

## FERGUS BOGGS' IMBALANCED SYSTEM OF PERSONALITY AND HIS DEFENSE MECHANISM AS SEEN IN *THE MARBLE COLLECTOR*

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### Abstract

*This research has goals to reveal Fergus Boggs' imbalanced system of personality and the types of defense mechanism he shows in this novel. This is a qualitative research which the source of the data is a novel from Cecelia Ahern, The Marble Collector. The data used in this research is the expressions related to the imbalanced system of personality and defense mechanism used by the character and the narrative texts. The researcher read and re-read the text, collected the data, categorized and analyzed them. The data was analyzed using Freud's psychoanalysis theory especially in ego defense mechanism. To maintain the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher used proof-reading methods. The finding of the study finds that Fergus Bogg's imbalanced system of personality is caused by the domination of the id. The domination can be seen when Fergus does everything when it is related to marbles, he often lies, and does something impulsively. His id domination can also be seen when he has affairs with several women. The id domination is caused by two reasons, they are the family and the priest that lead him in having traumatic experience. The second finding is Fergus Bogg's types of defense mechanism. The types of defense mechanism portrayed by Fergus are rationalization, projection, reaction formation, and displacement.*

**Keywords:** The Marble Collector, Cecelia Ahern, psychoanalysis, imbalanced system of personality, domination of id, ego defense mechanism

### INTRODUCTION

Most of all people will judge someone's personality from what they see. It can be good, like when someone keeps helping other people, being friendly, and being generous, but it can also be bad like when someone keeps cheating, being cruel, and being rude, even people will say that someone is depressed when she or he is hardly smile. In fact, to know someone's personality is not that easy. According to Freud (1997), who is a famous psychologist, there are three parts that build someone's personality. Those parts are id which seeks for the needs and the wants; ego, which based on the reality and the reason why someone has to do something; and the last is superego, which keeps the person acting based on reality and idealistic moral manner.

Freud (in Barbara, 1985: 285) also says that "healthy personality development requires a balance between the id and the superego." Those parts have to be harmonious. If they are not balanced, there will be a bad thing happening to the person like having mental illness. When there is one becoming the strongest among the others, the ego has to control the id and the superego. When the id is too strong, someone will do something impulsively. Freud (in Hall, 1954: 27) says that id is "a spoiled child of the personality." It is demanding, impulsive, irrational, selfish, and pleasure loving. The example given by Freud (in Hall, 1954: 23) is a baby who cries when she or he cannot get food. The only thing she or he can do is crying. Unless she or he is fed, the baby will keep crying because

she or he cannot fulfill her or his own food. When the baby grows up, the parents should make a schedule and training to develop the baby's superego. They cannot feed the baby immediately if they want the baby to be disciplined. Meanwhile, when the super-ego is the one which is the strongest, the person will be burdened by guilt. She or he will ignore any other things besides the moral value without seeing if it fits the reality or not. When a person is dominated by one of them, it means that the person has an imbalanced system of personality.

Having an imbalanced system of personality can lead someone to a mental illness. The person will suffer from an anxiety, which according to Buss and Larsen (2002: 177) it is "an unpleasant state, which acts as a signal that things are not right and something must be done. Here, it is the ego role as a mediator. The id needs and the superego moralistic idea have to adjust with the reality. To reduce the tension, a person's mind will control them and do several things as a form of a defense. It is called defense mechanism. There are several types of it, they are repression, rationalization, projection, sublimation, reaction formation, displacement, denial. However, Hall (1954: 96) states "When a defense becomes a very influential it dominates the ego, curtails its flexibility, and adaptability," but it is needed so the ego will develop.

Psychological issue such as mental illness is considered as something bad in

society. However, the evidence shows that it really exists. According to World Health Organization report through its official website (2017), there is one in every four people in the world who suffers from mental illness. By the 2020, it is predicted that mental illness will be the second disease which cause the global disease burden. The lack of information and urgency makes this disease getting worse. That is why the researcher thinks that a research related to the mental illness is needed to improve the awareness of it.

One of the ways to raise the awareness about mental illness is through literature. It is fictional and different from other real life science. It is also usually considered as something that does not give a real impact. However, a literary work always has a reference from the reality. Lukens (1999: 7) says that "literature provides a sense of life and unity." He also says that life is fragmented. Hence, literature provides many aspects in life that is united in a form of a story.

Some novels have discussed various issues related to psychology, like someone who suffers from depression and loneliness. For the issue of personality, there are several literary works like Sidney Sheldon's *Tell Me Your Dreams* in which the character, Ashley Patterson, committed homicide to five men. He does it because of his traumatic experience during his childhood. Another literary work with the same issue is entitled *Sybil* by Flora

Rheta Schreiber. In *Sybil*, the main character portrays some types of defense mechanism to deal with her very traumatic childhood.

In this research, the novel which is going to be analyzed by the researcher is one of those literary works that has a psychological issue. The main character of *The Marble Collector* by Cecelia Ahern unconsciously uses defense mechanisms to deal with his situation. *The Marble Collector* by Cecelia is published in 2015. This novel has a very unique yet simple premise where a marble, which is usually considered as kids toy, can lead into a serious problem for the main character and also other characters. This is also the thing which leads the main character to lie and his ego employs several types of defense mechanism. Having two points of view makes this novel more unique. The first point of view is from the father, Fergus Boggs and the second is from the daughter, Sabrina who tries to reveal his father real personality. Fergus' forgetfulness makes the researcher interested to find the answer from other characters and the story lines. This research will be conducted using Freud's psychoanalysis theory on defense mechanism.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researcher uses qualitative method to arrange this research. Creswell (2007:5) states that a qualitative research is a mean to explore and understand the meaning individual or group ascribe to a social or human problem. Since the researcher uses a novel and it

consists of life and social life experience, this method fits really well to analyze human problem in it. The source of the data used in this research primarily uses a novel from Cecelia Ahern, *The Marble Collector*. The researcher also uses other works related to psychology in literature to support the analysis. There are several steps the researcher uses to conduct the research. First, the researcher read the novel thoroughly several times to understand the content. Then, the researcher took some notes of several important evidences. Those notes were used as documentation for further analysis. The final step was using those data to be categorized and answering the research questions.

To obtain the trustworthiness of this research, the researcher made sure that this research has qualitative validity and qualitative reliability. The qualitative validity is a procedure done by the researcher to check the accuracy of the findings, while the qualitative reliability is indicated when the researcher keeps approaching other different projects from different researchers. The researcher had employed some procedures to check the credibility. That was by triangulation techniques. Thus, the researcher did peer review with other college students from English Literature study program. Besides, the researcher also consulted the findings with her thesis advisor, to ask for suggestions and opinion related to the research.

## **FINDINGS**

Fergus' imbalanced system of personality can be seen by his behavior when he does something related to marbles and when he has affairs with women. They show the domination of Fergus' id. Fergus gets his first marbles while being disciplined in a dark room as a punishment he gets from a priest. A person who gives him marbles is also a priest. Fergus calls him a 'nice priest'.

"I brought you something. A box of bloodies" I flinch and he puts a hand out.

"Don't look so scared now, they're marbles. Have you ever played with marbles?" I shake my head. He opens his hand and I see them shining in his palm like treasures, four red rubies.

(Cecelia, 2015: 9)

The quotation shows that Fergus thought that those marbles are like treasures at his first sight. Unfortunately, the changing is into a worst one. He is controlled by his id because of his ambition to the marbles. Moreover, people around him do not support him to play marbles.

Fergus stops playing marbles when his brother dies, but he continues playing it after a while because it is his comfort zone. He keeps playing marbles without being known by Gina, his wife. "For the past sixteen years I've been lying to you about a hobby of mine. It's been a huge part of my life, but you know nothing about it" (Cecelia, 2015: 210). This statement shows that Fergus has lied for sixteen years. He does not only lie when it comes to marbles, but he also lies when it comes to everything related to them. He

always tries to find a way to play them without being known by Gina and Sabrina, their daughter. He lies to fulfill his desire of marbles. It shows the domination of his id. The domination of the id is also shown when Fergus buys a very expensive marbles impulsively.

Besides lying to many people, Fergus id domination can be seen when he has some affairs with women. Being rejected when he offers his real self, he seeks for someone else whom he thinks will understand him more than his own wife. His daughter, Sabrina, sees him in a restaurant with the woman. "I saw her with Dad when I was fifteen years old. It was before my parents separated" (Cecelia, 2015:177). He has an affair with the woman without thinking about his own wife and his daughter, who unfortunately sees him. Fergus does not only cheat once, he cheats again with a woman whom he thinks understands his hobby. She does not really know about marbles, but she lets him do the hobby. "Cat knows about me, the real me, the marble persona, and Sabrina and Gina are completely unaware." (Cecelia, 2015: 242). Fergus cheats because his previous wife cannot understand his hobby. He keeps doing this although people agree that this is morally wrong.

He does not stop cheating although he has found the woman who can accept him. He cheats once again with someone who knows marbles in an advance way. "My conscience has grown since meeting her, but it doesn't remove the need I have to get away and meet

this other woman.” (Cecelia, 2015: 297). Moreover, Fergus does it when he is in a special event with Cat in another town. Fergus does not continue meeting the woman because they are far, but it makes Fergus considers Cat as a worse woman than she used to be.

In the first chapter of *The Marble Collector*, it is said that Fergus' father died before Fergus and his family move from Scotland. Fergus experiences an opposite life after the moving. The new people who come to his life treat him differently from his previous life. He does not get used to this kind of situation “We are here not to be leaders, we are here to serve. This is not what my daddy taught me, he said that I was a natural leader, that I can be anything I want to be” (Cecelia, 2015:8). His father teaches him to be brave, he also says that crying does not mean that he is weak. Meanwhile, in his new environment, he is taught to be tougher and to serve which is against his father's teaching. Moreover, in his new house, Fergus gets a bad treatment from a priest.

Father Murphy stands over my desk and is tall and grey and wide. He spits as he shouts at me; I feel the spit land on my cheek but I'm afraid to wipe it away in case that makes him angrier. I try looking around at the other boys to see their reaction but he lashes out at me. A backhanded slap. It hurts. He is wearing a ring, a big one; I think it has cut my face but I daren't reach up to feel it in case he hits me again. I need to go to the toilet all of a sudden. I have been hit before, but never by a priest [...] Then he pulls me out of the room, by my ear, and that hurts too, away from everyone, down the

corridor, and he pushes me into a dark room.

(Cecelia, 2015:6)

Fergus has a bad memory of his childhood. Fergus gets an abuse from a priest whom he considers as a nice person after he is trained to speak Irish words. However, Fergus cannot repeat the words after the priest correctly. His brothers can not help him, even they are not brave enough just to laugh. It is his first very bad experience in his lifetime which then makes him having a trauma. It leads him in having imbalanced system of personality later as he does not get enough affection.

However, when he is being punished in a dark room, he gets his first marbles from a nice priest. The marbles appear as being his savior. It calms him, but later it gives him pleasure and becomes his ambition. Freud (in Barbara 1985:285) as he says “an overly strong id makes one a psychopath, lacking of conscience, or an ogre, selfishly meeting one's needs without concern for others.” When it comes to a marble, he becomes a person who is dominated by his id. He will do everything for it.

In his childhood, Fergus does not only get a bad treatment from the priest, but also from his own siblings.

My neck is being squeezed so tightly I start to see black spots before my eyes. I'd tell him so but I can't speak, his arm is wrapped tight around my throat. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I'm small for my age and they tease me for it. They call me Tick but Mammy says to use what I have.

(Cecelia, 2015:25)

This bad treatment from Fergus' own brother who accuses him cheating during playing marbles motivates him more to be the best marble player among other, and will do anything to reach his goal. He is dominated by his id more than the other systems unconsciously then. He tries to get more attention from people.

The next finding is about the types of defense mechanisms. In this novel, Fergus unconsciously portrays several types of defense mechanism to reduce his anxiety. The first Fergus' type of defense mechanism is rationalization. Fergus portrays it after he is fired. He is in a high tension, shouts to Cat, says that he has lied a lot. However, Cat apologizes him. He says, "She says she understands, but it's all a mess, it's all a mess. It's the marbles' fault" (Cecelia, 2015: 328). Instead of realizing that all the bad things which happen now are caused by himself, he uses the marbles as the reason.

The next is projection. Fergus is someone who is ambitious but too coward. He keeps doing something impulsively, wants to be the best marble player, and wants to get attention. However, when he makes a mistake, he will lie even he will project it to someone else. It can be seen when he says, "Ma shouts a tirade of angry abuse at Hamish and all the time I think should interrupt and confess to it all but I don't. I can't. I'm too chicken" (Cecelia, 2015: 82). In this quotation, Fergus confesses that he is too chicken. He projects his fault to Hamish who actually does not do

the fault. When Hamish confesses the fault which he does not do, Fergus reminds silent. He is anxious and wants to be safe but he does not think about his brother. He also takes advantage of Hamish' kindness and care for him to protect him.

Fergus also unconsciously portrays reaction formation as his defense mechanism. Fergus, as a person who is dominated by his id, always thinks that he is always right. Fergus also keeps lying, thus sometimes he unconsciously tells the opposite to keep himself safe. When Fergus marries Gina, during the party, his family leaves because they do not feel comfortable. He keeps telling himself that it is better when the family leave while he actually wants them to stay. "That's fine with me though. I can relax more without them. No one is going to go flying across the room and smashing into a table because of a funny look or an intimidated tone" (Cecelia, 2015: 161). On the other chapter, sometimes Fergus wishes that he can meet his family, let them see how Sabrina finally shows her first step, how she grows, et cetera.

After sixteen years I'm beginning to see that was a stupid idea; there are times, occasion when I'd like them to be here. When Sabrina did something, or said something and I wished they'd been here to see. Or a family day out when the waiter trips up, or a twat friend of Gina's says something and nobody but me can see he's a twat.

(Cecelia, 2015: 202)

The last type of Fergus' defense mechanism is displacement. Instead of forcing himself to tell his family that he is still into

marbles and has a very bad impact for them, Fergus cheats with other women who want to listen to him. In this case, he considers the women he has affairs with is less threatening than if he tells his marble persona than if he tells it to Gina. The woman is Cat, a woman who keeps listening and accepting Fergus and his marbles world. Fergus tells that he uses Cat as an escapism where he can reduce his anxiety when he does the separation and keep the secret of his life. "No more secrets, no more separation of my life. I've come to hate the man I have become. No more secrets. Not with Cat. This is my chance at a fresh start" (Cecelia, 2015: 238). Fergus has affairs more than once. After Cat, he cheats with someone else who is a marble expert. He says that, "She wants to talk about that for a while and I don't mind reliving my glory days when there are very few people I can tell the story to" (Cecelia, 2015:301). He shares his story about marbles because they have mutual interest. The woman understands all things related to marbles while Cat only accepts Fergus.

The last displacement portrayed in the novel is when Fergus has to face the most stressful event in his life. After being fired by his boss, he shouts to Cat,

"I was fired!" I shout suddenly, which silence her and makes her jump in fright.

(Cecelia, 2015: 327)

He has begged to his boss to get his job back. However, the boss does not care and fires him anyway. Not only getting fired is a terrible thing, begging is even more terrible

for Fergus. Moreover, it does not change anything. That is why he becomes so rude to Cat to reduce his disappointment. He considers Cat as someone who is less threatening than his boss. Not only he shouts to Cat, but Fergus also forces Cat to play marbles with him. "Do it properly!" I yell and she starts to cry

"Do it, do it!" I pick the marble up and force it into her hand

"Throw it!"

(Cecelia, 2015: 329)

Besides considered as someone who is closely related to marbles, Cat is someone who also gets a bad treatment from Fergus beside Gina.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

There are several factors which cause Fergus' imbalanced system of personality. They are the family and priests which leads him having a traumatic experience. It makes Fergus dominated by the id. The imbalanced system of personality is portrayed in the novel as Fergus does everything impulsively when it comes to marbles. The domination of the id is also seen when Fergus has affairs with several women.

The imbalanced system of personality causes Fergus having anxiety. In this novel, there are several types of defense mechanism to calm the tension made by the id, they are repression, rationalization, projection, reaction formation, sublimation, and displacement. Those types of defense mechanism are mostly

shown because of the tension which is caused by the marbles.

### **Suggestion**

After conducting the research, the researcher would suggest to the student especially in literature department to raise the awareness of psychological issue through literature. Although mental illness is something can not be seen, but it exists since a person was born until now. Through literature people will see from a broader perspective which not only hers or his. Hence, this kind of study will help people to understand this issue. Moreover, besides defense mechanism, there are still a lot of issues related to psychology which also relatable to the real life.

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