



PORTRAYING HEDONISM IN CRAZY *RICH* ASIAN NOVEL BY KEVIN KWAN

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Submitted: 27-11-2022

Review: 19-12-2022

Accepted: 30-12-2022

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22202/tus.2022.v8i3.6367>



Abstract

Modern society has the view that hedonism is a lifestyle that only emphasizes pleasure such as shopping for luxury goods and eating expensive food. This is contrary to the simple lifestyle proposed by Epicureans. Epicureans distinguish between natural desires that are needed (such as eating) and natural desires that are allowed (such as delicious food), and vain desires (such as wealth) (K. Bertens, 2000). Therefore, hedonism does not always have to prioritize luxury but can improve the quality of enjoyment itself. Evolving the issue of flexing in society often done by the youth as the negative stigma yet it could be positive if it is seen from a different angle. This study also identifies the influence of hedonism on the main character's life. In this research, the researcher used the qualitative method to analyze the data as it is concerned with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior. The finding of this research was that natural desires are allowed to have the effect of being able to (1) enjoy life more, (2) have a high social spirit, and (3) be wise in dealing with problems. The impact of vain desires tends to be (1) anti-social, (2) excessive consumptive behavior, and (3) unsatisfactory

Keywords: *Hedonism; Life Style; Social Life, Luxuries*

INTRODUCTION

Hedonism is a manner of existence wherein humans expect that they are glad after searching for happiness and keep away from painful feelings as much as possible. (Franz Magnis-Suseno, 1987:114). A deep truth in hedonistic behavior is that humans are fundamentally seeking pleasure and attempting to avoid displeasure. Hedonism is a point of view that associates "good morals" with "pleasure." In the present life, hedonism is closely related to the lifestyle of humans.



It is supported by Kotler (2001), stating that "lifestyle" is a type of interaction expressed in activities, interests, and opinions. Lifestyle is understood as an individual's active adaptation to social conditions to satisfy the need to connect and engage with others. Furthermore, Aldin (2006) argued that the way people dress, and eat, including substance use, type of work, and how individuals go about their daily lives are components of lifestyle. Those elements of the way of life are not only the style of the high class but also the low and middle classes as well. This way, people compete to show their richness through flexing on social media just to satisfy their lives. This lifestyle is also called hedonism. It is supported by Collins Gem (1993: 97) argued that hedonism may be a doctrine that states that joy is the foremost vital thing in life. In other words, indulgence is an understanding held by individuals who exclusively look for life's joys. Hedonism triggered serious problems in people's lives, such as 1) consumptive. Hedonism is a trait that tends to lead to excessive consumptive behavior even when the income is not enough to finance the expenses. 2) Selfish. Selfish is concerned disproportionately or exclusively with oneself: looking for or concentrating on one's own benefit, preference, or comfort without regard for others. 3) Wasteful. Wasteful is characterized by the feeling of dissatisfaction in getting things and always wanting more.

Hedonism cannot be separated from the ethical, at its most basic, ethical hedonism is the belief that all and only pleasure is non-instrumentally good, while all and only pain or displeasure is non-instrumentally bad. The non-necessity objection to this rejects its claim that only pleasure is good, that only displeasure is bad, or both (Moore, G.E. 1903). The hedonistic lifestyle is, of course, a waste. Because hedonists are more concerned with pleasure than the needs of the goods they buy. 4) Irresponsibility. A hedonist is usually irresponsible. This is because the person only focuses on himself, thus becoming a person who has less responsibility. Hedonism tends to be found in people who are individualistic, self-centered, or selfish. 5) Lazy. Hedonism is a trait associated with a sense of laziness. This is natural, considering that people with a hedonistic lifestyle often do not appreciate



their time and money. 6) Corruption. Hedonism is one of the roots of corruption. This is because the income is not enough to meet their basic needs, so they are forced to commit corruption.

The bad effects of hedonism are supported by rapid industrial development in the era of globalization. It made the public goods supply productive. Because there are so many options, people are easily enticed to consume goods. Goods that were once considered secondary needs have become primary needs, and luxury things have become primary needs as well. Currently, many have become top necessities, usually in amusement facilities such as karaoke courts, nightclubs, etc. (Chatijah and Purwadi, 2007). Wahyudi (2013) Notes that people's habits and attitudes about hedonistic lifestyles turn into lavish lifestyles in a relatively short period of time and tend to be outrageous, eventually leading to a lifestyle of consumption. The modern society holds that hedonism is a lifestyle that emphasizes only pleasure, such as buying luxury items and consuming expensive foods, which is in contrast to the simple lifestyle proposed by the epicures.

Foodies distinguish between natural desires that are necessary (like food) and natural desires that are permissible like delicious food and vain desires like wealth or well-being (Bertens K, 2000). From this, it can be concluded that hedonism does not always have to prioritize luxury, but can improve the quality of enjoyment itself. In this novel, natural desires can be portrayed by Nick Young, while vain desires are portrayed by Eddison Cheng. The Epicurean teachings emphasize the topic of lust; the goal is "ataraxia," i.e., a calm mind, free from feelings of worry and a balanced state (Bertens. 2000). Based on the above statement, an example of hedonism in society can be seen when a rich person who can live in a luxury house or buy an apartment chooses to live in a simple house in a quiet town away from the city noise. In this example, it can be concluded that hedonism is not always a property satisfaction but it is peace from the simplicity of life. According to Magnis-Suseno (1997), hedonism does not make a person greedy but a picky eater. Freedom from distraction is a happy goal in life. The good is eudemonia, according to Aristotle (1095a15–22), yet there is a dispute among us as



to what eudemonia actually is. Similarly to this, ethical hedonists concur that pleasure is good, but non-hedonists differ in their definitions of what constitutes pleasure.

METHODS

In this research, the researcher used the qualitative method to analyze the data because this method is suitable for analyzing literary work. Kothari (1990: 50) states the qualitative approach to research involves subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviors, and Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research is an understanding-based inquiry process based on several methodological traditions of inquiry that examines a social or human problem. Therefore, researchers can research to find hedonism in Nick Young and Edison Cheng's hedonistic lifestyle. Furthermore, the data source for this research came from the novel *Crazy Rich Asians* by Kevin Kwan (2013). The data of this research was the text of the novel in the form of words or sentences related to the hedonism experienced by Nick Young and Edison Cheng. Researchers focused entirely on Nick Young and Edison Cheng's hedonistic life.

In this research, the researcher applied some procedures for collecting the data. as follows: First, the researcher read the novel carefully and understood the novel deeply. By understanding deeply the content of the novel, it made easy for the researcher to fulfill the need of the research question answers. Then The researchers identified the characteristics of hedonism that occurred in the main character through the selection of the identified case in the novel, and next the researchers wrote down the identified data and sorted the data related to the research question and unrelated data with the research question. Finally, the researchers displayed the data to ensure the data were matching with the need of answering the research question and the hedonism theories.

Before analyzing the data, the researcher validated it by applying triangulation. Triangulation is analyzing the subject's answers by examining the



truth with available or obtained empirical data (other data sources) (Kriyantono 2014).

The steps of triangulation were done as follows: First, the writer did cross-check with data that has been used by another researcher. Second, the writers cross-checked the data with the expert related to this research. Third, the writer investigated the data by asking a supervisor for suggestions related to the findings.

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data based on some theories to give more empirical findings. There were three steps done by the researchers to analyze the data. 1) The researchers analyzed the data to find the kinds of hedonism in the novel through several characters namely Nick Young and Edison Cheng by applying Epicurus's theory about Hedonism. 2) The researchers interpreted the results of the analysis. 3) The researchers concluded the result of the analysis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Habits and people's views on a hedonistic lifestyle change in a relatively short time into a life of luxury and tend to be excessive, which ultimately leads to a consumptive lifestyle. Modern society sees hedonism as a lifestyle that is only concerned with pleasure such as shopping for luxury goods and eating expensive food, this is contrary to the simple lifestyle proposed by Epicureans. Hedonism can also lead people to be in a good act like being described by the main character in the novel *crazy rich* by Kevin Kwan

A. Enjoying life

Enjoying life is often understood as a mindset resulting from reflection, action, and gratitude. Even though most of us do not have enough free time to be alone in search of a path to happiness, the best way to find happiness is to make changes that can be applied in everyday life. With the awareness of respecting others and allowing yourself to do your best, these small changes will give you greater enjoyment in life. According to Magnis-Suseno (1997: 69), that Enjoyment



is not the same as greed. Get used to a life full of simplicity. Enjoyment is the goal, so do not be enslaved. Enjoyment is not just sensuality but liberation from body and mental pain.

a. Text

He was just enjoying his Irish coffee, soaking in the atmosphere, and being perfectly charming. Sitting in the enclosed garden lit by colorful, whimsically painted lampshades, Rachel gradually began to see, in a whole new light, the person her friend had been so eager for her to meet. She couldn't quite put her finger on it, but there was some- thin something exotic about Nicholas Young. For starters, his slightly disheveled canvas jacket, white linen shirt, and faded black jeans were reminiscent of some adventurer just returned from mapping Western Sahara. Then there was his self-deprecating wit, the sort that all those British-educated boys were so well known for. But underlying all this was quiet masculinity and relaxed ease that was proving to be infectious. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 92) (see appendix: I)

The quotation is about when Nick enjoys the Irish coffee soaking in the atmosphere and setting in the beautiful pace. He used his slightly disheveled canvas jacket, white linen shirt, and faded black jeans even though Nick is an heir to his family who has wealth that no human can imagine and show the enjoying of life. This is supported by the theory of Hadiwijono (1980:56) which said the wise know the art of enjoying something as long and deep as possible.

b. Text

Nick's lifestyle in New York could be described as modest, if not downright frugal. He rented a cozy alcove studio on Morton Street that didn't seem to contain anything of value aside from his laptop, bike, and stacks of books. He dressed distinctively but casually and never realized just how much those rumpled blazers with the Huntsman or Anderson & Sheppard labels cost. Otherwise, the only splurges she had known Nick to make were on overpriced produce at the Union Square Greenmarket and good seats to a concert if some great band came to town. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013:214) (see appendix: I)

The quote above shows that Nick likes to live a life of simplicity. Evidenced by everything he chose from where he lived to the way he dressed. No matter how old the clothes are, while they are still decent and comfortable, they will be happy and enjoy them. He is very selective in managing his finances. This statement is supported by Magnis-Suseno (1997: 69) that enjoyment is not the same as greed



but getting used to a life full of simplicity. Enjoyment is the goal, so do not be enslaved. Enjoyment is not just sensuality but liberation from body and mental pain.

B. High Concern for Social Relationships

Caring is when someone can be compassionate towards fellow beings in need, not because someone is more capable financially but since he has caring. The point is that when someone sees the suffering of another person who is truly incapable of anything, that person can feel the suffering of others by sharing in that suffering. According to Franz Magnis-Suseno (1997), this can be seen from the teachings of Epicureans that doing good is often more fun than just receiving good

a. Text

With Nick, however, Colin had the freedom to be himself. Nick, who had known him since childhood, was probably the only person on the planet who didn't give a damn about his money, and more importantly, the only one who was there during what they both referred to as "the war years". Beneath the wide grin and the charismatic personality, Colin struggled with a severe anxiety disorder and crippling depression, and Nick was one of the few people allowed to witness this side of him. It was as if Colin bottled up all of his pain and anguish for months at a time, unleashing it on Nick whenever he was in town. To anyone else, this would have been an intolerable situation, but Nick was so used to this by now, that he almost didn't recall a time when Colin wasn't swinging between the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. This was just a prerequisite to being Colin's best friend. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 144-145) (see appendix: II)

The above quote explains that Nick cares deeply for Colin by always cheering Colin on when bad things happen to Colin such as when Colin struggles with severe anxiety disorders and crippling depression. Therefore, the researchers concluded that Nick has a high concern for social relationships. It is supported by the theory of Bertrand Russell (History of Western Philosophy, p. 334) who said Epicureans did not completely avoid social life because for him the safest social relationship was friendship.

b. Text

A man in a white polo shirt and khaki shorts approached with a large tray from the luxury eco-resort nearby." Well, Colin, Alistair-I thought that the only way to get you coffee snobs to stop bitching and moaning was to get you a decent flat white,



one hundred percent made in Australia, "Nick said, as the waiter put the tray down on the reddish earth.

Alistair brought the cup to his nose and inhaled the rich aroma deeply. "Nick, if you weren't my cousin, I'd kiss you right now." he joked. Colin took a long sip of his coffee, its perfect velvety foam leaving a white frothy mustache on his upper lip. "This has got to be the best coffee I've ever tasted. Guys, I'll never forget this."

It was just past sunset, and the sky was shifting rapidly from shades of burnt orange into a deep violet-blue. The men sat in awed silence, as the world's largest monolith glowed and shimmered a thousand indescribable shades of crimson(Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 296) (see appendix: II)

The quote above explains that Nick cares about Alistair by giving Alistair something that makes Alistair happy which is a good cup of flat white coffee. Therefore, the researchers concluded that Nick has a high concern for social relationships. This is supported by the theory of Franz Magnis-Suseno (13 Ethical Figures, p. 50), this can be seen from the teachings of the Epicureans that doing good is often more fun than just receiving kindness.



C. Being wise

Wise decisions require not only intelligence and explicit knowledge, but also tacit, or implicit, knowledge gained through experience (Sternberg, R. J. 2003). Being wise can also be defined as a person who can make decisions appropriately, either directly or indirectly, fairly and objectively, in addition, wisdom is having the power of discerning and judging properly as to what is true or right; possessing discernment, judgment, or discretion.

a. Text

A mere six hours later, Nick, Colin, Alistair, Mehmet, and Lionel found themselves sitting on canvas chairs in the middle of the Australian desert, taking in the spectacular view of the glowing rock. "I've always wanted to come to Ayers Rock. Or Uluru, or whatever they call it now," Colin said.

"It's so quiet," Mehmet said softly. "This is a very spiritual place, isn't it? I can feel its energy, even from this distance.

"...it's considered to be the most sacred site for the Aboriginal tribes, "Nick answered." My father brought me here years ago. Back in those days, "We were still allowed to climb the rock. They stopped letting you do that a few years ago".

"Guys, I can't thank you enough. This was the perfect escape. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 295)

"I don't quite understand ... you mean your parents never knew about me in all this time?" Rachel asked in astonishment.

"Yes, I mean, no, they didn't. But you need to know this has absolutely nothing to do with you-" Nick began.

"Well, it's a little hard not to take it personally."

"Please don't. I'm sorry if it seems that way. It's just that ... Nick swallowed nervously." It's just that I've always tried to keep clear boundaries between my personal life and my family life, that's all".(Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 64)(see

appendix: III)

In the above quote, it can be explained that Nick is wise here because he can distinguish which needs are more important, especially in terms of maintaining clear boundaries between Nick's personal life and his family life. It is supported by the theory Magnis-Suseno(1997: 64-65) which said Epicureans show that humans must be wise towards their desires. A wise person will live in such a way that is healthy and has a calm soul, because humans only need two things to live happily, namely free from feelings of body aches and feelings of fear and anxiety.



C. The Effect of Hedonism on Eddison Cheng's life

Hedonism is a type of habit and it can develop into people's lifestyles. Everything is done by people continuously whether it is realized or not will affect one's life.

Anti-social

Anti-social is defined as any kind of conduct that violates the basic rights of another (Calkins SD, Keane SP 2009). A person with anti-social is a perception and conception of personality and self-worth, which in turn can affect his confidence in facing the real world. An antisocial is unwilling or unable to associate in a normal or friendly way with other people.

a. Text

"I miss Paris. It's been ages since I've been. Remember our crazy trip there with Eddie?" he said. "Aiyoh, please don't remind me! That's the last time I ever share a suite with that rascal!" Astrid shuddered, thinking she would never be able to craze the image of her Hong Kong cousin

with that amputee stripper and those profiteroles. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 39)
(see appendix: IV)

The conversation quoted above explains that Eddison is careless about social relationships, here Eddison only cares about his own pleasure by hiring and playing comfort women, even though he is in the same room as Astrid (his sister). He doesn't care about Astrid. This opinion is supported by the theory of Wijaya, R. (1991). He states that adherents of a hedonic lifestyle also tend to be anti-social or do not have social sensitivity.

Materialistic

Richins (2004) theorizes materialism as a three-dimensional concept defined by (a) employing properties and money at the center of one's life, (b) trusting that money carries pleasure, and (c) judging one's own and others' accomplishments based on income and possessions. The materialistic meaning here is that Eddison still feels jealous of others even though he already has a lot of wealth. Materialism is excessively concerned with physical comforts or the acquisition of wealth and material possessions, rather than with spiritual, intellectual, or cultural values.



b. Text

Deprived compared to most of his, friends. He didn't have a Despite this embarrassment of riches, Eddie felt extremely had a full-time crew for his yacht, which was much too small to host more than ten guests for brunch comfortably. He didn't have any Rothkos or Pollocks or the other dead American- house on the Peak. He didn't have his own plane. He didn't can artists one was required to hang on the wall to be considered truly rich these days. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013: 81) (see appendix: V)

In the above quote explaining that Eddison thought his wealth was insufficient, Eddie felt his crew was too small to accommodate more than ten guests for a comfortable lunch. He also felt he didn't own Rothkos or Pollock and wanted his private plane. In the case of art, he felt that he had no artwork to hang on the wall to be considered truly wealthy. He never feel satisfied with what he has, even though he has more than enough wealth. This opinion is supported by the theory of Wijaya (1991) R. He states that materialism, is part of a hedonistic culture that feels dissatisfied with what it already has.

Consumptive

Consumptive behavior is defined as a human proclivity to consume indefinitely, with a focus on wants rather than needs (Mowen & Minor, 2002). It can also be defined as Consumptive behavior is the act of individuals as consumers buying or consuming goods or services excessively, irrationally, causing waste, and only prioritizing wants or pleasures without considering the needs or benefits of these goods or services, even only to obtain social recognition, following fashion or personal satisfaction. According to Tambunan (2001: 1) that consumptive behavior more specifically explains the desire to consume goods that are not needed excessively to achieve maximum satisfaction

a. Text

And then there was Eddie, their firstborn. To all appearances, Edison Cheng was "the perfect one." He had breezed through Cambridge Judge Business School with distinction, done a stint at Cazenove in London, and was now a rising star in Hong Kong's private banking world. He had married Fiona Tung, who hailed from a politically connected family, and they had three very studious, well-behaved children. But privately, Alexandra worried the most about Eddie. In the last few years, he was spending far too much time hanging around with these dubious



Mainland Chinese billionaires, flying all over Asia every week to attend parties, and she worried how this might be affecting his health and his family life. (Crazy Rich Asians, 2013:50-51) (see appendix: VI)

The quote above describes the extravagance made by Eddison in recent years, he spent a lot of time hanging out with Chinese billionaires, flying all over Asia every week partying, not even worried that this could affect his health and family life. He used what he had irregularly. The priorities are things that don't matter. This opinion is supported by Wijaya, R. (1991). He states that consumptive nature is an absolute characteristic of a hedonist, and does not have a priority scale. Whether they need it or not, they will immediately try to fulfill their wish.

Nick Young and Eddison Cheng are characters in Kevin Kwan's novel *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013), they are the main subject of this research. To fulfill the research object, the researcher analyzed the hedonism Epicure's theory. In this study, Nick and Eddison embraced a hedonistic lifestyle. Even though they belong to one hedonism, the hedonism group based on their consumption patterns is different. Nick is a class of unnecessary natural desires hedonism. Meanwhile, Eddison includes the vain desires of hedonism.

The hedonistic lifestyle has an impact on the people who use it. However, the impact differs by the group. Nick, who uses simple hedonism, has the effect of being able to enjoy his life more, have a high social spirit and be wiser in dealing with problems. Nick's impact proved to be more positive than Eddison's. The impact of Eddison's vain desires is that he tends to be anti-social, has excessive consumptive behavior, and is never satisfied. This difference shows that the effect of hedonism depends on the person who uses it. In this study, the researcher wanted to prove that hedonism does not always have a bad impact, but also has a positive impact. These impacts can be distinguished based on the type of hedonism taken. This study aims to reveal the positive side of hedonism which is widely misunderstood and underestimated by the public.



CONCLUSION

The researcher draws several conclusions in this study. First, hedonism not only has negative effects but also has positive sides. If analyzed using epicurean hedonism, simple hedonism has a happier impact than vain hedonism, because it causes some bad effects in the future as exemplified in the novel. Second, hedonism is not always related to property but depends on the individual himself.

Finally, several hedonism effects affect the characters' lives namely Nick Young and Eddison Cheng. The effect of hedonism on Nick's life is that Nick enjoys life with simplicity, is wiser in making decisions, and is more about his surroundings. Meanwhile, the effects of hedonism in Eddison's life are more negative, such as he is more selfish, ungrateful, extravagant, and disrespectful to other people and even his own family.

The researcher proposes the following suggestions for other researchers who may be able to carry out further research on the same novel. First, because this study has described hedonism, further research should be carried out on other aspects of this research. It is recommended to conduct research on the lifestyle contained in this research does not explain widely.

Second, the researcher suggests other people conduct further studies in comparing novels with other works such as poetry, drama, film, etc. In addition, it is also necessary to find other ways or methods of analyzing the hedonistic lifestyle's. Finally, the researcher states that criticism, suggestions, and corrections are fully accepted for the progress of this research.

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