

Movie Review - Psychological Standpoint

‘The Bucket List’

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BASIC MOVIE PLOT

Corporate billionaire Edward Cole and working class mechanic Carter Chambers have nothing in common except for their terminal illnesses. While sharing a hospital room together, they decide to leave it and do all the things they have ever wanted to do before they die according to their bucket list. In the process, both of them heal each other, become unlikely friends, and ultimately find joy in life.

ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE MOVIE

Edward Cole (Jack Nicholson)

The character showed traits of adjustment issues with both anxiety and depressive features. He had never fallen sick and thus when he was brought to the hospital he showed a lot of anger and frustration towards the IV tubes attached to him, also at the time when his head was shaved for his surgery. After he got to know that he has cancer and only few months to a year maximum to survive, he reflected the depression traits along with the thought of suicide. Also it’s found that a majority of the patients who are diagnosed with terminal illness like cancer show the traits of anxiety and depression. This character also shows classic traits of Schizoid Personality. The character of Edward Cole reflected a pervasive pattern of detachment from social relationships and a restricted range of expression of emotions in interpersonal settings. He did not enjoy close relationships, including being a part of the family, always choose solitary activities, appeared indifferent to the praise or criticism of others, showed coldness, detachment, or flattened affectivity.

This character also showed some traits of Borderline Personality as well. He had a number of unstable interpersonal relationships (in the movie he said that he was interested in marriage but also at times used to like to stay single, thus leading to unstable marriages), he had got divorced 4 times. He did not share good relationship with his own daughter. He had chronic feelings of emptiness, inappropriate anger and difficulty controlling anger, showed impulsivity at spending, sex and binge eating. This character also shows some issues that can be related to the psychosocial stages of Erik Erikson. There are 8 psychosocial stages given by Erik Erikson, and it’s found that if the needs of a particular stage are not met well it can lead to internal crisis that can either cause psychosocial regression or growth and development of specific virtues. There were two stages that seem to be not met well by this character. They are as follows:

PSYCHOSOCIAL STAGE	ASSOCIATED VIRTUE	RELATED FORMS OF PSYCHOPATHOLOGY
Trust versus Mistrust	Psychosis	Addictions and Depression
Intimacy versus Isolation	Love	Schizoid personality disorder

Carter Chambers (Morgan Freeman)

He was a mechanic and an amateur historian intellect. He also reflected some traits of anxiety and depression, which is a common trait to find among the terminally ill cancer patients. Thus cancer as an illness has found to have high comorbidity with anxiety and depression. He showed death anxiety. Sigmund Freud hypothesized that people express a fear of death, called thanatophobia. He saw this as a disguise for a deeper source of concern. It was not actually death that people feared, because in Freud's view nobody believes in his or her own death. The unconscious does not deal with the passage of time or with negations, which does not calculate amount of time left in one's life. Furthermore, that which one does fear cannot be death itself, because one has never died. People, who express death-related fears, actually are trying to deal with unresolved childhood conflicts that they cannot come to terms with or express emotion towards. The name Thanatophobia is made from the Greek figure of death known as Thanatos.

Wisdom: Ego integrity vs. despair

Developmental Psychologist, Erik Erikson, formulated the psychosocial theory that explained that people progress through a series of crises as they grow older. The theory also envelops the concept that once an individual reaches the latest stages of life, they reach the level he titled as "ego integrity". Ego Integrity is when one comes to terms with his or her life and accepts it. It was also suggested that when a person reaches the stage of late adulthood he or she becomes involved in a thorough overview of his or her life to date. When one can find meaning or purpose in his or her life, he or she has reached the integrity stage. In opposition, when an individual views his or her life as a series of failed and missed opportunities, then he or she do not reach the ego integrity stage. Elders that have attained this stage of ego integrity are believed to exhibit less of an influence from death anxiety.

Other theories on death anxiety were introduced in the late part of the twentieth century. The existential approach, with theorists such as Rollo May and Victor Franklin, views an individual's personality as being governed by the continuous choices and decisions in relation to the realities of life and death. In the movie he was preparing a bucket list and the moment he came to know that he has very few months to survive, he threw away the list as he thought that he does not have the means to fulfill any of his wishes and also because he does not have much time. This movie is worth a watch for the fact it speaks about many people who have an unhappy life and yet crave for a resolution of all their problems before their death but may or may not have the courage to go and seek the same.