

Journal with Cindy Cornelia

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Maleficent's Personality Changes in *Maleficent*

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I analyze *Maleficent* (2014), the first Disney film to place a previously antagonist character into a protagonist in a new film. In this thesis, I found changes in the personality of Maleficent from good to evil and back to good that caused her to experience anxieties. Therefore, I use Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of three fundamental elements of the human psyche (id, ego, and superego), anxiety and defense mechanisms. Based on my analysis, I found that Maleficent becomes evil when her id, ego, and superego are unbalanced, and Maleficent can return to being good when her id, ego, and superego are well-balanced. Moreover, Maleficent experiences reality anxiety, neurotic anxiety, and moral anxiety during the process of her personality changes, and she uses defense mechanisms such as aggression, intellectualization, and apathy to overcome her anxieties.

Keywords: personality changes; anxiety; defense mechanism

INTRODUCTION

Walt Disney is one of the big companies that produces children's films and is known for its classic animation after *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* premiered in 1937. After the success of its animated films, Disney remade their animated films into live-action films and became more successful.

Disney characters have basically the same traits, namely a pure good protagonist and a pure evil antagonist. An example of a pure good protagonist can be seen in the female protagonist or what is known as the Disney Princess. The protagonists in Disney films, from the first, second to third eras, are good characters and they are victims of the antagonists. Some examples are Snow White from the first era, Ariel from the second era, as well as Elsa and Anna from the third era. In addition, the antagonists in Disney films or commonly called Disney villains, are evil characters who try to thwart the protagonist's goals. Some examples are The Evil Queen who was the antagonist in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) who was jealous because she was previously the most beautiful woman in the world who was replaced by Snow White, and Lady Tremaine who became the antagonist in *Cinderella* (1950) who was jealous because of Cinderella is prettier than her two daughters.

Disney has created various protagonists and antagonists over time, but all protagonists are described as pure good and all antagonists described as pure evil. Then in 2014, Disney put the role of a previously antagonist in another film into a protagonist in a new film. Disney released the live-action film *Maleficent*, an adaptation of the animated film *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), in which the female protagonist is Princess Aurora and Maleficent is a female villain who is described as an evil witch who comes from nowhere to the king's party and curses her baby girl. However, in the film *Maleficent* (2014), Maleficent is placed as the protagonist who is described as a young fairy with a pure heart who lives in the forest kingdom. One time he fell in love and had a relationship with a young man named Stefan from the human world who eventually betrayed Maleficent to make him the next king. Maleficent was so angry that she cursed King Stefan's daughter and became evil. However, Maleficent was able to return well after he was close to Princess Aurora.

ANALYSIS

To find out how Maleficent's personality changes so that she experiences anxiety and how she copes with these anxieties, I use Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of three fundamental elements of the human psyche (id, ego, and superego), anxiety and defense mechanisms.

The Process of Maleficent's Personality Changes Resulting in Anxiety

The id, ego, and superego are the three personality elements in the human psyche that work together to create a balanced personality (Bressler, 1999). In other words, a person is considered good if the id, ego, and superego are well-balanced, and a person is considered problematic if the id, ego, and superego are unbalanced.

Before Maleficent becomes evil, or before her id dominates her ego, she is initially a good person. The id is the most primitive element of personality which operates according to the pleasure principle and aims to satisfy basic desires (Feist, 2009). At first, Maleficent's id is her attraction to a young man named Stefan driven by her basic desires. At the beginning of the film, it is shown that Maleficent stopped a young man from stealing a jewel from The Moors kingdom, and she seemed interested in him. This can be seen from how Maleficent looked happy when Stefan said he liked her wings and when she thought of Stefan at night. The force behind Maleficent's feeling of attraction of the opposite sex is caused by the needs of her id which is called instinct. Freud stated that the instincts contained in humans can be divided into eros (life instinct) and thanatos (death instinct). Eros is a basic human motive that encourages one to behave positively or constructively such as the drive of life, love, creativity, sexuality, self satisfaction, and species preservation (Minderop, 2010). That way, Maleficent's sense of attraction for Stefan is a basic desire of her id that is driven by her eros. In this case, Maleficent's superego believes that Stefan is a good person, and this is evidenced by Stefan casted away his iron ring since iron will hurt fairies like Maleficent. Superego represents the aspect of moral and idealism from personality which is controlled by moralistic and idealistic principles (Feist, 2009). That way, the superego knows what is considered good and bad, and Maleficent's superego demands the ego to let her spend time alone and have a relationship with Stefan. Ego is the element of personality which is the decision maker that is in charge to control the demand from id while considering the moral value from superego (Feist, 2009). Since her superego has seen that Stefan is a good person, and according to her ego's reality principle there is nothing to lose in a relationship with Stefan, her ego approves to fulfill her id's demand by letting her have a relationship with Stefan.

Maleficent's id that has been fulfilled causes her to experience pleasure. When the id's demand is fulfilled, one experiences pleasure, but when it is not, one experiences displeasure or tension (Boag, 2014). The pleasure experienced by Maleficent can be seen from how she looks happy when spending time alone with Stefan. Moreover, the pleasure Maleficent experienced as a result of her id's demand being met causes her to put full trust in Stefan by openly telling all her stories to him. Therefore, Maleficent can be said to be initially good or has a balanced personality because her ego can overcome her id with consideration from her superego.

Maleficent turns into evil or has an unbalanced personality due to her id which dominates her ego in taking action. She put full trust in Stefan as she experienced pleasure in return for having her id fulfilled. When the id's demand is fulfilled, one experiences pleasure, but when it is not, one experiences displeasure or tension (Boag, 2014). At first Maleficent felt pleasure because her id's demand driven by eros has been fulfilled, so she can put her trust in Stefan. However, Maleficent felt displeasure when she learned that Stefan betrayed her love and trust by cutting off her wings. This incident causes Maleficent to experience anxiety, namely realistic anxiety. Hall (1979) stated that the reality anxiety is developed from the external world, and it occurs when there is a real threat or danger such as war, crime, etc. that might harm a person. Maleficent's anxiety can be seen from how she cried while holding her back when she woke up

to find her wings had disappeared. Maleficent experiences realistic anxiety as a form of displeasure because her id is not fulfilled. However, her sadness and anxiety turned to hatred after she found out that Stefan did that to her so that he could become the next king. This can be seen from how Maleficent furious once she knew Stefan's purpose of betraying her was to be the next king. Having been betrayed, Maleficent's id turns to hatred and demands revenge. Just as love is driven by instinct, Maleficent's hatred is also driven by her instinct. However, the driving instinct is not eros, but rather thanatos. Thanatos is the basic human motive that drives one to behave in a negative or destructive manner, such as the drive of aggression, sadism, destruction, violence, and death (Minderop, 2010). Maleficent came to the celebration of the birth of King Stefan's daughter and cursed The princess.

Maleficent's ego as the decision maker is defeated by the strong desire of her id since her ego immediately complied with the id's demand by immediately coming and cursing the king's daughter without any consideration. In this case, Maleficent's superego is unhelpful since Maleficent has never experienced betrayal in the first place and she does not have a guide on how to handle this situation. The superego is a personality element that functions to suppress the id's impulses that society considers unacceptable because the superego combines the values and morals of society that are learned from parents and other people (Guerin et al., 2005). Since she has no moral references, Maleficent's superego is unhelpful and her ego is easily overpowered by the strong will of her id. With the smooth running of Maleficent's revenge, it shows that Maleficent's id dominates and overpowers her ego without superego's consideration. The ego's inability to control her id coupled with her unhelpful superego causes an imbalance in Maleficent's personality that causes the id to dominate the ego. Therefore, Maleficent can be said to be evil or have an unbalanced personality because her ego is defeated by her id in taking action without consideration from her superego.

As a result of Maleficent's id dominating her ego, Maleficent who was initially good becomes evil. In order for her to return to being good, Maleficent must have a good personality or her id, ego and superego are well-balanced. Maleficent's dominant id is the hatred towards King Stefan driven by the thanatos. Having cursed the king's daughter, Maleficent's id also seems to hate the princess, and this can be seen from how Maleficent said "Look. The little beast is about to fall off the cliff" when she was watching Princess Aurora who was still a toddler running towards the edge of the cliff. Calling Princess Aurora the little beast shows that Maleficent's id in the form of hatred still remains. However, Maleficent's ego as the decision maker decides to help the falling princess. Id and ego are immoral because both of them do not recognize good and bad values (Minderop, 2010). Since helping people is a moral act, in this case her superego takes the role and demands her ego to take that action. According to Sigmund Freud (1923), superego will try to hold up the desire of Id and do something with moral and rational. That way, Maleficent's superego successfully demands her ego to resist the desire of her and replaces it with moral action, namely helping the princess who falls off the cliff. Maleficent's superego that runs based on the moral principle sees that letting The princess die is immoral.

Earlier when Stefan stole the jewel from The Moors Kingdom, Maleficent said "It's not right to steal, but we don't kill people for it". This shows that Maleficent grew up in a place where killing was not a good thing. The superego combines the values and morals of society that are learned from parents and other people (Guerin et al., 2005). That way, her superego has learned the value from the environment that killing someone is not good, the same as letting people die. For that reason, her superego demands her ego to help The princess. The ego that runs based on the reality principle also sees that the demand of the superego are compatible with the reality principle since the action is harmless. The compatibility between the moral principle of her superego and the reality principle of her ego makes the ego agree to help the princess and hold back her id. Maleficent's action that helps Princess Aurora indicates that her ego can overcome her id and make a right decision with the consideration of her superego. This is the first

evidence of maleficent's personality change from being evil because the id dominates, to being good because the ego can overcome the id with the superego's consideration.

Then, Maleficent can also be considered to have become good or her ego can overcome her id when she tried to lift her curse on Princess Aurora. Maleficent's id is still hatred towards The princess driven by thanatos, and this can be seen from how Maleficent said "Good night, Beastly" to the sleeping Princess. The nickname sounds negative because beastly means that she considered The princess like a beast, and it means that the id in the form of hatred is still dominant in her. However, her ego decides to lift the curse while Aurora is asleep. As mentioned earlier, Id and ego are immoral because both of them do not recognize good and bad values (Minderop, 2010). The act of lifting the curse is a moral act, and it is influenced by the demand of her superego. The superego will try to restrain the desires of the id and do something morally and rationally (Freud, 1923). Maleficent's ego and superego manage to control the hatred of her id, and her superego demands the ego to take moral action. In addition, superego is formed through the process of internalization of values or rules by individuals from several figures involved (Freud, 1960). Throughout the film it is shown that Aurora does good to Maleficent and the living creatures around her, so Maleficent's superego learns that she has cursed someone who is innocent. This is what causes Maleficent's superego to realize that she has wrongly cursed the innocent Aurora and demands her ego to lift the curse. The ego decides to agree to the superego's demand on the basis of the reality principle that such action will not harm or have a bad impact on Maleficent. Maleficent's ego that decided to lift The princess's curse failed to lift the curse.

This failure causes Maleficent to experience anxiety, namely moral anxiety. Moral anxiety is a fear that arises because the dangers come from the conscience or the superego which has its own moral standards giving the feelings of guilt or shame on the ego raised by the perception of danger from the conscience (Hall, 1954). Maleficent's guilt can be seen from the gloomy expression on her face when she found out that her curse could not be lifted. In this case, Maleficent's moral anxiety is influenced by her superego. The superego represents the moral and idealistic aspects of personality that are governed by moralistic and idealistic principles so that feelings of guilt arise as a result of the ego's failure to do what the superego asks (Feist, 2009). Maleficent's superego gives her ego a feeling of guilt so that she experiences anxiety because her ego fails to meet the demand of her superego to lift the curse of Princess Aurora. Therefore, Maleficent's attempt to lift the curse on Princess Aurora shows that her ego can overcome her id and make the right decision in taking action with the consideration of her superego.

Finally, Maleficent can also be said to be good or her ego can overcome her id when she dealt with King Stefan at the end of the film. Maleficent's id in the form of hatred for King Stefan driven by her thanatos is still dominant and can be seen from how she immediately strangles The king when they suddenly came face to face. Maleficent's encounter with King Stefan causes her to experience anxiety, namely neurotic anxiety. This anxiety is included in neurotic anxiety because Maleficent has previously been abused by King Stefan and there is a fear of something that has happened before. Neurotic anxiety is defined as a fear of unknown dangers that can be caused by things that a person imagines because of previous experiences (Feist, 2009). Previously, King Stefan, knowing Maleficent's weakness was iron, mobilized all his people with iron armor and weapons to attack Maleficent. Maleficent's neurotic anxiety is a development of realistic anxiety considering realistic anxiety is the origin of neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety (Alwisol, 2010). Maleficent's neurotic anxiety is based on her reality anxiety in the sense that she knows that the actions of King Stefan causing her to experience realistic anxiety are threatening acts. Hall (1954) also stated that neurotic anxiety has three forms: when a person is afraid of his own identity who always expects something terrible to happen, when a person has an intense or irrational fear that is greater than the actual danger, and when a person gives a

panic reaction, a result of feelings of irritation and tension that make a person do something impulsively. In this case, Maleficent's neurotic anxiety in the form of a panic reaction can be seen when she suddenly confronts King Stefan and acts impulsively by strangling him. Panic reaction due to neurotic anxiety indicates that Maleficent's id of hatred for King Stefan is still there and tries to control her ego. However, Maleficent let go of her stronghold, and this shows that her ego has managed to overcome her id. Maleficent's action of not harming or killing King Stefan was influenced by her superego, as deciding not to harm or kill the enemy was a moral act. As mentioned earlier, the id and ego are immoral and cannot differentiate between right and wrong (Minderop, 2010), and that means that Maleficent's superego comes along in demanding the ego not to hurt or kill King Stefan. Maleficent's superego, who has learned from her surroundings that killing is immoral, demands her ego not to hurt or kill King Stefan. Maleficent's ego decides to fulfill her superego's demand since the moral principle of the superego does not violate the principle of ego reality. The ego that can overcome the id with the superego's considerations shows that Maleficent's personality is balanced.

Maleficent's Defense Mechanisms to Deal with her Anxieties

The first anxiety Maleficent experiences is realistic anxiety when Stefan betrays her by cutting off her wings in order for him to be the next king. This anxiety is included in realistic anxiety because the threat comes from the outside world, as Hall (1979) explained that reality anxiety develops from the outside world, and it occurs when there is a real threat or danger such as war, crime, etc. that can harm a person. Maleficent's realistic anxiety can be seen from how she cries out loud while holding her injured back. In overcoming this realistic anxiety, Maleficent applied an aggression defense mechanism. Aggression is a defense mechanism in the form of attack or destruction as a result of angry feelings (Minderop, 2010). Maleficent's anxiety of having been betrayed and hurt aroused her anger, and she used an aggression defense mechanism to relieve her anxiety by venting her anger on the object that cause anger, which is the King Stefan. Maleficent decided to come and curse King Stefan's daughter immediately after learning that Stefan betrayed her. Maleficent's act of cursing the king's daughter showed that she chose aggression in overcoming the anger caused by her anxiety. This action is classified as aggression because it leads to destruction or attack aimed at King Stefan which is the source of her anxiety. This is also related to Maleficent's personality change from being good, and the aggression defense mechanism used by Maleficent is influenced by her dominant id. Maleficent's id at that time was hatred driven by thanatos, and act of aggression was a manifestation of Maleficent id's death instinct that dominated her ego because her superego was helpless. Therefore, Maleficent overcomes her realistic anxiety caused by the betrayal of king Stefan using an aggression defense mechanism by cursing the king's daughter.

The second anxiety that Maleficent experiences is moral anxiety when Maleficent failed to lift her curse on Princess Aurora. This anxiety is included in moral anxiety because it comes from Maleficent's conscience or superego. Moral anxiety is a fear that arises because the dangers come from the conscience or the superego which has its own moral standards giving the feelings of guilt or shame on the ego raised by the perception of danger from the conscience (Hall, 1954). Maleficent's moral anxiety can be seen from how she looks guilty when she found out that her curse could not be lifted. In overcoming this moral anxiety, Maleficent applied an intellectualization defense mechanism. Intellectualization is a defense mechanism that transforms events into a non-emotional experience through the overuse of conscious thought process (Bowin, 2004). Based on that definition, intellectualization tries to overcome the anxiety caused by an event by using rational thinking based on facts and logic. Maleficent used Intellectualization by finding another way to lift her curse on Princess Aurora. Previously when cursing, Maleficent said that the curse can only be lifted with a true love kiss, and this is the reason why she failed to lift the curse. After recalling those words, Maleficent then realized that she could lift the curse only by bringing a true love kiss to the princess. Once Maleficent also saw Princess Aurora meet and talk to a prince in the forest, and the two were seen to fall in love

with each other. Seeing the two of them together made Maleficent realize that the prince could be the princess' true love kiss. Thus, Maleficent decided to bring the prince as a true love kiss to Aurora to lift the curse, since rationally this method is in accordance with her curse words. In this case, her superego not only gives the ego a feeling of guilt for failing to fulfill the demand, but the superego also demands the ego to find other ways to fulfill the demand. In moral anxiety, a person can still be rational in thinking about problems because of the encouragement of the superego (Alwisol, 2010). Therefore, Maleficent overcomes her moral anxiety due to guilt for failing to lift her curse on Princess Aurora using the intellectualization defense mechanism by finding another way to lift the curse.

The last anxiety that Maleficent experienced was neurotic anxiety when Maleficent came face to face with King Stefan. This anxiety is included in neurotic anxiety because Maleficent has previously been hurt by King Stefan and there was a fear of something that has happened before. Neurotic anxiety is defined as the fear of unknown dangers that could be caused by things that exist in the shadow of a person because of the previous experience (Feist, 2009). In addition, realistic anxiety is the origin of neurotic anxiety and moral anxiety (Alwisol, 2010). Maleficent's neurotic anxiety develops from her realistic anxiety where she has previously been abused by King Stefan with iron which is her weakness. Maleficent's neurotic anxiety in the form of a panic reaction can be seen when she suddenly faced King Stefan and acted impulsively by beating him once and strangling him. In overcoming this neurotic anxiety, Maleficent applied a defense mechanism, namely apathy. Apathy is a defense mechanism in the form of a reaction to frustration by withdrawing and acting as if resigned (Minderop, 2010). Moments after Maleficent strangled King Stefan, she released her stronghold and turned away from him. Maleficent's apathy can be seen from the way she let go of her stronghold on King Stefan while saying "it's over". Maleficent's apathy can also be seen from how she turned and was about to leave King Stefan alone after releasing her stronghold. Maleficent's id which previously had pushed her to act aggressively by cursing The princess could be restrained by her ego with the consideration from her superego. The superego will try to restrain the desires of the id and do something morally and rationally (Freud, 1923). Maleficent's superego has succeeded in restraining the desire of her id and demanding her ego to do something moral or rational. Therefore, Maleficent overcomes her neurotic anxiety of having been abused by King Stefan so that she reflexively strangled and almost injured him using an apathy defense mechanism by releasing King Stefan and turning away from him to avoid further conflict.

CONCLUSION

Based on my analysis, I found that Maleficent's personality changes are influenced by the interaction of her personality elements (id, ego, and superego). Maleficent can be evil because her id, ego, and superego are not well-balanced, and Maleficent can be good because her id, ego, and superego are well-balanced. I also found that Maleficent experiences anxieties during the process of her personality changes, and she applies defense mechanisms to deal with her anxieties.

Moreover, Disney can be said to have created a new trend by placing the previously antagonistic Maleficent as the protagonist in a new film, considering that previously Disney only made pure good protagonists and pure evil antagonists. Maleficent who experienced personality changes from good to evil and then returned to good, had anxiety and finally used defense mechanisms to overcome the anxieties, showing that no one was purely evil. Evil people have reasons that cause them to be evil. In addition, personality changes do not just happen, but through a series of processes starting from how the elements of personality (id, ego, and superego) interact, personality change occurs, and a person can experience anxiety during the personality changes.

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