)

Thus, by understanding the film, the writer has great interest and wants to make research on it according to these following reasons:

First, this film has interesting major character that is Guido Orefice (Roberto Benigni). Guido is not only a smart, funny and creative person but he is also very adaptable man. It is easily for him to make adaptation to the new environment. Everything that he does always make the people around him have a smile. He has so many unique ways to make everybody around him feel happy and comfort. A lot of people like him because his unique characteristics. He has his own perspective to see the whole thing in this world especially life problems. He always faces the problems in his life within wide smile on his lips. He never shows it toward people especially to the people that he loves like his family.

Second, the writer has great interest to the genre of this movie. The director of it that is Roberto Benigni has great bravery to make breakthrough to the film industry. He might be realize that his step would make controversy among the moviegoers but he took a chance and did it very well. After this movie released in several country, it is indeed so that there were pro and contra statement from the moviegoers and movie critics. Although it has controversy, but the unique genre of this movie

which is covered tragic movie in comedy way, definitely make it really interesting and different with the others.

Third, the writer likes the plot of this movie which is the narrator has flashback story to the previous time at the beginning of it and describes every single event in a series of humor and tense. There is a balance between them, so it makes the viewers or moviegoers have no boring time when they watch this movie. For the first part, they will laugh but for the second part, they will have tense. Although the tense will appear in the second part, but the humor still become a part of it. At the end of it, the writer knows that the story is the narrator's own experience. The writer can say that when we have watched this movie, we will always want to repeat, repeat and repeat more to watch and enjoy it.

Fourth, the writer has interest to the setting of this movie especially for it's setting of place. The places or location which are used inside this movie really describe old time and represented all of the events as if on the year where the truly events happened. It brings the viewers as if go back to the old time that is in a year 1939 until 1945.

Fifth, the writer likes the cinematography of this movie. The director and the maker of it make the viewers as if watching old movie because the pictures taking really like in old times. The events inside the movie really delivered to the viewers and moviegoers through the pictures shot.

The last, the writer also likes several moral messages that want to deliver through this movie, like how really unique ways used by a person to make the people around him feel happy and comfort. There are some people who see their life problem in humor or not serious way because they think that this life too much worth to fill with the tears or another sadness. Through this movie we also can see about how great love and sacrifice of father to his family. Inside this movie also there is a faithfulness of a wife to her husband and lie is not always bad things to do because sometimes we have to make some lies to save someone's life.

Therefore, in this research, the writer wants to observe Coping Behavior of Guido Orefice in Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (1997): Individual Psychological Perspective.

B. Literature Review

Life is Beautiful is the Grand Prix winner at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival. The writer found some research related to this film. The first researcher is Elisa Serra (1998) from Università Degli Study of Bologna. The title is *La Vita e Bella: Italiani e Americani a Confronto Sul Caso Benigni*. She focused her research exclusively on the humorous part of *Life is Beautiful*. However, Benigni's movie contains many other ideas and aspects that could be explored for future investigations in the humor studies. The outcome of the study showed that is to say that Italians and Americans perceive humor contained in *Life is Beautiful*. On the other hand, the US sample perceived more the dramatic side of the movie, thus

feeling uncomfortable in front of comic parts. We had the impression that many people didn't laugh because they were inhibited by the topic of the picture, that is to say the Holocaust and the human tragedy generated by Nazism.

The second researcher is Julia Brandon from Denver, Colorado in 1999. She focused on *The Nazism Roberto Benigni's Life is Beautiful*. The outcome of the study showed that in the movie Guido longs for his family to leave the harsh concentration camps that in which the Jews are forced to live. Not once does he succumb to the Nazi and everything he does is for his family.

The third research is *The Secret Histories of Roberto Benigni's Life is Beautiful* by Ruth Ben-Ghiat from The Yale Journal of Criticism in 2001. She focused on the secret or history background behind this movie. The director made this story according to the truth that he got from his father's real experience.

Beside those researches, the writer also takes *Life is Beautiful (La Vita e Bella)* Film Review by James Berardinelli in 1998 which tells about *Life is Beautiful* review from his point of view and assumption from the beginning until the last part of this movie.

The writer's research is different with those researches. Not only the humorous part, the longs of major character for his family to leave the harsh of concentration camp, or secret or history background behind *Life is*

Beautiful movie but the writer also wants to make research deeply to the coping behavior of major character that is Guido Orefice. How the unique ways of Guido to solve his life problem which can make people around him feel happy and comfort.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of the study is how coping behavior of main character reflected in Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*. In this study, the word behavior includes bodily movements, speech and virtually any action of the organism. We can not solve the problems of mental health without substantial knowledge of human motivation and behavior (Vass, 1974:7). Everybody have their own ways to solve their life problem and it is something that Guido Orefice (main character) does too for the people around him which is all of the things that he does always make them so happy and comfort when they are nearby him. He has his own character which makes him so unique.

D. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study relates to the choice of the title and problem. The objective of the study is to analyze the movie based on its structural elements, also to analyze the film script based on individual psychological perspective by Alfred Adler.

E. Limitation of the Study

In this research, the writer gives limitation to focus on individual psychological perspective. It is emphasized on the coping behavior of Guido Orefice as main character in Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* movie script by employing individual psychological perspective as the primary approach.

F. Benefit of the Study

The benefits expected from this study are as follows:

1. Practical Benefit

The study is expected to make the writer's knowledge wider about the play and also the elements inside the movie.

2. Theoretical Benefit

The study is also expected to contribute to the body of knowledge, particularly the literary study of Roberto Benigni's work.

G. Research Method

1. Type of Research

The type of this study is qualitative study in the form of library.

2. Object of the Study

The object of the study is Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* movie and movie script.

3. Data Source

In doing this study, the writer uses two sources of data named primary and secondary data sources.

a. Primary Data Sources

The primary data source is the movie and movie script itself, *Life is Beautiful* by Roberto Benigni.

b. Secondary Data Sources

The secondary data are taken from other sources, which are related to the primary data such as the biography of the author, the psychological perspective and website about *Life is Beautiful* movie script.

4. Data-Collecting Method

The method used in this research is library research. The first step is watching the film while reading the script, then finding out the important data and arranging data into several parts based on its classification and finally developing the data that are provided related to the problem statement which has been chosen.

5. Technique of Data Analysis

In analyzing data, the writer employs descriptive qualitative analysis. This is an interpretation of the text and context analysis to get the characteristic of the data at the *Life is Beautiful* movie script.

H. Research Paper Organization

To make it easy to understand the whole research, the writer divides this paper into five chapters.

Chapter One is introduction that consists of background of the study, problem statement, literature review, objective of the study, limitation of the study, benefit of the study, research method and paper organization. Chapter Two is underlying theory in which the writer explains the theory of psychological that will be employed in this study and theoretical application. Chapter Three is the structural elements analysis of the *Life is Beautiful* movie and script. Chapter Four presents individual psychological analysis dealing with the problems in the *Life is Beautiful* movie script. The last chapter brings the conclusion and suggestion.