

The Mind and the Act: A Representation of the Freudian Tripartite Model in Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Alex la Guma's *A Walk in the Night*

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Abstract

The conflict between the Id and the Superego, as negotiated by the Ego is one of the fundamental psychological conflicts experienced by human beings in all races. The character of a man is dependent upon which part of his mind dominates and triggers the outcome of his actions. To Sigmund Freud, the mind is in constant conflict within itself and also the cause of every anxiety, unhappiness as well as happiness of man. This study focuses on the Freudian concept of the tripartite mind as the basis for all human actions or inactions. Upon the framework of Psychoanalysis, this paper establishes a correlation between the Freudian tripartite model with Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, by looking closely through the mind of the characters in both novels respectively, showing, to a great extent that the actions of every character as well as all human beings is the outcome of the conflict that first begins in the mind.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Id, Ego, Superego, Unconscious, violence, conflicts, mind.

1. Introduction

The human personality is the outcome of the drama acted out in the mind. This is to say that the outcome of every human being is a manifestation of how mental forces interact. To Sigmund Freud, we are actors in the drama played out by our minds and our personalities represent the struggles going on deep within us. Sigmund Freud, in the 20th century, developed a theory of the unconscious and an associated psychoanalytic therapy which deals with three levels of the elements of the mind called a tripartite model. The term psychoanalysis has three distinct meaning; firstly, it is a school of psychology, which emphasizes psychic determinism and dynamics. As a school of psychology it also emphasizes the importance of childhood experiences in molding one's adult personality and behavior. Secondly, psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the role of unconscious in determining human behavior, is a specialized method for investigating the unconscious mental activities. Finally, psychoanalysis is a therapeutic method for the investigation and treatment of mental disorders, especially the neurotic disorders (Freud 179). However, the scope of this study is limited to the second definition of psychoanalysis which is to investigate and validate the fact that the unconscious determines every human action or inaction. Psychoanalysis is a method of understanding mental functioning and the stages of growth and development. It is a general theory of individual human behavior and experience, and it has also contributed to the growth of many other disciplines. Psychoanalysis seeks to explain the complex relationship between the body and the mind (Farrell 202). This theory is named "tripartite" because it contains three structural elements of the mind: Id, Ego and Superego. The id is the portion of the psyche that generates "our instinctual physical, especially libidinal, desires. The id itself is often described as insatiable and pleasure seeking" and it does not consider the consequences or implications of its actions (Murfin and Ray 164). Conversely, the super ego "operates according to morality principal and serves primarily to protect society and us from the id" (Bressler 151). The ego is the "rational governing agent of the psyche...the ego serves as intermediary between the world within and the world without" and it helps "keep us healthy human beings by maintaining a balance between these two opposing forces" (Guerin et al. 130- 1). However, the Ego has a difficult time dealing with the competing demands of the Superego and the Id. According to the psychoanalytic view, this psychological conflict is an intrinsic and pervasive part of human experience. The conflict between the Id and Superego, negotiated by the Ego, is one of the fundamental psychological battles all people face. The way in which a person characteristically resolves the instant gratification versus longer-term reward dilemma in many ways comes to reflect on their character.

This conflict is accurately represented in Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, as

both authors examine the turmoil that goes on in the characters' minds which consequently fuels and determines their actions and inactions. Iyayi and La Guma respectively delves into the minds of the characters, bringing to the fore their inner most thoughts; their fears, anger, desires, aspirations, nursed guilt, all conflicting in their minds and serves as the reason for each action.

2. Methodology

Festus Iyayi's *Violence* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, are mostly known for their Marxist and Realist undertones respectively. This paper, however, sets out to establish the fact that every conflict arising in an individual or in a society is as a result of the conflict which first begins in the mind. To achieve this, this paper adopts the library method for its appropriateness. This entails data collection from critical works, documented materials, the internet and other resource materials for the purpose of interpreting the primary texts. This, therefore, implies that reference materials on the concept of psychoanalysis and the analysis of the primary text generally will be relied on.

3. Freudian Tripartite Model

3.1 Id

The id is the primitive and most instinctive component of personality. It consists of all the inherited components of personality present at birth, such as; sex (life) instinct – Eros (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct. The id represents the impulsive (and unconscious) part of our minds which responds directly and immediately to the instincts and impulses. The personality of the newborn child is all id and only later does it develop an ego and super-ego. The id remains infantile in its function throughout a person's life, and does not change with time or experience, as it is not in touch with the external world. The id is not affected by reality, logic or the everyday world, as it operates within the unconscious part of the mind. The id demands immediate satisfaction and when this happens we experience pleasure, when it is denied, we experience anxiety or tension. The characterizing way of processing information or thinking by id is referred to by Freud as primary process. The primary process is primarily emotional, irrational, illogical "and filled with fantasies and preoccupations of sex, aggression, selfishness and envy" (Barlow and Durand 25).

3.2 Ego

The ego is governed by reality principle instead of pleasure principle that governs the id. The information-processing or thinking of ego is characterized by logic and reason and is referred to as the secondary process. The ego acts as the mediator between the unrealistic and impulsive id and the external real world (the super ego). It is the decision making component of every personality. Whereas the id is impulsive and unrealistic, the ego works with reason and is realistic. The ego operates according to the reality principle, working out realistic ways of satisfying the id's demands, unlike the id which works according to the pleasure principle. Like the id, the ego seeks pleasure (i.e. tension reduction) and avoids pain, but unlike the id the ego is concerned with devising a realistic strategy to obtain pleasure. The ego has no concept of right or wrong; something is good simply if it achieves its end of satisfying without causing harm to itself or to the id. Also, the ego engages in secondary thinking process, which is rational, realistic, and orientated towards solving a problem. The ego engages in reality testing which helps him to think through an action over and over till a solution is found and enables the person to control their impulses and demonstrate self-control, through the mastery of the ego.

3.3 Superego

The third part of personality called the super-ego is the moral censor, which is identified with the voice of conscience. The superego is partially unconscious and partially conscious. The Superego is the last part of the mind to develop. It might be called the moral part of the mind. The Superego is an embodiment of parental and societal values and virtues. It stores and enforces rules and constantly strives for perfection, even though this perfection ideal may be quite far from reality or possibility. The superego incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others. It develops around the age of 3 – 5 during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. The superego's function is to control the id's impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression.

The superego consists of two systems: The conscience and the ideal self. The conscience can punish the ego through causing feelings of guilt. For example, if the ego gives in to the id's demands, the superego may make the person feel bad through guilt. The ideal self (or ego-ideal) is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be. This represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave

as a member of society. Behavior which falls short of the ideal self may be punished by the superego through guilt.

4.1 Correlation between the Freudian Tripartite Model and Festus Iyayi's *Violence*

In Festus Iyayi's *Violence*, violence is portrayed as a mental demoralizing structure which eliminates hope, health, self-esteem and ability to live independently; only relying on a meager wage of labor. Violence, in the novel does not only refer to the physical violence but psychological violence too as the pride and self-esteem of the working class are being dented and destroyed. Iyayi, portrays violence in the novel in terms of hunger, poverty, lack of employment, lack of social security, etc. The point of view is that of a third person/ omniscient narrative with occasional play on the readers' mind. Through this point of view, the writer enables the reader to see into the mind of the characters; their struggles, hunger, needs, etc. In page 38, we see into the mind of Idemudia; the struggles, uncertainty, etc. that runs through his mind when he thinks of where Adisa could be. Also, in page 73, the author leads us into Adisa's mind. Seated in Obofun's car; her mind struggles in between what her aunt told her and what Idemudia said. Over and over, the author has used this technique to capture the mind of the characters; what they think, what bothers them, their struggles, etc. The Freudian principle of the tripartite structure of the mind is represented in Iyayi's *Violence* as the reader is made to see the manifestation of sexual exploitation, violence, fights and revolution which is the outcome of the conflict which already begins in the mind. Violence, in the novel does not only refer to the physical violence but psychological violence too as the pride and self-esteem of the working class are being dented and destroyed. The author creates characters that represents the different classes in the society and shows how their outward actions are a product of the battle that had earlier been conceived in their minds.

Adisa, who in the novel is mostly the victim of a mind in conflict. Being driven home by Obofun who picked her on the way, the author exposes the turmoil that envelops her mind. The id being represented by her aunt's voice saying to her; "you are still young and beautiful and many men will come running after you." (73). The id again, still pushing further says;

Ah, you think you would die to have another
man touch you? You are wrong. There are

other alternatives to marriage. You can take a
room... [73].

By the last sentence in above extract, the id offers a suggestion, in a way has been able to suppress the ego. Now the superego surfaces in the voice of Idemudia (ringing in her mind) saying; "...I'll find out! I'll kill you!". This now, is the voice of the superego (in Adisa's mind), an external force, a body of rule and conduct reminding Adisa of the repercussion of having extra marital affair.

Another instance of conflict between the id, ego and superego can be found in below extract;

'you should go home now', her other mind said to her.
'yes, I will', she answered. 'Good. You must not let
yourself be tempted'. 'But perhaps he wantsto help
me? How can you believe that? Didn't you see the
look in his eyes when he invited you?' 'No', she told
her other self. 'I didn't see it'. 'Well, I saw', her other
self said. 'I saw it and it was not good. It was full of
lust'... 'Do you really imagine I am going to give
myself to him?' 'No, I do not. But you could be
tempted. You should go home'. [115-116].

In above extract, one can imagine the turmoil/conflict going on in Adisa's mind. The text constantly uses the phrase; 'her other self' to mean the different parts of Adisa's mind. While the ego warns her to go home so as not to be tempted to commit adultery, the id part of her mind reacts by stating that Obofun might help her. At this point, the superego also reacts by reminding her of the look in Obofun's eyes and interprets it to Adisa's consciousness that it was full of lust; in other words, acting as a counter check to the id's impulses that pressurizes Adisa to go and see Obofun. The ego again, with the voice of reason, warns Adisa to go home so as not to be tempted. At the end of this episode, we see Adisa moving towards the Airport road to meet Obofun, thereby defying the warning and restraint of the ego and the superego, choosing rather to obey the impulses of the id.

In page 168, Adisa being taken to the hotel by Obofun the second time thinks; "... 'And what have I got to lose?'

she asked herself. ‘Nobody will find out. Nobody will ever imagine that I was involved with such a man...Nobody...Not even Idemudia’.” At this point Adisa is already being manipulated by the id and the id has triumphed over the ego and the superego. At this point, she knew within her that she has been defeated because she has given in to the id’s impulses and is being enveloped by the feeling of guilt that emanates from the superego. This defeat which began in her mind manifested as Obofun dragged her into the bedroom and she gave in. Though “it was an unconscious fight, her conscious had already given in and so the fight was weak” (169).

One of the major themes in the novel is sexual exploitation. The rich exploits the poor and in this novel, Adisa, Idemudia and Iriso are major victims of sexual exploitation. In Adisa, however, we see the turmoil and resistance to the exploitation that goes on in her mind; the id, being in constant conflict with the ego and the superego and the final outcome is the triumph of the id over the other parts of the mind which makes Adisa a victim of sexual exploitation. In Obofun, the conflict in his mind as informed by the id, ego and the superego consequently informs his actions and inactions in the novel as well. He sees Adisa and begins to think of how he can have her. While “The better part of his nature accused him. ‘Adisa is married’, it warned him. ‘Don’t try anything with her. Just help her. You have the means. Help her and forget about her long straight legs’ ” (119). Now, the id part of his mind wants him to have Adisa; to have sex with her and satisfy his pleasures and desires. While the ego, is described here as “the better part of his mind”, wants him to assist Adisa and not assault her. Meanwhile, as the ego is at play in his mind, Obofun “...jolts himself away from this part of himself, this dissuading conscientious part of a man that always attempts to make him go straight” (120), thereby defying reason and succumbing to the impulses of the id. Another instance where the id becomes triumphant in Obofun’s mind can be seen when he regarded Adisa as being virtuous. “His better nature told him to ‘shut up and stop thinking about a married woman’ ”. (120). Finally, however, he resolves in his mind to concede to the impulses of the id. This defeat of the ego and superego by the id in Obofun’s mind is consequently seen as he finally had his way, sleeps with Adisa, thereby exploiting her sexually.

In Idemudia’s mind, the conflict in his mind rests on the fact that he has to fight for survival, to fend for his family, how to get a job and be able to take care of his family. The inability to achieve this, however set his mind in a total revolution as he, thinking of how he usually sells his blood to make ends meet decides he will not give up. He says; “ I am going to continue to struggle, to fight.” (157). Also, as a victim of sexual exploitation, Idemudia’s mind is seen in confusion as he is asked by Queen to sleep with her so as to discontinue the strike threat. His mind at this point that “having her would bind him to her as no other thing could...It would be even worse than accepting the money. And it would be unfair to Adisa...he would never do it. No, never. It was wrong” (299). By this, the ego and the superego wins over the impulse of the id.

It can be argued comfortably however, that the Marxist tenet of revolution first begins at the Freudian concept of the structure of the mind. That is to say, every revolutionary action is a product of a revolution and conflict that first started out in the mind. In the novel, the mind of Adisa is in total revolution against sexual exploitation, the current situation; their state of affairs, lack and penury. She revolts (in her mind) against the structure which has placed her and her husband at the down part of the ladder. She revolts against the fact that life has placed her where she has found herself; losing her father at a tender age and as a result was not able to complete her studies and the fact that men die in the village at their middle ages (just like her father) due to hard labor in the land, malnutrition, poverty and ignorance. (72). The pains, Adisa did not wish to remember and constantly fought back in her mind. The strike action suggested by Idemudia to the other workers, however, is borne out of his thought and a revolution that begins in his mind against his state of affairs. In his mind, he questions why “A man gets a job and he cannot protest. He cannot ask for higher wages...” Also from the boiling in his mind as a result of “his unfinished education, his joblessness, his hunger, his poverty”, by which he considers a form of violence, a “debasement of himself, his pride as a man” (243). These, hitherto fueled the reason for the strike action which he later suggested to the other workers in page 246.

As pointed out in New International version’s Holy Bible, in 1 Timothy 4:2, it is possible to have one’s conscience seared or dead as a result of the constant tilting towards the id and acting out its impulses. After a long period of constantly obeying the id and acting on its impulses, the conscience which is the superego becomes weakened and one is seen acting without necessarily listening to the voice of reasoning. For Queen, this conflict is perhaps silenced as she is portrayed as one who has lost her conscience. The text states that;

In the beginning, her conscience nagged her each time after she had gone out and had an affair with a man. But gradually, she lost her conscience in the thousands of naira that poured in to her, in the

confidence that she could use what she had to get
any man, to do what she wanted... [195-196].

The text, therefore presents to us the later part of Queen's mind whereby the id had already suppressed and quietened the ego and the superego and all her actions as shown in the novel are based on the impulses of the id. She acts so she can get what she wants; not minding whatever consequence that may bring. The author, however, uses this technique to capture the mind of the characters; the conflicts that exists therein, what they think, what bothers them, their struggles, etc. He shows to a very large extent that the mind determines each of our action and every action was first played out in the mind. The novel has an undertone of Marxism and the very essence of revolution which the Marxists posit begins in the mind and Iyayi has skillfully shown this.

4.2 Correlation between the Freudian Tripartite Model and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*

In his first novel, *A Walk in the Night* (1962), La Guma describes the political and social existence of the "colored" people of the District Six slum in Cape Town. He examines the life of the district through the actions of four characters during the course of one night. He focuses on the decay and despair of the slum, whose residents are frequently too absorbed by their own miserable state to react to it, and thus suffer alone. In doing so, he explores the connection between rights and responsibilities through the unfolding of his characters' decisions and actions. Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* forms a strong indictment on the evils of Apartheid in South Africa, particularly in the "colored" community. The novel exposes the hopeless and desperate life of the Blacks who are portrayed as victims of a social system that ultimately robs them of their humanity which according to Lindfors, "are victims of their environment and passions" (44). The novel provides insight into the socio-political situation of the South Africans in the early 1950s; a period which is characterized by the dominance of Apartheid policy in all spheres of life. *A Walk in the Night* describes the chain of events that occur after a black man; Michael Adonis is fired by the foreman at the sheet metal factory for daring to talk back at him.

For La Guma, the conflict that goes on in the minds of the characters is represented as the author makes the reader see into the minds of the characters; their fears, anger, their actions and inactions and consequently the struggle that goes on in their mind as a result of the action carried out by them. He represents Michael Adonis as a character who suffers under the discrimination metted out on the colored by the whites in South Africa. We clearly see into the mind of Michael as rage fills his mind. He is angry for being sacked by the foreman in the factory where he works and this fuels the anger in his mind which makes him to constantly swear; "I'll get him...That sonavabitch, that bloody white sonavabitch, I'll get him." (5). He therefore takes his revenge on an unsuspecting white man. Michael's anger and frustration drives him into killing a poor old white Irish neighbor, Uncle Doughty, whose skin color is a symbol of white oppression This anger culminating from his mind consequently led to his killing the old Irishman; old uncle Doughty in page 28 which threw his mind into state of conflict. He states;

...I didn't mean to kill that old bastard...to hell with all of them and that old man, too. What for did he want to go on living for, anyway...maybe I ought to go and tell them...you know what the law will do what the law will do to you...They'll hang you. you think they're going to listen to your story;...Awright man he's dead and you're alive. Stay alive Ja, stay and get kicked under the ars until you're finished, too... [43-44].

Here, the author reveals the state of his mind as being in constant conflict. We see the superego in action as his conscience somewhat pricks him for this deed as he keeps saying; "I didn't mean to kill that old bastards". At the same time the superego reminds him of the repercussion of the law and the consequences of committing murder especially in a racist South Africa. Finally, the id urges him not to report to the law instead he should stay alive till he is finished someday as it is the fate of all colored or blacks in a racist South Africa. Constable Raalt is described in the novel as a character who acts on impulse and whose actions are as a result of transferred aggression from the thoughts about his wife. In page 30, it is stated; "The other half of Raalt's mind was thinking, I'm getting fed-up with all that nonsense, if she doesn't stop I'll do something serious". The other half of Raalt's mind as described here can be said to be the Id. The thought about the friction he has with his wife, however, puts Raalt in tension which he seeks to release with the help of the Id. In page 39, he states;

'I wish something would happen, I'd like to lay my hands on one of those bushman bastards

and wring his bloody neck.' He found little relief in transferring his rage to some other unknown victim, but he took pleasure in the vindictiveness and his manner increased the discomfort of the driver who did not know what it was all about, but only sensed the rage that was consuming his companion [39].

Here, the Id wanting to express its impulses leads Raalt into swearing and transferring his aggression to an unknown person who may likely offend the law while he is on patrol. By obeying the Id in letting out above statement, Raalt, feels a sense of satisfaction through this transferred aggression. This anger boiling in his mind and in an attempt to obey the impulses of the Id led Raalt to shoot the innocent Willieboy against the advice of the driver who kept telling him not to shoot (86). This goes a long way to prove the above earlier statement about the Id that the id demands immediate satisfaction and when this happens we experience pleasure, when it is denied, we experience anxiety or tension and this ultimately determines our next action.

5. Conclusion

Some critics, however, discredit the viability of Freud's clinical data and regard it as being flawed or invalid. Greenberg believes that Freud's case studies do not place enough stress on revealing the outcome of the treatment and that Freud's aim was more to illustrate his theoretical points. In addition, Freud fully presented only twelve cases, but he mentioned over one hundred minor cases. Greenberg asserts that many of the presented cases would not even be considered acceptable examples of psychoanalysis; that virtually all of the case studies had basic shortcomings. Greenberg finds it "both striking and curious" that Freud chose to illustrate the usefulness of psychoanalysis through the display of unsuccessful cases (240-241).

Based on this research, it can be proven to some extent that the theory accurately describes the working of the human mind and explains the outcome of every human being as being first played out in the mind, owing to the conflict between the component parts of the mind as seen in characters in Iyayi's *Violence* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*. It should be however, noted that both authors apply this technique to develop the themes in their respective novels, such as, theme of violence, oppression, victimization, exploitation, etc as reflected in both works. They achieve this by delving into the minds of the characters and bringing to the fore their deepest fears, desires, tension, anxiety, anger and nursed guilt.

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