



Analysis of Louis's Growth in *The Trumpet of the Swan*: Based on the Theory of Cognitive Development

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Abstract

The Trumpet of the Swan is a famous book written by American essayist E·B·White. It tells the story of a trumpeter swan, Louis, who was born without a voice. Fighting against his fate, Louis overcame varieties of difficulties and finally succeeded by learning to play a trumpet. The initiation theme in the novels plays a positive role in teenagers' cognitive development. Based on Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, this paper specifically analyzes Louis's growing experience according to his intellectual cognition, emotional cognition, self-cognition, social cognition and moral cognition to enrich its study and help readers better understand the novel.

Key words: *The Trumpet of the Swan*; Louis; Growth; The theory of cognitive development

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INTRODUCTION

The Trumpet of the Swan is a famous book written by American writer E·B·White. It tells an interesting story of

a trumpeter swan, Louis, who was born without a voice but got over varieties of difficulties by learning to play a trumpet. White is well known for his three children's literature works.

The Trumpet of the Swan is popular both in China and abroad. At abroad, scholars and researchers has studied its theme, educational function and writing style. Lots of scholars focus on the study of different themes in the novel. The famous American John Updike has pointed out its initiation theme. He thinks it gives children a wonderful story about growing-up (Updike, 1970). As to the ecological theme, the writer Michael Simms was moved by the harmony between man and Nature (Simms, 2011, p.17); attracted by the charm of trumpeter swan, John R Nelson develops a particular interest in birds (Nelson, 2014, p.33). The educational function is also studied. Haffner (2001, p.79) holds that *The Trumpet of the Swan* is a classical work of children's literature and its diverting plots aroused students' interest in writing. Meanwhile, Anita Merina deems that we can't afford to miss it because it can inspire us to dream and work hard (Merina, 2001, p.24). Finally, the study of writing style is also popular. Crew (1992, p.59) finds the story full of wisdom and humor; Mayo (2015, p.31) maintains the book is very suitable for children because it consists of simple vocabulary and rich storyline. Cadden (2012, p.349) specially studies the ending part of the story and compares with White's other works.

Meanwhile, Chinese scholars and researchers have studied its theme, writing skills and animal images, etc.. Dream and endeavor are the two themes of their study. Fairy tale writer and translator, Ren (2010) said it is a story about a disabled trumpeter swan fighting against his fate when he was translating this book. Song (2010) figured out that a man with dream and courage will succeed. The animal image in the book has also aroused scholars' interest. Sun (2011) are interested in the animals in White's novels and he thinks they are the metaphor of human beings.

Both scholars and researchers in China and abroad take the theme into consideration. They have pointed out its themes of dream and ecology. Then they became interested in White's writing style and skills. And others analyze the story from the viewpoint of cognitive linguistics and stylistics. Through the tendency of its researches, we can infer that *The Trumpet of the Swan* is attracting more and more attention. To study this book from the psychological point of view is not paid great attention nowadays. It is necessary to combine psychological study with the initiation theory, attaching a dynamic perspective to view the swan Louis's growth.

1. THE INITIATION STORY AND THE TRUMPET OF THE SWAN

Initiation story is the novel sharing the experience of characters' growth from innocence to maturity. Many researchers have studied initiation story from its origin, definition and features. This paper takes *The Trumpet of the Swan* as an initiation story and gives reasons.

1.1 The Origin of Initiation Story

Initiation story is the novel about people's growth and maturity. It reflects the growing and changing process of characters from individual to society, from innocence to experience in thoughts. Most researchers believe that it originated in the second half of the eighteenth century in Germany as "Bildungsroman" which is generally considered the most significant German contribution to the novel genre (Sun, 2014, p.74).

The term "initiation story" began to be used in American literature in the 1940s. With the great development of American industry, many adolescents were not ready for the change, thus they faced a variety of growth problems which provided vivid materials for the initiation story and resulted in the boom of initiation story in America in the late of 19th century (Yang, 2014, p.224). For example, Mark Twain's *The Adventure of Tom Sawyer* (1879) and *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* (1844) are regarded as the sign of the maturity of initiation story in America.

1.2 The Definition of Initiation Story

Initiation story, according to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, is a novel about the moral and psychological growth of the main character. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Abrams points out that

the subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world. (Abrams, 2004, p.193)

Based on several former critical definitions about this genre, Mordecai Marcus made a further study and summarized them into two kinds:

One kind is that it describes the initiation as the knowing process of the adolescent towards the outside world; and another one is that it interprets initiation as the process of knowing self-identity and value, and also the process of adjusting the relationship between self and the society (Marcus, 1969, p.32).

Finally he gave initiation story an effective definition in his work, *What Is an Initiation Story*, that

young protagonist experiencing a significant change of knowledge about the world or self, or a change of character, or of both, and this change must lead him towards an adult world. It may or may not contain some form of ritual, but it should give some evidence that the change is at least likely to have permanent effect. (Marcus, 1969, p.222)

1.3 The Features of Initiation Story

Normally speaking, initiation story usually indicates that the main character undergoes many difficult and even life changing events, and often he/she gains maturity from the experiences. Although initiation story has many different topics and characteristics, Professor Rui Yuping, in *A Study of American Initiation Story*, has listed several distinguished features. Firstly, the story of the character should conclude his/her growing process. Secondly, the content of the novel should embrace the character's personal experiences. Secondly, the character usually has a "spiritual journey" from innocence to recognition of life and identity. Lastly, initiation story usually ends with self-realization after the character experience difficulties and hardships.

1.4 *The Trumpet of the Swan* as an Initiation Story

The Trumpet of the Swan, written by E. B. White, is a children's novel. It tells the story of Louis, a trumpeter swan born without a voice and trying to overcome it by learning to play a trumpet.

At the very beginning, this novel begins with a little boy, Sam Beaver, who is very friendly with birds. He often had trip camping in Canada with his father. He was a boy loving adventure and he found a little pond near their camp. In the little pond, there was a trumpeter swan laying eggs. One day, a red fox appeared and tried to attack the swan. Sam helped the swan out of the trouble. They knew each other in this way. In a peaceful warm afternoon, five cygnets were welcomed to the world, and Louis was the youngest. Louis was adept in swimming and flying. His feet were strong and his wings were full of strength. However, he was dumb. It is ridiculous that a trumpeter swan can't even make a sound. Louis tried many ways to make up for it. He learned to read and write, which turned out to be no use for birds. At the same time, Louis fell in love for a swan named Serena, but he had no way to express his love. Finally, his father got a trumpet for him. Louis spared no efforts to practice playing trumpet. Nevertheless, the trumpet hasn't been paid. And it became a haunting trouble for him. Therefore, Louis made up his mind to earn

enough money to pay for the trumpet. He worked for Camp Kookooskoos, a Boatman and a nightclub. He has been to Canada, Boston and Philadelphia. And he met his beloved when he stayed at the Philadelphia Zoo. In the zoo, Louis gained Serena's love and protected her from being pinioned by the headman. After all these things, Louis earned a large amount of money to pay back the storekeeper. He earned freedom back and got a totally new life. By redemption of the debt, Louis felt a great relief. With the trumpet, Louis took a journey which refers to the psychological and emotional process from youth to adult. After he had been tested by crisis and difficulties, Louis finally found the best place for his unique talent.

Based on the definition and features of the initiation story, we can say that *The Trumpet of the Swan* touches upon the theme of one's growth. First of all, in the novel, the author describes a vivid life of Louis from his childhood to his adult life, which covers Louis's growth process. Secondly, the content of this novel involved Louis's personal experiences. In addition, initiation story usually has a common pattern: innocence—temptation—leaving home—confusion—ordeal—loss of innocence—epiphany—recognition of life and identity (Rui, 2004, p.53). Although *The Trumpet of the Swan* doesn't include all of them, it still follows the pattern. Lastly, this novel ends with Louis's self-realization and his new happy life. Thus, *The Trumpet of the Swan* is undoubtedly a typical initiation story.

2. THE THEORY OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

In this part, this paper will firstly give a brief introduction to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget explains some different cognitive development in different growing stages. Therefore, this paper will generally tell people's cognitive growing process in the four cognitive stages.

2.1 An Overview of the Theory of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget is a clinical psychologist known for his pioneering work in child development. According to Ernst Von Glasersfeld, Jean Piaget was "the great pioneer of the constructivist theory of knowing" (Glasersfeld, 1990, p.22). Jean Piaget placed great importance on the education of children. As the Director of the International Bureau of Education, he declared in 1934 that only education is capable of saving our societies from possible collapse, whether violent, or gradual. He holds that "the principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done" (Piaget, 1953, p.24).

He considered cognitive structures development as a differentiation of biological regulations. When his entire

theory first became known—the theory in itself being based on a structuralist and a cognitivist approach—it was an outstanding and exciting development in regards to the psychological community at that time (Howard, 1981, p.49).

2.2 Different Stages of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget divided people's cognitive development into four stages. In each stage, the children will have different cognitive development. They are described in Piaget's theory as:

2.2.1 Sensorimotor Stage

During the sensorimotor stage, the children will experience the world through movement and their five senses. Children are extremely egocentric, meaning they cannot perceive the world from others' viewpoints. In this stage, Piaget believed that the process of thinking and the intellectual development could be regarded as an extension of the biological process of the evolutionary adaptation of the species (Piaget, 1953, p.87). They progressively construct knowledge and understanding of the world by coordinating experiences with physical interactions (Zhang, 2007, p.87). Children gain knowledge of the world from what they see and what they are taught. They progress from reflexive, instinctual action at birth to the beginning of symbolic thought.

2.2.2 Pre-Operational Stage

During the pre-operational stage of cognitive development, Piaget noted that children tend to share their feelings and thoughts with others. "The pre-operational stage is sparse and logically inadequate in regard to mental operations, but they are able to understand, represent and remember feelings and thoughts (Piaget, 2000, p.246)." As they are in their adolescence, they begin to notice the difference between the opposite sex and them and perhaps they will fall in love for somebody. That is what we call puppy love or young love. With time going by, their understanding about love will change little by little. By the time when they reach the deep meaning of love, they are getting mature in emotional cognition (Arnett, 2013, p.64). Besides, when they are mature in emotional cognition, they can control their emotions and actions.

2.2.3 Concrete Operational Stage

During concrete operational stage, people can conserve and think logically. Their thought processes become more mature and "adult like". They start solving problems in a more logical fashion. At this stage, people undergo a transition where they rediscover themselves (Santrock, 2008, p.221). The heightened self-consciousness in them is reflected in their sense of personal uniqueness and invincibility. They begin to learn their "true identity" and find the best place for their ability. They gain the awareness of their responsibility. They get rid of their innocence and get close to maturity.

2.2.4 Formal Operational Stage

During formal operational stage, people have a great development in their social cognition and moral cognition. People's social experience governs the way that people think about social matters. They also are changing cognitively by the way that they think about social matters (Santrock, 2008, p.223). In the formal operational stage, people display more skills oriented towards problem solving, often in multiple steps (Piaget, 2000, p.252). At this stage, people obtain the sense of right and wrong. They behave themselves according to the principles and values.

3. LOUIS'S COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, every child has different cognitive development at different stages of cognitive development. In this part, this paper is going to analyze Louis's development of intellectual cognition in sensorimotor stage, emotional cognition in pre-operational stage, self-cognition in concrete operational stage and social cognition and moral cognition in formal operational stage. By analyzing Louis's cognitive development, this paper will help understand the process of Louis's initiation.

3.1 Sensorimotor Stage: Intellectual Cognition

According to psychologist David Wechsler, intelligence is defined as the aggregate or global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment. And Oxford Dictionary of Psychology maintains intelligence is a kind of cognitive ability (Colman, 2006, p.381). The development of intelligence cognition plays a significant role in children's growth. Jean Piaget holds that there is a durable development of children's intelligence cognition. First of all, children are born with "the ability to carry on different thinking"; secondly, children will generally gain "the power of good responses from the point of view of truth or fact" through experience; afterwards, they can obtain "the capacity to inhibit an instinctive adjustment" (Piaget, 1972, p.53).

3.1.1 The Ability to Carry on Different Thinking

After Louis was born, the first thing he was going to learn was swimming. Following the mother swan, Louis "gazed for a second at the water, then tottered forward, gave a jump, and was afloat" (White, 2007, p.223). As a baby, he was curious about everything around him and he had the bravery to take a try. Therefore, when his parents told him to do it, he just did it with no hesitation. With time going by, Louis gradually grew up and he began to have his own thinking. When the summer was drawing to a close, Louis was old enough to learn flying. After the father swan's announcement that they would leave and off to Montana, Louis wanted to ask his father how they would learn to fly and how they would find Montana even they learned

to fly. He began to worry about getting lost. The father taught them the three parts of flying—takeoff, ascent and levelling-off. Although Louis listened to his father with great attention, the idea of flying still frightened him. He began to wonder whether he can learn flying well. And he was more nervous than ever before when the father swan was making a short exhibition flight. He wondered if he could really do it.

Suppose I fail! Then the others will fly away, and I will be left here all alone on this deserted pond, with winter approaching, with no father, no mother, no sisters, no brothers, and no food to eat when the pond freezes over. I will die of starvation. I'm scared. (White, 2007, p.241)

Louis was very upset, but he was always brave enough to try. Fortunately, he turned out to be the first of the young cygnets to become airborne, ahead of all his brothers and sisters. It was a tremendous relief and splendid sensation for him. He never knew flying could be such fun. "This is great. This is sensational. This is superb" (White, 2007, p.242).

Making a comparison between the two learning experience, we can easily find that Louis has built up his own thinking. From "nothing to it" to wondering, Louis has an obvious development of intellectual cognition. And he has had the ability of carrying on different ways of thinking.

3.1.2 The Power of Good Responses

After Louis realized that he was dumb, he had an idea. He decided that since he was unable to use his voice, he should learn to read and write. "If I'm defective in one respect, I should try and develop myself along other lines" (White, 2007, p.245). With great endeavor, he finally found Sam and thanks to Sam's help, he went to school successfully. In the school, Mrs. Hammerbotham taught him to read and write. The idea of communication reflects Louis's development of intelligence cognition. Communication is absolutely indispensable in our life. Through communication, we can express our opinions, share our feelings and make better understanding.

A year and a half went by, Louis came back with a small slate and white chalk pencil hanging by a cord around his neck. And he couldn't wait to show what he had learned, so he wrote "Hi, there!" on the slate in haste. However, none of his members of family could understand what he had written. His attempt to greet his family was a failure. He felt keenly disappointed. One day, he saw a grain man and succeeded in communicating with him. Louis "was overjoyed to be carrying on a conversation with a stranger" (White, 2007, p.262). Then he realized that even though the slate was of no help to other birds, it was going to be a help with people. Louis made his mind that he would always carry them with him, no matter where he went in the world. Louis eventually managed to communicate with others, which shows that he has been capable of make good responses from the point view of truth.

3.1.3 The Capacity to Inhibit an Instinctive Adjustment

Since the slate and chalk pencil didn't work for birds, the parents decided to help. The father swan flew to Billings and got a trumpet for Louis. Louis was delighted with the new trumpet. He learned to play the trumpet by himself. At first, he tried to get it to make a noise. He tried several different positions, bending his neck and blowing. No sound came out. But then Louis discovered that, by holding his tongue in a certain way, he could get the trumpet to emit a small gasping sound. It was very difficult. So Louis turned to Sam Beaver again. Sam bought a book of trumpet calls and read the instructions to Louis. Louis practiced the calls every afternoon and pretty soon he was good at reveille, mess call and taps. Because Louis had learned reading, writing and the trumpet, he could communicate with both human beings and birds. We can say that Louis make the best of his language tools. And also his living in nature and human society shows that Louis could adjust himself well in different environments.

By Louis's rich learning experiences, we can draw a conclusion that Louis grew up with the durable development of his intelligence cognition. He was skilled in learning new things. And he can make good responses. Also, he has the capacity to inhabit an instinctive adjustment.

3.2 Pre-Operational Stage: Emotional Cognition

Emotion, in everyday speech, is any relatively brief conscious experience characterized by intense mental activity and a high degree of pleasure or displeasure (Schacter, 2011, p.310). It can be any short-term evaluative, affective, intentional, psychological state, including happiness, sadness, disgust, and other inner feelings. Feelings are best understood as a subjective representation of emotions, private to the individual experiencing them. And since we are born, the earliest emotions we show are also our feelings.

Since Louis was born, we can see that Louis showed his feelings frequently. He was very happy when he first met Sam and he gave one of Sam's shoelaces a pull as a greeting; he was a little sad when they were going to leave their birth place; he was scared when he didn't know whether he could learn flying well. Examples can be seen throughout the text.

For inner feelings are rather common and understandable, this paper is going to put more emphasis on love and self-control.

3.2.1 Love

Love is a special kind of emotions. "As the eternal theme of human society, love is not only important in the growth and development process of a person, but also a required course of youth life." (Zhou, 2011) Many thinkers, philosophers, writers and psychologists, at all times and in all countries, have explored, described, singed love.

Love can be divided into different types. It can be a simple pleasure. It can also be a virtue representing human kindness. Here, it refers to the "emotion of a strong attraction and personal attachment" (Colman, 2006, p.246).

Firstly, it comes to puppy love. For birds, spring is the time to find a mate. The males begin to look for their female partners. They show off themselves in front of them. The females begin to notice the males, too, but they pretend they are not noticing anything at all. They act very coy just like what human beings do in their adolescence. Louis fell in love for Serena. Whenever he swam past her, he could feel his heart beat faster, and his mind was full of thoughts of love and desire. He thought he had never seen such a beautiful young female swan. He wished he could do something to attract her attention. He wanted her for his mate but was unable to hell her so because he couldn't make a sound. He swam in circles around her and pumped his neck up and down to prove he could hold his breath longer than any other bird. One day, he even wrote "I love you!" on the slate although he already knew Serena couldn't understand it. It is like human beings who do stupid things for love.

With the love for Serena, Louis was determined to learn to play the trumpet no matter how difficult it was. In our life, love can be a kind of incentive, encouraging us to work harder and keep on pursuit. In this way, love helps our development of emotional cognition as well as the maturity of our inner world.

With growing, we realize what is mature love. When Louis stayed at the Philadelphia Zoo, he found Serena on the Bird Lake. Serena had been caught by the fierce storm and blown all the way across America. Louis was tempted to rush right over at the first sight. But he were not whom he used to be. He became mature. He thought, "she was in no condition at the moment to perceive the depth of my affection and the extent of my love" (White, 2007, p.344). That night, Louis stayed awake, keeping watch, at a sight distance from his beloved. In next two days, Serena felt distinctly better, being stately and graceful again. Louis had made a plan that he would awaken Serena with his trumpet and music to impress her with the intensity of his desire and the strength of his devotion just at the daylight. Louis played the song which he wrote for Serena. His plan worked. Serena succumbed completely to this charmer, this handsome musician, this talented cob.

Nevertheless, the news of Serena's arrival had finally reached the Head Man in Charge of Birds. He gave an order to his keepers that Serena should be pinioned immediately in case she would get away. Louis was extremely angry. He would not let anybody hurt his lover. He fought against the keepers and went to the office of the headman to make a negotiation. The headman insisted on pinioning Serena. Louis explained his reasons and expressed his love for Serena and freedom. And he also wrote a letter to ask Sam for help. With the efforts

of Louis and Sam, the headman finally agreed Louis to take Serena away. From simply admiring to take the responsibility to protect Serena, Louis's love has been mature.

3.2.2 Self-Control

Self-control, an aspect of inhibitory control, "is the ability to control one's emotions and behavior in the face of temptations and impulses. As an executive function, self-control is a cognitive process that is necessary for regulating one's behavior in order to achieve goals" (Timpano & Schmidt, 2013, p.13).

On the one hand, control in emotions is an important part of self-control. Louis was getting famous in Boston and a man called Abe Lucas introduced him to a nightclub in Philadelphia. Louis accepted the offer. He flew to the Philadelphia Zoo to meet Mr. Lucas. At night, Louis went to work. His place of employment was a nightclub of great renown, across the river—a place of high fashion and low prices, a jumpy joint. Louis earned a great amount of money during the next ten weeks. However, Louis did not like the job at all. The nightclub was big and crowded and noisy. Everyone seemed to be talking too loudly, eating too much, and drinking too much. Actually, Louis prefers to go to sleep at sundown. He does not want to stay up half the night entertaining people. Though Louis didn't like his new job, he chose to keep working for he needed to make money to pay for his trumpet.

On the other hand, it is very important to have control in one's actions. Another example is that Louis tried to have a discussion when there was disagreement. Louis was very angry when he noticed the headman was going to pinion Serena. He beat the two keepers for Serena needed his protection without any delay. Then he tried to hold back his anger and persuade the headman. He tried to negotiate. Under such circumstance, he could just fly away with Serena and no one could catch them. In fact, he tried his best to control his tempter and actions. He has learned deal with problems, in peaceful ways.

Based on the two examples, we can claim that Louis has had the ability of self-control, which means he can control both his emotions and behaviors. He thinks rationally, act properly. And at the same time, he can solve many problems by his own.

3.3 Concrete Operational Stage: Self-Cognition

The development of self-cognition is the process from dependence to independence, from self-absence to self-realization. In this process, the character firstly will realize his self-absence. Then, by some experiences, he will have a new recognition of his identity. Finally, the character will fulfill his self-realization through making great efforts to overcome weaknesses.

3.3.1 From Dependence to Independence

There are two main aspects of independence, that is, financially independence and spiritually independence.

The psychologist D. W. Winnicott points out that every child is born to depend on his parents. "When the child grows up, he will no longer depend on his parents and become all independent individual." (Winnicott, 1995, p.272) When Louis was a child, he was well protected by his parents. The mother taught him to swim and the father taught him flying. Louis flew here and there following his parents. What's more, the father flew to Billings and got a trumpet for Louis riskily. After Louis accepted his speech defect and decided to make up for it, he depended more on his human friend, Sam. Sam helped him dealing with many problems. He made it possible for Louis to go to school and work for the camp. And he even did a "surgery" for Louis.

Louis took Sam's advice to go to Boston. When he arrived at Boston, he became more independent. He managed to get jobs and earned a large sum of money. Since Louis got jobs and he can support himself by his own, we can infer that Louis has achieved his financial independence. At the same time, Louis has been aware of how to solve different kinds of problems on his own. He gained Serena's love and protected his beloved from any hurt on his own. In this way, Louis has achieved his spiritual independence.

3.3.2 From Self-Absence to Self-Realization

"Self-absence refers to someone's lacking of capacity for introspection and the ability to recognize oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals. It is an absence of cognitive or descriptive component of one's self." (Bong & Clark, 1999, p.143) In other words, self-absence is someone's lacking of self-recognition because of his weaknesses or something else. In this book, it means Louis's speech defect.

"He opened his mouth but didn't say a thing. He made an effort to ay beep, but no sound came." (White, 2007, p.227) It is the first description of Louis's defect. However, at that time, Louis was too young to know it. The mother swan realized that Louis never said a word some time later. She discussed with the father swan and the father decided to test Louis to make certain whether he could make a sound or not. When the father wanted to talk privately with Louis, Louis still didn't know what happened to him. Asked to say a word, Louis "took a deep breath, opened his mouth, and let the air out" (White, 2007, p.232), but there wasn't a sound. Louis became very upset and tried it again and again, but it was no use. Louis felt like crying when his father claimed that he was dumb. Not until that time did Louis realize that he was different from his brothers and sisters. He felt frightened at being different. He couldn't understand why he had come into the world without a voice. He thought fate was cruel to him.

Since then, Louis had the awareness that he had a speech defect and he was worried about it. He could not shout while he was playing water games, which lost half

the fun of these games; he could not ask any questions like others, which dissatisfied his curiosity; he was afraid whether a swan could fly if he had no voice and couldn't say ko-hoh. Louis gained some confidence until he learned to fly. "I may be defective, but at least I can fly" (White, 2007, p.243) he thought. He gradually accepted his speech defect and came up some ways to make up for his defect.

At the beginning, he went to school to learn reading and writing. However, it was only useful for communicating with humans. Therefore, he turned to trumpet. The trumpet was of great help. With the trumpet, he would never be dumb any more. By learning to play trumpet, he became a real musician. He could play all sorts of music. He got jobs and earned money. And the most important thing for him was that Serena was attracted by his music and fell in love with him. With the trumpet, Louis fulfilled a variety of achievements. At the end of the story, Louis and Serena had their new life, happily together.

3.4 Formal Operational Stage: Social Cognition and Moral Cognition

During formal operational stage, people have great development in their social cognition and moral cognition. They begin to pay much attention to all kinds of social matters such as daily works, relationships and so on. People hope they can handle everyday social matters in a perfect way. Meanwhile, they gain the awareness of moral principles and values which they are asked to stick to.

3.4.1 Social Cognition

Social cognition is the cognitive activity that accompanies and mediates social behavior, including the acquisition of information about the social environment, the organization and transformation of this information in memory, and its effects on social behavior (Colman, 2006, p.705). People who have a high level of social cognition have "the capacity to effectively navigate and negotiate complex social relationships and environments" (Honeywill, 2015, p.73).

Louis liked company, and he already had many friends on the lakes. They were many kinds of water birds: swans, geese, ducks and other waterfowl. Louis was greatly admired for his ability as a swimmer. He liked to compete with other cygnets to see who could swim underwater the greatest distance and stay down the longest. The lakes they lived were like small communities. He loved his friends and he was eager for talking with them, so he decided to visit Sam and get help from him.

School is a scaled down version of society. In the school, Louis was introduced to Mrs.Hammerbotham and other students. He studied reading and writing and other knowledge. Mrs. Hammerbotham and his classmates were curious about him and they all were friendly to him. After his school days, Louis got his first job in his life—serving as a counselor for Camp Kookooskoos. When Mr. Brickle

introduced him to other counselors and the children, "Louis was embarrassed but he came forward and bowed. Then he raised his trumpet to his mouth and blew a long ko... Louis bowed again" (White, 2007, p.287). He was gentle and in good manners. In the camp, Louis often played volleyball with the children. And the children were very glad to be his teammates. He saved a drowning child and all the people were proud of him.

Louis walked into the real society when he went to Boston alone. He passed the tryout and got a job. His employer—a Boatman offered him a night in Ritz Hotel. Louis knew how to take an elevator, call service and he even knew to tip the waiter. Besides, he knew how to mail a letter and answer the phone. After his work in Boston was over, he went to Philadelphia. In order to earn the right to remain free in the zoo and not have a wing clipped, Louis kept his promise to give a concert for the citizens on Sundays. And he learned to make a discussion with the headman when there was disagreement between them.

According to Louis's social experiences, we can infer that he has a high level of social cognition. From the nature to school then to the real society, Louis has the ability to adjust his surroundings. He is good at making friends and he always leaves a good impression on people. When he is in trouble, he turns to Sam for help, which is also an important part of social life. Moreover, when he has disagreement or conflict with others, he knows he should negotiate with people. That is to say, he is very capable of handling social relationships. In a word, social cognition has been developed as Louis grew older.

3.4.2 Moral Cognition

Moral development refers to the formation and maturation of a sense of right and wrong in children in the normal course of cognitive development (Colman, 2006, p.476).

Louis has his own judgment in deciding what is right. We have mentioned that Louis had worked as a counselor for Camp Kookooskoos. And there was a boy named Applegate Skinner in the camp. Applegate claimed many times that he had never liked birds, making Louis feel embarrassed. One afternoon during rest period, the boys in Applegate's tent began teasing him about his name. Applegate was sore and he slid a canoe into the water and paddled out into the lake without saying anything to anybody. However, Applegate had no business taking a canoe out alone. Neither had he passed his swimming test nor his canoe test. When he was a quarter of a mile from shore, in deep water, the wind grew stronger and the waves got higher. Applegate lost his balance and the canoe tipped over. He found himself in the water, desperately screaming for help. All counselors heard him and they immediately took rescue operation, but they were too far away to rescue Applegate in time. Louis also heard him. "Dropping his slate and his chalk pencil and his trumpet, Louis splashed into the water and struck out,

beating his wings and kicking with his great webbed feet” (White, 2007, p.298). In a moment, he had passed all the boats and reached Applegate. He dove quickly, pointed his long neck between Applegate’s legs, and then came to the surface with Applegate sitting on his back. Louis was rewarded the Lifesaving Medal for saving the kid in the nick of time.

Louis’s saving the kid shows us that he knows what is the right thing to do. Applegate said many times that he didn’t like birds. Louis didn’t get angry and he just discharged his duty day after day. The fact is that no one will blame a bird for his not saving a bird. But Louis spared all efforts to save him without a second thought. And he didn’t do it for reputation, money or anything else. He even didn’t pay much attention to people’s cheerful shouting. But he felt rather happy and satisfied: “That night when darkness came, Louis blew the most beautiful taps he had ever blown” (White, 2007, p.302).

When he comes across something that is wrong or immoral, Louis never hesitates to stop it. Louis had a haunting trouble that his father took the trumpet without paying for it. And his father often felt deplorable because he lost his good reputation. Louis knew it was wrong and he didn’t like that at all. Thus, he decided to earn enough money to pay for his trumpet. He took many jobs. At first, he worked for Camp Kookooskoos. His job was waking children at daybreak, calling them to meals and playing taps when they were dropping off to sleep. Louis was a conscientious worker. He even asked Sam to take a razor blade and slit the web on his right foot so that he can be not just a camp bugler, but a real musician who can play all sorts of music. After the camp, ended, Louis flew to Boston and he was employed by a Boatman. This time, his job was to swim in front of other swan boats, leading the way and blowing his trumpet. When asked why he needed money, Louis couldn’t help thinking about his poor father who had stolen the trumpet and about the poor storekeeper in Billings who had been robbed and whose store had been damaged. Louis felt sorry for them. This work went smoothly and he loved it. Finally, he went to Philadelphia to work for a nightclub. He didn’t like this job at all, but he stayed for it was well-paid. Only in this way could he earn enough money to pay back that storekeeper. After he finished all his work, he earned totally 4,420.78 dollars. He handed all the money to his father and wrote a note on the slate to let his father redeem his honor and recapture his sense of decency. After the debt was paid off, Louis felt a great relief. No more would he have to carry a moneybag around his neck. Louis possessed the sense of wrong and he made up for his mistake. Therefore, Louis owned the development of moral cognition and he did things sticking to the principles and values.

Generally speaking, Louis gained social cognition and moral cognition in this stage. He entered the social world and paid much attention to some social matters such as

relationships and employment. Meanwhile, he had a clear judgment of right and wrong. That is, Louis had become a mature man.

CONCLUSION

To draw a conclusion, this paper specifically analyzes Louis’s growth—from innocence to maturity, according to his intellectual cognition, emotional cognition, self-cognition, social cognition and moral cognition in four different stages on the basis of cognitive development theory. In this way, this paper explains why *The Trumpet of the Swan* belongs to initiation story. With Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget’s theory of cognitive development as the theoretical foundation, this paper mainly studies Louis’s different stages of his growing process in *The Trumpet of the Swan*. The study of the Louis’s growth posed us a new way to help readers understand the growing process of those strong-willed persons who encountered difficulty in their life and how they managed to conquer those difficulties. It has some significance to help people, especially children in their growing period, to experience the story in the book as well as improve their own personality trait through the painful but meaningful growing process.

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