

THE PROTAGONIST' SEARCH FOR MEANING:

A Psycho existentialism Analysis of *Ning*

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Sarjana Pendidikan



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ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Everyone would like to exist, and they will do everything to get what they think is a meaningful life. However, each individual perceives a meaningful life differently, and so did the main character of this research subject, a novel titled *Ning*. Therefore, this study would like to investigate what meaningful life actually means to the protagonist and what shape(s) her perception of a meaningful life. This study used psycho-existentialism, which describes three fundamental theories: Freedom of will, will to meaning, and meaning of life. This research aimed to find out what a meaningful life may mean and what affect one's understanding of meaning. The analysis reveals that the protagonist's understanding of a meaningful life; i.e. to be well-educated, was shaped by her parents who thought differently from the community they lived in. However, after she had had a meaningful life, she still needed to obtain another perception of meaningful life. i.e. to become a successful woman with a family and children. The findings are expected to make readers respect what people do to reach a meaningful life better and realize that people have different perspectives of meaningful life because of age, environment and experience.

Keywords: meaningful life, exist, psycho-existentialism, struggle

Introduction

Searching for meaning in life is every human's desire. However, each person has a different opinion about a meaningful life. Some people may associate a meaningful life with having a lot of goods. For example, many Americans are in love with having a modern house, latest model cars, lots of clothes, a wide variety of food and a lot of new electronic gadgets, resulting in a throwaway society where new is better, savings are low and debt is high. The cost and quantity of things that one accumulates measure one's success. (Mueller 1a) Nevertheless, others may think happiness instead of success is the best thing that will make

their life meaningful. This different point of view leads people to have different ways of thinking about a meaningful life.

The dissimilar perceptions of a meaningful life can be seen in the various phenomena existing in the modern society. People generally respect the wealthy and well-educated better than those who are not. Society may treat others differently; some of them believe that appearance makes important perspective about which people are. Take for example if someone go with car, others may think that they come from a wealth family background. When they go with bicycle other may think that she/he come from simple family. However, it is not always people who use car is richer than bicycle. Those perspectives set some people to think that they have to respect they who use car because they are rich, rich people should be educated and respected. However, individual's understanding about meaning may change with age and experience.

One who experiences how meaningful life is change by age is Bill Gates, the chairman of Microsoft. He did not finish his college study to focus on his interest in computer programming and software. As Microsoft is one of the biggest software companies in the world, he decided to stop working in Microsoft and established a charitable foundation with his wife because he realizes that his money can be useful for others who are not as lucky as he is (Fried 2) It is showed that actually Gates have a big opportunity to be rich by working in Microsoft. However he decided to stop working and build a charity foundation because he realizes that life is not always about getting a lot of money.

Another perspective about meaningful life is those who find a meaningful life in being an *Abdi Dalem*, a high-ranked court servant in Central Java. According to *Ngabdul*, one of the *Abdi Dalem* of *Keraton Yogya*. He decided to be an *Abdi Dalem* not because of the

salary, but because being one makes them proud of them self, and this, in a way, fulfills their desire for a meaningful life (pramesti 2a)

Similarly *Ning* by Niken-Anjar depicts a girl who dreams to preserve meaning in life. Growing up in a strict Javanese customs and rules, Ning witnessed how Javanese tradition and the people involved in it were marginalized. She wanted to make her traditional heritage well known and be respected in a wider society. However, although her dream remained, she did not want to be a traditional dancer or a singer like what she did when she was a child. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze what a meaningful life actually means to Ning and what shape(s) her perception of a meaningful life.

To answer the research questions, psycho existentialism would be used to analyze the object material. Psycho existentialism was selected because it believes that human search for meaning is the essence of life (Frankl 113)

Psycho Existentialism

Psycho existentialism is usually concerned with existence, change, freedom and self-cognizance, among other things

Existence precedes essence and some go even further and affirm that essence does not exist, that only existence has reality. All Existentialists emphasize the person as subject. The subject exists, and for some, he alone exists; that is to say, if any essence whatever exists, it is the individual's subjective state of existence (William 167).

One of the important subjects is to be successful. Sahakian believes that everyone has essence and desire. He also maintains subconsciously people put the essence to be exist as

their existence in social community, even, people tend to be selfish to be one who affirm themselves as an important subject whatever the condition is (167)

Vienna explains that psycho existentialism views success as a big product of dedication. It believes that people should not aim at success because the more they aim at it and make it a target; the more they are going to miss it. Success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: people have to let it happen by not caring about it. If they listen to their conscience and carry it out to the best of knowledge, they will see that in the long run, success will follow because they have forgotten to think of it (16-17) the most important person in Psycho Existentialism is Viktor Frankl. His theory and therapy grew out of his experiences in Nazi death camps. Watching who did and did not survive if they were given an opportunity to survive, he concluded that what he saw fitted Friedrich Nietzsche's idea that: "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost anyhow." (Frankl 121) He saw that people who had hopes of being reunited with loved ones, or who had projects they felt a need to complete, or who had great faith, tended to have better chances than those who had lost all hope. He called his form of therapy **logo therapy**, from the Greek word **logos**, which can be meant as study, word, spirit, God, or meaning. Frankl focuses on the last sense; i.e. meaning. He made three fundamental assumptions which form a chain of interconnected links, Freedom of will, Will to meaning, and Meaning of life

(1) Freedom of will

Frankl believes that the will toward meaningful existence asserts itself when the obstacles have been cleared away and man has freedom of will belonging to the immediate data of experience (2a) The meaning of freedom is to have such a high degree of certainty that no power in the world can shake someone from their belief and force them to act contrary to what they know to be true. This needs a combination of both mind and heart but it first has to be *grounded* in the mind, in being convinced of something that just makes good *sense* (Frankl 212)

However, Bastaman argues that human beings are not exactly free though they claim to be free. Because of their amazing potential ability, they might not realize that they actually have some limitations, such as psychological limitation (ability, skill, talent etc), biological limitation (age, power, stamina, etc), and sociological limitation (chance, social responsibility, obedient to norm etc) (41). When human beings want to be free, they will respond to that limitation and broke it. They broke it because with limitation they can't reach their desire getting the freedom of will. In this case, self actualization is important. Self actualization is an ongoing process of fully developing a personal potential. It is not an attainable aim the more one would strive for it. Process is considered more important than the goal itself. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence; that is the ability to focus attention on doing something for the sake of others, as opposed to self-actualization, in which doing something for oneself is an end goal (Nutshell 133)

(2) Will to Meaning

Frankl says that people will do everything to be meaningful to his society (6 a) This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by the people; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy their own *will* to meaning (Nuthsell 121) People believe that happiness and satisfaction are different from each other. They have their own measurement on it. One may feel they have fulfilled being a meaningful person, but others may not.

There are some ways that people use to be a meaningful member of the society. The recent phenomenon of people using tablet computer is one example. To be considered modern, technology literate, busy and important, people use it because it can be brought anywhere so that everyone can see it. Having such a gadget reflects their social status and helps them be accepted in higher middle class society and make them a meaningful being. In effect, they also satisfy their will of pleasure.

Frankl explains that the will of pleasure sometimes stands behind the will of power and even the will of meaning (126-127 b) The will of pleasure is the result of the will of meaning. After one's desire of the will of meaning is fulfilled, the will of pleasure will demand to be satisfied, and it will be when someone has reached their own measurement on being meaningful. In Freudian psychology, the pleasure principle is the psychoanalytic concept describing people seeking pleasure and avoiding suffering (pain) in order to satisfy their biological and psychological needs (Lopez 147). The illustration of people using computer tablet, the latest gadget, shows that people want to be a meaningful being in the society, As they are well-accepted by the society, they feel they have fulfilled the meaning for pleasure for their own sake.

After the meaning for pleasure has been achieved, the meaning for power appears. It is the capability of someone to fulfill their purpose of will of meaning in life and reach their standard of pleasure. For instance, meaning of power stand above the meaning of meaning and pleasure. Psycho Existentialism views this case and said that it may be used in three ways: to refer to (1) itself, i.e., the specifically human mode of being; (2) the meaning of existence; and (3) the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence, that is to say, the *will* to meaning (Nuthsell 122)

(3) Meaning of life

The desire to reach what is imagined makes people have meaning in their life. Imagination builds dream and hope; it leads human being to move and to be a better one. Every human being has different ways to get this. They will struggle to get what they want, when it is not fulfilled, they will feel frustrated and depressed (Frankl 124-125) People must never forget that they may also find meaning in life even when they are confronted with a hopeless situation or when they face fate that cannot be changed (Nuthsell 135) The same holds for human existence. One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. There cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it (Arnold 618)

Ning's view of a meaningful life

Based on Frankl's ideas of psycho existentialism, the discussion will cover freedom of will, the will of meaning, and meaning of life. It also includes the meaning for power and

pleasure. This discussion is focused on the way of the characters in a novel titled *Ning* see and shape her perception about a meaningful life. It will deeply discuss the efforts of the main character in struggling to exist.

As the first daughter of parents of traditional dancers who cannot meet their daily needs, Ning lives in a small house with her parents, brothers, and cousins (Niken-Anjar 7) In a community of traditional dancers, who are mostly uneducated, Ning is encouraged and determined to succeed, which means to have different values from those commonly held by her community. Most traditional dancers feel satisfied if their daily needs are fulfilled, such as to be able to eat three times a day. They do not care for their social status, nor do they think of becoming a different individual from most members of the community as reflected in the following quotation:

Wid, Ning's relative, said that:

"Ah seniman kaya awake dewe ki sing penting isa mangan. Sekolah dhuwur-dhuwur nek ra isa mangan, piye le iso makarya? Opo meneh nek uwis sekolah dhuwur ning akhire mung dadi lonthe, piye?" (Niken-Anjar 54)

"Ah, the most important thing for artist like us is how we can eat every day. What is the use of good education if we can't earn money to eat? Let alone, if the children are well educated but at the and they only become a bitch"

What Ning's relatives said reflects the difficult life the traditional dancers are facing. Their main concern is how to meet the basic need, which is food. This explains why they do not care about either social status or education. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs reveals, people are motivated to fulfill their basic needs before moving on to other, more advance needs (Maslow 370) Therefore, to the dancer communities, who have to struggle to fulfill their basic needs, other basic needs are unthinkable.

The perception of the unimportant role of education in the dancer community can be related to the fact of Tarsih, one of Ning's friends in the traditional dancers' community. Tarsih also thinks that education is insignificant because to be a dancer, one does not have to be well-educated. What matters is having her needs fulfilled. Therefore, she neglects her education because she already gets what she needs to get what she thinks make her life meaningful.

“Jadi, kamu bolos?”

“Ah, nggak pa-pa ‘kan kalau sesekali.” Tarsih menjawab tanpa nada menyesal atau bersalah sama sekali, bahkan cenderung bangga. Aku memmdanginya tak percaya. “Kan sudah aku bilang, buat apa sekolah tinggi-tinggi kalau pada akhirnya kita tetap jadi penari. Mending yang biasa saja, dapet kenalan, dapat tambahan, selesai deh masalah, Dia janji mau membelikan aku tas dan sepatu, asal minggu depan aku mau menemani dia jalan-jalan lagi.” (Niken-Anjar 110-111)

“So, you skip the class?”

“Ah, no worries, I only do it once in a while” answered Tarsih without feeling guilty and sorry. She even seemed proud of what she had done. I looked at her in disbelief. “I’ve told you what the use of being well-educated is, if we will still be a dancer. It is better if we can have anything we need now, that’s enough...., He promised to buy me a bag and shoes if I agree to hang out with him next week”

Both of Ning's relatives Wid and Tarsih seem to believe that whatever they do to change their fate as a poor family will fail because they still will become dancers. However, they consider a meaningful life differently. To *Bulik* Wid, who is one of the older generations of the dancer community, a meaningful life is having their basic needs met by eating three times a day. To Tarsih, who is of the younger generation, a meaningful life is not only eating three times a day, but also having a good bag, shoes, or going out to the malls. On the other hand, Ning wants to be someone who exists in society as a successful daughter of a dancer. If she still becomes a dancer, she wishes she is not an ordinary dancer whom people will

appreciate (Niken-Anjar 46) As Frankl maintains, everyone has their own desire to be reached in life, even rules should be broken and people will judge how hard the effort is (2b)

To make her dream come true, Ning breaks the limitations she has at times. Ning's limitation comes from her psychological side that is caused by her family financial condition. Ning comes from a poor family; her parents are traditional dance teacher. The fact that she is poor and that her parents do not earn much money makes their family have low self esteem (Niken-Anjar 195) However, Ning's mother believes even though they are poor, they should prove that they can do what others can. Her belief is reflected when she told Ning the moral of a Javanese Puppet.

“Nah, dari cerita itu kita bisa belajar kalau yang kecil dan kelihatannya penakut ternyata bisa sebaliknya. Dia bisa menggantikan orang yang paling dianggap kuat. Jadi kalau mau yo Ngger, Genduk... jangan takut sama kondisi sekarang. Kita bisa kok mencapai kehidupan yang lebih baik dengan usaha kita. Akan lebih baik kalau usaha yang kita kerjakan itu nggak dikoar-koar dulu. Biarlah orang lain tau hasilnya saja,” (Niken-Anjar 32)

“From the story we learn that people who look small and timid can turn out to great. They can replace those who are considered strong. So if you want, do not be discouraged by our present condition. We can have a better life if we struggle. Keep the work hard and show them the result”

What Ning's mother told her shows that she has a different belief from the dominant ones in the community. She believes in having a better life. She advises Ning not to tell her dream to the others. This implies that she views a meaningful life differently from most members of the community. Unlike Tarsih and *Bulik* Wid, Ning's mother also believes that education is the way to get a better life.

“Masio awakmu bocah wayang, awakmu kudu sinau sing megati, yo nduk ... Ibu tetep ngupoyo supoyo awakmu tetep biso sekolah sing ngauripi” (Niken-Anjar 22)

Even though you are “anak wayang” (a child who grows up in the middle of Wayang community) you have to do your best in education, I will do everything to make you get a good education. Which will enable you have a better life. Education is the key point in life, not only from formal school but you can learned every single moment which happened in your life as the other education

One may feel they have fulfilled being a meaningful person for the society, but others may not. (Frankl 221) Ning’s parent has a really different point of view from their community about what a meaningful life is. For them, a meaningful life is when their children get a good education and is accepted by the community outside the dancer community. This different perception may be shaped by the fact that they not only work as a dancer but also as a part-time teacher. Her father is a *Pancasila (Moral Education)* teacher in an Elementary school near their house, while her mother is a dance teacher in *SMP Waringin Bandung* (Niken-Anjar 35,194)

The environment where Ning’s parents work seems to support and motivate them to think above the standard perception of a meaningful life in the community of traditional dancers. Ning’s parents believe and shape their children to be educated person, so that they can have a better life in the future. Even though they are traditional dancers, they want their children not only to become an ordinary dancer, but a dancer who also has another job (Niken-Anjar 29)

Ning’s parents’ determination reflects their strong belief in what a meaningful life is. Even though it is really difficult for them to send their children to school, they never give up reaching the dream of having educated children. When they could not afford Ning’s junior high education, they asked the Bishop of the Church, where Ning’s mother usually helps with the church programs, to lend them some money (Niken-Anjar 55)

Ning's view of meaning is affected by her parents' strong will and belief in knowledge and education as the key to a valuable life and being and that life is not always about materials thing. Listening to what conscience commands to do carrying it out to the best of knowledge, they we will live to see that in the long run, success will follow because they had forgotten to think of it (Vienna 16-17)

"Ilmu kuwi harta sing paling utama, paling utama seko opo wae. Awakmu kudu saguh ngrengkuh bab kuwi yo Ning...." (Niken-Anjar 22)

"Knowledge is the most precious thing in our life. You have to understand it Ning"

Therefore, she imagines that she can change her family condition and make herself exist through education. It is proved by all her efforts to get a better education. (Niken-Anjar 21) As Frankl maintains, reaching imagination make people feel that they have a meaningful life, then when it is not fulfilled, they will feel frustrated (124-125)

Ning's struggle to be a meaningful being

Ning's determination to reach her dream reflects how meaningful it is for her. Meaningful being in this case means that someone has reached what is meaningful life for her. Her desire to be a meaningful being is reflected in her struggle to overcome the obstacles she faces in reaching her dream. The obstacles come mainly because of her family's financial condition and the values and norms existing in the society.

Her family's financial condition makes education a difficult thing to get. However, that does not discourage Ning from trying to be a meaningful being. First, she did not complain when she had to walk for 30 minutes to go to school every day because her school was

located around 4 km from her house, (Niken-Anjar 15) Besides, since she could not afford the textbooks she decided to rewrite or copy her friends' textbooks (Niken-Anjar 21) What Ning did shows that she does not let herself be overcome by obstacles. Instead, she does what she can to solve them. It fits Nietzsche's idea that those who have reason to live will do what they can to face obstacles (Frankl 121)

What Frankl suggests is reflected when Ning pursues higher education. To help reduce her parents' financial burden, Ning uses opportunities to earn money. When she knows that there will be an outdoor movie performance, Ning offered to help the committee sell the tickets, planning to use the money she earned to buy shoes (Niken-Anjar 38-39) Even though the money is not enough to buy the shoes, she felt satisfied with what she has done. By working, Ning sacrifices the joy of being young: to have fun with her peers. As Nuthsall reveals that everyone has the capability to fulfill their purpose in life and reach their standard of pleasure (122)

Nutshell's opinion of individual's capability to reach their standard of pleasure and their purpose of life' is better reflected in Ning's struggle for her idea of a meaningful life after she has graduated from high school. She does not only make a lot of efforts to exist in the society, but also adjust her dream. After graduating from Senior High School; she wants to be a doctor. However, her parents advised her to continue her study in Faculty of Psychology because to be a doctor cost a lot of money (Niken-Anjar 154) It is fit to Frankl idea that at the will of pleasure sometimes stands behind the will of power and even the will of meaning (126-127 b)

Ning's dream seems to come true when she graduated from Senior High School in Bandung in a Faculty of Psychology (Niken-Anjar 196) Her struggle to get an education and to fulfill her need is continued. She has to study hard to keep her scholarship to fulfill her need as a University student. Ning also have a project with *Bu Santi*, one of her lecturers (Niken-Anjar 195,206) She has two opportunities through all struggles she did to get her school need fulfilled. Not only it is fulfilled but also she can exist in the society, just what she also dreams as what a meaningful life is. Ning might have reached her will of pleasure by this. In Freudian psychology, the pleasure principle is the psychoanalytic concept describing people seeking pleasure and avoiding suffering (pain) in order to satisfy their biological and psychological needs (Lopez 147)

Having a job is another way she proves to the society that she exists. One of it is working in a club. She did it to meet her financial needs. By doing this job Ning believes those not only meet her school needs but also help her parents to fulfill their daily needs (Niken-Anjar 165) sometimes in that club Ning faced some guests with bad behavior. They asked her to come to their table so that they can give her "*Saweran*", *Saweran* is giving some money to a singer after she (the singer) does what the guest wants (Niken-Anjar 204)

After finish her job as a singer, a man named Mas Doddy came at the backstage to praise her performance. He asked her to sometimes come to guest table when she is singing.

"Kenapa sih kamu gak mau turun panggung? Padahal kalau turun panggung pasti banyak yang nyawer lho?"

"Ya, nggak mau aja, Mas... Nggak ada perlunya juga."

"Kan kamu bisa dapat tambahan dari sana?"

"Ah, dari hasil menyanyi saja sudah cukup mas, Mas." (Niken-Anjar 204)

“Why don’t you try to come to the guest table? If you do that there must be “Saweran” for you”

“I just don’t want to do that, that’s useless”

“You can get more money from them”

“Ah, being a singer is more than enough for me”

It can be seen that Ning’s family, Ning is taught to be polite to other people. This shows that Ning’s family have a very different opinion on meaningful life, When the others will do everything to get what they need, this family always think first before do something, even though their life is so difficult but they get what they want and need in a good way by keeping their attitude.

Ning remembers what her grandmother said when she agreed to accept the job as a night club singer

“Cah wedhok kuwi kudu njunjung dhuwur tata karma lan kesopanan. Opo meneh karo lawan jenise” (Niken-Anjar 204)

“A woman should keep her good manner. Moreover, with a man”

However the biggest problem comes from the society. First, traditional dancer community’s belief that education is useless (Niken-Anjar 54) to them, education does not make life better. Instead it makes them worse because it makes them spend money for books, shoes, and other school things which will never improve their life. At last, they will be traditional artist too, like what their parents did (Niken-Anjar 55)

Even when Ning has grown up, she still faces problems from the society in her struggle to give meaning to her life. Being a singer in a night club makes Ning have no enough time to rest, sometimes she forget to erase her make when go to school. It makes her friends think negatively about her.

“Teman-teman mengira kamu bekerja menjadi wanita tidak benar Ning karena beberapa hari yang lalu kamu berangkat ke sekolah dengan make up yang masih terlihat tebal. Kamu juga kelihatan kusut, pucat dan tidak bersemangat, gayamu juga sangat berbeda akhir-akhir ini” (Niken-Anjar 165)

“Some friends think that you’ve become ‘a bad girl’ because few days ago you went to school wearing thick make up. You also looked untidy, pale, and unenthusiastic. You have behaved very differently recently”

That assumption makes her want to be free to choose their own future and break the negative assumption of society about her background family. The meaning of freedom is to have such a high degree of certainty that no power in the world can shake someone from their belief and force them to act contrary to what they know to be true (Frankl 212)

Ning’s classmates do not support her struggle to have a meaningful life. They share a similar idea that an artist should not take a ‘difficult’ major in the university. In elementary school, as the daughter of a traditional dancer family, Ning was always be mocked as an “Ugly Anak Wayang”. In the University, she is also mocked by her friends.

*“Iya, itu kan yang waktu awal kuliah disini dandannya menor banget,”
“Ooooo itu... Diam kan juga senengnya pakai hak tinggi banget,. Nggak pegel apa ya ke kampus pake hak setinggi itu?”
“Dia kan artis”
“Oh yaa, sekarang aja sukanya nyanyi di pub-pub di Jakarta”
“Ah, tetep aja gayanya norak, gak pantes kuliah disini”* (Niken-Anjar 197)

“Yeah, she is a girl who always use thick make up in campus”
“Oooooo, she also likes to use high heels shoes. Is it comfortable enough use those shoes?”
“She is an artist”
“Yeah, now she is a singer in some pub in Jakarta”
“She should not be here, her appearance were so bad”

Even when Ning was in elementary school, she was also humiliated because of her physical appearance

“Tapi, pemain wayang orang yang aku lihat di televisi kemarin itu otrangnya tinggi besar, cantik-cantik. Nggak kecil dan hitam kayak teman kita yang satu ini” (Niken-Anjar 17)

“But the puppet actress I saw on TV last night was tall and beautiful. She was not short, dark-skinned like her”.

The two quotations above reflect that Ning is never really accepted by the community she is in, except the community of traditional dancers. Their humiliation may motivate her to be better in appearance and intelligence to show her existence.

However, what her elementary schoolmates said about her may also be one of the reasons why she pursue education to get a meaning in life besides her parents’ influencing her to be well-educated. As a little girl, Ning may feel she turns out to be too ugly to be a dancer. She does her best to be educated because that is the only way for her to prove her existence.

What Ning does matches Nutshell’s idea that human being reach meaning in life even when they are confronted with a hopeless situation, when they face a fate to be changed (Nuthsell 135) what in a situation which discourages Ning’s motivation to change her fate as “*Anak Wayang*” is increased.

Proving her ability and existence in society, Ning joined *Leo Club*, a social community of which members are richer than her. As they appreciate Ning and never question her background (Niken-Anjar 199) Ning successfully turn out that she also can be a member of a rich community who is aware of social problems. Leo Club’s members’ acceptance is an acknowledgment of her existence and her belief that people of the same background they can have different future by hard work and struggling (Niken-Anjar 216-217) What Ning did fits

Nutshell's opinion that when human being wants to be free, they will respond to that limitation and break it (133)

Ning's success may also be affected by her belief that she can face all the difficulties with her determination.

“Aku tidak akan pernah menyerah pada apapun, aku yakin kalau aku berusaha lebih keras, akan berhasil, jika gagal, aku juga yang harus bisa memutar otak untuk mengatasi keagalanku dan mencari solusi lain yang lebih jitu supaya berhasil” (Niken-Anjar 46)

“I will never give up with everything I will face; I believe that if I work harder I will succeed. If it does not work, I have to turn my brain to overcome my failure and I should be able to find another solution to succeed”

People feel they become a meaningful being after reaching their dream. Ning's determination to reach her dream reflects how meaningful it is for her. It also fits Arnold's statement that everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. (618) Mission and dream are the same, they need struggle to be fulfilled, everyone has their own fulfillment and so does Ning who wants to achieve her mission although she's facing some difficulties as Frankl says that reason to live makes people have better chances (121) Mission, dreams, and struggle are the implement of how meaning in life reached. After it is reached then someone feel that they also become a meaningful being.

. Despite her decision to use education to be a successful individual, Ning will still be a part of her traditional dancer community. She says that

“Menari sudah menjadi bagian dalam hidupku sejak aku masih berumur empat tahun. Apalagi aku lahir dan besar dalam lingkungan keluarga penari. Kalau diumpamakan,

menari itu sudah seperti makanan sehari-hari. Kalau aku tidak menari, malah terasa aneh” (Niken-Anjar 48).

“Dancing is a part of my life; I have done it since I was 4 years old. Moreover, I was born and grew up in a dancer community. So that it is like a having a meal for me, it will be strange if I don’t do it even for a day.”

Ning also seems to realize that members of the traditional dancer community do not consider education as a way for one to be someone. Therefore, by being loyal to dancing, she remains an accepted member of that group.

As Frankl maintains, people will do everything to be meaningful to his society (6 a) It is unique and specific then can be fulfilled by the people who has desire to fulfill the will of meaning; only when it is reached then they will satisfied with their own measurement (Nuthsell 121)

The meaning of freedom is to have such a high degree of certainty that no power in the world can shake someone from their belief and force them to act contrary to what they know to be true. (Frankl 212) Ning is a girl who has a belief about freedom in life, but in the positive and right way. She uses the meaning of freedom to reach her dream. Freedom here means that every human being has their own right to reach their dream, to have the same right and be recognized in the society.

Ning’s efforts and determination bring her to success when she becomes the first girl of the traditional dancer community who has finished a university-level education. This means that she has reached her dream and proves her existence. However, as a bachelor of psychology, she then needs to prove that she is capable of what she has learned in the

university. Therefore, she went to Jakarta to work in a consultant company as a human resource officer.

Ning has really reached what she thinks make her life meaningful. Her ability to dance makes her be accepted in the traditional dancer community, which also means she exists in the group. As she has finished university-level education and got a job, she has achieved what she views as what make her life meaningful. Ning realize that her life is not only about proving to society who she is and how she exist, as the time goes by she thinks that have husband, children, and family makes her life more precious.

“Aku berbahagia memiliki suami yang pengertian dan mendukung seperti suamiku. Aku merasa aman dan nyaman bersamanya, Apalagi dengan kehadiran dua jagoan kecilku. Aku jadi merasa jadi orang yang paling berbahagia” (Niken-Anjar 241)

“I am happy having a husband who always cares and supports what I do. I feel comfortable and secure with him. Moreover, I have two sons. I feel like I am the happiest person in this world”

The quotation expresses Ning’s gratefulness for what she has. More than that, it reflects that the idea of a meaningful life for Ning has changed as her grows older (Frankl 2b) After Ning has got married and had two children; life seems to be perfectly meaningful for her. In her company, she is a very reliable employee, who is able to achieve a lot of project goals, but she never wants anybody to know what she has done to make her company successful. She always remembers her mother’s story of Arjuna, who always helps others without being known by other people (Niken – Anjar 235) Although she does not seem interested in what is meaningful to most employees, her attitude actually reflects what she believes is meaningful.

Ning has a will of pleasure that is proving to her society that she is different from the other anak wayang. After will of pleasure come, will of meaning is followed, in this case is

successful and exist in her society. To fulfill the will of pleasure and meaning she also have the will of power, means that she have to struggle and face all the difficulty. It fits to Nuthsell ideas that the will of pleasure leads Ning to have the will of power that means to maintain her life with all her successes (122)

Conclusion

The analysis has revealed the answer to the research question; i.e. what meaningful life actually means to *Ning* and what shape(s) her perception of a meaningful life. To *Ning*, a meaningful life is to exist in the society where she lives, and that means to keep the tradition and to be educated. Her understanding of meaning is shaped by her parents, who adopt a different understanding of a meaningful life from most people in their *wayang* community because they also work as part time teachers in a school. Besides, her friends' mocking and humiliating her seem to strengthen her determination to take her parents' advice and pursue education to show her existence. These findings show that environment influences one understands of meaning.

Ning's struggle to reach a meaningful life brings her to another meaning in her life. After she has managed to be educated and exist in the society she still feels that having a husband and children makes her life more meaningful. This reflects the idea that environment has a big influence on someone perspective about meaningful life.

These findings are expected to make readers realize that people have different perspectives of a meaningful life, which may be shaped and changed by age, environments and experience. Reader are also expected to be more respectful to what others do to reach what a meaningful life is for them and to reflect on what they think of a meaningful life.

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