

Psychosexual Identity: An Analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

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Abstract:

Psychosexuality derives the force of undefined sexual development establish with the growing age with Freud's personality controller "id", "ego" and "superego". The character Dorian Gray, in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is developing a psychosexual identity. He encounters several difficult events in his life and progressively transitions to a hedonistic lifestyle. Dorian whose beauty was captured by artist Basil Hallward made a bargain with his own painting to prevent him from growing older and losing his youth. He was willing to sell his soul in exchange for the image to in order to remain beautiful. In due process h lost his identity. When he realized that his quest for beauty had triumphed over reality, he stabbed his painting and in the process, put an end to his sinful life. Thus this novel initiates a conversation between body and psyche with painting or art revealing the double roles of art in influencing personality. On the one hand, art can provide people pleasure and on the other misinterpreting art can cause serious harm in both personality and society. Thus this paper tries to showcase the psychosexual identity of the character Dorian Gray through an analysis of the Wilde's work *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Keywords: Psychosexuality, Identity, Body, Soul, Reality.

Introduction: Psychosexuality, the term is associated with the Freudian psychological theory of consciousness and unconscious. The term also refers to the mental statement related to sexual activity. It could be emotional or behavioral. This seems an individual develops a rambling state of mind that reflects in his personality. That individual is unable to differentiate his or her conscious, preconscious and unconscious stance. Again, psychologist Freud acquainted us with three characteristics of personality that are "id", "ego", and "superego". The "id" as Freud defines is born in the individual and refers to the pleasure personality means the complexion effortlessly leaned toward the comforting things of life without giving much thought. "Superego" staying opposite to "id" is compelling the temperament to do socially acceptable things. And the "ego" being in the middle tries to balance both "id" and "superego" which means "ego" is the decision-maker of that personality. When an individual is

not able to develop his/her psychosexual identity properly, according to Freud, he/she is destined to have identity issues in future or to have flaws in future personality. It seems the "id", "ego" and "superego" of that individual may create confusion to define his/her personality in society.

Analysis: Psychosexual confusion or identity issue of a human being and its mental statement is symbolically painted by Oscar Wilde in his work *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The work deals with the character Dorian Gray and his personality reflection- the portrait of his own. Dorian Gray and his Portrait in this work illustrate the psychosexual confusion of reality. Dorian Gray, is an elegant man who painted his beauty by the painter Basil Hallward. Satisfied with Basil's work Dorian Gray made a wish to remain young and beautiful always and his portrait reflects his ageing signs. Behind Dorian's wish of always being young and handsome, there is his friend called Lord Henry

Wotton, who praises Dorian a lot and makes him admire his beauty. Here, that is why Lord Henry Wotton, compared to Freud's personality traits, becomes "id" for Dorian Gray, and the painter Basil Hallward becomes the "superego", and Dorian Gray represents "ego". Conflicts between Henry and Basil seem the conflicts between the "id" and "superego" of Dorian Gray and being "ego" Dorian put Henry before Basil, that is "id" wins against the "superego". This "id" and "superego" also can be used to refer to the existence of bad angels and good angels in human life or the negative influence and the positive influence.

Dorian has affection towards Sybill Vane. She was a performer. But when she started to create hope with Dorian she started to lose her skill of performance and Dorian also lost Interest in her. Dorian breaks up his relationship with Sybil Vane. Then, he first encounters the marks of sin in his portrait. He then comes to know that his urge to picture ageing becomes true and keeping him young and elegant the portrait reflects his age and his sins. Basil tried to control Dorian but he failed over "id". Dorian tried to redo the things with Sybil Vane but it was too late because Sybil took her life then. Continuing sins over sins Dorian becomes the reason for the death of one of his friends also and when he went to see his portrait again he was then terrified by the picture. The picture was reflecting the guilt, depravity, wickedness, and enormity behind his beautiful skin. Dorian then kills Basil too and then stabs the picture of his own. He kills himself. He stabs the picture, which means the ageing Dorian. And then Dorian becomes old and dreadful and the picture becomes the young and beautiful Dorian Gray again.

The picture of Dorian Gray becomes the language of subjectivity reflecting Dorian's uncanny psyche. His self-love or tilting nature toward the aesthetic beauty of the human body serves his "ego" and so he is not able to rectify or develop his mental health properly. His instability and material attachments lead him to live a hedonistic lifestyle that is dwelling on pleasure and enjoyment, which is also oriented toward fulfilling the desires of individuals to obtain gratification. This superficiality makes Dorian defensive over his reality. He becomes

shallow. Considering heredity and the environment as the factor in human development, it can be claimed that Dorian gets his feature of the unstable psyche from his family ancestors and the influence of his friend Henry upon him.

The human body and psyche are linked to each other. A stable and healthy psyche reflects a healthy and happy body and vice versa. And when the body of an individual is unstable the psyche reflects its character and leads to the brink of suicide. Wilde here thus brings a portrait to represent the psyche of Dorian's body, which leads him to kill himself to restore the stability he quests for. This reversal enigma of body and psyche painted Wilde through the character of Dorian Gray, who indulged himself in multiple death in life and his psyche is reflected in the body of his painting which compels Dorian to question his real identity. But Dorian failed to get it because "id" influences his "ego" to believe man's aesthetic pleasure of life over the morality of doing good in life which keeps him a sexually unsatisfied person also as he breaks up with Sybill Vane and becomes the cause of her death too. Wilde, it seems, tries to show the personality one cultivates throughout his life as nothing more than that morally, socially constructive thoughts and actions. Wilde paints three characters to show the existence of "id", "ego" and "superego" in one personality. When Basil completes his painting of Dorian, both Henry and Basil claim it. Basil tries to establish that the painting is more him except for the body which is Dorian's. Henry also shows affection toward the painting. This conflict between Basil and Henry represents conflicts between the "superego" and "id". Yet the picture remains Dorian's. This means, the "ego" remains visible and it is the "ego" to decide between "id" and "superego". The picture was beautiful then and Dorian was also real then. When Dorian swapped places with his portrait, Dorian displayed, keeping reality inside, an appearance of beauty and the portrait growing old, mirroring Dorian's unreality, callousness, and moral disruptions. Dorian lost his identity, his existence.

The human body if we see it as a mixture of flesh and blood won't be able to see the soul within it. The soul is the mere identity of a

human being as well as of art. Wilde here thus has given soul to the art rather than the human body. Dorian here is the body without a soul. His soul is possessed by the portrait. That is why the soul evolves as reality and Dorian's flesh becomes just a defensive entity. His possessions in the portrait show his love for the body which makes him a narcissist. The concept of homosexuality also merges with this. Basil and Henry also point to a homosexual desire among them. Considering three of them as one, "id", "ego", superego", their conversations represent the quest for their lost identity which in reality exposes Dorian's unidentifiable sexuality and unstable psyche. Psyche and the body, the flesh, seeks stability that Dorian lacks and is unable to establish at the proper time and environment and therefore he develops an immature "ego" which at the end lead to terminate both "id" and "superego" by taking his own life.

Conclusion: Psychosexual identity develops from the early family life experience and influences, by which every person's behavior pattern in adolescence and maturity are framed. Those who have experienced mental trauma are continually aware of their surrounding, may store traumatic memories in a specific area of the brain for safety, and must constantly guard against recurrence of similar events. As a result, when they interact with others, these unpleasant experiences, which are externalized by self-abasement plots, are embodiment from discomfort in an unfamiliar situation, making them self-conscious in front of others and unable to lead a stable life. Thus character Dorian Gray, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, isn't aware of what's going on with him and he doesn't realize where the main trouble is. Dorian, in the end blames Basil, who represented the superego and Basil's artwork for everything which is in real was the Dorian, the "ego". A portrait of Dorian Gray, which depicts all of him, gave him eternal youth by a portrait of himself that depicts all of his misdeeds and wrongdoings on itself rather than on his body become paradox for his life. His lack of morals drives him down a path of destruction until his transgressions are revealed and he meets his death.

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