The Internal Conflicts Faced by the Protagonist Santiago in Following His Destiny in 'The Alchemist' by Paulo Coelho

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan studi ini untuk mengungkapkan konflik internal yang dihadapi oleh Santiago — karakter utama dalam novel *The Alchemist* oleh Paulo Coelho — dalam menjalankan takdirnya. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan untuk menganalisa konflik internal Santiago. Data utama berbentuk narasi dan dialog antara tokoh-tokoh dalam novel tersebut. Dokumentasi sastra digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data yang relevan dari novel tersebut. Analisa data digunakan untuk menganalisa isi dan analisa naratif terdiri dari pengurangan dan interpretasi data. Studi ini menemukan bahwa Santiago menghadapi tiga konflik internal yang muncul karena pertentangan antara kebutuhan untuk mendapatkan kekuasaan pengakuan sosial, dan berpasangan dengan kebutuhan akan pencapaian pribadi.

Keywords: internal conflicts, neurotic needs, destiny

INTRODUCTION

As creatures equipped with body, soul, instinct, intelligence and emotion, human beings are gifted with more complicated life than of animals. Our needs are not limited only on food and shelter, but also on such things as love, dignity and reception which make us naturally social creatures that require the existence of others in order to survive.

The journey of our life reflects our complexity as well. Our needs and our connections with others throughout our live inevitably lead us to conflicts as sometimes things which we desire and necessitate collide with those of others. Furthermore, we also come across conflict with ourselves known as inner conflict or internal conflict in literary term. Sigmund Freud (Lundin, 1969: 304) saw conflicts continuously occur between the systems of personality, the ego, id, and super ego. He believed conflict to be intrapsychic, within the self, and distinguished it from frustration which originated in barriers from external reality.

Karen Horney (1945: 9) says that it is not neurotic to have conflicts. At one time or another, our wishes, our interests, our convictions are bound to collide with those of others around us. And just as such clashes between ourselves and our environment are a commonplace, so, too, conflicts within ourselves are an integral part of human life. Basically, conflicts not only are the state of opposing with others but also grow within us. Internal conflicts usually appear when it comes in time of making decisions.

Horney also mentions that it is the prerogative as well as the burden of human beings to be able to exert choice, to have to make decisions. We may have to decide between desires that lead in opposite directions (p.9).

As a part of our life internal conflicts affect us. The choices we have taken lead to consequences which color our life, moreover, they even change our life. A simple choice as the clothes that we wear is able to influence other people's opinion toward us. A more complex choice like the university major is the base of our future professional life. The results of a correct choice are mostly happiness which comes along our success and victory in all aspects of life. However, the wrong choice is commonly the cause of failure. The effect of failure is different in each person. Some people accept it as a bitterness which happens to all living human beings. On the contrary, for some people failure can drive them to desperation.

Those internal conflicts are also experienced by Santiago, the protagonist in *The Alchemist*, an enthralling novel by the famous Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. *The Alchemist* has gained a great success among other novels by the author. Originally published in 1988 in Portuguese, it has been translated into 56 languages, and has been sold more than 65 million copies in more than 150 countries, and is one of the bestselling books in history.

It is interesting to learn the conflicts Santiago faced during his journey in following his destiny because we all too face conflicts in our life. Just like him, when he — against his father's will — decided to become a shepherd because he wanted to see the world, we have many sorts of disagreement in various degree

from the mildest to the strongest with the people we encounter — even with our loved ones. And also, his internal conflict in deciding whether to believe his seemingly absurd dream about treasure or not happens to us in time of making a difficult choice that affects our life.

Holman and Harmon (1986: 107) explain conflict as the struggle that grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot. Conflict provides interests, suspense, and tension. At least one of the opposing forces is usually a person, or, if an animal or inanimate object, is treated as though it were a person.

Furthermore, Shaw (1905: 91-92) divides conflicts into five types: 1) elemental, or physical. It is a struggle between man and the physical world. The struggle represents man versus forces of nature, 2) social. It is a struggle between man and man, 3) internal, or psychological. It is a struggle between desires within a person. External forces may be important and other characters may appear in the narrative, but the focus is always upon the central figure's inner turmoil, 4) a variant form of social conflict is a protagonist's struggle against society, 5) the fifth conflict is man's struggle against fate and destiny.

Internal conflicts come from the internal needs within each human being. In order to analyze the cause of Santiago's internal conflicts as the protagonist in *The Alchemist* and how those conflicts affect him, the mature theory by Karen Horney is applied.

Bernard J. Paris in his online article *Brief Account of Karen Horney* writes that according to Horney, people defend themselves against feeling unsafe, unloved, and unvalued by developing both interpersonal and intrapsychic neurotic

strategies. The interpersonal strategies involve moving toward, against, or away from other people and adopting a self-effacing, expansive, or resigned solution. Each of these solutions entails a constellation of personality traits, behaviors, and beliefs, and a bargain with fate in which obedience to the dictates of that solution is supposed to be rewarded. Since people tend to employ more than one of these strategies, they are beset by inner conflicts. In order to avoid being torn apart or paralyzed, they make that strategy predominant which most accords with their culture, temperament, and circumstances; but the repressed tendencies persist, generating inconsistencies and rising to the surface if the predominant solution fails (pp.2-3).

George Boeree (1996: 4) adds that Horney saw neurosis as an attempt to make life bearable, as a way of "interpersonal control and coping." This is what we all strive to do on a day-to-day basis, only most of us seem to be doing alright, while the neurotic seems to be sinking fast.

Boeree gives an illustration to distinguish the 'healthy' human being with the neurotic one. He says that we all need affection, so what makes such a need neurotic? First, the need is unrealistic, unreasonable, and indiscriminate. For example, we all need affection, but we don't expect it from everyone we meet. We don't expect great outpourings of affection from even our close friends and relations. We don't expect our loved ones to show affection at all times, in all circumstances. Second, the neurotic's need is much more intense, and he or she will experience great anxiety if the need is not met, or if it even appears that it may not be met in the future. It is this, of course, that leads to the unrealistic

nature of the need. Affection, to continue the example, has to be shown clearly at all times, in all circumstances, by all people, or the panic sets in. The neurotic has made the need too central to their existence (p.4).

Horney had one more way of looking at neurosis – in terms of self images. For Horney, **the self** is the core of your being, your potential. If you were healthy, you would have an accurate conception of who you are, and you would then be free to realize that potential (self-realization) (p.6).

Boeree also writes that Horney identifies ten neurotic needs found in human beings: 1) the neurotic need for affection and approval, the indiscriminate need to please others and be liked by them, 2) the neurotic need for a partner, for someone who will take over one's life. This includes the idea that love will solve all of one's problems, 3) the neurotic need to restrict one's life to narrow borders, to be undemanding, satisfied with little, to be inconspicuous; 4) the neurotic need for power, for control over others, for a facade of omnipotence, 5) the neurotic need to exploit others and get the better of them, 6) the neurotic need for social recognition or prestige, 7) the neurotic need for personal admiration, 8) the neurotic need for personal achievement, 9) the neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence, and 10) the neurotic need for perfection and unassailability (pp.4-5). Bast in her online article *Summary of Neurosis and Human Growth* mentions that those needs can be identified into three basic needs: mastery, love, or freedom (p.6).

In this study the writer will put the emphasis on Santiago's internal conflicts because the story in *The Alchemist* is mostly centered on how Santiago

dealt with his confusion, fear, anger, and pain to make an important decision in his life.

DISCUSSION

In *The Alchemist*, the protagonist Santiago experienced some internal conflicts which appeared during his journey in following his destiny. Those conflicts drove him to think hard in deciding an important step of his life with its own consequences which sometimes led to hazards and obscurities. However, the hazards and obscurities were the integral parts of Santiago's journey. They showed that all lives have their own obstacles and dark times where we can learn from.

This study was aimed at revealing the cause of Santiago's internal conflicts from the psychological point of view by using the mature theory of Karen Horney. The theory is used to explain the neurotic strategies developed by people to defend themselves against feeling unsafe, unloved, and unvalued. Although Santiago is not at all a neurotic, it does not mean that he is free from the need that can lead to neurosis. The way he dealt with the conflicts was what distinguished him from the neurotic.

There were three major internal conflicts which Santiago faced in the story. All of which were caused by the clash of different desires inside him. The following are Santiago's internal conflicts:

1. Conflict caused by the need for power and the need for personal achievement

Santiago, an adventurous Spanish boy who enjoyed his life as a shepherd for two years suddenly had a same dream twice about finding a hidden treasure if he came to Egyptian Pyramids. He did not take his dream seriously at first, but after he got his dream interpret by an old Gypsy woman and met an old man who claimed himself as Melchizedek the king of Salem, Santiago made a decision to sell his flock and left his homeland to search for the treasure.

It was certainly a difficult decision to make. Santiago spent all of his life in the region of Andalusia, where he was born, grew up, and been a shepherd. During his traveling as a shepherd never once he left Andalusia, the place where everything connected to him existed, to go abroad. He was torn between the desire to stay close to things which were familiar to him and things which could bring him fortune and prosperity. In this case, things that most familiar to him was his flock which became inseparable part of his shepherding life. Santiago's dilemma in choosing whether to stay or to go can be seen in the following:

> Here I am, between my flock and my treasure, the boy thought. He had to choose between something he had become accustomed to and something he wanted to have (Coelho, 2002: 27).

The desire to stay close to his flock came from the neurotic need for power, for control over others, for a facade of omnipotence (Boeree, 1996: 4). The need can also be categorized as one of the three basic needs, which is the need of mastery (Bast, 6). From the following citing we can see that Santiago felt he had full control over his flock:

> He knew everything about each member of his flock: he knew which ones were lame, which one was to give birth two months from now, and which were the laziest. He knew how to shear them, and how to slaughter them. If he ever decided to leave them, they would suffer (Coelho, 2002: 27).

Although Santiago developed a bond with his flock since they taught him unspoken lesson about being a good shepherd, he as well saw them as the tool of living his dream, to travel. Since he was born as a son of simple farmer, the only way possible for him to travel was by being a shepherd. The following conversation shows his determination:

> "The people who come here have a lot of money to spend, so they can afford to travel," his father said. "Amongst us, the only ones who travel are the shepherds."
> "Well, then I'll be a shepherd!" (Coelho, 2002: 9).

The neurotic need for power then clashed with the neurotic need for personal achievement (Boeree, 1996: 4), which was reflected by his dream of finding a hidden treasure. Interestingly, both needs are belong to the basic need of mastery.

Finding a treasure of course would bring the great admiration from other people since life as a shepherd did not offer him the luxury. Santiago himself realized that a shepherd was not a prestigious profession. Shepherding was a profession that did not allow the person to settle down. A baker was considered a more important profession than a shepherd. Certainly parents would choose a baker over a shepherd for their daughter's husband. Since Santiago was attracted to a merchant's daughter, that fact bothered his mind so much. His feeling was reflected by his own opinion about being a shepherd:

> "Why would a king be talking with a shepherd?" the boy asked, awed and embarrassed (Coelho, 2002: 13).

Apart from that, people also saw Santiago as a simple man without much money in possession. Even then man with not much money was not considered an honorable man. Especially for the people who valued money more than anything, such a man like Santiago did not deserve their time and attention. The thought about a man like Santiago was reflected in the manner of the Gypsy woman to Santiago:

> "Tell me more about your dream," said the woman. "I have to get back to my cooking, and, since you don't have much money, I can't give you a lot of time." (Coelho, 2002: 13).

From the evidences above we can see that Santiago dreamed of personal achievement that could be reached by finding a hidden treasure. His succeed would gain him great respect and admiration from others. However, searching for the treasure meant that he had to leave his mastery to his flock which became the part of his two years shepherding life. He finally chose to search for his treasure after he was certain that he would find his treasure.

2. **Conflict caused by the need for social recognition and the need for personal achievement**

In the port town of Tangier, Santiago was deceived by a complete stranger who took away all of his money and left him penniless. He was shocked and broken that at first. Nevertheless, he was able to find the way out of his problem. He worked for a crystal merchant to get money to continue his journey to Egypt. The crystal merchant told him that he would not be able to get enough money to go because Tangier and Egypt was separated by thousands of kilometers of desert.

Upon hearing that, Santiago gave up his hope to go to Egypt but still worked for the crystal merchant to get money to buy new flock. For nearly a year, he had been working incessantly, thinking only of putting aside enough money so that he could return to Spain with pride. On his last day, he asked the crystal merchant's blessing for returning to his country but the crystal merchant said that his destiny was not to buy a sheep.

Again, Santiago was torn between the desire to return home and the desire to continue his journey. He had enough money to buy himself a hundred and twenty sheep, a return ticket, and a license to import products from Africa into his own country. When he returned, he was no longer the same simple shepherd as he was when he left his country. He was still a shepherd but with much bigger flock, the new ability to speak Arabic, and an experience as a crystal seller. He was more confident in himself, though, and felt as though he could conquer the world.

Santiago's desire to return home with pride came from the neurotic need for social recognition or prestige (Boeree, 1996: 4). People from his country naturally would look at him with respect, unlike when he was just a shepherd with only sixty sheep. He would return home as a rich man although he did not find his treasure. Moreover, he would return to the thing that was familiar to him, taking care of his flock in the fields that he knew. That feeling came from the neurotic need for power (p.4). He felt that he would face the thing that he was good at, not a strange and unpredictable thing that was reflected in the following:

> I know why I want to get back to my flock, he thought. I understand sheep; they're no longer a problem, and they can be good friends. On the other hand, I don't know if the desert can be a friend, and it's in the desert that I have to search for my treasure (Coelho, 2002: 65).

Meanwhile, Santiago still had a desire to continue his journey to search for his treasure. It meant that there was the need of personal achievement lingering in his heart. Coming home as a rich shepherd was important but then following a dream of finding a treasure was also important. He chose to continue his journey in searching for his treasure because he decided that maybe becoming a shepherd was not really his dream and he was not an ordinary man for he had met a king.

3. **Conflict caused by the need for a partner and the need for personal achievement**

The last major internal conflict emerged after Santiago met Fatima the desert woman, the love of his life whom he treasured so much. He even considered her more important than the real treasure awaited him in the Pyramids itself. Fatima was the result of his lifetime journey in finding his twin soul. He felt that he loved her even before they met.

The deep feeling that Santiago had for Fatima came from the neurotic need for a partner, for someone who will take over one's life (Boeree, 1996: 4). Once he met Fatima, Santiago was certain they were meant to be. He did not need to find out who she really was because he understood the language of the world that told him she was the one. The need, according to Horney, came from the desire for human intimacy or a desire for "belonging" (1945: 18).

Boeree adds that the need for a partner also includes the idea that love will solve all of one's problems (1996: 4). Santiago considered his love for Fatima would fulfill his need and the source of his strength. He knew that his love for her would enable him to discover every treasure in the world. He took it for granted

the reason why he came to Al-Fayoum oasis because searching for treasure was suddenly not that important for him. He felt that the tribe war was no longer an obstacle because it made him meet Fatima just like shown in the following part:

> "I'm going to wait here for you every day. I have crossed the desert in search of a treasure that is somewhere near the Pyramids, and for me, the war seemed a curse. But now it's a blessing, because it brought me to you." (Coelho, 2002: 95).

Then again, there was the need to search for treasure. The need for personal achievement was still inside Santiago. Reluctant as he was in the beginning because he had found Fatima, Santiago finally decided to continue his journey. Fatima and the alchemist convinced him that searching for treasure was his personal legend.

Fatima, the desert woman, was used to the way the desert people lived. The desert women never restrained their men from exploring the desert in search for glory even though they knew there was a chance that the men would not come back. She encouraged Santiago to pursue his dream in spite of Santiago's disinclination. She was certain that being apart would not change their love just like the desert. Fatima's thought can be found in the following part:

> "That's why I want you to continue toward your goal. If you have to wait until the war is over, then wait. But if you have to go before then, go on in pursuit of your dream. The dunes are changed by the wind, but the desert never changes. That's the way it will be with our love for each other (Coelho, 2002: 97).

At this point, the different point of views in seeing love between Fatima and Santiago caused him a dilemma. In his country, married shepherds always had a difficult time convincing their wives that they had to go off into distant fields. Love required them to stay with the people they loved.

The alchemist had the same point of view about love. He understood the nature of the desert women who gave freedom to their men. He explained that Santiago must understand that love that spoke the Language of the World. It would not restrain. It gave the liberty to pursue one's own destiny.

Once again the need for personal achievement took over Santiago. He realized that it was his destiny to go far away from his homeland to find a treasure. For the love of his life as well he continued his journey. He knew that Fatima would appreciate his effort in searching for his treasure and faithfully wait for him until his return. With faith he then decided to go. Santiago's feeling was reflected as follows:

> "I'm going with you," the boy said. And he immediately felt peace in his heart (Coelho, 2002: 120).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that the writer draws from the analysis is the three internal conflicts that Santiago faced were the results of the clash between two desires arose within him in time of making a very important decision in his life. The desires represented the psychological needs (or in this research the writer applies Karen Horney's terms of neurosis needs) commonly found in any human beings. What makes the needs different if they emerge in a neurosis or in a normal person is the tendency of the person in coping with the failure to complete the needs. The normal person accepts the failure as a part of life, while in a neurosis it causes anxiety.

Santiago's first internal conflict emerged because the need for power or mastery over his flock clashed with the need for personal achievement. Living a life as a shepherd for two years without any doubt brought Santiago a feeling of full control over his flock. Guiding the sheep in searching of food and water, taking care of them, and protect them were the things that were familiar to him. Suddenly he had to give them all up to fulfill his other need — the need to find a place in the world through a personal achievement represented by the dream of finding a hidden treasure.

The second conflict arose when Santiago had to decide whether he returned home to Spain or continued his journey. The decision to return home came from the need for social recognition or prestige since people would surely respect him for he was a rich man. He successfully collected lots of money by working for a crystal merchant. The need clashed with the need for personal achievement that drove Santiago to follow his Personal Legend. The later need was finally chosen because Santiago thought that he could always go back as a shepherd but he might not have other opportunity to have such a wonderful journey.

The third conflict caused by the clash of two desires, the need for a partner and personal achievement. Romantic man as he was, Santiago was willing to sacrifice his treasure for a true love. However, he then realized that he gained many things by continuing his journey, including the devotion from the love of his life.

We can see that the three internal conflicts above emerged because of the need of personal achievement clashed with other needs. It showed that even within a simple shepherd a grand desire in his life, such as finding a treasure which undoubtedly would make him wealthy and respected. Although being a shepherd was the path that he chose as the price of the freedom, Santiago realized that it was considered a humble profession by the majority of the society. It was a natural thing that he dreamed of a great thing happened in his life.

However, the conflicts did not cause Santiago a prolonged and unresolved anxiety which was one of the sign someone suffered from neurosis. He, on the other hand, was capable of facing those conflicts in a quite mature way, then cast off dilemma by choosing to make a decision and accepted whatever consequence that the decision brought. It proved that Santiago was a healthy-minded person. He did not allow his doubts and fears to mislead him from the path that he took in following his Personal Legend.

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