

Psychological Analysis of Ernest Hemingway's "A Day's Wait"

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Abstract

*The object of this study is the psychological analysis of short story of Ernest Hemingway "A Day's Wait" that deals with the familiar Hemingway theme of heroic fatalism or fatalistic heroism, namely courage in the face of certain death. The story is based on the fateful misunderstanding between a nine years old boy named Schatz and his father. The purpose of this study is to see and to find out that why the child aspired the death so much. This study focuses on the main character viz. Schatz and his motivation to die. His behaviour has been analysed in the light of three significant and widely researched theories of psychology. The first theory is a Cognitive theory i.e. Rational Emotive Behaviour Theory which concludes that Schatz was not emotionally disturbed due to unfortunate circumstances but he constructed his views of such situations in this specific way. The second theory is Freudian Psychoanalytic theory which concludes every human being is born with two types of instincts: **Eros**— the life instinct and **Thanatos**— the death instinct. Schatz's behaviour was simply instinctual mainly governed by Thanatos. This was stimulated by his mal learning in the school and apparent behaviour of his father. The third is a social psychology theory i.e. **terror management theory (TMT)** which concludes that Schatz was having a psychological conflict that resulted from having a desire to live, but realizing that death is inevitable produces terror. The more he avoided cognitions about death, the more he gets terrified of it. Ultimately he suppresses his fear by withdrawing his resistance and accept the death as inevitable. But when his father debriefed him about his misunderstanding, he is having a sigh of relief. In the last it is shown the child comes back to life while take some time to lose temper and cry for minor things but it seems everything is going to be alright.*

Introduction

Literature is not only to amuse and entertain the people of a particular society in particular times but it is and can be used for didactic/ instructive purposes (Horace, 65 B.C). Older people in a family used any of genre of literature, commonly used is folktales, who teach the concepts of right and wrong, moral and immoral to the young minds. People travel around and tell "their" story. No matter where you go in the world, every human being look and feel the more or less same way (Abler, A. 2008). For example, people still think that the scale of the force and power (giants, dragons and gods are great). All people think that snakes are "strange and bizarre" and therefore is considered to be "different" (and sometimes bad). All human blood is red, but red is the colour of strength and life. The whole world of folktales about death is a mystery to everyone (by Baring-Gould, W. 1988). And the idea of "living death that feeds people" is frightening everyone. The tragic short of Ernest Hemingway "A Day's Wait," published in 1933 in his book *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, deals with the familiar Hemingway theme of heroic fatalism or fatalistic heroism, namely courage in the face of certain death. It can be a witness to the capacity of Hemingway and his commitment to this issue fatalistic heroes from a child of just nine years with as ease as with a professional medal winner and a 76 - years old refugee from the Spanish Civil War. The tragedy of this story is not, of course, hamartia of the hero Schatz so he is doomed, but the cognitive dissonance that has made his life miserable while otherwise he is very much fine indeed.

The heroism of Schatz a placid exterior which hides a passionate and subtle nature. This could be demonstrated in his words and actions during his *day's wait*. The most spectacular manifestation of Schatz's heroism described via the difference between his behaviour during the day's wait (plot of story) and his behaviour on the following day. He has evidently been seen like controlling himself strictly when his father goes out for hunting and at the occasion when his father debriefed him and he realizes that he will be fine soon. His self-control was a bit relaxed next day realizing he will be fine. He was then portrayed very weak who cries very easily for small things which are not significant. The child is stoic in the face what he thinks is his certain death. He controls his emotions with an iron self-control during all the day, and even suggests to his father left the room he gets saddened to see his son dying (Evans et. al.2010). He also prohibits everybody else to enter his room for concerns about his health, even though he's been doomed to die all alone. The story theme invokes paradoxical feelings of catharsis as well as pleasure in the audience. A few analysts see this story as a 'slice of life' story that actualizes a mundane reality with artistic creativity and experiences (Jewell, Elizabeth J. & Abate, Frank R. 2001). The story is based on the fateful misunderstanding between the boy and his father. The nine years old boy named Schatz falls sick in a winter night. Once the doctor is called, it was diagnosed that Schatz got affected by influenza and high temperature found. Doctor suggested some medication for such mild disease. Schatz hears his father talking to the doctor whose diagnoses was a mild temperature of 102 degrees. It is this perceived information that seemingly causes conflict and misunderstanding between the boy and his father. Schatz's reaction to this information was he let himself down in the bed.

To entertain the boy the father read to him some stories of pirates. But Schatz makes an unusually dissociated, even when his father suggested the boy some sleep, the boy denied bluntly. Father keeps reading some more for himself for a while and the boy remain insomniac and to the surprise of the father, the boy rudely suggested to him to leave if it bothers him. The father tried to persuade the boy, but he told his father "to leave if it disturbs him".

Assuming that the little boy is dizzy, the father leaves the room and takes the family dog on the frozen river for a walk. Dog flushes a covey of quail, while the father prey several before the triumphant return of the hunt. Reaching the home, he found Schatz still white-faced at the bottom of the bed. When father checks Schatz's temperature, the boy seems anxious to know what it is. The father seems indifferent to the unusual anxiety of the father. Either he has not noted it or he assumed it normal in feverish condition. Father responded to his son's inquiry of status of temperature that it is around hundred and then gave medicine to the boy. Even after taking medicine the boy doesn't seem getting normal and relaxing rather extremely worried. Noting this, father wanted to diversify the child's attention by reading again the story of pirates for him. But he sees that Schatz is not careful, so he stops reading the story. The father was bewildered over a blunt question of the child: "How do you see that approximately how long it will take that I am going to die?"

The desperate father surprised but Schatz asks again when will he die? The stunned father uttered with difficult, as his voice and breath has been choked in the throat, he swallowed and gathered all his courage and says to his son very politely that all will be well, and declares this whole conversation stupid. Upon this, Schatz says. "I have learned at school in France that one cannot survive with forty-four degrees. And he has got hundred and two."

The desperate father elaborated to his son about the difference between Fahrenheit and Celsius thermometer to compare with miles and kilometres. Over this description, the boy relaxes gradually over the day long. Interestingly, the next day, "he cried very easily to small things that were meaningless." In spite the father was of concern of his son's health but

he seems unable to identify his son's gross misunderstanding of simple medical diagnosis. His son's non judicial belief that he is going to die shortly out of high temperature in Fahrenheit. He mixed it up with Celsius form that often used in many parts of the world. Obviously, at unconscious level, this belief was affirmed by father's behaviour when he went for hunting giving message, increase fear to his son that he should go/ die now.

Hemingway's particular style that he ends the story in an ambiguous way leaves the readers to get puzzled over why the boy was reacting to unimportant things (Baker, C. 1972, Benson, J. 1989). Was it a usual reaction of a 9 years old boy to little things of everyday life? Had he been normalized? Had his day's long wait for death influenced him for the rest of life?

Alan Watts in his book *The Wisdom of Insecurity: A Message for an Age of Anxiety* (1951) writes and researcher unquote it as: when an individual thinks he is either exhausted physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally or when he/ she consider himself fragile or weak to accomplish his goals his brains aspire for the death. The body dies because he wants. It is beyond his power to resist disease or repair damage, and so tired to fight, he turns to death. If our consciousness is more sensitive to the feelings and impulses throughout the body, it shares this desire, and even, sometimes, it does.

Autobiographical element in 'A day's wait':

It is a testament of Hemingway's ability and his aesthetic sense that he creates a virtuous hero who makes a judgmental error, suffers both outwardly (isolation, alienation) and inwardly (tortured conscience) (Evans et. al.2010). He elicits the feelings of pity and fear in the audience over his outspreaded simplicity and suggestibility that he developed his belief for a heresy that he learnt when he was in France. He recognizes this hamartia at the end of the story. Interestingly, the tragedy lies not the hero Schatz is doomed but he believes himself to be doomed when he is not. Schatz's heroism is quiet and his day of waiting is a stunning show of his words and actions (Evans et. al.2010). The most spectacular manifestation of Schatz's heroism is his different sort of dignified behaviours, one during the day's wait when he is looking for the death to come, second on the next day when he was over reacting to little things. Though he was overly occupied by overwhelming emotions of death but his self-control has really been worth mentioning when his father goes for hunting and left the boy all alone in the room. He keeps his emotions with composure throughout the whole day and even suggests his father to be off if he cannot see him dying. He also banned everyone else to enter in his room for any reason, even though by doing so he condemns himself to die alone. While on the next day, his self-control was loosen up and he has been seen crying over small things and the matters of little or no importance. The debriefing of his father has disheartened all his emotions that have invaded him and crying was due to purging of emotions that he has buried and experienced in the previous day.

Most researchers are of the view that the writer of this story is Nick Adams indeed, the semi-autobiographical character of Hemingway in a series of stories. Carlos Baker (1909-1987) who is known to be an official biographer of Hemingway was the first to make this statement, and the fact that the original manuscript of "Fathers and Sons", one of Hemingway's confirmed Nick Adams stories, calls Adams's boy "Schatz" seems to clinch the matter (Evans et. al.2010).

Psychological analysis of 'A day's wait':

Albert Ellis, an eminent American psychologist, developed the Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) in 1955. Predecessor of fundamental aspects of Rational-Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) can be traced in ancient philosophical traditions, especially

Stoicism (Robertson, D. 2010). The philosophical system of the Stoics follow the teachings of the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno. To live a good life, according to this philosophy, one needs to be indifferent pleasure and pain. The glimpses of this philosophical school of thought even in the first significant publication of Ellis on Rational Therapy which says a person is emotionally rarely affected by external events, but by "ideas, attitudes or internalized sentences about external events and objects." The rationale of REBT is that unfortunate circumstances do not make people emotionally disturbed, it is rather how do they build their view of these situations in their own language, beliefs, meanings and philosophies of the world, themselves and others? (Ellis, A. 2001).

So as in the case of Schatz, as he has not been an unfortunate about how he developed the belief about his death. In REBT, clients learn and apply this premise by learning the A-B-C-D-E-F model of psychological changes and disturbance (Dryden W., & Neenan M. 2003). *ABC* model says it's not an A but the adversity (or event activation) that generates emotional and behavioural Consequences of disturbed and dysfunctional Cs, but also what people *B*, irrational believe about the A, adversity. A, adversity can be an external situation, or thinking, feeling, or any other type of internal event, and you can refer to the events of the past, present or future. The *Bs* are the irrational beliefs which are rather the most important in the model A-B-C. These beliefs are the explicit and implicit meanings and philosophical assumptions about events, personal wishes and preferences. The *Bs*, which are most important, are highly evaluative and contains of comprehensive, integrated and coherent cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects. According to REBT, when assessing a person *Bs*, beliefs about A, activating event is rigid, absolutistic, fictional and is not working properly, the *Cs*, the emotional and behavioural consequence be likely self-destructive and annihilated. Furthermore, if belief in a person is discriminatory, flexible and constructive, the C, the emotional, behavioural consequence is probably be self-helping to be constructive (Dryden W., & Neenan M. 2003).

If we apply this *ABC* model to Schatz's case, we can find that A (adversity or activation event) was the mal-learning of temperature scale which has generated disturbed and dysfunctional emotional and behavioural consequences. The mal adaptive behaviour that hindered to associate between Fahrenheit degree and Celsius degrees to distinguish the homeostasis of human body. The child, Schatz started believing that due to this extreme body temperature he is not going to survive anymore and this has done solely on self-analysis basis. To accomplish the belief, he started collecting evidences that can complement his bizarre behavioural actions like he withdrew all his social, academic and familial activities because he was thinking that he is going to die soon. The consequences of this dysfunctional and disturbed behaviour were that he seemed to be reluctant to heed on his father's advice, he was reclined at the bottom of bed and waiting for the death to come. The more important thing in this whole scenario is his withdrawal behavioural. At the face of definite death, perceptually, an individual stops trying to restore health and/ or to improve life's circumstances. He has lost interest in life, even when his father wanted to dissuade him of taking some eatables and suggested everything will be alright soon, he seems reluctant of this hope.

Using REBT, by understanding the role of mediating, evaluation, and based on the philosophical sense, meanings, interpretations of unrealistic and self-defeating assumptions and disorders, people can learn to identify and then go to *D*, disputing and questioning the evidence for them (Ellis, A. 2001). As Schatz inquired the father that when he's is going to die? This rather seemed intro-assertive statement in nature. Perceptually a young dying soul wanted to capture the attention from the most important person in his life, and that is none other but his father, that soon he is going to die. The hapless father seemed in trauma, even

the iota of idea of death of young son ripped his soul from the body and that it might not necessarily be painful for the physical body, but for the soul itself that has been wrenched into pieces.

At *Es*, effective new philosophy, they may identify and reinforce the signs of not having a psychopath, or should be, and to distinguish them from healthy constructs, and subscribe to see more constructive and self-helping philosophies (Ellis, A. 2001). As the boy has learned that nobody can survive at this much high temperature. He accumulated evidence in the favour of his belief. This new view logically leads to the F, new feelings and behaviours which are appropriate to the A- they are addressing in the exercise. One begins to develop the belief system from the moment he/ she comes into the world. The system of beliefs forms from rational as well irrational input. Obviously a new-born baby cannot have a well formed capacity for logical deduction to develop and process a rational belief system. It is rather a process based on one's experience of the world. As one gets mature, the abilities and understanding expands simultaneously, and ultimately one develops the cognitive mechanism including our belief system which is grounded on five fundamental techniques of retrieving information. Only one of these stems directly from one's personal facility of critical thinking. It can be very helpful and enlightening to know why one believes what he/ she does. The five primary methods include: (i) Evidence (ii) Tradition (iii) Authority (iv) Association and (v) Revelation. Modification in cognitive mechanism is a dynamic process that takes place automatically, continuously and even without you being consciously aware of it but it can also take place at conscious desire to change core beliefs. Scientifically speaking, this the other part is termed as ***unlearning***, in which an individual follow a procedure to extinct the learnt material from his memory as well as from his behavioural and emotional domain (Campbell, Cathy J. 2012). Schatz has also developed his belief by using one of five, and most probably it was an authority. A teacher who has taught his that way. At this later childhood, children are mostly inspired and influenced by their teachers. So as he has learnt an incomplete concept of human body temperature and unknowingly got stuck up at conversion of degree Fahrenheit to degree Celsius. This has developed the concept and quite a firm concept it was, that he is going to die soon out of having high fever that a human being can't survive of it.

Within the framework of REBT it assumes that people have inherently rational (i.e., self-helping, prosocial and constructive) as well as irrational (i.e., self-destructive, antisocial and useless or not helping) trends and tendencies (Ellis, A. 2001). Following this, Schatz has an innate tendency to develop an irrational belief out of his day-to-day life experience (here at school). REBT proposes that most of the people construct disruptive emotional issues, whether at conscious or at unconscious level, including guilt, self-pity, clinical anger, sadness, shame, depression and anxiety, as well as behaviour and behavioural trends such as procrastination, avoidance personality traits, Obsessive thought and compulsive behaviours, substance abuse, addiction to fantasy and daydreaming and suicidal thinking, emoting and behaving. As we can also observe the same with Schatz. He seemed to have an emotional imbalance. He was having a multifaceted emotional behaviour that include anxiety, sadness, clinical anger, shame, depression and dominantly self-pity that he is going to die soon. He withdraw himself at the bottom of sleeping bed and didn't take any interest in eating, talking, sleeping or any other worldly activity but to wait for the destiny to fulfil his end. One of the main tasks of REBT is to make the person to realize that uneasy and dissatisfied triggers happen in the lives of people at any time, and whenever it happens they have an opportunity to make themselves feel healthily as well as unhealthily and positive as well as negative. After this it thoroughly work in to develop positivity and healthy emotions and behaviours by all means and by all respects (Ellis, A. 2001).

In REBT views, human emotion (affection), behaviour and cognition work together. These are interrelated in such a way that they overlap often and determine human attitude. Since our emotions and behaviours have an influential impact upon our thinking, and vice versa. The assessment and analysis of information from the external environment is a natural and integral part of the human body that works in a biological pattern with a feedback mechanism: our perception affects upon our behavioural responses and our behavioural responses, in turn, affects upon subsequent perception (Ellis, A. 2003). In this context, analysing Schatz's attitude, whether it was affected by his thought or by his behaviour, we come to the conclusion that it was not deviant at all and by the virtue of any assessment. His pattern of thinking is like the other children of the same age. His experiences affected upon his expression of emotions and his expression of emotions determine his behaviour.

It has commonly been found that disturbance of thought, emotional and behavioural self-defeatism and social defeatism are mainly because of irrational thought, inconsistent feelings and dysfunctional behaviour. REBT suggests that when people are inclined to easiness, fulfilling their desires and wants in a grandiose, absolutistic and fatalistic or derthen it promotes disruption and tumult in the society (Ellis, A. 2003). We can also conclude from it that parents, elders and teachers should consider it worth working that their transfer of concepts and material may have a tremendous impact upon the life of youngsters. Any concept, if learned the other way round, may have a great toll to pay. Application of knowledge and comprehension of ideas, concepts, and morals must be doubly checked before delivering the advance ones. Mal-learned material not only handicap the learner to go advance but may inflict the developing minds and their lives.

Death Instinct:

Instincts are different from stimulus as the former is arisen from within the body, while the other is operated from outside the body. An instinct has a constant force that a person cannot avoid it by using a flight response of the body. Instinct can be described as having a source, object and a purpose. The source is a state of arousal within the body and instinct has to subside it (Freud, 1938). Hence life is seen maximally dealing with these conflicts i.e. bodily arousal and subside of the arousal. Freud described two types of instincts: *Eros* concerned with the protection of life and the species. Hence it deals with gratification of all the needs which help us to carry and continue life like need for the health, safety and security, food, and sexual drives. *Eros* not only deal with preservation of life but also creation of life. *Eros* promotes positive feelings of a harmonious society, love and prosocial behaviour, therefore, cooperation, collaboration, and other supportive behaviour. While the other type is *Thanatos* which are contradictory with *Eros* and deals with the extinction of life. *Thanatos* propels and individual to engage in risky and destructive activities. *Thanatos* promotes negative feelings of dissonance, thrill, aggression, fear, hate and war, which lead to antisocial acts from bullying to murder. Eros is a profound sexual impulse that deviates moral standards of a society. On the other hand, the Thanatos—the death drive, is also unacceptable, against the idea of the sanctity of life and can be considered as an excuse or even encourage suicide. In other words, fear of death gives the motivation to life (Brown, J. 2012). In case of Schatz one could see the dynamic forces of *Eros* and *Thanatos*. When he learns that an individual cannot survive when encounter the temperature of 102 degrees. He also sees the apathetic attitude of his father, who goes for hunting—leaving the son who mistakenly perceives himself at the verge of death. The absurdity of the situation is child believes and knows that his parents love and care him a lot but he inferred the contradictory evidence. At one point he reluctantly argues with his father that he could leave the room if he bothers him. This shows the agony of mind of young child, whose instinct of Thanatos spurred and waiting for his own death desperately.

Sigmund Freud rather used a dualistic approach to describe Eros and Thanatos. Since they are contradictory in one another, but could be turned to one another as well like flipping of love and hate, crying and laughter. Freud was of the view that if we explain our behaviour to ourselves and/ or others, we rarely give a true picture of our motivation. This is not because we are aware of it (Freud, 1938). While people are a great beguilers of others, they are better at self-deception. Our rationalizations of our behaviour and thus obscuring the real causes. In the light of Freud's findings about complementary nature of the two instincts, we can derive conclusion that Schatz was loving his own life very much. He was dear to himself. He has had an inflated but fragile sense of his own importance, a deep need for admiration, attention and a lack of empathy for others. Indeed his self-love propel him to be desperate. He lost his energy and reclined at the bottom of bed all the day long, do not take interests in stories and hearsays, abnegate food and become insomniac. By using a psychological defence mechanism of Reaction formation, he pretends to behave exactly opposite of what he feels and experiences. To demonstrate this, he asks his father approximately how long it will take that he is going to die. Inside the question, there was a desire to avoid the death, and to live and live longer.

Terror management theory:

Terror Management Theory (TMT), a theory in Social psychology, suggests that an individual's desire to live, when he/ she sees the death is inevitable, generates the basic psychological conflict in him/ her. This unique conflict turns to be in terror and causes anxiety. The solution of this conflict is usually unique to a sociocultural environment (Greenberg, J., Pyszczynski, T. & Solomon, S. 1986). This theory is of the view that culture is the symbolic systems that ensure the importance and value of life. Hence cultural values play a key role to assist the fear of death by giving life importance and a purpose. This theory was the first introduced in 1986 by Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon and Tom Pyszczynski. The fundamental theme of this theory that people are motivated to overcome the terror built-in the human consciousness of the fragility and mortality by investing in cultural beliefs (or faith) to diffuse life with meaning, and the people who linked to them. People are also motivated to avoid cognitions related to death, and to prevent such thoughts by following the world-view or to raise one's self-esteem and social status. An individual must have more thoughts of death when he/ she is threatened of death, as compared to when he/ she is not threatened (Becker, E. 1973). If we analyse Ernest Hemingway's "A Day's Wait" in the light of TMT, we can find a deep buried desire in the eyes and attitude of young Schatz. When he learns life is not possible at the temperature of 102 degrees. He asks a question to himself why me? Why I am going to die? He desperately sees toward his father, whom he considered strongest man on earth, who can be his saviour and can fight the death angel to rescue his loving son. But, to the surprise of son, father behaved normally, as he knew the temperature is not fatal or life threatening at all. The father goes for hunting along with his dog and reads the fables for the son and himself as usually. Inexperience and emotionally disturbed Schaltz gave up hope and bringing his heart in his mouth asks a question from his father that how long I will live? He thought, this might melt the heart of his father who would then frugal his life. The boy gathered entire his courage to say good bye to life. Realizing the domination of fate he stops resisting to cling to life. Hemingway caricatures this simple situation as very much extra ordinarily that audience could not control to project oneself in the child. The writer seems at the apex of his skills that everyone seems sobbing to console the child. Death is not a horrible experience before a nine years old child but only a feeling of relief that eventually everyone has to die. Since he has had not much high dreams so he withdraw easily. This is how he manages the terror of death.

Conclusion:

The short story of Ernest Hemingway "A Day's Wait" deals with the theme of heroic fatalism or fatalistic heroism, namely courage in the face of certain death (Evans et. al.2010). The story is based on the fateful misunderstanding between a nine years old boy named Schatz and his father. The purposes of this study is to see and to find out that why the child aspired the death so much. What was going on inside the mind of the child? Is it normal to behave the same like Schatz? This study focuses to the main character and his motivation to die. The psychological analysis of the story through three different perspectives vis-à-vis REBT, Freudian Psychoanalysis and TMT reveal that Schatz was not emotionally disturbed due to unfortunate circumstances but due to his mal learning of school material. He interpreted this mal learning and constructed his biased views of situation (here high temperature ending his life) which was according to his limited world life experiences. So Schatz has not been an unfortunate about how he developed the belief about his death but his culture and limited experiences made him to believe so. His instinctual behaviour operates as a constant force and propelled him to desire for death as to avoid a conflictual situation that he has clung himself. Obviously, his mal experiences at school played an important reason for this stuck. It produces terror when this 9 years old boy realizes that death is inevitable. As it is commonly said that Pain ceases to be, once beyond redemption. So the case with Schatz. His terror for death came to an end and beginning of his bravery to accept it and manage it. Over the debriefing of his father, he restitutes to his earliest condition. But since he felt himself to come out of trauma so his temper was short and pounding heart so he cried over even minute and ignorable matters before he behaved normal.

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