**Psychological Development as the Major Theme of**

***The Curious Case of* *Benjamin Button* (2008)**

*The Curious Case of* *Benjamin Button* (2008) is not just a story about an irony fate of the human’s differences. Benjamin is the main character of this movie. He was born with a completely opposite life from other human beings. First, he was born as an elderly, then grew younger throughout the time. His mother died from giving birth to him. He was dramatically ignored from his father, Thomas Button, since their first met. For this reason, Queenie, a woman who work in a nurse house took care of him instead. He grew in the different style of environment from other child in the same age. During his young adult stage, he applied for a work as a tugboat man. After the war, he returned to his homeland and lived with Daisy Fuller, the woman that he loved since his youth. However, when Daisy gave birth to his baby, he decided to leave her in order to avoid being a burden. He spent the rest of his life travelling to other countries. At last, he returned and died as a child, forgetting all his memory. The story obviously shows the psychological development through the main periods of a human’s life: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

First of all, during an infancy, the protagonist, Benjamin reacted on a physical pain. This related to the theory of newborn development. As shown in the fetal development theory, Benjamin from *The Curious Case of* *Benjamin Button* (2008) may receive a harm in his brain during his development before birth. This is because he was born on the last day of the Great War. During his infancy, his brain and organs could be damaged be loud sound and others war factors. In the movie, when Queenie let Dr. Rose observing Benjamin body as a newborn, the doctor confidently said that, “His body is failing him before his life’s begun.” Another theory that can be related to his infancy stage is the perceptual development. Its action will be shown when an infancy’s brain connected itself to response the environmental stimuli. When Queenie introduced Benjamin to all the members in the nurse house, he was smiling and laughing. In the next few scenes, the movie shows abilities that humans gained since their birth: see, hear, smell, and respond. Benjamin showed baby’s capacity by trying to use these skills and abilities to adapt to the environment; survive from danger. For the example, after Thomas Button left Benjamin to the nurse house on his first birthday, he cried when Mr. Weathers accidentally stepped on him.

Secondly, the childhood’s play stage took a huge role demonstrated his development. From the theory of language acquisition, a child in childhood period will start to learn language, interaction with others, muscle control, perception, and memorization. This usually be inspired by a family or media. In *The Curious Case of* *Benjamin Button* (2008), Benjamin stated that he was taught to read when he was 5 years old. The film shows that he started to pronounce the word “molasses.” Moreover, he learned to play the piano from Miss Maple, this supported his development by the muscle control. According to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, Benjamin had an ability to function independently and think for himself. His development from the social and culture interaction outweigh his maturation process of the brain. From the theory of cognitive development, Benjamin reached an assimilation stage. He tried to do the thing that fit to the situation and human nature. For the example, when he saw a group of children in the same age with him playing on the road in front of the nurse house, he curious on the different appearance. He tried to go over the road to play with them even his body could not. During that time, he also has the idea of qualitative changes. He found himself impressed in a beautiful thing. He stated in his diary that Daisy Fuller’s blue eyes are the most beautiful things he had ever seen. He also showed a clear social development. He learned to follow others suggestion and consider if it is acceptable or not by observing the majority’s response. One example of this was when he was asked to walk for the first time. He showed his confusion. However, when he saw that Queenie agreed with the command, he starts to walk.

Moreover, Benjamin’s action and thought during his teenage are able to describe and related to several theories. According to Freud’s theory of psychosexual development, teenagers from the age of 11 will enter he genital stage. In this stage, they will learn to deal with maturity-opposite sex by adapting the values of same-sex parent. There is also the idea of gender schema, the behaviors that organized on how each gender should think or behave. Benjamin behavior in this age can be described in these two terms well. When Benjamin worked with Captain Mike Clark, he was introduced to the place for adult’s activity. When he knew that Captain Mike Clark enjoying sleep with women, he assumed that it is normal. At the result, he copied Captain Mike’s action as the same-sex parent. He did the same thing to the opposite sex. In an addition to this, Benjamin expressed his unpleasant feeling and behavior related to self-esteem and emotion feeling followed the rationalization in personal development theory. He learned to hang out with friends and deeply considered about his responsibility to death person when some elderly in the nurse house passed away.

Additionally, Benjamin’s activities and choices from his adulthood to the dying stage mainly present the idea of isolation in psychological development. According to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, Benjamin entered the young adult stage with a comparison between intimacy and isolation. This shows the increasing of complexity in adult life and an autonomy: ability to take of care one’s self life and decision. He decided to leave the nurse house and went on his journey. The idea of job satisfaction also takes place in the movie. Job satisfaction is the needs a person would demand from his or her occupation, including resources, reward, comfort, and challenged. Benjamin applied for the tugboat man on Captain Mike’s boat as soon as he began his journey. Tugboat man is a hard work that required strength in both physical and mental factors. This presented his desire for the challenged. The movie also related to Levinson’s theory of male development, the season of adulthood which showed that people from age 18 to 20 will seek for their independence and, the people from age 21 to 27 will try an experiment in careers and lifestyles. After these experiments, he understood life more and finally decided to return home. Continually from this season, Benjamin in the age of 28 to 39 discovered his lifestyle adjustment and stability by settling down with his wife, Daisy Fuller. In his pay-off years, from age 45 to 65, he did self-directed stuffs and be engaged in self-evaluation. He came up with contrast ideas about life and leave his family to travel to another countries.

To conclude, *The Curious Case of* *Benjamin Button* (2008) absolutely shows the psychological development through the main period of human life: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. The protagonist, Benjamin Button’s timeline included several theories such as fetal development, perceptual development, cognitive development, Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, Freud’s theory of psychosexual development, Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, Levinson’s theory of male development, and tons of other psychological terms. In my opinion, these theories can related well with Benjamin’s life than a real person because he is a fictional character. It is predicted that these theories should be able to adapt to the reality, but not in the way too obvious.

References

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