

AN ANALYSIS OF EGO DEFENSE MECHANISMS OF MR. BORKMAN IN HENRIK IBSEN'S *JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN*

Heny Kustiyah, Dra. Hj. Meilia Adiana, M.Pd. , Drs. Imam Basuki, M.Hum.

English Department, Faculty of Letters, University of Jember (UNEJ)

Jln. Kalimantan 37 Jember 68121

E-Mail: Cresaglifea@gmail.com

Abstract

Defense mechanisms is the protective action which all people have, they build their own defense depends on their experience of life and their personality. Here, the discussion will show about ego defense mechanism represent in literary work. *John Gabriel Borkman* is one of Hendrik Ibsen's plays and it was written in 1896, which presents the condition in nineteenth century. The main character John Gabriel Borkman uses defense to handle his uncomfortable feeling. This discussion is analyzed by using Scott's psychological approach and Freud's theory of personality. There are six ego defense mechanisms that he used those are projection, denial, Isolation, displacement, reaction formation, and rationalization. Ego defense mechanisms called as protective action but those not only give good effects but also bad effects.

Keywords: *protective action, ego defense mechanism, literary work.*

Introduction

Literary works are the reflections of real story that can be learn by enjoying the prose, novel, drama and others through reading and giving new understanding about the value of life, good side and bad side of the character and situation. "Literature is interpreted as reflecting norms and values, as the ethos of culture, the processes of class of struggle, and certain types of social facts" (Albrecht in Gusti, 2011:1). The literature as the representation of norms and values that happen in society gives the people feeling to enjoy the literary works and this also the representation of some social class in process to struggle their life. People can learn about life from the story in literary works that are manifested in the forms of drama, prose, and poetry or written material such as novels, essays and other works of imagination.

In the similar opinion the other experts said that literature exists to give us a pleasure that is described from the story. The story can be imitating life, or more precisely by displaying the writers' visions of life as it is or as the writer thinks it should be (Koesnosobroto in Gusti, 2011:1). The ideas above explain that literature is the written literary work that is performed by imitating the real life. And the writers through their literary works describe their vision or thought about life and those literary works exist to give a pleasure to the readers with story and experience through the media that is literary works such as prose, novels, plays, and poems.

John Gabriel Borkman is one of Hendrik Ibsen's plays and it was written in 1896, which presents the condition in nineteenth century. This drama is called as tragedy because it illustrates of serious action and disastrous conclusion for the main character (Abrams,

1999:321), John as the main character faces the disastrous conclusion. He dies when he has decided to rebuild his life. In this drama there are descriptions about the economic situation such as capitalism and corruption but the main topic that Ibsen tells is about love and family, love between John and Ella and the condition of his family after his misfortunate action. It is said misfortune because of his action that corrupts the money in his bank. He makes himself fall together with his family condition. John Gabriel Borkman has love relationship with Ella Rentheim and both of them have engaged but John suddenly changes his decision to marry Ella's twin sister Gunhild Rentheim. Gunhild and he get married and have a son from his marriage but because of his misfortune action that he did, he becomes the outsider in the family. John is a former bank director; he was arrested because of using the bank's money for his glamour life style. The law arrested him in cell for five years; this incident triggered the conflict between John and his wife because when he was in the court, he blamed his entire fault to his wife. That relationship even became worst when he said that he corrupted the bank's money for the sake of his wife's extravagant life style. Gunhild, who felt innocent about this incident, got furious about John's statements. This part makes his relation with his wife and son in bad condition.

The *ego* is the center between *id* and *superego* when both of them are in conflict then it creates anxiety. And when the anxiety becomes overwhelmed, the *Ego* will relieve it by using the technique that Freud calls as Ego defense mechanisms.

In this case ego's job is to make *id* and super-ego happy and handle the situation when they have a conflict or if ego cannot make *id* and *superego* happy it will

protect the consciousness by using defense mechanisms. Ego protects the situations or feelings that make people feel sad, unpleasant, threatened and hurt, in here ego builds defense to overcome the unbearable feeling and keep the consciousness in the safe position. Thus the defenses that are occurring in the way to protect people's feeling and physic can be appropriate and inappropriate solution depends on the people who manage it. Through *John Gabriel Borkman* play the discussion will show which defense that helps and not to Mr. Borkman's action. The defense is the protective action which all people have, they build their own defense depends on their experience of life and their personality. "Personality is a dynamic organization inside the person of psychophysical systems that create person's characteristic patterns of behavior, thought, and feelings"(Carver and Scheier, 2000:5). So, every person has his own personality and experience in life even twins can have their own concept of life and personality. This can be said that the defenses are different from the one person and the other person.

This discussion takes the topic about defense mechanisms because the researcher wants to explain about human ego defense mechanisms described in Henrik Ibsen's literary work and the defense mechanisms is the people's ways to survive their unstable feeling that all people use and need. The researcher is interested in Mr. Borkman's action to repress his guilty, fear of punishment, anger and other feelings that makes him defend himself from painful experience and protects his self esteem. This discussion is going to examine the Ego defense mechanism of the main character, Mr. Borkman. The reason why the researcher chooses this drama is because it is interesting to discuss and the story contains a suitable topic of Ego defense mechanisms. So, this study will explain the psychological aspect about defense mechanisms that are done by Mr. Borkman in Henrik Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*.

The discussion uses psychology to discuss about psychology in this discussion because the discussion about psychology can help the people who enjoy literary works have better understanding about human behavior, "...if psychoanalysis can help us better understand human behavior, then it must certainly be able to help us understand literary texts, which are about human behavior" (Tyson, 2006:11). The statement gives the researcher an inspiration to discuss this drama by using psychological approach and hopes the discussion will provide better understanding of the drama Henrik Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*, especially in the discussion about ego defense mechanisms as one of human behaviors.

Qualitative data will be used in this discussion because the data are not described with number, the discussion involves description, analysis, and interpretation. The research data are taken from the books sources; it means that the researcher uses library research. Finally, the method used is inductive method, this kind of method tries to gather some appropriate data regarding the topic discussed, and the general conclusion is reached after interpreting the specific data.

Method of Analysis

The type of data used in this study is qualitative data. According to McMillan statement (1992:9-10), qualitative data indicates the data that cannot be counted such as diary entry or narrative description. So, the data will be the non-numeric data and they will be words or a descriptive explanation. This discussion will use the descriptive explanation to analyze Mr. Borkman's psychological experiences in *John Gabriel Borkman*. This discussion involves the description, analysis, and interpretation of the presented problems using Sigmund Freud's theory of personality.

The type of research used in this study is library research which provides the readers about some knowledge. "Much of the library-related research has been applied research dealing with everything from evaluating book collections to adopting automated circulation system" (Powell, 2004:2). By using this research, the researcher wants to know the basic theory about ego defense mechanisms which are explained by Sigmund Freud. And the researcher wants to enlarge the point of view concerning with it. The last, by library research the researcher wants to develop the topic through the appropriate data concerning with the topic.

There are two methods used to analyze literary work, those are deductive method and inductive methods. This study will use inductive method that explains the discussion from the specific to the general. Shaw (1972:107) said that inductive method is the movement of thought, expressed or implied from the specific one to general. Induction method tries to establish a general truth from the observation of specific facts, from sufficient number of these facts or particular, the inductive process of reasoning reaches principle or conclusion.

Result of Data Analysis

The result of the study shows that John Gabriel Borkman uses the six defenses, such as: projection, denial, isolation, displacement, reaction formation, rationalization. They are his way to handle his fear of punishment, fear of abandonment, shame, anger, and guilt. The defenses are also used to protect his self-esteem. The defense mechanisms are needed by everyone and each of them has different effect. There is a defense that brings positive and negative effects. In Mr. Borkman himself, the defense mechanisms give both the negative and positive effects. Those defenses bring negative effects to his relationship with his surrounding such as his lover, his family and his friend. Those make him far from them and destroy the bound between him and his family. The positive effects are just affecting to Mr. Borkman himself because by using the six defenses he can relieve and handle his fear, guilt, shame, and anger. Those can also protect his self esteem.

Discussion

A.Mr. Borkman's Defenses Mechanism

- **Projection**

The analysis of John's projection is the first discussion in this chapter; it is one of the defenses that can be the way to reduce John Gabriel's fear, it is the feeling that can make him feel in the safe place. This defense makes people blame their uncomfortable feeling or something that threatened them to something or someone else.

The main character does projection as the way to defend his fear of punishment. Mr. Borkman commits crime in his working place at the bank in which he corrupts the bank's money and uses them for his own. His action violates the moral code; it is the reason of his moral anxiety occurs. This anxiety makes him fear of punishment from his surrounding or his feeling of fear that someone blames him because of his bad deeds. His first projection is aimed to his wife in court.

ELLA RENTHEIM: Still, he is your husband.

MRS. BORKMAN: Didn't he say in court that it was I who began his ruin? That I spent so much money-?

ELLA RENTHEIM [*cautiously*]: But *wasn't* there some truth in that?

MRS. BORKMAN: But wasn't he himself who wanted me to? Everything had to be so senselessly extravagant-

ELLA RENTHEIM: I know that well enough. But that's just why you should have stood out against it. And you certainly didn't.

MRS. BORKMAN: Did I know that it wasn't his own - the money he gave me to squander? And he squandered himself, too. Ten time more than I did!

(Act 1: 290-291)

Those dialogues explain that Mr. Borkman blames his wife although Mrs. Borkman does not really know the fact; she just does it as what her husband wants.

His action to blame his own wife is to console the extreme anxiety of his fear of punishment from the judge. This action happens in the court and the audience witnesses of this event. Borkman's accusation is his way to protect himself from the punishment and the blame from the society.

He also projects his wrong doing to other people such as to his enemy Hinkel and his former fiancée Ella Renheim. This action makes him feel less threatening and easy because the mistake is not his own. He thinks other people who have relation with him take part of his action.

ELLA RENTHEIM : [*scornfully*]: Year after year I refuse happiness, I suppose you mean?

BORKMAN: You could perfectly well have happy with him instead. And then I have been saved.

ELLA RENTHEIM : You-?

BORKMAN: Yes, then you'd have saved me, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM : How do you mean?

BORKMAN: He thought it was I who was at the back of your refusals-of your obstinate denial. And so he took his revenge. For he could do that so

easily-he had all my frank, confiding letters in his hand. He made use of them, and so it was all up with me-for the time being. You see, all that's your fault, Ella!

(Act 2: 327-328)

Those dialogues show that John does not think that his mistake is a crime but the fault of his past relationship. In the past he broke his love with Ella because Hinkel wanted Ella, but his proposal was always refused by Ella. Borkman blames Ella's action to turn down Hinkel's proposal as the reason of his misfortune condition. For Borkman, Ella is less dangerous than the other people who will blame or punish him. It happens because he believes Ella may forgive him as someone who ever loved and saved her properties.

The analysis above shows that Mr. Borkman has the reason to project his wrong doing to the other people. First, his projection to his wife, time (situation), and Ella are action to project something threatening to the less threatening. Second, the fear of punishment from society is the main cause of his projection. The society is the greatest threat for him. He reduces the fear by blaming the wrong doing that is his own to the others who are closed to him. Those actions are the representation of projection as people's defense mechanisms.

- **Denial**

Denial explained as the kind of defense that people use to release the intense anxiety by believing the difficulties or unpleasant incident do not exist or never happens (Tyson, 2006: 15). In some of John Gabriel's dialogues there are some descriptions that he refuses to acknowledge the actions and conditions that he has done and those make trouble for people that are closed to him. The explanation below will show whether Mr. Borkman applies this defense or not when he should deal with some difficult events or conditions.

BORKMAN [*hardly*]: Yes, I do. It's this that's to blame for your never having got on in the world. If you'd only get rid of all this, I could help you on to your feet - help you so get on.

FOLDAL [*seething inwardly*]: Oh, you can't do that.

BORKMAN: I *can*, when I once get into power again.

FOLDAL: But that's such a terribly long way off.

BORKMAN [*angrily*]: I suppose you think that time will never come? Answer me!

FOLDAL: I don't know how to answer you.

(Act 2:323)

Borkman keeps saying that his power can be back again. That sentence is a proof of his denial. He does not accept the fact that the bank does not want him; it means he also loses his power to realize his wishes. He does not want to recognize that because he is afraid of losing the reason to stay the way he chooses and faces the situation wisely. His belief about the power and his fortune will change and back again are a kind of denial in fantasy. He fantasies to gaining everything back like

before by keeping his dreams and beliefs.

In other situation Foldal ever has different opinion with Borkman, he still thinks that he can do everything even to help Foldal if he is clear from crime and gets his job back. But according to Foldal's understanding about law, Borkman's name cannot be cleared by law. He, who cannot face the reality, feels that the statement of his friend as the threat. And the result he tries to defend by making the threatening objects far from him. Foldal feels unhappy about that and finally he says the truth that he has wasted his time for just accompanying his friend in the fantasy. Borkman believes that the bank needs him and his power will return again are his fantasy. The reality is they cannot be back again if he does not try to get them back. There are three types of denial according to the previous explanation and one of those types is denial in fantasy. This kind of denial is the one that is suitable with John's description above because he refuses the fact and then he believes in his hope and dream.

- Isolation

Isolation is a kind of defense that separating people and the stressful ideas from the original things that are connected with them. People who have this defense have a tendency to separate their emotion and the objects that make them feel stressed or uncomfortable. This defense is the dominant way of John Gabriel to defend him from the stressful condition. The story describes that he lives in a separated place from his wife and his son.

MRS. BORKMAN [*turning her eyes away from Ella*]: That's not he, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM [*with surprise*]: Isn't that Erhart? [*Guessing.*] Who is it then?

MRS. BORKMAN: The director.

ELLA RENTHEIM: [*softly, controlling her distress*]: John Gabriel Borkman!

MRS. BORKMAN: He walked up and down like that; to and fro. From morning till night. Day in, day out.

ELLA RENTHEIM: It's true. I've heard rumours of it -

MRS. BORKMAN: I can believe it. No doubt there are rumours about us out here.

ELLA RENTHEIM: Erhart has spoken of it. In his letters. That his father generally kept to himself - up there. And you to yourself, down here.

(Act 1:295)

The quotation above shows that Mr. Borkman lives separately with his family, in one house but in different room. He stays upstairs which is used to be a gallery and his wife with his son live in the downstairs. He has separated himself in the different room from the people and things that put him in stressful feeling. In the story, he does not really keep in touch with them; it is just his son that sometimes visits him upstairs. This action is like the isolation explanation, this defense becomes the way of securing the feeling or makes people's feeling stay away from something that makes him experience

stressful. Those dialogues between Ella and Mrs. Borkman can be concluded that Mr. Borkman has this defense to reduce the stressful feeling. He may have it when facing his family because in other side he has guilty feeling to them. Yet he does not admit his fault and facts that happen but in other side he is aware of his mistake so he feels guilty of it.

Borkman's action that isolates himself in gallery is his way to punish himself. The action which he always does is the indicator that he feels guilty, that is why he alone accuses, defends and judges his own mistake again and again. He inspects himself and finally knows that the mistakes of him are actually ruining his own life. He said that "myself" is also his wife and his son because he thinks his family is he himself and one mistake of the head of the member in the family means the mistake for all of them. The family finally knows that the reason of Mr. Borkman to isolate himself is his guilty feeling toward his family. This feeling makes him experience the threatening feeling or stressing condition when he is with his family. He decides to isolate himself because he wants to reduce those uncomfortable feelings and it becomes the way of him to face the problem wisely.

On the other hand his isolation can be an action of denial because through isolating himself apart from the situation and people that may accuse him, he can hear and see everything like he hopes; it means he denies the fact that by isolating himself and apart of them. In this case he wants the problems that make him feel anxious disappeared by separating them from him.

- Displacement

Displacement is a kind of defense that illustrates about displacing the target that people think as the threatening case with something or someone less threatening. In the drama it is clearly described that there are two women with the same physical figure. Ella and Gunhild Renheim are twins that are identically same.

[The MAID *opens the doors for the stranger and goes out herself*. MISS ELLA RENTHEIM *comes into the room. She is like her sister in appearance, but there is more is more suffering than of hardness in the expression of her face... the two sister stand a moment in silence and look searchingly at each other. Each of them is evidently waiting for the other to spoke first.*]

(Act 1:288)

The statement above describes that Ella and Gunhild have resemblance in appearance, which is said that she is similar to her sister in appearance. The statement is needed because in this defense explains that the similarity can be the identification of Borkman's action is part of displacement or not. Like the discussion before, there are two factors of displacement as Hall and Lidzey said those who use the resemble object to substitute the original one or people substitute the object because the society does not permit that thing (1970: 47). Mr. Borkman in the story replaces his woman Ella with her twin sister Gunhild. John replaces Ella, because he is afraid if he chooses her there will be an obstacle for his

goal and his successful carrier. The obstacle occurs from Hinkel who also wants Ella to become his wife. Gunhild, who looks a like Ella, accepts as the replacement because she is not like Ella who can be an obstacle to his carrier. The relationship between John and Gunhild is not deep like his relationship with Ella that is why this relationship will not cause extreme hurt or fear for John.

This displacement is people's action to change something that they desire with the substitute one because the real target is threatening that usually caused hurt feeling, frustration, anger and fear (Tyson, 2006:3). So, this discussion describes that Borkman applies displacement as his way to defend himself from his fear of failure in his job. He replaces Ella because he is afraid her existence in his life will affect his goal to have bright future and Gunhild for him is good enough to replace her for the sake of his fortune and ambition to be "The King".

The replacement done by Mr. Borkman can be part of the projection action. This shows when he feels as a victim of Hinkel and the other people who conduct him as a criminal who corrupts the money from his office. In fact he cannot really realize his anger so he transfers the anger through his action such as to blame his fault to other people surrounding him especially to his wife and Ella. Showing his anger by hurting other people's feeling is his way to do replacement of his anger to someone that less threatening. Actually, he should be angry to Hinkel or his company he thinks as the main cause of his uncomfortable feeling. From that point of view, John Gabriel's projection is his replacing of threatening things to the one that less threatening.

- Reaction formation .

Reaction formation is a kind of replacement but it replaces the object or something in opposite way (Hall and Lidzey, 1970: 49). While displacement explained in the last topic is about to replace objects or something with the same characteristic or the things that look like the original one. According to that statement it can be said that displacement and reaction formation are different kind of defense mechanisms. There are some quotations showing this defense used by Mr. Borkman to release his anxiety.

John replaces his love with power because for him power is less threatening than love feeling. He loves Ella but he does not want her to company his life in commitment relationship; he worries that she will be his obstacle to gain a success. The unhappiness will be his if someday she changes her minds and chooses other man. The story tells that Hinkel really wants Ella but his loves are always refused by her. The reason of Borkman replaces Ella because he is fear of abandonment. This thing is a feeling that our friends or the loved one is going to desert us or do not care about us (Tyson, 2006: 16). So, he leaves Ella first to prevent him from getting hurt if she is changing her mind and deserts him later.

That action of Mr. Borkman is the kind of reaction formation. He, because of fear if there is someone that is closed to him will leave him first; he has decided to take the opposite way to leave her. He thinks that he must not struggle to keep the relationship but just

ended it. He knows there is obstacle in his love with Ella but he does not struggle to keep his love with Ella. He decides to leave her by using a reasonable reason that he needs to sacrifice her to get the help from man in power, Hinkel.

- Rationalization

Rationalization is the last defense that will be analyzed in this chapter. This defense usually makes people dodge the troubled things that may inexcusable become rational and accepted. And this defense is used to explain the things by giving logical reason. There are the evidences of his rationalization.

MRS BORKMAN: Yes, as brand for the name of Borkman.

BORKMAN: How do we know that, if the other had had the power, they wouldn't have acted just as I do?

MRS BORKMAN: No one. No one but you would have done it!

BORKMAN: Perhaps no. but that was because they hadn't the abilities that I had. And if they had done it, they wouldn't have done it with my goal before their eyes. The deed would have been quite different. To put it briefly, I have acquitted myself.

(Act 3:343)

Borkman in his dialogues above explains his crime as the common action for the people who have the power. Doing the corruption is not strange for them who are in power. There is no guaranty that the other people will not do that if they have power like him. His words become the excuses for the crime that usually be seen as the wrong action to become something rational. The purpose of his rationalization of the crime is to cover his fear of punishment by changing the other people's perception about his action. By using that he hopes the other people will change their perception from against him and blame him becomes tolerate him. The excuse is made because he wants to make his action becomes excusable and something permitted will not harm him.

His wanting to protect his self-esteem is the other reason of his rationalization of his crime. By making excuse of his fault he tries to secure his reputation and his dignity. The main result of this rationalization is to make him far away from other people's blame or punishment and also to protect his self esteem.

B. The Effects of Mr. Borkman's Defense Mechanism

The way of people to protect themselves must give effects to other people or themselves. People have the good effects or bad effects according to the result of the action that they take. If the result does not give them bad affects, it means the defense mechanisms give people an advantage to help reducing their anxiety. The defense mechanisms that John Gabriel uses also have the effects. The first effects of those defenses can be seen in his household condition.

- His Household Condition

The isolation of Mr. Borkman makes him have bad relationship with his family. He is not close with his son or it can be said that he does not really know about his own son. He also has a bad relationship with his wife; both of them like an enemy who live in the same roof but do not care or understand each other although they are husband and wife. It happens because of anger and they do not aware of their feeling to each other which turn them as an enemy and a stranger.

Gunhild prefers to call John “wolf” ,it because she has no any good feeling and intention to him but hatred instead. Those dialogues show that both Gunhild and John Gabriel do not have good communication that is caused by the unsolved problem in the previous case. There is no communication it means they have bad relationship.

The son almost never visits him because he thinks his wife keeps the son away from him. John Gabriel has the same action with Gunhild. He does not mention the name of his wife but call her as “someone”. Both the evidences strengthen that these members of family have no good relation or close relation and the main cause of that is Borkman’s isolation. The isolation makes the communication bad toward the family members and the result for the family is that they become strangers to each other.

- His Friendship with Other People

The defense mechanisms of John Gabriel also have affected his friendship with his friend. He only has one friend named Vilhelm Foldal who visits him in the gallery when the night comes. Foldal is the only person that still keeps in touch with him and listen all Borkman’s opinion and complain. In the drama Foldal is described as someone who believes and always supports Borkman when all people are against his action and later he leaves him alone in that situation. Borkman defense’s causes the relation between them is in bad condition. He denies to accept the reality that sometimes said by his friend. The things that Foldal said make Borkman insecure. Those words do not keep him living in fantasy of his hopes and his dreams anymore. He fears because he is not ready to accept the facts. Borkman takes action to relieve his unpleasant feeling by dissipating Foldal from his place. He wants Foldal to leave him because he wants to get rid of the things that make him insecure.

- His Relation with Ella Rentheim

Ella Rentheim as the one that Borkman loves also gets the effect of his defense. The effect is caused by the past relation that she has with Borkman. The defense turns the relationship between them becomes inconvenient. The effect can be seen in the previous discussion. Borkman often blames his fault to other people and Ella is one of them to blame. That kind of defense is called projection. The first problem is the past relationship but the projection that he does makes his relation bad. Ella cannot forgive Borkman because he has left her. Borkman, because of his guilty feeling for her, he hides his feeling by blaming her for the misfortune that he faced.

The love that is not ended in happy ending between John and Ella becomes the reason for both of them have not closed relation. The statement is said that it was a very long time since they met face to face; it means they do not have good relationship after they broke up their love. Borkman’s replacement is the main cause of this effect; Ella cannot face the reality that he leaves her just for the glory and the success of his business. All of those descriptions explain that Mr. Borkman’s defense mechanisms bring bad effects in his relation with his former fiancée.

- His Way of Thinking

The last effect of the defense mechanisms shows in John Gabriel’s way of thinking. All of the defenses give the different point of view for him to face the uncommon things that he does. He takes the reasonable excuse in different opinion with his surrounding; those are about sacrifices, happiness and the purpose of life. Borkman thinks happiness depends on their own choice, it does not concern with other people but Ella’s happiness is about feeling. The feeling is not something rational that can be chosen like Borkman has mentioned. Borkman’s idea about happiness is the effect of his rationalization; his words above actually become his excuse to make him far away from anxiety. His decision to leave Ella and the bad condition of him now can stimulate the extreme anxiety that makes him feel painful. The solution of that he tries to make all of the facts of his condition explained logically, so he does rationalization and intellectualization. Logical excuses can be accepted by his brain and with that the feeling of insecure will be reduced.

The obsession of him to be successful and gains power makes him once again excuse all his actions with the rationalization. He decides to give someone he loves as a price for his victory in business. The choice is logical for him because he needs it to fulfill all his dreams to be a powerful man.

Borkman also replaces something that is dear to him and endangers him with some helps to smoothing his way to be successful and powerful. He substitutes his love with glory. He cannot face Ella because of his choice and then he rationalizes his action by choosing his life, have to win or fall. It shows that Borkman’s way of thinking about sacrifice. The sacrifice is about lost something to gain something the same or more than what he has lost. That means there is a price to reach a victory and for him something important must be paid with something important too.

This is the other description about what “sacrifice” means for him. When his wife asks him she says that Borkman never loves other people outside him and he proudly answers that he loves power. He believes that power will create happiness much more to the people than the other things. It is because the power he desires will not make uncomfortable for his feeling. With his knowledge and experience the power is controllable, that is different from people that will fight him back and makes him uncomfortable and worried.

Borkman thinks that power brings happiness although in the reality his obsession to be a powerful man has broken his family relation. His opinion comes out because of the uncomfortable situation. He protects his belief up till now by using rationalization. His action is the way of him to distort the reality. Gunhild tries to force the true condition to Borkman but the facts are the cause of his anxiety. He gives rational excuse to make his wife believe that the situation happens because it must happen. The misfortune condition is not caused by him but the compulsion that makes that thing must happen. He means the sacrifices are needed when the bad thing happens to help him. His reason to blame his fault to his wife is needed to help him because they as husband and wife are in the same boat when it sinks the captain cannot be sacrificed. Borkman as the head of the family needs to save himself to revive his family and continues his career.

Those descriptions above shows that Mr. Borkman, because his fears of people of accusing him, tries to cover his fault with reasonable excuses. Those excuses make him have uncommon perception about life. As a common people, he wants to live a good life with Ella and reaches his goal as successful man. But his crime makes him builds defenses that change his way of thinking. His point of view about happiness, sacrifice, and purpose of life are different with other people perception because his defenses. The rationalization appears because he is cornered by questions from his wife and Ella, and then the answer is something logic that can be used to persuade them. He wants they understand about his action or permit that, but those ways of thinking appear because of the rationalization he made. It means that the defense also affected his way of thinking.

Conclusion

Finally, from this discussion, the defenses of Mr. Borkman are denial, rationalization, isolation, projection, displacement, and reaction formation. Those defenses show that denial is his way to deny the reality by making excuse of his crime and by isolating himself. Those become the reason why the bad relationship with his family and his surrounding appear. The isolation makes his wife and his son cannot get closed with him. The rationalization is just his excuse to run away from the problem. Projection, displacement and his reaction formation become his way to reduce his uncomfortable feeling but hurt other people. It means that his defense mechanisms bring bad effects to his surrounding including his own family. However, the defenses bring the good effects too because by using those defenses, Mr. Borkman can relieve his extreme feeling that make him feel uncomfortable. In short, the bad effects affect his relationship with his family and surrounding, then the good effects affect him only.

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