

A Psychoanalysis on the Main Character in Franz Kafka “*Metamorphosis*” (1915)

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Abstract

The purpose of the thesis is to find out the Id, Ego, and Superego of the main characters, that is, Gregor Samsa, the traveling salesman who transforms into a giant insect, and Metamorphosis, written by Franz Kafka and published in 1915. The method used in this study is descriptive-qualitative. The technique of collecting data is reading the novel repeatedly and underlying the necessary lines and quotations in the novella. The result shows that there are 24 quotations, which consist of 9 quotations of Id, 6 quotations of Ego, 7 quotations of Superego, and 2 most prominent reflections on Kafka's personal life.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis, Id, Ego, Superego.*

Introduction

Psychoanalysis is a theory that provides an understanding of the structure and function of the human mind, with a significant focus on the role of the unconscious mind and the influence of experiences during early life stages. Ankey in Tatlilioglu (2022: 100) defines psychoanalysis was proposed by Sigmund Freud in the 19th century as a theory for treating mental disorders, and had a revolutionary impact on psychology, this theory to study many factors such as depression, anxiety, and conflict in individuals featured in literary works. Freud explain personality is formed from 3 components: Id, Superego, Ego.

According to Karabulut in Tatlilioglu (2022: 102), the emergence of Freud's psychoanalysis and his work on the subconscious has an essential place. The subconscious, which comprises biologically inherent fundamental sexual and aggressive tendencies as well as suppressed ideas, memories, and desires, is formed up of impulse.

The concept of psychoanalysis is centered on the idea of human consciousness and unconsciousness, which are viewed as aspects of the personality and issues related to instincts and fears. Freud further develops the

concepts of the Id, Ego, and Superego as human personality structures and the way people interact.

Franz Kafka's novella *Metamorphosis* was published in 1915. The story starts with Gregor Samsa who works as a traveling salesman. When Gregor wakes up in bed, he finds that he has turned into a giant insect, or something resembling a cockroach. Despite this shocking event, the fact that he had overslept and missed the train he had to go to work worried him even more. He expresses his concerns about his family and their financial situation and his responsibilities to both. He becomes alienated from his family and his neighbourhood. Gregor tries to adapt to his new form as an insect, although he eventually becomes increasingly withdrawn and isolated in his room.

In this case, Kafka's novella presents an intriguing and dramatic portrayal of the human psyche in turmoil, making it ideal for psychoanalytic analysis through the lens of fundamental Freudian ideas such as the conflicts and different functioning of the Id, Ego, and Superego within a person. Gregor Samsa's physical insect transformation can represent the dramatic emergence of unconscious Id impulses overriding the normal ego functions of the psyche. The writer can analyse how the transformation symbolizes this shift in the balance between the Id, Ego, and Superego of Kafka, which is represented by the character Gregor Samsa.

The writers are interested in analyzing Id, Ego, and Superego in the main character is Gregor Samsa in the novella *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, a travelling salesman who transforms into a giant insect.

Literary Review

Literature

Wellek & Warren in Effendi, et.al (2019: 63) defines literary work is a story that displays the author's creations. Literary works have an enjoyable function if they can entertain and impress their readers, while literary works have a useful function if they can provide insights, invitations, messages, or messages through the deeds, actions, and behaviours of the characters in the story.

Kirszner & Mandell (2017: 5) states that literary work is a piece of writing that demonstrates artistic purpose and some degree of creativity. Literary works include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. Literary work refers to any written piece of work that has a creative or artistic value, rather than a purely informative one. This can include works of fiction, such as novels and short stories, as well as works of poetry, plays, and essays. Literary works are often distinguished from other types of writing by their use of language, tone, and style, which are carefully chosen to create a particular emotional or aesthetic effect on the reader.

From the definitions above, the writers conclude that literature comes from an author's imagination from multiple perspectives, fiction or truth, expressed through the art of language.

Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a theory used to understand the structure and function of the human mind with particular emphasis on the role of the unconscious mind and the influence of early life experiences. Psychoanalysis believe that every human being has thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories we are not aware of.

Ankay in Tatlilioglu (2022: 100) defines psychoanalysis was proposed by Sigmund Freud in the 19th century as a theory for treating mental disorders, and had a revolutionary impact on psychology. this theory to study many factors such as depression, anxiety, and conflict in individuals featured in literary works.

Psychoanalysis believes that all our behaviour comes from the unconscious, the unconscious is the main impulse for all our behaviour according to Sigmund Freud our personality is formed from 3 components:

a. Id

Psychoanalysis is a compulsion from the inner self and has the role of a kind of instinctive lust that is the most basic in the human subconscious. Id is very primitive and would like to do anything to satisfy our lust. For example, if someone wants to get a lot of money, then he steals in the bank, then Id will encourage us fully to do that. Freud also referred to it as the true psychic reality. The Id is the inner world or human subjective world and has no direct relationship with the objective world or the id is not related to reality. The Id does not relate to reality. The Id contains things that are brought from birth (biological elements)

including instincts. The working principle of the Id is to eliminate tension or discomfort and seek pleasure or enjoyment.

b. Ego

The ego acts as the mediator between the id's demands and external reality. The ego is 'that part of the Id that has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. (Freud in Fitriani 2019: 123). Ego works to satisfy all of the desires, wants, and needs of the Id's demands in an acceptable manner in a realistic and social manner; the Ego mediates between the Id's unrealistic impulses and reality. The concept of the ego's thinking is characterized by secondary process thinking, which is more rational, logical, realistic, and sophisticated. This process allows the ego to become a decision-making component.

c. Superego

The superego develops from the ego and conveys morality related to norms and rules within the environment, which include society and the family. Instead of reflecting a realistic norm. It may be perceived as reflecting an idealistic standard rather than a realistic one. It could be said that the function of the superego is to act as a mediator between the id and the ego. The superego can be seen as a kind of conscience, recognizing good and bad. It might be said that, like the id, the superego does not consider reality in the same way, perhaps not struggling with the realistic (Putri 2021: 18). It could be argued that the main functions of the superego involve controlling the instincts of the id and guiding these impulses in ways that are more socially acceptable. It could be suggested that the superego directs the ego towards goals that align with morals, encouraging individuals to pursue perfection.

1. Characterization

The term "character" itself refers to the perpetrator within the story. Nurgiyantoro (2009: 165) defines character can mean 'the actor' and it can also mean 'characterization', between a character and its characterization, there is indeed a coherent whole. The very mention of a character's name often leads us to his or her characterization. The identity of a character is shaped by the events that occur in their life, and conversely, the events themselves serve to portray the character and, in a sense, become a form of characterization.

Research Methodology

The writers use descriptive qualitative method. The source of the data is novella entitled *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka which are taken from website FreeClassicBook Online Available at: <https://freeclassicebooks.com/2019%20New%20Free%20Classic%20ebooks/I-R/Kafka%20Franz/pdf%20Files/Metamorphosis.pdf> (Accessed on 18th of November, 2023 at 2.00 p.m.).

The writers implement these steps to analyze the data: read the novel repeatedly, finding necessary lines and quoting the sentences that only focused on the terms Id, Ego, and Superego. categorize the data based on Id, Ego, and Superego. Analyzing the collected data by linking between categories and interpretations based on psychoanalysis theory. based on the results of data analysis and interpretation.

Discussion and Finding

The study tried to find out the Id, Ego, and Superego contained in the novella *Metamorphosis*. Based on the research findings submitted by the writer, there are 9 quotations of Id utterances consisting of 9, 6 quotations of Ego, 7 quotations of Superego, 2 most prominent reflections on Kafka's personal life.

After identifying the sentences in the previous section, the writer interprets the data analysis as follows:

1. Id

From the 3 components of psychoanalysis based on Freud's theory, the Id is the most frequently found in the *Metamorphosis* novel with 9 quotations of the Id in total. The content of the novel itself tells about Gregor Samsa. As a travelling salesman who turned into a giant insect when he woke up. In the context of the *Metamorphosis* story, Gregor's transformation into an insect seems to symbolize the human condition of being trapped in his basic instincts, losing control over himself, and losing his human identity. The dominance of the Id aspect in Gregor can be seen as a consequence of the

horrific transformation he undergoes, where he loses his ability to control and balance other aspects of his personality, such as ego and superego.

2. Ego

In this psychoanalysis component, the writer finds 6 quotations in total. It shows that despite his transformation into an insect, Gregor still has a rational and logical side to him. Ego is an aspect of personality that functions to balance between the demands of Id and the demands of reality. In Gregor's condition that has turned into an insect, the existence of Ego becomes very important to maintain his rationality and logic as a human being. This can be seen from his efforts to adjust to his new condition, find ways to communicate with his family, and try to understand the situation he is experiencing.

3. Superego

In this component, the writers find 7 quotations in total. It was clear that the existence of Superego in Gregor Samsa as reflected in the quote shows that even though he has transformed into an insect, Gregor still has a strong moral and ethical side in him. Superego is an aspect of personality that reflects moral and ethical values obtained from the environment and education. The existence of the Superego becomes very important to maintain his human values. This can be seen in his guilt and remorse towards his family, his efforts to still help his family financially, and his awareness of his responsibility as the breadwinner of the family. The superego has the role of controlling the primitive urges of the Id and keeping Gregor held to the principles of humanity.

4. Kafka's Reflection on Metamorphosis

In *Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka explores themes of alienation and work criticism. His Jewish identity and disharmonious relationship with his father contribute to his feelings of alienation. Kafka's dislike for his job as an insurance employee reflects his dissatisfaction with the capitalist system. Gregor Samsa, a character who transforms into an insect, represents the struggles of the lower classes in a capitalist society. Kafka's essays serve as a

means to express his dissatisfaction with his job and the oppressive nature of the capitalist system.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the author of *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka, holds a particular view of the significant character portrayed in this novella. The psychological state of Gregor Samsa is significantly influenced by his family. The author bases *The Metamorphosis* on his own experiences. The condition of Gregor Samsa as a main character was the same, the exact condition that Gregor also experienced. Therefore, the writer wrote this thesis to describe and explain the psychoanalysis in Gregor Samsa as the main character and the reflection of the author.

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