

Prevalence of Superego in Able: Sublimating in Homecoming --Abel's Personality Structure in House Made of Dawn

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Abstract: *House Made of Dawn*, the masterpiece of the Native American Writer N. Scott Momaday published in 1968, won him fame and recognition in dominant American society. Momaday was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for the novel, which signified the renaissance of Native American literature. This paper focuses on Abel's superego directing his ego to transcend his id and awaken him to be on the way of returning to his tribe and the ancient tradition. He regains the conscience and morality by listening to his grandfather's story-telling. Therefore his psychic energy eventually begins to stay away from its destructive effects and his superego is on its way to sublimation. The power he gains transfers into the integration with his tribal tradition during his running at dawn, which is constructive to the future of his tribe and himself. The conflict of his id, ego and superego is hushed into peace with balance. His superego gains sublimation.
Keywords: House Made of Dawn; Abel; Superego; Homecoming

1. INTRODUCTION

In Freud's typology, the superego is the agency in our psyches related to conscience and morality. The superego is involved with the process of approval and disapproval of wishes on the basis or whether they are moral or not, critical self-observation, and a sense of guilt over wrong-doing. Abel's superego consists of his conscience and morality that an American Indian is supposed to stick up for Indian tradition and culture which bring him up and not to turn against them. With superego taking the upper hand, Abel is aware that homecoming is the only way-out for him to establish his place.

2. FEELING GUILTY OF CUTTING HIMSELF OFF HIS INDIAN CULTURE

Superego concerns the social values and taboos that we internalize and experience as our sense of right and wrong. It works as the conscience, preserving our morality and dignity. Among the id, ego and superego, none can function single-handedly of the other two. They are associated with each other interactively and

come into play as a whole. In dealing with the interaction between id and ego, superego or conscience serves as a judge. It determines what is correct and leads our spirits to a realm of new height, removing every barrier. Abel's superego involves his conscience that he is supposed to adhere to Indian tradition and not to rebel against it. As mentioned before, Abel holds a series of faulty views of the world of the ancient tribe and modern, industrial America.

For years, Abel has felt he is isolated in Indian culture due to his family, surroundings and experience. He holds the belief that he doesn't belong to Pueblo. Much of his understanding of nature differs from that of the Indian tradition. For Indians in the Southwest, the eagle stands for supernatural force in tribal culture. Nevertheless, young Abel considers the eagle as the symbol of freedom and life, which appeals him to depart from his hometown: "They were cavorting, spinning and spiraling on the cold, clear columns of air, and they were beautiful" (16). In the meantime he regards the eagle carrying a snake in its talons as "awful sight", which is different from the view held in Pueblo. And from a series of descriptions of Abel's special emotional state responding to animal life, a conclusion can be drawn that Abel holds a number of viewpoints that differ from those in Indian culture. Then Abel's superego acts as a judge telling what is correct. After his undergoing frustration and pain, his superego that one should stick up for his own tradition begins to prevail and pass judgment on him. Thus he realizes that it brings him suffering and setbacks to rebel against the tradition. Instead of acquiring real freedom, he experiences hardship and frustration in his pursuing it. Abel wishes to assimilate into modern society for a long time. He tries to fulfill his wishes in three ways: serving in the U.S. army in World War II, sexual relationship with the white woman Angela and struggling as an industrial worker after getting out of the jail. During the bloodcurdling war his passion for blending in modern world turns out to be a huge failure. He is regarded as an alien in the eyes of the

white soldiers. They prevent him from integrating into them who represent the mainstream culture in the modern America even in the grueling war. An Indian is bound to be rejected and shut out of the modern society without an equal identity. The war has left him mentally collapsed. His superego prevailing after frustration and pain tells him that a man who rebels his own tribe that brings him up can never find his identity. His superego once again functions as a judge. Angela, a white woman seeking treatment in Walatowa, appeals to Abel a lot. But in fact she symbolizes the dominant society of America in sickness. Her morbid beauty has an irresistible attraction for Abel. Therefore Abel rebels the tradition again to indulge himself in the sexual relationship with her. His passion for Angela, as a matter of fact, indicates his longing for white society. Angela doesn't love him actually, and her desire originates from her curiosity about his body, an Indian young man's body. In addition, she seduces Abel to distract herself from her own unhappiness. It is apparent that Angela is just taking advantage of him. Thus she gets away from him before long. Abel is chastened by the failure. After the misery, his superego informs him that it is destined and his rebellion against his own culture contributes to his frustration.

Abel leads a miserable life in Los Angeles after being in jail for six years. Due to the relocation policy he once again struggles to survive in the white society. As an alienated American Indian he undergoes setbacks and pain in the way that is expected. His endeavor to live in peace and stability turns out to be a daydream. Thanks to Ben, or else he would live in the dirty, shabby and dark storeroom equipped with no toilet. He is under the gun on account of being suspected of causing trouble again though he is an industrial worker. The Relocation people keep coming around to remind him of his identity of being a prisoner before, which almost drives him crazy. Worse still there exist somebody who speaks ill of his tribe, which hurts him deeply. But what defeats him thoroughly is that a police officer called Martinez robs Ben and him of money and almost beats him to death when he goes to ask him for justice. During the great pain his superego begins to prevail in his mind. There is an emerging acceptance that his desire to live peacefully in the modern society is just the castle in the air and only the ancient Indian tradition can grant him the strength and confer him a real identity. The superego is related to the processes of critical reflections and a sense of guilt over wrong-doing according to Freud. Therefore Abel's comprehension of his faulty viewpoint on his tribe and modern society demonstrates that his superego is prevailing in his mind, which makes him feel guilty to stay away from his tribe. To sum up, as his ego identifies his connection with Indian tradition and culture in undergoing the frustration and pain in the modern

society, his superego functions as a judge who tells him what is true and what is wrong and eventually directs him towards the right track.

3. REGAINING CONSCIENCE AND MORALITY FROM HIS GRANDFATHER'S BEDSIDE STORY

In Freud's typology, the superego is the agency in our psyches concerning conscience and morality. The superego involves the process of approving and disapproving of one's wishes and whether they are moral or not. Abel's superego lies in his conscience and morality that an American Indian is supposed to keep up his Indian tradition and culture in which he is brought up rather than turn against them.

Francisco, Abel's grandfather, stands for the ancient tradition in Pueblo. He brings Abel up and teaches him the history of Jemez and the people who live on this land from generation to generation. In his old age, Francisco is shocked to see that his grandson is torn in two by the ancient rites and traditions of his people and modern, industrial America. Devastated, he catches sight of Abel's descending into hell. When Abel returns to Walatowa after undergoing frustration and pain in Los Angeles, he finds his grandfather dying. Abel is loyal to this observance for about one week. When Abel sits and watches beside the bedside of Francisco, the old man revives and falls into a coma alternately. Abel's heart is broken at the sight of the room where he was born and where his mother and brother passed away.

For six days the old man fights against the preordained death and talks and sings. Till dawn of each morning, the old man will speak out his memories. Abel fails to comprehend the meaning of Francisco's narration initially, nevertheless, "voice of his memory was whole and clear and growing like the dawn" (172).

In the first of the six sections, Francisco recalls taking Abel to the cemetery to the southwest of their village. He aims at steering his grandson in the holy knowledge of astronomy in Indian tradition by pointing out in detail the astronomical phenomena which marks the rites such as ceremonial dances. He wants to make sure that Abel acknowledges the significance of astronomy in Indian so that Abel can sense the motion of nature in his mind. It reminds Abel of the know-how of the solar calendar that Francisco informs him when he is a child and the ceremonial rituals under Indian tradition. Then the old man's memory flies into the past when he was young. He calls to mind that he rides out and encounters tracks of various animals. Abel listens to the story in which his grandfather tracks down a bear and kills it at last. In Francisco's recollection, Abel regains the knowledge of the hunting ways and rituals in the ancient tradition of Jemez. Abel's grandfather's vision brings him back to the romance with a pretty young girl and the sad ending of their story—his lover carries his child but the child is stillborn and

they break up at last. The forth recollection carries Francisco back to a dawn when he takes his grandsons to view the dawn runners at high speed—an ancient tradition in Jemez, which reinforces Abel's racial awareness at the thought of running at the dawn. Francisco's fifth vision, which resembles that of the bear hunt, brings him to the achievement of an action during a ritual which marks his new and important position in Jemez. He recalls the excellent performance he has made in the ceremonial and the admiration from the people. The story in which Francisco is viewed as the healer in Jemez indicates that he will also heal his grandson. The last memory is also involved with running. Francisco's recollections in his last moments of life are bound to awaken Abel's knowledge of the traditional ways handed down from the ancient time. Ultimately, they start to make sense and deliver meaning.

On the morning of the seventh day when his grandfather passes away, Abel for the first time holds a ceremony strictly following the permanent practices of his tribe to prepare his grandfather for the funeral. In listening attentively to Francisco's uttering memories for six dawns, he once again takes in the essence of the tribal tradition and the ancient culture conveyed from the stories and regains the power to overcome barriers. He understands well why grandfather tells him those stories—he wishes Indian tradition could be passed and developed in this way. Francisco's recollections arouse the connection between the tribe and Abel and "Abel was suddenly awake, wide awake and listening" (183). It is the turning point which marks Abel's transformation. He has lost his belief and conscience before. He has undergone disorder and confusion before. He has suffered frustrations and pains before. Yet he regains the conscience and morality that he should adhere to the tribal tradition and culture in the presence of tribal tradition which functions as a great healer to him. The conscience and morality have come back and taken over all his soul, which spurs him to cherish a wonderful dream that seems surreal. It is his superego that functions unconsciously: "Nothing had awakened him. There was no sound in the room" (183). The reason and sense of responsibility revive in Abel so that he is determined to fulfill the obligation to his grandfather. He is finally transformed. After his own near-death experience he returns home only to inject the life of the last member in his family into his new one—taking part in the ceremonials just as his grandfather has done in his youth.

4. SUBLIMATING THROUGH RUNNING AT DAWN IN HIS NATIVE LAND

According to Freud, sublimation is the transformation of detrimental impulsion into something less pernicious. It can be a decentralizing liberation or may be a beneficial and rewarding piece of work.

Confronting disharmony of upset thinking, we tend to produce psychological energy which has to go somewhere. Sublimation transfers this kind of energy away from ruinous conducts and into something that is universally receivable and/or effective. As for Abel, the frustration, pain and discrimination he undergoes in trying to assimilate into the modern society can be harmful to the society and him without being released in the proper way. When his id prevails, he indulges himself in alcohol and sexual desire. Ultimately he kills the albino recklessly on account of the psychological energy that finds nowhere to go. During the near-to-death pain, his ego identifies his association with the tribe and welcomes his prevailing superego. By listening to his grandfather's story-telling he regains the conscience and morality. Therefore his psychic energy eventually begins to stay away from its destructive effects and his superego is on its way to sublimation.

As mentioned above, not long after he is nearly beaten to death by Martinez, Abel returns again to his native land Walatowa, only to find his grandfather, Francisco, on the point of death. His grandfather recollects his honorable moment to be a real man in bear hunting and taking Abel to watch the race of the dead—running at dawn as fast as you can. Francisco dies on the bed after his storytelling and Abel prepares him in accordance with the ancient way in the tribe and leaves him before dawn. He hurries to the old wagon road where his grandfather takes him to watch the race. As the first light of dawn shines down upon the slopes of the valley, Abel fixes his eyes on the runners and he joins in the flow in spite of the pain in his body to run after them.

It is apparent that Abel is perhaps unable to run far owing to his health problem. He is on the recovery from the severe injury he suffers in Los Angeles. However, he makes his decision to join in the running. Still and all, he struggles to run. In the description, Abel runs until he feels pain-free, and some readers view this as the death of Abel. However, the author of the thesis disapproves of the interpretation of Abel's death during the running. Or else the stories told by Francisco on his deathbed to Abel will be less meaningful. It makes more sense to interpret this to mean that Abel's running with the spirits of forefathers grants him the power to triumph over his severely beaten body. In addition, prompted by the ancient song "House Made of Dawn" echoed in his head, Abel is capable of conquering his physical limitations.

Dawn signifies the beginning of the tribal life, and the regeneration of the tribal culture. Every new morning is the moment of revival when new life begins to be filled with invigoration. From the dawn originates birth and generation. Abel's running marks a new leaf in his life. He is running with the concept that he runs with the faith of his grandfather. He is also running with the notion that he is substituting

himself with his grandfather's position in the village, which indicates the passing of the torch from generation to generation as his grandfather has taken part in the ceremonial run at dawn in his youth.

Abel puts to an end to his struggle for a real identity by running at dawn and singing Night Chant. Eventually he returns to his home in the house made of dawn. He gains his conscience and morality and has a vision of the proper access to wholeness—he could see the canyons, the mountains, the sky, the river and the dark hills at dawn. His insight and voice convey his harmonious association with his tribal tradition and culture and look forward to his bright future shared with his tribe.

During the process of running, Abel is filled with good expectations from his superego which thinks highly of the landscape of his native place and the tribal tradition. Therefore, he identifies with his tribe in beauty and harmony. Once he loses his identity; once he suffers a lot from the frustration and desperation; once he endures the injuries in his body. Finally everything calms down. The contradiction among his id, ego and superego has been alleviated and unstable and harmful factors have been curbed.

Sublimation is probably the most useful and constructive of the defense mechanisms as it takes the energy of something that is potentially harmful and turns it to doing something good and useful. Freud believed that the greatest achievements in civilization were due to the effective sublimation of our sexual and aggressive urges that are sourced in the Id and then channeled by the Ego as directed by the Super

ego. In his more basic musings, he considered such as painting as a potentially sublimated desire to smear one's own faeces. As discussed in the previous chapter, the confusion and setbacks Abel undergoes are likely to result in harmful deeds like his killing the albino. Yet his inner energy sourced in the id is channeled by the ego as directed by the superego. The power he gains transfers into the integration with his tribal tradition during his running at dawn, which is constructive to the future of his tribe and himself. The conflict of his id, ego and superego is hushed into peace. His superego gains sublimation.

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