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Psychological Behavior Changes In Paulo Coelho's Veronika Decides To Die

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Abstract

Veronika Decides to Die, it expresses about discovering the meaning of life. Veronika is the novel's main character and its protagonist. She is a Slovenian woman that seems to have an ideal life. She is not happy and satisfied in her life, she realizes this life meaningless. Therefore she decides to die because 'everything in her life was the same' (6). Freud's psychoanalytic theory of melancholia is used to discover the reason for Veronika's depressed and stressful condition which urges her to commit suicide. Consequently, it brings her to stay in an asylum, Villette. There she obtains some new experience and new things. Astonishingly, at the end, the world of insanity allows her to discover the meaning of life exactly is. Personality growth and finding her new life in order to create a healthy individual, the psychological approach is reflected as the appropriate one to be applied in this study. Veronika is also an introvert and passive person. As she always focusing on her inner thoughts, emotions, feelings and ideas. In an asylum, Villette the insanity direct her growing personality. Her personality goes to the healthier and stronger one that allows her to view this life positively. She is able to love small things that lead her to discover her life's meaning.

Key Words: Individual Psychology, Psychological depression, Behaviour changes, Feminism, Self-realization.

Introduction

Studying literary works has numerous substantial in understanding the life and all occurrences, and obtainability of various theories and its enhancement in the literature study allow us to see one literary work from many features and elements. This study will utilize the transactional psychoanalysis as the tool to measure the individuals' psychological features and its background by rending one's personality based on the dialogues happened in any literary works.

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Veronika Decides to die expresses the protagonist, Veronika, as a strange young and beautiful woman who was viewing the life as a meaningless and insignificant. This novel of the story has strong result in every conversation and narration.

Paulo Coelho is a Brazilian contemporary novelist and lyricist, he is considered one of the most influential and renowned authors of our times. He is author of more than 30 books, Each and every work of Coelho it has unique themes and techniques. Paulo born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1947, he worked as a director, theater actor, lyricist and journalist. His association and collaboration with Brazilian music composer and singer Raul Seixas offered some of the ultimate classic rock songs in Brazil. His novels mostly based on spiritual experiences, quest for self and universal human experiences beyond the religious practices. His characters are realistic and also his female characters are unique, self-identifying and they are 'high females'. Many of them have inspired by his novels and his novels are the best sellers of the recent time. He has received several prestigious awards and inspired countless readers.

Veronika Decides to Die is a novel by one of the world's most renowned authors Paulo Coelho. In this novel, he deliberates life and death and its difficulties. The society discovers unacceptable and unthinkable, like insanity and suicide that is portrayed in the novel accurately. The protagonist, Veronika, also who decides to die and how she attempts to kill herself and then how after her followed suicide attempt, she learns to live. Veronika is twenty-four years young and beautiful woman from Ljubljana, Slovenia, having boyfriends, a loving family, a good job, however, she finds her life full of endlessly meaningless, which she hates the repetitive life and has nothing else to do. So she isn't happy with her boring life, not because she is disadvantaged something in her life: "She was not killing herself because she was a sad, embittered woman, constantly depressed" (Veronika Decides to Die p.6).

The query of life and death continues to worry her persistently. Out of stress and desperation she develops self-pity and wishes to have a diplomatic death. She thinks, "She would gain nothing by continuing to live; indeed, the likelihood of suffering only increased" (p.6). Ultimately, her misery and meaninglessness of civilized society lead her to take impetuous decisions to commit suicide. She trusts that she had spent her life to the full extent;

At twenty-four, having experienced everything she could experience - and that was no small achievement -Veronika was almost certain that everything ended with death. That is why she had chosen suicide: freedom at last. Eternal oblivion. (p.7)

Veronika takes an overdosing with sleeping pills to stop her life. But the suicide attempt fails, and she is taken to Villette, the most contentious local an asylum in Ljubljana, Slovenia. After recovering and improving, she would have to go back to her routine life. But her heart is now irreversible damaged and she has only seven days to live. She feels that very lonely therefore, she should live the next seven days life to the completest. She realizes that life is vigorous and invaluable. Veronika's subject of a psychiatric experiment directed by the Villette's head Psychiatrist Doctor Igor, There was only one way out: "to discover a cure for insanity" (p.67) as,

"he knew that failed suicides tend to repeat the attempt sooner or later. Why not use her as a guinea pig to see if he could eliminate the Vitriol, or Bitterness, from her organism?" (p.189).

He thinks Veronika “a heaven-sent opportunity in the shape of a would-be suicide; he was not going to lose this opportunity for all the money in the world” (p.67). He explains her that she is going to die in a week. He gives particular drug with which he manages to accelerate the effects of heart attacks and excite upon Veronika, the falling days of her remaining life. But Dr. Igor creates this story to make Veronika understands the meaning and lost prominence of her life. He desires to show that the treat to bitterness lies in consciousness of life itself. Though he scrutinizes how Veronika behaves, changing her character and new life. Dr. Igor’s trick works it progressively she begins realizing the world around her with new point of view. The new endless consciousness begins her to evaluate her life. She begins to question in her heart about the existence of life. In Villette, each and every one changed her lifestyle to live the life. There she learned many things about the meaning of life.

In the asylum, she meets the three most significant and prominent personalities of her life who assist as a tool for her self-realization. Zedka, the stressed and depressed housewife, Mari, the Lawyer who lost her dreams when she came to suffer from panic attacks, and the third one a schizophrenic artist Eduart, who has spent his life refusing love. These three of them perfect in their mind but the outer world identifies them simply as lunatic people, they are the reason where Veronika discovers that the every moment of existence is valuable living. In the asylum she first meets Zedka, who had become fanatical with a former lover and unsuccessfully searched for him, and she prepared to leave her family, her children, everything for him. But Zedka’s vain search led to depression, anxiety and lastly, she was permitted to the asylum. Loneliness arrives over her and leaves her frustrated and annoyed. She suffers “astral” (p.45) journeys during her treatment and discovers the world around herself in a way that was strange by all values. She becomes a friend to Veronika, when release she leaves her with the thoughts of endless and valueless love. She makes Veronika understands that the deep internal desires that are searched within us form a hidden but a vital part of our personality. Such longings should be comprehended and examined without fail. Although the last days of her life she decides to discover herself, her identity, delights, desires, love, grief, pain, and her hatred. She permits herself to live totally because she might not have another option:

“She felt like going over to the piano in the lounge, and celebrating that night with a lovely sonata she had learned at school. Looking up at the sky, she had an indescribable sense of well-being, as if the infinite nature of the universe had revealed her eternity to her” (p.57).

In the asylum, Zedka wants to leave her stress and depression, but carries with her all other kinds of insanity and now will be normal for her and others. She says:

When I came here, I was deeply depressed. Now I’m proud to say I’m mad. Outside I’ll behave exactly like everyone else. I’ll go shopping at the supermarket; I’ll exchange trivialities with my friends. I’ll waste precious time watching television. But I know dial my soul is the tree and that I can dream and talk with other worlds which, before I came here, I didn’t even imagine existed. (p.148)

Veronika then meets Mari, is a member of the Fraternity who could have left many years ago but stay at the expenses of the state due to the hospital’s familiarity, and she pretend and behave like hazardously violent insane person when the period of government inspection. She is an effective lawyer, when enters the asylum as a panic attack patient. Mari’s anxiety, fury, fear, and pain decreasing from her own mental and emotional disintegration are repeated, and she experiences illogical fear or phobia as they

are subjected to harassed existence. Phobia may be described as a tenacious, abnormal, and illogical fear of a specific thing or situation that forces one to avoid it, although the awareness and comfort that it is not dangerous. A phobia is an immediate fear of something that in reality, it is not actual risk also called as Psychic abnormality. Almost her position is totally curable. Before coming to Villette, Mary had, “decided to give up the tedious, unending job of being a lawyer to dedicate the rest of her days to working for some humanitarian organization” (p.103).

She wanted to live life to the fullest by satisfying her relished desires. She wanted to serve for the famished children of El Salvador, who “were forced to live on the streets and turn to prostitution” (p.103). But when she couldn't stand up against the communal norms, she started having panic attacks and therefore curved down before the social pressure and predominant attitudes. Critics lecture that people suffer from mental illness, frustration, fear, phobia, and psychosis. These mental disorders quiver the life and lead to ultimate destruction. It is stated by Eric R. Maisel that,

A mental disorder is a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or psychological pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress or disability or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom. (The New Definition of a Mental Disorder n.pag)

And thus, she was thwarted from becoming “the fountain that overflows” (p.180-81). But now, learning from her own experience, she teaches Veronika to push herself beyond her boundaries and urges her to experience the highest pleasure. She urges her to be true to her self instead of getting bogged down by other people's opinions and fancies. She makes Veronika understand that “her parents would still have loved her, but, afraid of hurting them, she had not dared to pay the price of her dream, the dream that was buried in the depths of her memory....” Veronika had known since childhood that her true vocation was to be a pianist” (p.85). In the end, inspired by Veronika's courage to live each day as it comes, Mari decides to leave the asylum and follow her heart and free her soul by working for the children of war-torn Sarajevo. She requests:

‘Where is my soul?’ Mari asked again. In what I wanted my life to be. I left my soul captive at that moment when I still had a house, a husband, a job I wanted to leave but never had the courage to ... the death of that young girl made me understand my own life’ (p.155).

Veronika's life changes when she meets Eduard, a schizophrenic whose madness was, according to the doctor's report, beyond cure. Schizophrenia is a brain disorder that affects the way a person behaves, thinks, and sees the world. People with schizophrenia often have an altered perception of reality. They may see or hear things that don't exist, speak in strange or confusing ways, believe that others are trying to harm them, or feel like they are constantly watched. Patients with schizophrenia often have overlapping depression and may have suicidal thoughts and behavior. They may withdraw almost completely from others, slipping into a world of private thoughts and experiences. They may cry, seethe with anger, laugh or giggle inappropriately, with little responsiveness to others or events. Being the son of a diplomat, he had seen all comforts in life, but his road accident changes his life. He gets inspired by the lives of great visionaries such as Jesus Christ, Darwin, Freud, Columbus, and Marx, “whose ideas had shaken the world, people with their vision of an earthly Paradise, people who had spent their lives sharing their ideas with others.” (p.165), and desires to create his visions of paradise through his paintings. Finally, he is

enveloped with such a “powerful feeling of guilt that he had felt incapable of doing anything” (p.132) and ultimately ends up in the asylum as a schizophrenic.

When Veronika meets Eduard, she creates music on the piano; he listens to her as if he is under some magical influence. On her part, Veronika “had finally realized her dream: to play with heart and soul, for as long as she wanted and whenever the mood took her. It didn’t matter to her that her only audience was a young schizophrenic; he seemed to understand the music, and that was what mattered” (Coelho 10). Each night Eduard waits for her to play and loses all his sorrows and worries in the rhythm of the notes. Eduard is the person who incites the understanding of life in Veronika. Veronika begins to experience all the things she never allowed herself to experience. And when she has just about twenty-four hours left for death as per Dr. Igor that she realizes life. She says to the doctor:

I want to ask two favors. First, that you give me some medication, injection, or whatever so that I can stay awake and enjoy every moment that remains of in my life. I’m very tired, but I don’t want to sleep. I’ve got a lot to do, things that I always postponed for some future date, in the days when I thought life would last for ever. Things I’d lost interest in when I started to believe that life wasn’t worth living. (p.127)

And her second favorite would be:

‘And what’s the second favour?’ I want to leave here so that I can die outside. I need to visit Ljubljana Castle. It’s always been there, and I’ve never even had the curiosity to go and see it close to. I need to talk to the woman who sells chestnuts in winter and flowers in spring. We passed each other so often, and I never once asked her how she was. And I want to go out without a jacket and walk in the snow, I want to find out what extreme cold feels like, I, who was always so wrapped up, so afraid of catching a cold. (p.127)

By convincing that her death is eminent, Doctor Igor has managed to shock Veronika, making her want to live, respect life, and - above all enjoy it, something which life is meant for. She always wanted to do things that fascinated her, and now she wants to go out of Vilete to taste them all and to know what life is all about. She not only falls in love with Eduard with all her heart and emotions for the first time but also enjoys it. Veronika now fully grasps the meaningfulness of her life. Like Veronika, everyone in this world is so busy playing safe and so busy keeping others happy by doing things that are required of them that they stop living for themselves, lose the essence of life: Wanting to be different, according to Dr. Igor, becomes a serious illness only when,

“you force yourself to be the same as everyone else. . . . It’s a distortion of nature, it goes against God’s laws, for in all the world’s woods and forests, He did not create a single leaf the same as another” (p.153).

Coelho inspires readers to look within to find the real selves. We have forgotten or hidden from ourselves to keep pace with the hustle-bustle of our lives. Veronika learns this fact when she lies in Vilete, waiting for her date to die. An awareness of death encouraged her to live more intensely.

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