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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Psychoanalytic Interpretation of W. B. Yeats' Dialogue of Self and Soul  
in relation to Id, Ego, and Super Ego**

Shumaila Maryam Barozai<sup>1</sup> Hassin ur Rehman<sup>2</sup>  
Muhammad Naseem Tareen<sup>3</sup>

1. M. Phil Scholar, Department of English, Hamdard University Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. PhD Scholar, Department of English, Hamdard University Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
3. PhD Scholar, Department of Pashto, University Of Balochistan, Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan

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\*Corresponding Author | [shumailagulzar59@gmail.com](mailto:shumailagulzar59@gmail.com)

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**ABSTRACT**

The present paper is an attempt to explore a beautiful blend of psychological conflict of Yeats platonic belief with experiences of real life. The dialogue of self and soul written by William Butler Yeats gives the Anti-self-theory. To put in the context of Freud psychological frame of id, ego and super ego, this dialogue is a revolutionary attempt towards own deceptive existence. Through the character of Self and Soul Yeats tells, how the unconscious mind has a power to direct the conscious mind. Similarly Id is sometimes shown as a devil sitting on the shoulder of a person. As this devil stays there, he informs the ego to decide what to do based on how it will affect the self, especially how it will make the self-happy. The ego is a person with a devil (id) on one shoulder and an angel (super ego) on the other. The superego is sometimes symbolized by an angel seated on somebody's shoulder, informing the ego to base their actions on how they will affect society.

**KEYWORDS** Ego, Id, Platonism, Super Ego, Yeatsian Philosophy

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**Introduction**

William Butler Yeats was born on 3 June 1865 in Sandymount, Ireland. Yeats elevated Irish literature. Yeats, born into the Anglo-Irish landowning elite, joined the Celtic Revival, a movement opposing English control in Ireland during the Victorian period that promoted Ireland's original history. He grew up loving Spenser, P. B. Shelley, and William Blake and was motivated by Irish nationalism, mythology, and folklore. He is one of the rare authors whose best literary works came after the Nobel Prize. His plays often involve Irish folklore, spiritualism and mysticism. The Countess Cathleen (1892), The Second coming (1919), The King's Threshold (1904), and when you are old and grey (1891) are well-known.

W. B. Yeats wrote this conversation "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" in 1933 and appeared in his collection of poetry "The Winding Stairs." Platonism had a big impact on Yeats. He had formed his own theory of the self and the soul. In poetry, the poet's soul and self both communicate to convey their defining characteristics. The author indirectly expresses his inner mental conflict by this conversation of self and soul. He attempted to revive the simplicity and nature of antiquity and combine it with the idea of good and wrong.

In the field of literature, psychoanalytic lenses are used for understanding psychoanalytic concepts. It is well examined in the literary arts or texts that literary criticism has given approach to evaluate the texts applying psychoanalysis theory.

Sigmund Freud developed it to treat neuroses. It also explored mythology, religion, combat, literature, and other arts. Psychoanalysis approaches a patient's internal fears and meanings as cultural formations. According to what I can tell, the psychology of social growth in groups, nations, and even humanity as a whole must be viewed from the same angle. The evolution of humans and its culture can only be viewed as a dynamic process with a biological foundation due to how heavily influenced it is by the environment, economy, social life, and political conditions (Elias, 1939). Psychoanalysis has many meanings. In literature, it can be taken in two ways: first, as the treatment of mentally ill persons; second, as theories about the mind and its problems. As a medical student, Freud studied and treated patients. Freud's extensive career allowed him to notice his patients' mental distress. This led him to explore psychology and the unconscious mind. According to Freud, there are three domains of the human mind and psyche. His earliest findings were on psychoneurosis, dreams, humor, and daily life psychopathology, such as Parapraxis or slips of the tongue. Third, a conscious system. He wrote 1900's "The Interpretation of Dreams" His ideas may have come from studying dreams. The mind accumulates, synthesizes, and organizes happy and bad experiences (Rittman, 2014).

This theory is wholesomely fitted on W B Yeats' Dialogue of self and soul, written in spring, after a long illness during which Yeats felt he was so near to death. As this poem comprises the mental unrest of Yeats with his worldly desire and he suppresses his self (id) through the purity of his soul (ego). Yeats used symbols, myths and imagery to represent social evils. Second World War terror, corruption, and danger threatened his poetic career.

Additionally, he had a prestigious literary reputation. His intelligent molding of ancient myths had a profound influence on the readers. For him, Ireland seemed to be something unique and exceptional. He would get disappointed whenever he found the people of Ireland immersed in unworthy material pursuits. He criticized common masses, in general, and the younger generation, in particular, for not having emotional attachment to the Irish values, cultural norms and traditions. He aimed to reach directly to the supernatural reality from where the poet's images were derived. W. B. Yeats put accumulated them and expressed them in a combined manner. That is why his poems represent the whole range of English literature. From the world of magic, he transformed his poetry to the real world.

### **Literature review**

This part consists of the past works of Yeats and other research studies on W.B Yeats through various theoretical frameworks. His own short stories and poems are reviewed to explore the gap for the contemporary research study. In *A Psychological Approach to Fiction*, Paris (1974) said, "Psychology assists us discuss the author's knowledge, while fiction assists us appreciate what the psychologists are discussing." Realistic fiction's main impetus is mimetic, and psychological realism novels require psychological study. Fiction imitates life and is a study of the author's psyche.

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, Keats' odes may be interpreted as expressing longings and wishes, impossibilities and possibilities, the pleasures of Imaginative thoughts, and the frustrations of the one's condition. As a result, the odes are analyses of these troubling conflicts as well as mature expressions of many underlying concerns (Watson, 1992).

It is crucial that Yeats' "Poetic dialogues" draw readers' focus on the idea of "opposites" in *A Vision*, his philosophical work. Yeats appears to believe that the soul is

made up of a worldview that is in constant opposition, though he expands it by connection to include the subjective and the objective, affection and conflict, or the Solar and the Lunar, and declares that the two opposites are in constant opposition (Mann, 2002).

As a result, Yeats believed that existence is a constant struggle within one's own soul that may result in a change in status. Yeatsian philosophy says that the basic representation of such antinomies that persons encounter while they are still living is the principal and antagonistic modes of the Self. Unity is the underlying idea behind "primary," while separation is the essential idea behind "antithetical." This suggests that main forces are what bind things together, but opposing forces are what pull them away (Mann, 2002). Yeats contends that life is inherently at odds with God and that our conscience exists independently of God as long as we are conscious beings.

The vast majority of Yeats' poetry also has a hermetic perception of fate, which is described as a comparison between the microcosmic human and macrocosmic world of the skies, similar in composition with regard to soul, body and spirit (Helleman, 2010).

He writes in "A General Introduction to My Work": "I was born with this belief, have resided in same belief, and will die with it; my Christ... is that Unification of Being Dante compared to a properly dimensioned human form, Blake's "Vision," which rename by Upanishads "Self" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 120). Similar beliefs about intellect as being spiritual and scared, as well as the idea that the soul is essential to achieving such views – "the righteousness of the soul is knowledge" – have been observed in older Greek traditions (Hermeticum, 110).

The sign, which was created via intense deliberation. This principle will be used to encode and decode divergent philosophical viewpoints. The Yeatsian ideas simultaneously accomplishes two tasks. First, it finds relevant correspondences inside the Self. Second, it discovers link between the ideal and the expression "following Hermetic instruction" (James, 2010).

When examining the use of symbols in Blake's and Burn's poetry in his essay collection *Essays and Introductions* from 1980, Yeats elaborates on how the use of conflicting symbols ultimately dissolves into one another and gives rise to a single emotion. The soul "moves among and develops in symbols when intrusion has taken it away from all other impulses except its own," writes Yeats in a piece that is identical to this one (Yeats, 1980). Yeats's symbol represented meditative contemplation, individual intelligence, and the ability of the mind to bring harmony and, eventually, unification to poetry. In Yeats's poetical output, the symbol will act as a channel of communication between the poem and the poet's consciousness.

The "Ego Dominus Tus" poem by Yeats is unquestionably one of the most sophisticated in terms of both composition and themes, according to several poetic conversations of the time. It is said to be one of the first dialogues to "dramatize self-division" and to investigate the Self in oppositional terms (Gould, 2013).

In a similar vein, it can be said to be the first literary discourse in which, in addition to the development of the Anti-Self theory, modern conceptions of self-division are attained. In the Hermetic tradition, in which words are coordinated with deeds through real empathy sayings being the embodiment of deeds the implementation of the Anti-Self in "I request to my own opposite, invoke all that I have least handled, least looked upon..." is coordinated with deeds through sympathy (Yeats, 2015).

In addition, Yeats' belief that the remaking of the Self is expressly expected through seeking for opposition is an expression of his desire to represent symbolically and dialectically the counterpart of his impulses: "And as I analyze my own piece of writing, I am comforted by those poems in which it appears that I have discovered something harsh and frigid, an articulation of the Image that contradicts everything I am in my daily life (Yeats, 1980).

It is essential to recognize the conflicts inside the Self in order to learn about oneself. In "Ego Dominos Tuos," Yeats uses the term "Anti-Self" to refer to the unconscious mind; as such, it has characteristics that are fundamentally distinct from the conscious mind's. It evokes a personality that is simultaneously his antithesis and the culmination of his (...) unmet potentials. (Hirschberg, 1975).

Reading Yeats reveals that he is emotionally and spiritually troubled. This study aimed to discuss the psychological conflict of Yeats between his id, ego and super ego. The writer's psyche serves as an expression of his or her thoughts and ideas. This technique emerged during the period of romantic writing, as it relates to expressiveness, uniqueness, and inner monologues. In order for the reader to correctly grasp the poem's secret meaning, the poet must reveal his true essence through his poetry. This assumption is founded on the notion that a work of literature is related to the author's mental and emotional characteristics (Abrams, 1997).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Sigmund Freud and his colleagues popularized the psychological theory throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Freud's psychoanalytic theory revolutionized the examination and treatment of 'abnormal' adult behavior around the turn of the 19th century. Id, Ego, and Super-ego are Freud's three psyche structures.

Id- which mostly relies on the unconscious pleasure concept.

Ego- It primarily functions in the conscious world according to the reality principle.

Superego- which, at all levels of consciousness, largely functions on the morality principle.

### **Material and Methods**

This is a descriptive study. The researcher applies psychoanalysis theory on the poem "A dialogue of self and Soul" by W B Yeats through textual analysis along close reading.

### **Results and Discussion**

In poem both the Self and the soul discuss their traits and demonstrate certain truths about themselves in the poem, and on the basis of that, there is a discussion and dispute. By employing the traditional Christian-based structure of a dramatic poetry debate dispute, between the Soul (or heart) and the Self, Yeats flips the standard Christian moral ideological works in which the soul laments what the body has done (or body). Similarly according to Freudian psychoanalysis theory, ego works as a moderator of id. It helps to make id realize of its childish acts and desires. In the poem the soul and body have both been sent to hell by sin. Because the body desires pleasure specifically, the pleasures of the egoistic now rather than the pleasures of the future in heaven while

contemplating God, sin is frequently associated with the body. In a paradoxical way, Yeats' poem prefers the morality and immortality of spirit over the body and the life infused in it, with all of its imperfections, sins, and humiliations. The poem that follows offers a unique perspective on the frequent disputes between spirit and flesh. A new foundation for the understanding of neurosis was established through research that investigated the conflicts between the ego, the super-ego, and the id in light of the requirements imposed by the outside world (Freud, 1926).

## Id

The "id" is the source of all drives because id looks for ways to get rid of tension, energy, and excitement. It works by the principle of pleasure, which means that it looks for happiness and avoids sufferings. In this way of acting, the "id" tries to get rid of all the energy as soon as possible. In a nutshell, the "id" is too much, too quick, blind, irrational, not social, self-centered, and it wants pleasure and materialistic.

The inner monologue of the poet in the second stanza, which is the body's way of communicating with itself, can reveal author's id in an instant. Here the poet has used one of his life experiences in order to express the actual idea of our thoughts and desires in our life. Yeats attempts to evoke "pictures and recollection" from the past, things that would not vanish but pursue the artist. Other things remain; the people do not; only their images persist in the 'Great Memory', a transcultural memory storehouse, similarly the unconscious mind is known as the storehouse of unfulfilled desires, and id is the part of unconscious mind.

*My Self. The consecrated blade upon my knees*

*Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was,*

*Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass*

*Unspotted by the centuries;*

*That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn*

*From some court-lady's dress and round*

*The wooden scabbard bound and wound,*

*Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn.*

In connection with the first stanza as author says that one's moral thoughts makes the existence acceptable. Similarly Japanese consul Junzo Sato gave Yeats the ceremonial sword in 1920 after hearing him read in Portland. The Juno's sword is covered by embroidered sheath. In connection to the text, the id is also covered by ego as the time passes, maturity suppresses the id and ego leads the bunch of thoughts. The unchanging sword demonstrates how a physical object can be viewed as a sign of the passage of time. Generally speaking, soul is viewed as being pure, moral, and transparent. The excellent signals of the super ego to the ego ultimately designed a good soul and character. Similarly, in the same context, the Sato's blade is as sharp and unblemished by millennia as a soul. Covering the "wooden sheath" of the sword is a "piece of embroidered clothing, "This hand-made object seems to stand up to time because it breaks down more slowly and always looks like the moon.

*My Self. Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it*  
*Five hundred years ago, about it lie*  
*Flowers from I know not what embroidery –*  
*Heart's purple – and all these I set*  
*For emblems of the day against the tower*  
*Emblematical of the night,*  
*And claim as by a soldier's right*  
*A charter to commit the crime once more.*

The 4<sup>th</sup> stanza of the poem also reflects the character of id. Id has the basis of what later will ever be recorded for other basis of the psychoanalytical phenomenon. To this, the workings of Id at an, unconsciously, premature level, set the ground for its development and desire. Here, "emblematical of the night" is symbolized as a passage for the desires of Id to manifest. Later on, "And the claim as by a soldier's right" A charter to commit the crime once more" is taken as the preliminary requisite for the achievement of the ends that Id has so far accrued of; it has developed into what manifests the desire of expressing the action that id is combined of.

*My Self. A living man is blind and drinks his drop.*  
*What matter if the ditches are impure?*  
*What matter if I live it all once more?*  
*Endure that toil of growing up;*  
*The ignominy of boyhood; the distress*  
*Of boyhood changing into man;*  
*The unfinished man and his pain*  
*Brought face to face with his own clumsiness;*

Throwing light on the sixth stanza of the poem from the perspective of Freudian lenses, a man is the result of the interaction of all of these factors, which together constitute these three occurrences. To begin with, "a living man is blind and drinks his drop" signifies the process of Id as it only aspires for pleasure other than what constitutes for what is above pleasure. The ignominy of boyhood and the distress of boyhood changing into man, for Id the only matter is what and where the pleasure is at hand is coming forth. The 'distress of boyhood' peculiarities in its way are still not the course of what constitutes of the Id.

## **Ego**

Ego is the aspect of personality that maintains a balance between our unconscious impulses (id) and our conscious will (superego). In other words, the ego attempts to

balance the id and superego. For Freud, the ego is the representative of the outer world to the id (Ego and the Id, 1923).

*My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;  
 Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,  
 Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,  
 Upon the breathless starlit air,  
 Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;  
 Fix every wandering thought upon  
 That quarter where all thought is donerding to freud  
 Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?*

From a Freudian point of view, the first stanza is a sign of the ego because it has a part that is partly unconscious and has not yet been named. This means that the poet is trying to get closer to the truth. "Who can tell the difference between darkness and soul?" These lines in the stanza represents the idea of the soul as it tries to find out what is real and what lies below what is seen. In Freudian perspective, Yeats tells the role of ego and super ego through the character of soul. As the ego works as the moderator for id, similarly, the soul begins by claiming that it guides the body to its objective, despite all of life's twists and turns. The soul's gaze is fixed on the "star" that "marks the secret pole," implying that it must contemplate eternity and desire an eternal existence, which is not the fate of the body. However, there is some ambiguity in this objective; one cannot discern what the soul wishes to achieve. The soul also has the ability to assemble the Self's ideas into a quarter where the thoughts are collected. However, the soul asks itself a question: can anyone tell the soul from its darkness.

*My Soul. Such fullness in that quarter overflows  
 And falls into the basin of the mind  
 That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,  
 For intellect no longer knows  
 Is from the Ought, or Knower from the Known –  
 That is to say, ascends to Heaven;  
 Only the dead can be forgiven;  
 But when I think of that my tongue's a stone.*

The fifth stanza reflects the ego by stating that this fullness in that quarter overflows and falls into the basin of the mind, here it is clearly stated that ego is a powerful, but naive, emotional attachment that one has of their desire to specify things. Here, the fullness is the state of unconscious thought that an object or a thought occupies in the subconscious mind. Later on, in , Man has been rendered deaf, stupid, and blind since intellect no longer distinguishes between what is true and what is false., the workings of

the lack of the knowledge are at hand. It is because the mind cannot distinguish, so to say, in what is reality and what is not. It cannot determine if it is known and unknown; illusion, at this, occupies a central place in the mechanism of the ego.

*The finished man among his enemies? –*

*How in the name of Heaven can he escape*

*That defiling and disfigured shape*

*The mirror of malicious eyes*

*Casts upon his eyes until at last*

*He thinks that shape must be his shape?*

*And what's the good of an escape*

*If honour find him in the wintry blast?*

In seventh stanza of the dialogue, the ego has a pressing aspect as it forces a man into specifying things; however, that cannot come up because of the unclear stance that ego has of desires or things. "The finished man among his enemies?- How in the name of heaven can he escape" shows that the ego that after the Id has developed into a 'finished man.' Despite this, it cannot escape the trap of subconscious thoughts and cannot specify them. The mirror of malicious eyes Casts upon his eyes until at last he thinks that shape must be his shape?" This is an explanation of how uncertainty and inaccurately does the ego go into the realm of things. 'Malicious eyes' thoughts that are powerful force it to amalgamate illusion into reality 'that shape must be his?' The ego still is entrapped in what is happening and cannot form a clear conclusion out of it.

### **Super Ego**

The superego is the aspect of the personality that represents our conscience and morality. Due to the moral and ethical constraints imposed on us by our careers, the superego develops. It determines our perception of right and wrong. Freud viewed it as an introjected paternal authority that directs, criticizes, and protects the ego. He describes various pathological configurations of the super-ego: excessively idealization (narcissism), excessively aggression, as in obsessional neurosis, or in melancholia, where so much destructivity has "entrenched itself" in the super-ego that it acts like "a pure culture of the death instinct" (Freud 1923).

*My Soul. Why should the imagination of a man*

*Long past his prime remember things that are*

*Emblematical of love and war?*

*Think of ancestral night that can,*

*If but imagination scorn the earth*

*And intellect its wandering*

*To this and that and t'other thing,*



*Deliver from the crime of death and birth.*

The third stanza has numerous linking to the concept of super ego. It has reached a different stage where it can tell the difference between things. To explain that man who has long since passed his prime remember things that represent both love and war, This shows how the ego has evolved and become super; it can still tell the difference between things, so why isn't it required to ask questions . This is the difference between the two ways of thinking that are at play. For now, the need to think and feel about things has begun.

*I am content to live it all again*

*And yet again, if it be life to pitch*

*Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,*

*A blind man battering blind men;*

*Or into that most fecund ditch of all,*

*The folly that man does*

*Or must suffer, if he woos*

*A proud woman not kindred of his soul.*

It can be viewed as the "ego's" moral. Conscience and ego-ideal are two things that the super-ego emphasizes. The super-ego, which is the branch of human psychology and moral function that comprises the ideas we're fighting towards and the expected guilt when we violate our code of ethics, is the opposite of the id. Leon Wurmser ( 2003) was a novelist who focused extensively with the super-ego. In his writing, he investigated the "dilemma" between feeling ashamed and feeling guilty. Similarly, in these lines the folly that man does ,Or must suffer, if he woos, Superego has become the antithesis in that it has the unconscious flapping of the Id and the Subconscious void of the ego; it can differentiate in between how things are and knows what is what. Here it knows as to what one man should know and work for; this means that it can Differentiate in between what is right and what is wrong.

*I am content to follow to its source*

*Every event in action or in thought;*

*Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!*

*When such as I cast out remorse*

*So great a sweetness flows into the breast*

*We must laugh and we must sing,*

*We are blest by everything,*

*Everything we look upon is blest.*

These lines signify that it has measured the extent to which things have tendency to be followed; it wants to repeat an action that has moral grounds. This clearly exemplifies the understanding of the things that had previously vanished or was doomed unclear. Superego is conscious; it knows; it can differentiate; this is why it does have clear significance of the things because it knows what lies where and why is everything blest or is not so. This aspect of personality structure is reliant on social norms to regulate conduct and carry out its functions, rewarding positive behavior such as pride and self-love and punishing negative behavior like guilt, inferiority, accident.

### **Conclusions**

The main goal of this paper is to show "A conversation of Self and Soul" by Yeats is a fight between the id, ego, and super ego, despite the fact that his poetry dialogues were influenced by Hermeticism by displaying a number of ancient Greek philosophical concepts. Yeats, who was influenced by the Pre-Socratics, considers existence to be an endless struggle between opposites, and that these opposites can be found both inside and outside of us. I have explored the Self and the Soul's partition through Freudian theory of psychoanalysis as id, ego and super ego. Through this dialogue author aims to give moral grounds by supervising id through ego and then super ego, which will give socially and ethically accepted existence. William Butler Yeats' self-and-soul conversation produces the Anti-self-theory. This dialogue is a revolutionary attempt to deceive oneself, using Freud's id, ego, and super ego framework. Yeats shows in Self and Soul how the unconscious mind directs the conscious.

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