

ANXIETY AND DEFENSE MECHANISM OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN “THE BLACK CAT” SHORT STORY

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ABSTRACT

This research primarily aims to analyze the psychological aspects of the main character in *The Black Cat* short story. This study, used Psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud to analyze the short story, to find out the anxieties and defense mechanisms used by the main character. Qualitative method was equipped in this study. The data was taken from *The Black Cat* short story by Edgar Allan Poe. In this study, the main character showed many psychological problems in shape of anxiety. The Main character showed Neurotic, Realistic, and Moral Anxiety. This study also revealed several types of ego defense mechanisms used by the main character to overcome his anxieties. They are: Displacement, Denial, Acting Out, Symbolization, and Projection Defense Mechanism.

Keyword: *Psychoanalysis, Anxiety, Defense Mechanism, The Black Cat short story.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is reflected in Human life, and vice versa. Many literary works adopt from real life. As in the short story by Edgar Allan Poe *The Black Cat*, it is reflects human life. This study primarily aims to analyze the psychological aspects of the main character in *The Black Cat* short story by using the psychoanalysis theory by Freud (1856-1939), to find out the anxiety and defense mechanisms used by the main character. This study is interesting because in this short story, showed many psychological aspects in shape of anxiety and defense mechanism, and it is often happens in everyday life.

Aspects of psychology include feelings, emotions, logic and human behavior. This is the reason of researcher conducted this study, because aspects of psychology are very closely related to daily life and important to be noted. This study was conducted so that the reader can understand the aspects of psychology and can apply it in everyday life to analyze the different characteristics of others. So, this study is expected to be a lesson for others in order to understand, adapting, and interacting to people who have different personalities.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, theory of Freud (1856-1939) used in order to analyze the psychology aspect of the main character in *The Black Cat* short story. This study focus on analyze the anxiety and defense mechanism used by the main character.

As father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud continued to modify his theory over a period of nearly half a century. Psychoanalysis focuses on the unconscious aspects of personality. According to Freud the human mind mostly hidden in the unconscious, it was mysterious and hidden. Meanwhile He believed that the conscious level of the mind could be seen similar to the tip of the iceberg. According to Freud, aspects of psychoanalysis emphasize the importance of understanding that individual personalities are formed by different characters in each individual. Unconscious thoughts, feelings and experiences which influence individual thoughts and actions are factors outside of a person's recognition (Patel, 2013).

2.1 Anxiety

In defining anxiety, Freud emphasized that it is a felt, affective, discomfort feeling, and unpleasant state which produced by the Ego. Anxiety functions as a signal to the individual towards existence some danger is imminent or imminent danger. Anxiety allows the ego to be alert to signs of threats and danger. The coming danger signals stimulate the individual to mobilize self-defense and reduce pain anxiety (Feist, 2009).

According to Freud there are three types of anxiety based on the source from the id, ego and super ego. There are Neurotic Anxiety, Moral Anxiety, and Realistic Anxiety.

a. Neurotic anxiety

Neurotic anxiety is defined as apprehension about danger that has not happened yet or undetected danger. This feeling exist in the ego, but the source is from Id. For example, during childhood, feelings of hostility feeling is often followed by a fear of punishment, and this fear becomes generalized into unconscious neurotic anxiety (Feist, 2009).

b. Moral Anxiety

A second type of anxiety, Moral anxiety, it is the type of anxiety which results from fear of violating moral or society code which stems from the conflict between the ego and the superego (Feist, 2009).

c. Realistic Anxiety

Realistic anxiety occurs due to the real situations that occur because of the ego. In this type of anxiety, the most popular method for decreasing the tension is to leave these situations which could lead to damage. For example, someone has to run away when a dog attacks (Gokdag, 2015).

2.2 Defense Mechanisms

Defense mechanisms are someone's strategy to hide and reduce their anxiety. Defense mechanism was used unconsciously when there are too much anxieties disturbing the ego. And it is to avoid the potential to harm a person's mental health which making them vulnerable (Snowden (2006).

In this study, I analyzed whether all of those defense mechanisms used by the main character or only some of those shown by the main character. They are:

a. Displacement

Displacement is the circumstances where individuals disguise or hide their unacceptable urges directing to other people or objects. For example, an employee who is angry to his leader, but, he might not vent his anger and remain friendly to his leader, however displace his anger onto his wife, his kids, or his cat (Feist, 2009).

b. Denial

If some situations are too difficult to handle, and the person refuses to experience and blocking external events from consciousness, it is called Denial. This is a primitive and dangerous defense, no one can last a long time to ignore reality and get away with it (Boeree, 2006).

c. Acting Out

Acting Out is when individuals expressing their thoughts or feelings by performing an extreme behavior. This is an effort to release stress, and often helps individuals feel more calm

and peaceful. For example, a boy who feel angry to the girl who broke his book, he do not say that he is angry, but he express his anger by throwing the book to the girl's face (Grohol, 2019).

d. Projection

Projection is the way individuals reduce the desire which caused an anxiety by connecting the unwanted impulse to another person. Projection can be defined as seeing in others unacceptable tendencies or feelings that actually reside in one's own unconscious (Feist, 2009).

e. Symbolization

Turning the inner conflict into distinct symbol is the way to handle that conflict. When individual experience an unwanted or stressful thought, they often turned into concrete or metaphoric thing by doing symbolization. Symbols consist of physical items, metaphoric ideas, or even symbol acts

<http://changingminds.org/explanations/behaviors/coping/symbolization.htm>

3 METHOD

This study belongs to a qualitative method that collects the data in the form of statements, sentences, utterances, and non-numerical data. This method works by interpreting the meaning of data, and it used to investigate the meaning associated with actions, behaviors, and interactions with others. The data in this study were taken from the short story of The Black Cat by Edgar Allan Poe, by reading, and classifying the data based on the type of psychological aspects, then interpreting it using Freudian theory (1856-1939).

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In The Black Cat short story, there are many utterances and sentences that clearly showed anxieties and defense mechanism used by the main character. Many anxieties are showed as following:

4.1 Anxiety

In The Black Cat short story, there are many utterances and sentences that clearly shows anxieties experience by the main character. Many anxieties are shows as following

4.1.1 Neurotic Anxiety

The following is evidence that the main character experiencing Neurotic anxiety:

“For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but—I know not how or why it was—its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed me. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred.” (Page: 9, 17th paragraph)

The above utterance showed a Neurotic Anxiety. This Anxiety is fear of danger that seems to threaten continuously, which is actually unreal but only in the feelings of anxiety’s sufferers.

As a matter of fact, there is no danger that threatens the main character. Even his new cat loves him so much, which meant there was no danger that must be feared or avoided. He should have liked it, but instead he disliked it and increasingly hated the cat. So, this anxiety occurs because of unreal danger, but from the mind of the main character.

4.1.2 Realistic Anxiety

The following is evidence that the main character experiencing Realistic anxiety:

“One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame.”(Page 5/ 7th paragraph)

The above utterance showed a Realistic Anxiety. It is a situation where someone is facing a real danger.

The Main character was facing the real dangers that caused anxiety. The real danger showed when the cat avoided his presence and inflicted a slight wound upon his hand with cat’s teeth, it was causing the temperament to be flaring up, causing anger and wanted to vent his emotions immediately.

4.1.3 Moral Anxiety

The following is evidence that the main character experiencing Moral anxiety:

“I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

“When reason returned with the morning—when I had slept off the fumes of the night’s debauch—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty.” (Page 5/7- 8th paragraph)

The above utterance showed Moral anxiety, it is the type of anxiety which results from fear of violating moral or society code.

The Main character was experiencing fear and anxiety caused by violating moral or society code which called Moral Anxiety. He grasped his cat by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket, which is not a good thing and violates the society code. It was causing the emergence of shame and regret in the morning after doing a bad thing at night.

4.2 Defense Mechanism

The following utterances are clearly showed several defense mechanisms used by the main character to overcome his anxieties:

4.2.1 Displacement

The following utterance is evidence that the main character used Displacement defense mechanisms to cope his anxiety:

“I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.” (Page 5/ 7th paragraph)

The above utterance showed Displacement Defense mechanism. Some people used this defense mechanism when their basic feelings cannot be released and then direct it towards another person, animal or object to satisfy the Id.

The main character overcome his anxiety by direct it toward alcohol, he drunk such a wine in order to forget his crime of killing his cat.

4.2.2 Acting Out

The following utterance is evidence that the main character used Acting Out defense mechanisms to cope his anxiety:

“I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket!” (Page 5/7th paragraph)

The above utterance showed Acting Out Defense mechanism. It is Allowing ourselves to express thoughts, feelings, or desires even though we know that desire is a bad thing or violates the social code is called Acting Out.

The main character was avoided and got a wound to his hand, and it caused him tremendous anger. He did not trying to hold the pressure inside him, but he followed the bad

pressure by hurting his cat. He took a penknife, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket.

4.2.3 Denial

The following utterance is evidence that the main character used Denial defense mechanisms to cope his anxiety:

“but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched.” (Page 5/ 8th paragraph)

The above utterance showed Denial Defense mechanism. The person who used this defense mechanism refuse to accept the reality of what happened that caused anxiety and he believe that his denial is the fact.

The Main character denied himself that he suffer anxiety. He said to himself that he doesn't experience feelings of guilt after hurting his cat to calm his feeling down. It was done to reduce his anxiety.

4.2.4 Symbolization

The following utterance is evidence that the main character used d Symbolization defense mechanism to cope his anxiety:

“The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.” (Page 13/ 29th paragraph)

“Gentlemen,” I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, “I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen,” (Page 13/ 30th paragraph)

“this—this is a very well-constructed house,” (in the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all),—“I may say an excellently well-constructed house. These walls—are you going, gentlemen?—these walls are solidly put together”; and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.” (Page 14/ 30th paragraph)

The above utterances showed Symbolization Defense mechanism. To handle an unwanted or stressful thought, individual will used physical items, metaphoric ideas, or even symbol acts to turn into concrete or metaphoric thing, it is called Symbolization.

The utterances above showed that the main character used several symbol acts to cover up his mistake. At first he tried to say things that made the police believe that there was nothing to

be suspected of. And secondly, he hit the wall with his stick as a way to reassure that there was really nothing to be suspicious of. Strange words and actions belong to the symbolization

4.2.5 Projection

The following utterance is evidence that the main character used Projection defense mechanisms to cope his anxiety:

“Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb.” (Page 14, 32nd paragraph)

The above utterance showed Projection Defense mechanism. Someone who does not accept thoughts, feelings or motives that are not received by others, they tends to blame the other’s behavior it is called Projection.

The main character tends to blame the cat for the mistakes he made. He blamed the cat for causing him to become a killer. In fact, that was truly his own fault.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the main character experiences many types of anxieties, and he uses many types of defense mechanism to cope, hide, and reduce his anxieties. The main character used Neurotic anxiety, Moral anxiety, and Realistic anxiety. And the usage of Displacement, Denial, Symbolization, Projection, and Acting Out defense mechanism are the way the main character to cope, hide, and reduce his anxieties.

6. SUGGESTION

To the readers, the researcher suggests to increase social sensitivity by applying the theories in this study in everyday life in order to recognize a person's characteristics, so that the reader easy to understanding, adapting and interacting to people who have different personalities.

The researcher suggests to the next other researchers to analyze more deeply about psychoanalytic theory. Other researchers are expected to be able to develop this research, by examining the parts that have not been examined in this study.

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