

SOPHIE'S DEFENSE MECHANISM IN HER STRUGGLE TO BREAK THE CURSE IN DIANA WYNNE JONES' *HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE*

Ratnanggana Ausiyyah Mustika Perwita

Supervisor: Eta Farmacelia Nurulhady

English Department Diponegoro University

Jl. Prof. Sudarto, SH, Tembalang, Semarang

Abstract

The experience that young people get has an effect to their personality and their problem solving. This is why older people tend to be more mature than the young people. In Diana Wynne Jones' *Howl's Moving Castle*, the main character has a development in her personality through experiences. Her experiences lead her to how she solves her problems while she unconsciously uses defense mechanism. In this case, in this study will be analyzed the characteristic of the main character, Sophie, when she faces a problem while using defense mechanism. The defense mechanism also helps Sophie to break her curse. Her defense mechanism soon changes her personality without her notification and it helps her reach the goal she thinks she will never get, that is to have an interesting future.

Keyword: psychoanalysis, defense mechanism, struggle, break, curse

1. Introduction

Family and society affect someone's personality development. In the days of ancient Europe, the society believes that being the first child in a family brings misfortune and failure. This condition is reflected in the popular literature entitled *Howl's Moving Castle*. This is a novel about a girl named Sophie, who is destined to be born as the first daughter with two siblings.

She believes in a doctrine about being an eldest makes her less fortunate than the other siblings. The myth affects much on how she reacts to everything that happens in her life. The novel is about Sophie's struggles to break her curse and to get an interesting life. The purpose of this study is to analyze her struggle and defense mechanism to free her from a curse and the things that happen to her during her journey.

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Plotnik, defense mechanism has a meaning that, "Freudian processes that operate at unconscious levels and that we use self-deception or untrue explanations to protect the ego from being overwhelmed by anxiety." (2011: 437). People have their own way to face and solve the problems they are facing. The problems make the anxiety occurs, when it happen the mind responds by increasing the amount of problem-solving. The people who confront the problems seek rational ways to escape the situation. For some people rather than feeling frustration, conflict, or feelings of unworthiness, people deceive themselves into believing nothing is wrong (Kasschau, 2003: 380). Kasschau states that Freud calls this technique as defense mechanism because they defense the *ego* from experiencing the anxiety. The *ego* has a pretty important job, which is to protect people from threatening thoughts in their unconscious. One way to protect them from the unpleasant things is through defense mechanism. In conclusion, defense mechanism has a certain specific means by which the *ego* unconsciously protects itself against such unpleasant impulses, circumstances, or feelings.

There are some kinds of defense mechanism depending on the consciousness or the unconsciousness that people does, Dennis states that some of the defense mechanism are denial, repression, projection, reaction formation, displacement, rationalization, regression, sublimation, and suppression (2007: 510-511). Only four of them which are used, they are reaction formation, suppression, rationalization, and denial. According to Kasschau, Reaction formation is "involves replacing unacceptable feeling of urge with an opposite one." (2003: 382). A person who uses reaction formulation when he is facing fears will over acting in the opposite way to the fear. It is more comfortable to someone to face his fears by replacing the fears with the thought that he is not afraid of it. He puts an act to be brave for something he

actually afraid of. Suppression is a condition where someone is trying not to think about an unpleasant thing in his mind, while he is doing fun things to replace the unpleasant feeling into something pleasant. According to Ryckman, suppression is consciously pressing down the unpleasant feelings or emotions by simply not thinking about them. The unpleasant feelings are stored in the preconscious. It can be reactivated and made conscious by the person through an exertion of his will (2008: 42). Suppression is a useful psychological mechanism which permits the person to concentrate on his problems without being distracted by every impulse which arises, and without having to act on those impulses.

Further explanation about rationalization is explained by Plotnik. Plotnik states that “rationalization involves covering up the true reasons for actions, thoughts, or feelings by making up excuses and incorrect explanation” (2011: 437). Meanwhile, Ryckman adds an explanation that rationalization is “the justification of behavior through the use of plausible, but inaccurate, excuses” (2008: 44). It can be concluded that rationalization has a definition that is justifying illogical or unreasonable ideas, actions or feelings by developing acceptable explanations that satisfy the teller (the person who make excuses) as well as the listener (the person who receive the excuses). The last defense mechanism that is used is denial. According to Kasschau, denial is “refuse to accept the reality of something that makes you anxious” (2003: 381). People tend to avoid the unwanted reality by denying it. They force themselves to pretend that something bad is not happening. Doing denial involves blocking external events from awareness. If some situation is just too much to handle, the person just refuses to experience it. Refuse to accept something unpleasant is a sign that someone is in denial.

3. Discussion

Having problems or dealing with conflicts brings unpleasant things to anyone who faces it. Reaction formation appears when someone who has problems tries to deal with it by putting on an act which is opposite to the things that is related to the problems. Reaction formation that Sophie uses is when the Witch of the Waste curses her; it changes her into an old lady. Sophie feels something strange happens to her, when she finally realizes that she becomes an old woman she does not freak out.

Sophie got herself to the mirror, and found she had to hobble. The face in the mirror was quite calm, because it was what she expected to see. It was the face of a gaunt old woman, withered and brownish, surrounded by wispy white hair. Her own eyes, yellow and watery, stared out at her, looking rather tragic.

“Don’t worry, old things,” Sophie said to the face. “You look quite healthy. Besides, this is much more like you really are.”

She thought about her situation, quite calmly. Everything seemed to have gone calm and remote. She was not even particularly angry with the Witch of the Waste (Jones, 2001: 15).

Based on the quotation, after Sophie finds out about her changing, she feels grateful instead of getting angry. She is quite rather calm than she expects. Even though she is an old woman, she feels healthy and the dress she is wearing at that time suits her. Somehow, she acts differently from what she expects. She does not get mad, angry, and try to curse the Witch of the Waste back. It shows that Sophie is in reaction formation state when she is cursed. Sophie’s act toward her fear is changing because she needs to overcome the fear or simply to get rid the unpleasant feeling.

Suppression appears when someone feels uneasy about something and he tries to get rid of it by hiding and controlling unacceptable thoughts or feelings. The same things happen to Sophie, when she feels something unpleasant, she tries to hide it and thinks about something else. When Sophie works at Fanny’s hat shop, Sophie feels lonely because there are no one else much to talk to. This feeling causes her down, feeling sad, and she does not want it. It can disturb her works so that she decides to talk to the hats.

“Sophie talks to hats more and more as weeks went by. There was no one else much to talk to. Fanny was out bargaining, or trying to whip up custom, much of the day, and Bessie was busy serving and telling everyone her wedding plans” (Jones, 2001: 7).

This quotation shows that Sophie is trying to suppress her unwanted feeling into something pleasant and joy even just for a little. It is better to talk to the hats rather than feeling lonely

because she has no one to talk about many things, especially she is a young woman who is like to talk about many things that happen. Sophie's method by talking to the hats makes her loneliness lessens. It solves one of her problems. When she talks to the hats, she does not have to think about her loneliness anymore. Sophie is trying hard not to think about something unpleasant. It makes her uncomfortable so that she suppresses her feelings and thinks about something pleasant to her. The thing about talking to the hats helps her release the uneasiness in her mind. She will forget about her loneliness because she has nobody to talk to. This is the suppression that Sophie unconsciously does to get rid her unpleasant feelings.

When Sophie thinks about something which is actually wrong, she decides to make an excuse for it, so that she cannot feel the anxiety. Rationalization is a defense mechanism that involves explaining an unacceptable behavior or feeling in a rational or logical manner, avoiding the true reasons for the behavior.

Sophie feels something that is seems not right for her, and then she tries to cover it up by making an excuse. This is what Sophie exactly does when she finally realizes that Fanny uses her.

"Maybe I'm being exploited." She told a hat she was trimming with red silk and a bunch of wax cherries, "but someone has to do this or there will be no hats at all to sell." She finished that hat and started on a stark black-and-white one, very modish, and quite new thought came to her (Jones, 2001: 13).

She is trying not to think about she is being exploited because it makes her feel sad. She fortifies herself from the feel of anxiety by makes an excuse that she work at Fanny as a hat maker because no one can do it like the way she did. Sophie knows herself is good at trimming the hats, so she uses it as an excuse for herself for not leaving the hat shop right away. Also she is aware, if she moves out from the house it means she has to work hard to find what she really wants and the thought of being an eldest will give her bad luck. Therefore, she finds a way to not moving out from the house as an excuse even though it means she must be work under Fanny. Rationalization not only prevents anxiety, it may also protect self-esteem and self-concept. When confronted by success or failure, people tend to attribute achievement to their

own qualities and skills while failures are blamed on other people or outside forces. That's why Sophie chooses to make an acceptable reason in each event that occurs in her life, such as defends Fanny by saying that Fanny needs her so it is natural for Sophie to stay at the hat shop.

Denial is happened when deep inside Sophie's heart she knows that she has a feeling for Howl, although she blames the suit with a spell to attract women. She just simply denies it by saying she does not want to admit that she gets caught by the spell.

"Oh, confound that gray-and-scarlet suit!" Sophie said. "I refuse to believe that I was the one that got caught with it!" The trouble was the blue-and-silver suit seemed to have worked just the same. She stumped a few steps further. (Jones, 2001:119)

From the quotation above it is clear that Sophie does not want to admit that she knows she likes Howl. She refuses the reality about her feeling for him, because it is something unpleasant to her. She is old and not pretty, whereas Howl likes pretty young girls. Sophie thinks it is impossible for Howl to loves Sophie back and it makes her down. This will not end well, since Howl falling in love for sure with Miss Angorian there is no way Howl will loves Sophie. Sophie does not want to recognize her feeling for Howl, because she thinks that it will be useless since Howl does not like her. Thus, she can protect her ego from the things she cannot cope with.

4. Conclusion

The defense mechanism appears when Sophie tries to eliminate the unpleasant feelings in her mind. When she consciously aware that the reality seems wrong to her: she prefers not to think about it and to hide it (Suppression); she simply denies it (Denial); she makes an excuse so that she does not have to make an effort to changes her life (Rationalization); or she put an acts like nothing happens or acts brave instead of feeling afraid of something (Reaction Formation). Until finally she realizes that doing those kinds of things are useless, not all of the things will change if she keeps denies or running away from the problem without pushes her to do something. In the end she breaks the curse of being the eldest or the curse of being an old lady, because it does not matter how she used to be as long as she tries her best to make her life better. Sophie's defense mechanism helps her to survive from all the problems that appear in her life. The habit on doing defense mechanism whenever the problems occur changes her

personality without her notice. Until her defense helps her to reach the things she thinks she will never get. In the end, the curse on her can finally be broken; both it is the curse of being an old woman and the curse of being an eldest of the three.

Bibliography

Coon, Dennis and John D. Mitterer. 2007. *Introduction to Psychology: Gateways to Mind and Behavior*. USA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Jones, Diana Wynne. 2001. *Howl's Moving Castle*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

Kasschau, Richard M. 2008. *Theories of Personality (Ninth Edition)*. United States of America: Thomson Wadsworth.

Plotnik, Rod and Haigkouyoumdjian. 2011. *Introduction to Psychology (Ninth Edition)*. Canada: Wadsworth.

Ryckman, Richard M. 2008. *Theories of Personality (Ninth Edition)*. United States of America: Thomson Wadsworth.