



The Structure of Personality in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the psychological complexity of the main character in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly the structure of personality comprising the id, ego, and superego. Set against the backdrop of the morally rigid Victorian era, the novel portrays the internal conflict experienced by Dr. Jekyll, who, driven by the pressures of societal expectations, conducts a dangerous experiment that leads to his transformation into the immoral and impulsive Mr. Hyde. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research identifies how Dr. Jekyll's actions embody each aspect of Freud's personality model: the id is manifested in Hyde's unrestrained behavior, the ego in Jekyll's attempts to mediate between his desires and social norms, and the superego in the moral judgment and guilt that eventually lead to his psychological breakdown. The findings reveal that the novel not only illustrates a case of dissociative identity but also offers a profound depiction of the human psyche's internal struggle for balance between instinct, reason, and morality.

Keywords: Freud, Psychoanalysis, ID, Ego, Superego, personality.

1. Introduction

Psychoanalysis, as introduced by Sigmund Freud in the early 20th century, revolutionized the way we understand human psychology by emphasizing the influence of the unconscious mind on behaviour, desires, and identity. At the core of Freud's psychoanalytic theory is his structural model of personality, which comprises three key components: the id, the ego, and the superego (Freud, 1923/1961). Each of these elements plays a vital role in shaping an individual's personality and behaviour. The id represents the unconscious, instinctual drives governed by the pleasure principle; the ego is the rational mediator that operates according to the reality principle; and the superego internalizes social norms and moral values, functioning as the conscience. Freud's theory has proven especially valuable in the realm of literary criticism, where it has been used to dissect characters' motivations, repressed desires, and inner conflicts (Tyson, 2006). The interplay between these psychic structures often reveals the psychological depths of characters and the symbolic layers of narrative. Freud's later elaborations on defence mechanisms, particularly repression and splitting, further



enrich the understanding of characters who struggle with internal contradictions (Freud, 1936/1946; Hall, 1954).

Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) offers a powerful literary representation of the Freudian mind. The dual identity of Dr. Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde symbolizes the conflict between the moral self and the suppressed instinctual drives. Jekyll, a respectable scientist, attempts to separate his darker impulses from his social persona through scientific means, resulting in the creation of Hyde, who embodies the unrestrained id (Felman, 1982). This internal battle resonates with Freud's notion of the ego's struggle to balance the id's demands and the superego's prohibitions. This article examines the novel through the lens of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, emphasizing how the characters—particularly Dr. Jekyll—manifest the dynamics of the id, ego, and superego. By engaging with Freudian psychoanalysis and relevant critical studies, this paper explores the psychological dimensions of identity, morality, and repression in Stevenson's text, arguing that the novel serves as an allegorical representation of the human psyche as conceptualized by Freud.

Literary works from the Victorian era have distinct characteristics. Generally, these works exhibit elements of Romanticism and even mysticism, often connected to religion, social values, and the arts. The Victorian era—defined by the reign of Queen Victoria—was marked by a strong emphasis on high moral standards, largely driven by powerful religious influences, especially among the middle class. These high moral expectations in society were portrayed by various authors, who indirectly revealed the social pressures of the time through their writings. One such example is the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which reflects Romanticism while also highlighting the era's elevated social and moral values.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a Victorian-era novel written by Robert Louis Stevenson, published in 1886. The novel tells the story of a strange case involving two individuals with vastly different backgrounds—Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—which is investigated by a lawyer named Mr. Utterson. The narrative follows the life of Dr. Jekyll, a well-known and respected physician in his community, who experiences significant pressure as a result of his high social status. Due to the mounting tension and stress, he feels throughout his life, he seeks personal freedom by conducting an extreme experiment on himself. However, his ambition and desire ultimately lead him to greater suffering, culminating in a tragic and harrowing death.

It is known that the inspiration for *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* came from a personal dream experienced by the author, Robert Louis Stevenson. Upon waking, Stevenson quickly crystallized the story's plot and wrote it down, resulting in what would become one of his most celebrated works. Psychological studies of the novel have often interpreted Dr. Jekyll's transformation as a manifestation of a split personality disorder—commonly referred to as “dissociative identity disorder” or “multiple personality disorder.” This condition refers to a mental illness in which a person is believed to possess two or more distinct personalities. However, when the



novel is examined through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, it offers more than just a portrayal of psychological disorder. It reveals the dark and complex nature of the human psyche. Based on Freud's theory of the structure of personality, the strange behaviour exhibited by the main character, Dr. Jekyll, can be seen as a representation of the functional system of the human mind—particularly the struggle to maintain balance among the different components of personality. These components, as defined by Freud, are the id, ego, and superego.

Therefore, the researcher chose this novel and applied a psychoanalytic literary approach with the aim of uncovering deeper meaning and exploring new interpretations. While previous studies have often focused solely on the mystery or psychological complexity of the human mind, or have limited the analysis to identifying the presence of "multiple personality disorder," this study seeks a broader psychological understanding. In this research, the focus is on identifying the personality structure as reflected through the actions and behaviour of the main character. These behaviours are viewed as representations of the psychological composition of the human self. Thus, the objective of this paper is to analyse and identify the personality structure possessed by the character Dr. Jekyll in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* using Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

Based on the background presented above, the central problem addressed in this study is as follows: How can the structure of personality in the character Henry Jekyll be classified, as depicted in the novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*?

2. Method

Methodology plays a crucial role in any research process. All activities aimed at proving a hypothesis or analysing a phenomenon rely heavily on the selected research method. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the methodology serves as both a key and a guide throughout the research process. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on non-numerical data expressed in the form of words. Data is gathered through various methods such as observation and document analysis, and processed through transcription, editing, and synthesis. Despite these transformations, qualitative analysis consistently emphasizes textual interpretation and meaning-making. In this research, the descriptive method is employed to analyse the psychological structure of the main character using Freud's personality model: the id, ego, and superego. The approach allows for a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics portrayed in the novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the psychoanalytic approach developed by Sigmund Freud, particularly his concept of the structure of human personality. Psychoanalysis is a branch of psychology developed by Freud to study the functions and behaviour of the human psyche. As an expert in the field, Freud formulated a comprehensive theory of personality through psychoanalysis. According to Freud, the study of personality can be divided into several components, including the



structure of personality (id, ego, and superego), personality dynamics, and personality development. However, this research focuses exclusively on the structural aspect of personality as portrayed in the main character of the novel. Freud (2006) asserted that personality consists of three key components: the id (biological aspect, consisting of instinctual drives and needs), the ego (psychological aspect, which operates based on reality and mediates between desires and external demands), and the superego (sociological aspect, which internalizes social norms, values, and morality to maintain balance).

The *id* is the most basic layer of the human psyche, governed by the forces of eros (life instincts) and Thanatos (death instincts). It contains innate biological drives, particularly those that are sexual and aggressive in nature. The *id* operates entirely unconsciously and is not influenced by reason, logic, or ethical considerations. Its only guiding principle is the pursuit of pleasure. According to Freud (2006), the id is present from birth. The psychic life of a fetus and a newborn consists entirely of the *id*. As such, the id serves as the foundational material for the further development of the human psyche. The *id* functions according to the pleasure principle, which seeks to immediately reduce tension and discomfort by satisfying instinctual needs. Tension is experienced as suffering or discomfort, while its release is experienced as pleasure. The *id* is not regulated by rational thought or moral judgment; it seeks only to satisfy instinctual desires regardless of social acceptability or consequences. Its sole aim is to achieve gratification in accordance with the pleasure principle.

According to Freud (2006), there are two ways the id attempts to fulfil its needs and relieve internal tension: through reflex actions (such as blinking) and through primary processes, like imagining food when hungry. While simply imagining the object of desire does not satisfy the actual need, it temporarily helps reduce the tension felt within the self. However, to prevent ongoing internal conflict, another system is required—one that can transform these imagined satisfactions into real experiences. This system is the *ego*. The *ego* is the dominant component of personality that functions primarily in the realm of consciousness. It develops as a result of the individual's interaction with the external world and operates based on the reality principle. In other words, it takes into account what is real and possible in the external environment when attempting to meet the id's desires. *Ego* is formed through contact with reality and serves to mediate between the internal demands of the id and the constraints of the external world. Its processes are directed toward finding realistic and socially acceptable ways to reduce tension and satisfy needs.

The ego is the executive component of personality, responsible for regulating and balancing the demands of the id, the superego, and the external world. It serves as a mediator, maintaining harmony among the various parts of the personality while also ensuring appropriate interaction with reality. *Ego* functions to protect the interests of the entire personality by addressing its broad and diverse needs. When the ego functions wisely and effectively, psychological harmony and alignment are achieved. However, if *ego* yields too much control to the *id*, the *superego*, or external pressures, imbalances can occur, resulting in irregular or disordered states of consciousness.



Additionally, the ego is shaped by the interaction between the individual and their environment. Its development is influenced by hereditary factors and guided by natural growth processes. This means that every person has the innate potential to think, reason, and use judgment. While the *ego* primarily operates in the realm of consciousness, it also functions at times within the unconscious mind. One of its key roles is to protect the individual from anxiety, which can arise due to conflicting demands from the id and the superego. The *superego* is the component of personality that embodies moral values and ethical standards. It functions as an evaluative system, providing judgments about what is right and wrong. According to Freud (2006), the superego develops as an internalization of societal norms and parental values, serving to guide and limit behaviour based on culturally accepted standards.

In other words, the superego is also considered the moral component of personality. Its main function, in relation to the other two aspects of personality, is to inhibit the impulses of the ego—especially sexual and aggressive urges that are strongly opposed by societal norms—and to encourage the ego to pursue moral goals rather than purely realistic ones, striving for perfection as defined by the individual's environment. In Freud's theory of the ideal superego, it is divided into two parts: the conscience and the ego ideal. The conscience develops through punishment received from parents for unacceptable behaviour, while the ego ideal is formed through praise and rewards for acceptable behaviour. The superego can act as an objective and spiritually elevated guide, and it is often seen as the result of socialization with cultural traditions and societal norms. In its role as an internal authority, the superego may also attack or punish the ego. This occurs whenever the ego entertains thoughts of rebellion or hostility toward an external authority figure. As a result, the ego becomes the target of the superego's critical functions, which may attempt to destroy it. In doing so, the superego aligns itself with the death drive originally rooted in the id. This is why Freud considered the superego to be an agent of the death instinct

3. Findings and Discussion

In the analysis section, the researcher presents several quotations that provide an overall description of the study's content using a psychoanalytic approach. These selected quotations correspond to the three components of Freud's personality structure: the id, ego, and superego.

3.1. Mr. Hyde and the Dominance of the Id

The first quotation refers to these structures as reflected in the character of Henry Jekyll and will be discussed in the following analysis.

"All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward on a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she could down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the, child's



body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut. I gave a look-halloa, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running."

The following quotation refers to an incident described by Mr. Enfield to Mr. Utterson, a lawyer in the city. The event took place on a cold night at around three in the morning. Mr. Enfield witnessed a short man, later identified as Mr. Hyde, walking along the street, while a young girl was running in the opposite direction. At a street corner, the two collided, and the girl fell to the ground. Instead of helping her, the man calmly walked over her body with his boots and continued on his way, leaving the girl in pain and distress. Witnessing the horrifying scene, Mr. Enfield threatened to expose the incident publicly, which would cause the townspeople to despise Mr. Hyde and ruin his reputation. Upon hearing this, Mr. Hyde agreed to compensate for his actions by offering a sum of money to the girl's family. From the explanation above, it is evident that Mr. Hyde's actions—whose true identity in the novel is Henry Jekyll—represent the first structure of personality: the *id*. Freud (2006) describes the *id* as "a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations," devoid of logic or morality, seeking only immediate gratification of its drives (Freud, 1923/1961, p. 73). Hyde's actions in this early scene are not only immoral but also antisocial, aligning closely with the Freudian understanding of the *id* as inherently anarchic and antisocial in nature. Mr. Hyde's act of trampling the young girl can also be understood as an attempt to channel the internal tension he experiences, releasing it through physical, impulsive behaviour. The novel describes Dr. Jekyll's life as highly monotonous, restrictive, and governed by rigid social rules that dictate every aspect of behaviour. These social constraints create ongoing psychological tension and inner suffering throughout his life.

It interpreted in relation to the social and psychological environment of Jekyll's Victorian context. Victorian society, as numerous scholars have observed, was structured by a strict code of conduct that sought to repress the expression of bodily and emotional desires (Foucault, 1978). Jekyll's transformation into Hyde thus reveals what happens when such repression becomes unbearable. In an effort to relieve this tension, Dr. Jekyll conducts an experiment that transforms him into a different person—Mr. Hyde. In this form, he gains a sense of freedom, allowing him to act without consequence or concern for his social reputation. This is demonstrated through his unrestrained and immoral behaviour, such as his treatment of the young girl. Jekyll's actions as Mr. Hyde are motivated by *pleasure principle*, a fundamental aspect of the *id*. This principle seeks to eliminate or reduce internal tension by pursuing immediate gratification. Therefore, Hyde's behaviour reflects an attempt to fulfil this principle through physical expression, regardless of social or moral consequences. His actions illustrate the function of the *id* in seeking satisfaction without restraint. Within this framework, the figure of Mr. Hyde operates as a Gothic double or *doppelgänger*, an externalization of the socially unacceptable parts of Jekyll's psyche. Hyde does not simply perform the actions that Jekyll dares not; he **is** the part of Jekyll that desires to



be free of social constraint and moral consequence. The transformation between Jekyll and Hyde is thus not only a physical metamorphosis but also a psychological regression—from the integrated ego to the fragmented, infantile desires of the id. As Freud contends in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), early childhood is dominated by instinctual drives that are only later subjected to social regulation. In this regard, Hyde's impulsive and sadistic behavior can be seen as a return to this pre-social, pleasure-seeking phase of psychological development.

Therefore, the trampling of the girl functions as an early warning in the narrative—a manifestation of what Freud called the “return of the repressed” and an allegory of the dangers inherent in unchecked psychic division. Mr. Hyde embodies the id in its most dangerous form: unregulated, unempathetic, and untethered from morality. The act of violence is not only a physical offense but a psychic rupture, signaling the disintegration of Jekyll's moral and social identity. This moment marks the beginning of a broader descent into chaos, as the balance among the id, ego, and superego continues to deteriorate. Stevenson's portrayal, then, is not simply a condemnation of evil but a sophisticated narrative rendering of Freudian theory—one that reveals the fragility of the self when its components are estranged rather than integrated.

3.2. Mr. Hyde's Compensation and the Mediating Function of the Ego

The quotation not only illustrates the function of the id, but also reveals behaviours associated with the second structure of personality: the ego. The actions carried out by Mr. Hyde create a serious problem that threatens Dr. Jekyll's good name and original identity. Aware of this threat, Jekyll—through Hyde—offers financial compensation for the girl's treatment as a way to redeem his actions. This moment highlights the presence of Henry Jekyll's ego, which intervenes to control and manage the impulses of the id (as represented by Hyde) while responding to the demands of the superego, represented in society by figures such as Mr. Enfield. Jekyll's ego acts to preserve the balance between his inner desires and the expectations of the external world. By maintaining a connection between the internal self and societal norms, Jekyll's ego strives to protect the harmony of his overall personality structure. This reciprocal interaction between the main character and the outside world, as revealed through his behaviour, reflects the function of the ego as the second element in Freud's personality structure. Freud (1923/1961) characterizes the ego as a “mediator” that must balance the conflicting demands of the id, the superego, and external reality. In this context, Hyde's compensatory gesture—though compelled by social pressure—demonstrates the ego's attempt to prevent further damage to the self, specifically to Jekyll's carefully curated public identity. The text tells us that Hyde returned with a check drawn in the name of Dr. Henry Jekyll, which reinforces the notion that the ego is working not merely for Hyde, but to preserve Jekyll's larger psychic integrity and social reputation. As Freud states, “The ego is not master in its own house,” but it must constantly navigate a terrain in which danger comes not only from external reality but from within the psyche itself (Freud, 1917/1955, p. 285). The following quotation refers to the third component of Jekyll's personality: the superego.



In addition to illustrating the functions of the id and ego, the quotation also reveals the third important component of personality: the superego. In the story, Mr. Enfield serves as a representative of society—a figure who enforces moral standards and functions as an external expression of the superego. His role is to supervise behaviour and ensure accountability by imposing consequences for actions that violate moral and social norms. Mr. Enfield witnesses the immoral act committed by Mr. Hyde and threatens to expose the incident publicly, thereby ruining his reputation. This reflects how the superego punishes the ego through spiritual or psychological consequences, such as guilt, shame, or a diminished sense of self-worth, leading to social rejection. The punishment is directed at the ego, which is deemed responsible for failing to control the id's impulses and for neglecting moral considerations. In response, Mr. Hyde attempts to negotiate with Mr. Enfield by offering financial compensation—an effort to delay or avoid punishment and reintegrate into society without further consequences.

The function of the ego in this scene is thus highly strategic. It recognizes the reality of the social world—that Hyde's act has been witnessed, that it is morally indefensible, and that it has provoked a collective ethical response. In order to mitigate the situation and avoid further escalation or exposure, the ego directs a course of action that appears conciliatory. However, this gesture is not born out of guilt or ethical concern but from the ego's function as the reality principle: it seeks the most effective way to resolve internal tension and maintain the illusion of a coherent, morally upright self. As Erik Erikson (1950) later elaborated, the ego is not merely a reactive agency but one that constructs and preserves identity over time. In this case, it acts to protect the social persona of Henry Jekyll from the moral collapse represented by Hyde's transgressions. Furthermore, the following quotation also reflects another dimension of Jekyll's personality structure, as shown below:

"I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and Circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his ape-like spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both, has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever re- due to that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shud ringing and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fear-struck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? Or will he find the courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end."

In this quotation, the final condition of Jekyll is depicted, in which he takes a desperate and reckless action by locking himself alone in a room. While confined, Jekyll regains consciousness after having lived for several days as his alternate identity, Mr. Hyde—a transformation caused by the effects of his own experiment. Realizing the gravity of his actions, Jekyll writes a letter of confession, expressing deep regret for the immoral acts and crimes he has committed.

The function of the ego is evident in Jekyll's conscious decision to isolate and lock himself away. Aware of the immoral actions he has committed, Jekyll deliberately chooses to confine himself in order to prevent further harm to others. He understands that, once he transforms back into Hyde—a part of himself that acts solely on desire (the id)—he would lose control. This decision reflects the ego's role in attempting to reduce the inner tension caused by Jekyll's tendency to gratify the id. In this context, the ego functions as a regulator, working to control both the id and the superego, while maintaining a balance between internal impulses and external expectations. Jekyll's ego strives to preserve harmony within the personality structure and protect his identity from further destruction. From this quotation, the researcher identifies the presence and function of two components of Jekyll's personality structure: the ego and the superego.

3.3. Superego as Moral Authority and Social Surveillance

According to Freud (1923/1961) the superego emerges from the resolution of the Oedipus complex and functions as the internalized representation of authority, operating to restrain the id's instinctual impulses and evaluate the ego's actions. In the scene narrated by Enfield, this moral function is activated in a clear and direct way. The communal outrage, mediated by Enfield's voice, operates as a mirror of Victorian social consciousness—a society that prized civility, restraint, and public decency. Enfield's response is not only legal or interpersonal; it is profoundly ethical, reflecting what Freud would describe as the "conscience" aspect of the superego, which instils guilt or anxiety when the individual transgresses internalized norms.

Additionally, the quotation also highlights the role of the superego in Jekyll's personality structure. This is reflected in the way Jekyll punishes himself for violating the moral values held by both himself and the society in which he lives. Through his written confession, Jekyll expresses that he has followed his conscience, implicitly acknowledging that he deserves the ultimate punishment—death. This illustrates how the superego functions as a harsh moral authority, turning inward to condemn the self when ethical standards are broken. In this case, the superego becomes so dominant that it seeks to destroy the ego. This internal judgment aligns with Freud's idea that, under extreme circumstances, the superego may act in tandem with the death drive originally rooted in the id. Therefore, the superego is sometimes described as an agent of the death instinct. Freud (1930) argues that an overactive superego can produce unbearable guilt, even leading the ego toward self-punishment. Jekyll's despair and reference to "doom" and "the scaffold" indicate that he internalizes society's condemnation, accepting death as a just outcome. This aligns with Freud's idea that the superego, in extreme cases, allies with the **death drive**, turning against the self destructively.

Thus, the confession is more than a narrative closure—it is a symbolic surrender. Jekyll's ego, unable to balance the id's impulses with the superego's demands, disintegrates. His suicide is the final act of a psyche torn apart by unresolved psychic conflict, highlighting Freud's claim that the struggle between these forces can end in annihilation when moral law becomes too harsh. To deepen the discussion, it is imperative to analyse the complexity and interplay between the id, ego, and superego



as psychological mechanisms within the broader thematic and symbolic architecture of the novel. Each component does not operate in isolation but rather engages in a dynamic interplay, one that mirrors the conflict between primal desire, societal expectations, and the individual's capacity for rational control.

4. Conclusion

The structure of personality in the character of Henry Jekyll as proposed by Freud—comprising the id, ego, and superego—can be clearly identified, each fulfilling its distinct role. The *id* functions as the primary system of personality, working to reduce the tension or psychological pressure Jekyll experiences. It drives him toward the fulfilment of the pleasure principle, which is manifested through his transformation into Mr. Hyde. The *ego* serves as the second component of personality, responsible for regulating and balancing the demands of both the id and the superego. It ensures Jekyll's connection with the external world remains intact and seeks harmony within his overall psychological structure. This is reflected in Jekyll's decision-making, especially when trying to manage the consequences of his identity as Mr. Hyde. The *superego* acts as the final component of personality, representing moral codes, social norms, and ethical values. It oversees and evaluates behaviour, rewarding or punishing thoughts and actions based on moral standards. This function is symbolically represented by Mr. Enfield, who acts as a moral figure and an external expression of the superego, threatening to punish Mr. Hyde for his immoral behaviour.

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