



Defining the deciding factors of behavior in *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London: A psychoanalytic perspective

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Available online at: www.isca.in, www.isca.me

Received 21st July 2018, revised 28th September 2018, accepted 18th October 2018

Abstract

The difference between the external and internal factor indicate what people think and the action they display. Both of them have their connection to the conscious and unconscious level of the psyche. In The novel, The Call of the Wild, these factors have their significant role in deciding a creature's behavior and affect the action at the same time. In the novel, When Buck kills his enemy, though he remains unconscious about his action, but his accomplishment indicates the call that he experiences from his inside is the influence of the environment he lives in. Therefore, the external factors work as the sources that can influence one though responding to that rests on one's thoughts.

Keywords: *The Call of the Wild*, Jack London, External factors of behavior, Internal factors of behavior.

Introduction

The behaviors of creature result from both the external environment and internal environment, which interact with each other, and some people said that the external factors have the same weight as internal factors. This research paper will argue that the external factors and the internal factors have the different weight on affecting creature's behaviors, and the internal factors are the main factors to decide the behaviors of creature. These factors are like "every action of management body is influenced by the environment"¹. The internal factors have always meant the inside world of creatures, thus, this research paper will apply the theory of psychology to analyze Jack London's novel *The Call of the Wild*². According to the analysis of Buck's thoughts and internal world, people will find that the different internal factors of creatures are the reason why these dogs have different behaviors in the same external environment so that the supporting the argument that the internal factors are the main factors to decide the behaviors of people.

Previous Research

For the novel *The Call of the Wild*, some people analyze it by primitivism, because the protagonist is a dog in this novel and it becomes the king of wolves at the end of the story. As Yin He, a Chinese writer, describes in his article that "although Buck, the protagonist of the novel, is a mild dog at the beginning of the story, it also has the original desire. Buck wants to be a wild, crazy, or a crafty dog in its heart and this is its nature. And this desire leads Buck to return to nature world. Since one wolf gives him a sign, Buck's nature was awakening. Thus, the original desire or the nature is the reason why Buck becomes to a wolf at the end of the story"³. That is the truth that the story

totally tells us a process of changing that a mild dog turns into a wild wolf. Compared with Yin and his idea, this research paper will point out that the changing is not because the nature of the dog; the original desire of the dog is only a little part of the reason. The most important reasons are the internal factors, that means the thoughts and internal world of the dog is the leader of Buck's life.

A Perspective of Psychology

At the beginning of the research, this essay will introduce what theory will be used in the research. As the argument is related to the thought process, the theory of psychology is very important in this area. Thus, this essay is going to introduce the conception of psychology here. Psychology starts "with the scientific study of the mind and behavior"⁴. It states how one's behavior shifts from one phase of conduct into another with a new realm of thoughts based on the given environments. In this essay, it will analyze the thoughts of Buck and describes why Buck turns into wild. A transformation that makes him shifting "from a domesticated to a wild one as a result of all that is done to him"⁵. The essay will show the result that the internal factors are the main reason that makes Buck into changing from a mild dog to a wolf.

Analysis

The novel *The Call of the Wild* is different from other novels, because the protagonist is a dog which is named Buck. Critics may inquire that how a dog can produce thought, and how the dog can express its thought. If the dog can create its own thought, and how one can know that. Therefore, the notion of psychology is needed to analyze it.

Actually, although the writer is describing a dog, the writer compares the dog to a person and personifies it. Thus, the dog, Buck can be considered as a person in this novel. This is the reason this novel is chosen for this essay to prove the argument it displays.

Buck was living in a warm valley in South America before it was 4 years old, where He led his life like:

The whole realm was his, "He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches"⁶.

During this period of time Buck stays with a lot of people who got a well civilized education. The notion of civilization ruled its mind at that time. He does not need to pay more attention to food; he does not need to take care of everything. Thus, the readers can find that Buck at that time shows meekness; the only thing Buck can do is walking with the members of the family and playing with the children. The comfortable environment helps Buck's character being peaceful and soft. There, Buck trusts everyone he knows. It means that Buck knows the environment and he lives in is a good environment and nobody will hurt him. Such behavior literally grows in Buck's mind due to his existing internal factors.

This kind of life does not last for a long time for Buck because the protagonist was stolen and sold to others. At the beginning of Buck's new life, Buck cannot believe what was happening to him; the people's manner is rude and wild. Buck feels angry because of the beating from people, and it feels hungry because of lacking of food and water. All of these feelings get mixed together in Buck's mind. From then on, Buck knows that a new and strange world comes to him. The civilization, he was used to know and see is not around him anymore. Thus, the character of Buck has changed for the first time. This is a good example to show that different environment of life has the different thought. After Buck understands that he was taken to a new world, though he was still feeling angry, he did nothing because he knows that wherever he is going to is useless. From this aspect, it is seen that the new thought will decide what the dog does next. When Buck was stolen to a man in red, this behavior is extremely clear. When the first time Buck meets the man who takes it to a club, Buck tries his best to get his honor, but the result is not as good as his wish, he was beaten hardly by the man. This truth tells Buck again that this life is different from his old life, and he should obey "the law of club and fang"⁷. This law means "factors for surviving in the Northland"⁷. From this aspect, people can know that why Buck obeys others and it does because Buck knows he cannot escape from the rules of

the club he is brought in. Indeed, his obedience to the imposed laws of the club imply to his internal factors of behavior.

When Buck first time becomes the sled dog, he feels very angry because of several days ago, he used to live in a big house and enjoy the sunshine with the members of the family, and sometimes playing with the children and walking with the lawyer. At that time, all people and dogs were used to live under the civilization, and the relationship between people and dogs was peaceful and happy. Compared with the past years, the fact is so hard for Buck to accept. Now, the relationship between people and the dog was changed. Dogs have to work for people. Buck should work so hard for people so that he can get some food from people. Although Buck feels so angry, he does nothing. He knows this is an extremely different world for him and this world is not peaceful and quite. These people ignore the civilization. All of these senses come Buck's own thoughts-the internal factors. Buck also learns that he has to keep quiet and does his job well, so that he can survive in the new environment. Such changes of behavior literally decide a creature's different actions in different environments. In the case of Buck, it remains same.

The food, for the sled dog, is one of the most important problems. The food can help the dogs to stop the feeling of hungry and make them stronger so that they can work. In fact, the food is not enough every time for these big dogs. In order to eat more food, the other dogs eat so fast so that they can plunder food from Buck. When Buck lives in the lawyer's house, he never worried about this situation because the lawyer would give the best food to him, and the most important is the food is extremely enough to him. Now, the food from the new master is ugly and not enough at all to his big stomach. Thus, at the beginning, Buck just eats some of them, and then the last food was plundered by other dogs. After several days, because of being hungry, Buck accepts the fact and eats faster to protect his food. From this aspect, it is observed that Buck changes a lot than before; this happens because of his changing of mind. In this novel, Jack London describes that when Buck sees another dog stealing a piece of meat and eating it, and finds that nobody in that process. Buck knows that this is a better way to fulfill his stomach; finally, Buck begins to steal. Compared with the life in a lawyer's house, what a serious sin it is. At this point of time, nobody knows civilization; the only thing they know is how to get enough food. This change in Buck will support the argument that different environment of life has the different thought, and this thought decides what kind of behavior will be done. Thus, the internal factors are the most important factors in affecting people's behavior.

When Buck lived in the valley before, this big dog had no desire, but after a long time working, Buck cares about the leadership of the dog team, he wants to be the leader of the dog team. His ambitions drive him thinking more and more enterprises. Thus, he often fights with the leader of the dog's team. The situation of the leader makes Buck feels proud, and

he enjoys that feeling is the reason why he wants to be the leader of the team. In order to make his dream come true, he would like to kill his partner. At this time, Buck becomes a cruel and muscular dog, and he went to the top of desire. In this aspect, the huge desire is the internal factors. If Buck keeps living in this kind of environment, Buck will keep his character till the end of his life. Luckily, this situation has been changed by an old man. The old man saves its life and gives love to Buck. From then on, Buck does not want to get any things, the only thing Buck wants to do is to stay with the man. Buck can move 1000 pound goods alone in order to earn 1600 dollars for the man. This is not only because of the food; this is because of the love to the man. This is not the ending of the story. One day, the man was killed by other people, and this is really a bad news to Buck, they love each other so much.

Thus, the character of Buck changes again, the dog which is cruel and muscular comes back again. At his first step, Buck becomes the king of wolves. Indeed, this process is dangerous and hard. Buck fights with so many wolves at the same time. Then, Buck takes his team to revenge upon the killer of his master. In fact, he kills them to survive and his killing of them without any guilt feeling clearly indicates his responses to the call of the wildness arisen from inside of him, presenting him as a transformed wild beast.

To Buck, killing of a person is unbelievable and difficult, especially for Buck. When Buck was born in the warm valley of the south of America, all the food was given to him by the people. Whatever Buck's master is a good guy or a bad guy; these people always support the food to Buck. In addition, after Buck left his first comfortable home, he learned a new rule that the law of the club and fang. This rule always tells Buck that he can not defy people, especially for these people who take club. And at that time, Buck forgets about the law of club and fang. When Buck lives with the man, he can get the love of the man and feels happy with the man. As the writer describes in his novel, Buck does not want to do anything at that time, he just stays on the ground and watches the man. What Buck wants to do is to find some information from the man and trying his best to react every order from the man. The living environment of Buck is lovely and peaceful and this love and peaceful environment makes Buck feeling comfortable and happy.

This change is a powerful example to show that the outside environment can change the thought of people. Whatever one's life and character are, one cannot stop this changing in one's mind, maybe this change is not one's wish, and this change is unconscious, but this changing does really exist. Thus, the different mind, the internal factors, makes Buck doing different things. Take Buck for example, before he lives with the man, he is a cruel and muscular dog, he loved running like mad on the ground, he loved the feeling of running and the speed and Buck was not quite. After Buck starts living with the man, he does nothing for changing his manner and his character, even his habit. The reader sees that Buck becomes a quite and peaceful dog. This changing is unconscious, but really exists.

This is also telling us that the outside environment can change people's mind, and this mind will lead people to do thing in a new style. Sometimes, a very short experience can also change people's mind, because this kind of experience is also a part of the outside environment. In fact, with the changing of the thought, people do something different than the action executed before. In this novel, Buck was hunting a rabbit with more than 60 dogs. At that time, Buck feels that he is the king of the dog team. Every dog runs with him and it seems like that other dogs are running under his order. Buck loves this feeling. At that time, Buck is not alone; he is running with the soul of the wild. And because they are hunting a rabbit, the aim of hunting is killing the rabbit. Thus, the desire of seeing blood is filling with Buck's mind. The situation makes Buck almost crazy. All these factors lead Buck to a new situation that as wild as a wolf. The only thing Buck wants to do is running and killing. And also because of this experience, Buck decides to kill his enemy which is another dog in the dog team. Although he prepares to kill that dog for a long time, he does not do that because he is afraid of the law of club. Now, Buck has the experience of hunting, and gets encouraged to kill another dog. At last, Buck completely kills his enemy in the surrounding of 60 dogs. Literally Buck learns the law of the wilderness – "eat or be eaten, kill or be killed"⁸. According to the analysis above, it can be seen that the different outside environment will affect the people's mind, this affection cannot be avoided. Maybe Buck does not know why he has done that, and although this is unconscious action, but these actions depend on his internal factors.

In the real world, this argument is also correct. The world is an objective world; one has to face different types of situations. For instance, the workers work in a company, they should obey all by the laws of the company because the company is a space which is different from outside. This is a special living environment for the workers. Thus, these workers know that what they should do in the company and what they cannot do. Their situation is decided by their thoughts. Thus, nobody could escape from this rule. The following example the essay can pick on, for example, the students' mission is learning knowledge from school, but every student does not want to study in school. For most students, learning is passive movement and all these students have their own hope and desire. The reason they keep studying in school is because they know that they have to learn much knowledge so that they can find a good job in the future or something like this. All the students sense depends on the internal factors and external factors, and the internal factors are the main factors to affect people's behavior.

Conclusion

Finally, the external factors decide the thought of people, and what the people do is decided by the internal factors ruling the thoughts of people. Whatever ones' their action - conscious or unconscious. As the Introduction describes the behaviors of creature result from both the external environment and internal

environment, which interact with each other. These factors decide the movement of people together. On the other side, the internal factors and the external factors have the different weight on affecting people's action. The external factors are the resource of people's mind; these factors give some information to people, but what people will do depends on their thoughts. Thus, the internal factors are the main to decide the behaviors of a creature.

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