

**جذور عقدة النقص التي لا مفر منها
في رواية "العين الأكثر زرقة" لتوني موريسون**

**The Inescapable Roots of Inferiority
Complex in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye***

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المخلص

تدور حياة الكثير من الأشخاص الذين نلتقيهم يومياً حول ردود أفعالنا المباشرة سواء كانت مقصودة أو غير مقصودة، فالنقد والتعليقات التي تثير مشاعر سلبية لدى الشخص الذي نتحدث معه قد تقود الفرد إلى حالات نفسية سلبية، مما يؤثر بالتالي على حياته الخاصة وعواقب الأحداث المستقبلية. في هذا البحث يحاول الباحث إلقاء الضوء على حالات مشابهة تتعلق بما يعانيه الأفراد من عقدة نفسية تسمى النقص، وهو المصطلح الذي عرفه عالم النفس ألفريد أدلر لمناقشة حالات مشابهة من وبأنواع متعددة، ويتم تحليل نص رواية توني موريسون "العين الأكثر زرقة" على أساس الأسباب والتفاعلات والعواقب المتعلقة بالعقدة النفسية المذكورة أعلاه.

Abstract

The lives of many people we meet daily revolve around our direct reactions, whether intentional or otherwise. Criticisms and comments that provoke negative feelings in the person we are talking to may lead the individual to negative psychological states, which consequently affect his private life and the consequences of future events. In this research, the researcher attempts to shed light on similar cases that relate to what individuals suffer from a psychological complex called inferiority. This term was introduced by the psychologist Alfred Adler to discuss similar cases of various kinds. The text of Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, is analysed on the basis of causes, exacerbations, and consequences related to the psychological complex mentioned above.



Introduction:

It is a well-known fact that when an individual grows up in an environment, he is greatly affected by the events or facts that occur around him that affect the construction of his/her personality and the structure of his mentality. Undoubtedly, society has a real contact with the individual during his entire life, and the individual is more receptive to external influences when he/she is at the beginning of the life, and this is a pure evident in the children's influence on the surrounding family or community circumstances and factors on the basis of their future morals. Thus, the individual begins to be directly affected in the early stages of development, and what leads him to develop his personality is family containment and the ties of society that qualify him to be a human being compatible with the principles and norms offered by society.

The most prominent psychologists point out that the early stages of an individual's life constitute an important basis for building and developing his future personality, and it is no secret to everyone that the adolescence stage may have a large share of influence on multiple aspects related to personality and its structure. The social view of the individual or the class to which he/she belongs may affect his/her personality, this comes in addition to the way they deal with him/her.

In the fields of psychological studies, the inferiority complex refers to an intensive feeling of inadequacy for the individual, this often comes as a result of the belief inside the mind of a human being that he, in a way or another, is deficient, or basically representing an inferior person among others. According to the founder of the term and the notable character in the psychological studies, Alfred Adler, the inferiority complex is an influential feeling that may be a result of earlier stages, upbringing a child, for instance. The children can be reasonably affected by several things, such as the constant comparison to a sibling or another child that might be represented as a competitor, this unfavourable situation may lead to a gradual creation of the core seeds of inferiority complex. Certainly, physical limitations as well as mental ones are also considered as essential factors leading to the initiation of such state. Detailed in his works, Alfred Adler also focuses on the fact that the different experiences resulting from the social class distinction or gender discrimination may impose a vivid influence on the mentality of the child (Hoffman, 2020).

In general, the inferiority complex may be the reason behind a compensation desire inside the person who suffers from similar situations. As a matter of fact, this can be achieved in multiple operations that the psychological patterns employ, of course, the ego can be directly involved in order to support the individual's mind with sufficient ideas and excuses so as to think of compensation, of simply accomplishing a certain goal that causes a state of being inferior. Moreover, the inferiority complex can also



be concerned with the way that others look at the physical appearance of the individual, for example, the ones who can be seen as shorter people may have a state of what is called Napoleon Complex, which comes due to the fact that Napoleon is short.

The results of inferiority complex may also include the behaviour escalation, considerable examples can be seen in the attention-seeking as well as unrestrained competitiveness. Another negative result of inferiority complex which can be seen repetitively is the extensive aggressiveness, without any sign of doubt, this may occur in developed stages of the mentioned state.

As significantly defined in the Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology, in Adlerian psychology, a combination of an erroneous belief of an individual that they are unable to cope with some aspect of life because of a real or imagined physical or psychological deficiency, feelings of depression, and a cessation of coping efforts in that area (Matsumoto, 2009, p. 255).

Adler, after deep analysis and experiments, started to consider that a great number of neurotic symptoms may be correlated to the extreme overcompensations that may come to veil this gradually developed feeling of inferiority, in addition to the examples above, similar achievements that can be obtained by compensation are oratory stammering.

In fact, the reasons behind the generation of inferiority complex are numerous, some are personal related to the individual's state of mind, and several of the reasons can be related to the environmental influences. Taking into a real consideration that the most important and influential period, in which the implementation of the complex may start, is the early years of childhood. During the critical stage of childhood, the sufficient needed attention to the emotional state of the individual is mandatory due to its direct effect on the development of his/her future character. When an individual's feelings of inferiority are exacerbated by the essence of discouragement or failure, an inferiority complex gradually starts to develop. Those who face the risks of showing a developing inferiority complex can be seen as people who may possess lower levels of self-esteem. In addition, people in such situation may exhibit depression or high levels of anxiety symptoms. Children who are raised in unstable situations among their families where the parents are regarded to have unreasonable expectations are highly expected to be urged by their ego to develop an inferiority complex. Adler points out that "Everyone (...) has a feeling of inferiority. But the feeling of inferiority is not a disease; it is rather a stimulant to healthy, normal striving and development. It becomes a pathological condition only when the sense of inadequacy overwhelms the individual and, far from stimulating them to useful activity, makes them depressed and incapable of development" (Adler, 2020, p. 97).



According to the classification of the Adlerian psychology, inferiority complex is divided into two types, The classification depends on the stage of the situation that the individual passes through. Thus, distinction is made between the two levels as identifying them into a primary inferiority complex state and a secondary state of inferiority feeling. Speaking about the first type of the complex, the young child's initial experience of different negative influences such as weakness, helplessness, as well as dependency, this also comes with the indication to the lack of parental favourable reception and the sufficient affection, otherwise the reason may be due to a genuine physiological weakness, these mentioned factors are believed to be the source of a primary inferiority feeling. In this case, the primary for of the inferiority complex may be escalated by repeatedly shown comparisons to a brother/sister who can be referred to as a competitor, sometimes the comparison may include a competitor of romantic partners (Richard L. Gregory, Editor, 1987). On the other hand, the secondary feelings of inferiority are considered to be related to an adult individual's encountering the situation of being unqualified to achieve a subconscious, reassuring unrealistic final goal of his subjective stability among others, in addition to this, the individual fails to create his own valid opportunity to find success which leads to the real compensation for the experienced unfavoured feelings of inferiority.

There are several indicators that give features and characteristics of the symptoms of the deficiency complex, which can be defined as a primary psychological condition, and there is no doubt that there are symptoms through which similar cases can be diagnosed. Thus, the signs that indicate an individual's inferiority complex can be summarized by referring to them in this presented research. It is undeniable that one of the distinguishing signs that refer to the aforementioned psychological complex is the signs of low personal evaluation or self-esteeming. In addition, being affected by compliments, comments or criticism in the environment around the individual develops the condition to an advanced level, making it a permanent negative psychological state. Another thing that can be considered as an urging factor which leads to the inferiority complex is the persistent seeking for the appreciation, validation and the expressed admiration from the surrounding environment, similarly taken as groups or individuals. In the situations that can be related to social state, the individual is supposed to attempt escaping into an endless isolation which offers him safety from being criticised or dealt with inferiorly. In return to the compensation aspect, the individual may behave in certain ways that can identify his situation as an inferiority complex case. In this case the person may assault others aggressively and create the feeling of insecurity for them, which allows him to feel a short period of equality in order to compensate the internal feeling of inadequacy. And finally, the



individual's repetitive refusal to participate in the competitive situations that may have a reference to his state of being compared and evaluated by others (Plumptre & Block, 2021).

In the present study, the researcher is purposefully applying the Adlerian inferiority complex reading to the events and character of the protagonist in *The Bluest Eye*, written by Toni Morrison. Such theoretical background represents an informative resource to the body of literature and the areas of literary knowledge, in case relating them to the most recent works that reflect the contemporary problems in order to be discussed with the objective point of view. Thus, the researcher attempts to show the base of the inferiority complex that the novelist established in order to present a story that exemplify a certain area in the everyday life of several people who suffer from a specific form of physical mental, or social lack of acceptance among others.

Inferiority Complex in *The Bluest Eye*:

From the very beginning, the author tries to reflect an essential aspect of the inner psychological state experienced by the main character in the story, Pecola Breedlove. The title that Toni Morrison formulated to suit the content of the text, may refer to a direct formula for the individual's adherence to her own opinion through her desires and goals that she aspires to obtain, which is to have the most aesthetic eyes and that no one can compete with her in terms of blue colour. This concept is reinforced by the reference to the compensation principle that Alfred Adler focused on in his discussions of the advanced psychological state. It is also worth noting that the main character's last name, which describes the family in general, may have interpretive features. The name refers to the one who feeds love to children, the education full of love, which in turn ensures some psychological and family strengthening for the individual since the early childhood period.

Pecola spends her early life in scenes full of negativity, which is completely reflected in her innocent personality, who knows nothing but the acquisition and excessive reception of principles that are reflected in her private life and affected psychology. And based on what was discussed in the first section of this research, the early periods, as the psychologist Alfred Adler adopted, that the first periods of a person's life are affected by the surrounding direct environmental factors related to society, family and friends. Through the first parts of the text, the reader feels that the first and last victim is this child who suffers from compelling family circumstances. The girl who lives in a primitive camp after her family's house was burned down, suffers from a lack of family adequacy to be firmly built that creates a suitable environment for her to develop positively and build a suitable personality that coexists with the environment. There is no doubt that the moral and real devastation that befalls the family home



forms a major obstacle that Pecola faces during her childhood period, as it prevents her from having a normal personality who adapts and adopts a positive lifestyle. The father suffers from excessive drinking of alcohol and has physical and sexual persecution towards individuals, and on the other hand, the mother suffers from disorders regarding personal life that make her ignorant of how to deal with society and the family. This comes in addition to the physical and verbal fighting between the parents that urges the feelings of anxiety inside the child who encounters severe problems concerning the family stability.

In addition to the family environment and the ramifications that Pecola encounters at home, she suffers from frequent situations that she faces daily in the school from those living in the neighbouring areas. Everyone always describes her as ugly, which causes her to have a negative reaction towards society. This sense of uneasiness and a complete lack of inclusion in the family is reinforced whenever Pecola feels that she must possess things that make her like others or have some kind of equality with them.

These causes have been put forward and referred to by the author, and they can quickly control the mind of the individual if there are no real treatments for the side effects that result from the situation in which the psychological state of the unintelligent child, Pecola, is going through. The symptoms of the psychological complex on Pecola appear continuously and are almost permanent. This leads to inconsistencies with what the society that surrounds the main character sees. After Pecola gradually becomes a victim because of her father's rape, according to what is mentioned in the novel, the little girl becomes pregnant with a child who dies after being born prematurely due to the bad conditions of the novel's victim. This is one of the reasons that promptly push for the negative development in the psychological state, which faces many accumulations that contribute to the continuous escalation of the psychological complex. In one of the advanced stages in the novel, Pecola starts to possess different internal thoughts and conflicts that contradict with each other in order to show the reader the pathological state in which the main character in the novel is progressing. It is also clear that the child has started to maintain ideas that are different from reality and what people see in her physical appearance. The negative psychological development taking place with Pecola, in these circumstances, makes her mentality closer to madness than the constant healthy recovery. Due to the outcomes of the researches made in different sectors with the certain numbers of people in mental health treatments, the inferiority complex is sometimes supposed to overlap inside the minds of patients with other examples of disorder, for instance the specific symptoms of a gradual schizophrenia, the disorders concerned with the mood, as well as personal psychological disorders. Concerning



this issue, Adler identifies the inferiority complex state as an indicator that contribute to assessing various factors to urge the individual's tendency into different unhealthy childhood behaviours (Adler, 1930).

Oftentimes, after being subjected to various types of psychological and physical persecution, Pecola tries to convince her mind, by the attempt of ego, that she has achieved her most significant expectation in life by which she may attain an ensuring that she can be one of the accepted people in society. In Pecola's imagination, finally, this can be obtained without resorting to a feeling compensation to the factual lack of her physical appearance and the feeling of missing an essential equality with others. Pecola's situation ends tragically with the madness state, this comes as a result of unintelligent and undeveloped defence mechanisms of the ego that an innocent child's mind cannot operate well. In the aftermath, the narrator of the final stage of the novel, Claudia, refers to an influential and essential phenomenon concerning the insanity state that Pecola passes through. The narrator attempts to offer a reasonable lamentation to Pecola's character. This occurs when Claudia describes the whole social sectors and members, including herself, have used this little child as a victim in order to achieve their aspect of being happier and more accepted. Again, by the deep and asserted depiction of this final stage of narration, the novelist is referring to the fact that a human being may be urged to act aggressively in order to compensate the deficiency state that he lives in.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, and what has been discussed through the presented research, the aforementioned text was read according to the terms discussed by Alfred Adler in his research that deals with the inferiority complex and the inferior dealings by the surrounding environment towards the individual. Through the aforementioned reading, the novel was discussed in a simplified manner, and the main events and circumstances that contributed to the emergence of the complex psychological state of the main character in the novel were addressed. It is also clear that society has a direct influence in exacerbating the negative situation that Pecola is experiencing. The narration that was specifically included in the novel fits with the author's goal, as she may want to convey the idea that everyone participated in the unfair process that led the little girl to loss and continuous deterioration. The employment that took place with regard to the storytelling can also be explained as an intellectual consensus and agreed that the cases that resemble this child must be a victim of what is going on behind the walls of the house or what the individual encounters in his daily life while dealing with different groups of society.



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