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A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN FRANZ KAFKA'S *METAMORPHOSIS*

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Abstract : *This study analyzes the psychological condition of the main character, Gregor Samsa in Metamorphosis, written by Franz Kafka as existentialist in 1912. The psychological conditions that shape the main character's personality in the form of anxiety, confusion, and sadness can line with the author's motivation as seen from his biography and the author's existentialist condition as outlined in this literary work. This study analyzes Gregor Samsa's personality using the Psychoanalysis theory of Id, Ego and Superego from Sigmund Freud, then linked the relationship between the main character's personality character and Franz Kafka's life experience as an author through the psychology of literature. This study uses a qualitative method of narrative analysis that represents narration and dialogue as the research object. The analysis contents are as follows; (1) Gregor Samsa's personality condition mapped through his Id, Ego and Superego. (2) Gregor Samsa's personality which is related to the life of Franz Kafka's personality as an author and gives rise to a new genre of Franz Kafka, namely Kafkaesque (3) Proving the conclusion through the collected data, the psychological conditions experienced by Gregor Samsa are a reflection of Franz Kafka's life as an author thus creating a new genre of literary work called Kafkaesque.*

Keywords : *Gregor Samsa, Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka, Psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, Psychology of Literature, Existentialism, Kafkaesque*

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Abstrak : Penelitian ini menganalisa kondisi psikologis dari karakter utama yaitu Gregor Samsa dalam *Metamorphosis* yang ditulis oleh seorang eksistensialis yaitu Franz Kafka pada tahun 1912. Kondisi psikologis tersebut membentuk kepribadian karakter utama berupa kecemasan, kegalauan, dan kesedihan ternyata bisa sejalan dengan motivasi pengarang yang dilihat dari biography nya dan kondisi eksistensialis pengarang yang dituangkan didalam karya sastra ini. Di dalam cerita tersebut, penelitian ini menganalisa kepribadian karakter utama yaitu Gregor Samsa sebagai objek penelitian menggunakan teori kepribadian Id, Ego dan Superego dari Sigmund Freud kemudian mengaitkan relasi antara kepribadian karakter utama dengan pengalaman kehidupan Franz Kafka sebagai pengarang melalui psikologi sastra tentang psikologi pengarang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif analisis naratif yang merepresentasikan informasi dalam bentuk narasi dan dialog sebagai objek dari penelitian. Adapun isi dari analisis, sebagai berikut; (1) Kondisi kepribadian Gregor Samsa yang mengalami kegalauan, kecemasan, kesedihan dengan kehidupannya yang dipetakan melalui dialog dan monolog (2) Kepribadian Gregor Samsa yang dijelaskan dalam aliran karya sastra Kafka disebut sebagai Kafkaesque (3) Membuktikan pada kesimpulan melalui data yang telah dikumpulkan bahwa kondisi psikologis yang dialami oleh Gregor Samsa merupakan cerminan dari kehidupan Franz Kafka sebagai pengarang. Sebagai seorang pengarang, karya sastra Franz Kafka merepresentasikan konteks social pada era itu bahkan masih relevan sampai sekarang dalam tema-tema eksistensial seperti itu.

Kata Kunci : Gregor Samsa, *Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka, Psikoanalisis Sigmund Freud, Psikologi Sastra, Eksistensialisme, Kafkaesque

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A. INTRODUCTION

Psychological conditions like confusion which is an expression of sadness can be found through narration and characterization in literary works that not only highlight the socio-historical and even cultural contexts of society but also represent mentality related to the reality that actually occurs. This psychological condition is referred to the expression of fear of conditions (social situations and their moral order) and objects (foreign substances beyond reason) that cannot be overcome or even anticipated by humans to achieve happiness.¹

One of the literary works that can be a reference to see the complexity and psychological condition in the society and become the focus of this study is a novella by a writer and existentialism philosopher named Franz Kafka entitled *Metamorphosis* (2005). This work is a masterpiece of many works by Kafka. Kafka wrote *Metamorphosis* when he was

depressed about the demands of work and family. This novella told about Gregor Samsa a traveling salesman who changed into a bed bug when he woke up. The changes that Samsa experienced made him a psychological dilemma, anxious in making decisions, anxious in dealing with life's conflicts and experiencing an identity crisis that led to inner turmoil. Kafka tries to dismantle the reality that occurs in a society that, in reality, everyone has a lifelike Gregor Samsa, who does not experience change and eventually dies like an animal, which eventually became its own genre, namely Kafkaesque.

Kafkaesque was a literary work genre in the form of gloom and sadness. This genre also presents stories where the subject always dead and there was an animal symbolization. It means that the bad human subconscious tried to fix it but cannot, in the end, humans must face the real reality of life. It made this literary

¹ Walgito, Bimo. *Pengantar Psikologi Umum*. (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2004), p.78

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work unique first from the title, second intrinsic elements associated with its context and extrinsic element, and finally Kafka's life itself. In this study wanted to analyze how Franz Kafka could write a Metamorphosis with a storyline that the readers considered unusual through the psychology of literature theory.

The psychology of literature concerns the psychological elements of fictional characters in literary works. In the study of literary works, aspects of humanity become part of the object of the psychology of literature.² Psychology of literature is an analysis of the text by considering the relevance and psychological role. The analysis focuses on the characters in the literary work. The psychology of literature has four definitions: (1) the study of author psychology, (2) the study of creative processes, (3) the study of types and laws of psychology applied, and (4) the impact

of literature on readers. This study used the first definition.³

The author's psychological approach was alluded to by I.A. Richards through his book *Principles of Literary Criticism* (2001). Richard explains that literary experience is integrated, synonymous with the mental structure taught in psychology. One of the several experts in the field of psychoanalysis is Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud argues about the importance of author psychology is an author weaves his delusions into a new reality of life, which can be understood as one form of escapism from real reality.

The scope of literary psychology is inseparable from the author's psychology, which uses perspective approaches, theories, and concepts of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. The concept of psychoanalysis focus on human consciousness and unconsciousness that

² Ratna, Nyoman Kutha. *Metode Penelitian Sastra* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar, 2004), p.344

³ Wiyatmi. *Psikologi Sastra* (Yogyakarta: Kanwa Publisher, 2011), p.28

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are considered aspects of the personality and issues related to instinct and anxiety. Freud further develops the concept of Id, Ego, and Superego as human personality structures and how humans interact.

Id relates to unconsciousness, which is the most primitive part of human possession containing instinctive, aggressive, and sexual impulses. For Freud Id was identical to the desire for pleasure. While Ego is the result of decisions taken by humans as a form of consciousness in interacting with reality. For Freud, Ego is synonymous with the principle of reality because Ego conforms to reality. Superego controls the standards and values that direct which behaviors can be done and cannot be done. According to Freud, the Superego is identical to moral principles.⁴

The psychology of author also explains about thought of author itself. Franz Kafka as the writer has his own

genre. The genre is existentialism genre. Existentialism is the ethical theory that we ought to treat the freedom at the core of human existence as intrinsically valuable and the foundation of all other values.⁵

Kafka writes in different ways of narrative method, from within the mind of the protagonist in the story is the author himself. All the protagonist in Kafka's writing especially Gregor Samsa always died in the end of the story. The existentialism idea of Franz Kafka is the expression: "One learns when one needs a way out". The other idea of existentialism from Kafka's writing is the description of the unknown word, the nightmare of his own anxiety-ridden existence in such fearfully dense diction and representation of the animal as unconsciousness word.⁶

This study applies the qualitative narrative analysis method. This method presents narrative information in text or image from the object of study. In this

⁴ Wiyatmi. *Psikologi Sastra* (Yogyakarta: Kanwa Publisher), p.77

⁵ Webber, J. *Rethinking Existentialism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.2

⁶ Czermak, Herberth, M.A. *Franz Kafka: The Metemorphosis & The Other Stories*. (New York: Hungry Minds. Inc, 2001), p.61

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study used text or novella as the object of study. Qualitative narrative analysis used some comments and components from the data analysis.⁷ The data collection steps involve (a) the limitation of the study through collecting narrative structure from the text, (b) describing narrative structure as the data, and (c) establishing the data from the novella through psychology of literature approach. Data analysis requires the maintaining oriented theoretical framework relevance to the data collection.

The object of the study is *Metamorphosis* novella written by author that born in Prague named Franz Kafka. This novella is famous in the 21st century, because the story written by Kafka according to the people in that era is very unusual, but has a deep existential aspect for the society in that era. *Metamorphosis* novella as the object of the study provides to finds out the psychological aspects of Franz Kafka as the author of *Metamorphosis* with the narrative

structure in the novella through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach and the relevance of existentialism through Gregor Samsa as the character in the story and Franz Kafka's perspective as an existentialist.

This study will analyze the following issues by main character in *Metamorphosis* such as; (1) Gregor Samsa's personality condition mapped through his Id, Ego and Superego. (2) Gregor Samsa's personality which is related to the life of Franz Kafka's personality as an author and gives rise to a new genre of Franz Kafka, namely Kafkaesque

B. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study focused on the psychological analysis of Gregor Samsa's personality from *Metamorphosis* story, which is become object and the focus of data collection. The data collection was elaborated used the Psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud to be used as the data

⁷ Creswell, John. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed methods*

Approaches. (England: Sage Publication, 2017), p.150

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analysis that would examine the psychological aspects from Franz Kafka as an author so he can write through Franz Kafka's biography.

1. Psychological Analysis of Gregor Samsa's Personality

The mental condition of the main characters was analyzed through the perspective of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis. It was related to personality formation that appeared through the dialogues from *Metamorphosis* as the data which translated by David Wyllie (2005), published by ICON Classics, San Diego, USA.

a. Id

According to Sigmund Freud, id is the mind we are all born with a desire and the impulses aimed at the immediate and complete gratification of those desires. Id relates to unconsciousness, it called as a primitive instinct related to aggressive

and sexual impulses. Freud called Id is the pleasure principle.⁸

Id appears there will be animal instincts that affect the distribution of that pleasure. It means the side of laziness and the animal side appear in Id that form monologues and dialogues to express the anxieties that have been suppressed and cannot be expressed to others.

In *Metamorphosis*, Samsa Id appear when he turned into the bed bug and tried to sleep longer than usually and forget about the strange dream he was having, while he must wake up to go to work. As expressed in the monologue below:
Samsa : How about if I sleep a little bit longer and forget all this nonsense

From the monologue above, Samsa thought that the transformation as a bed bug only a dream, while he realized that all this nonsense was real, so he wanted to back sleep again. This condition appeared because Samsa tried to get out through his sleep that the work he has been doing so far is

⁸ Rennison, Nick. *Freud & Psychoanalysis*. 9Great Britain: Pocket Essential), p.38

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monotonous, unpleasant, torturing his mind. It also about his life. Samsa is the breadwinner of the family who has to support his parents and sister. It makes him a lot of repression that he was hiding so it formed Samsa's Id in his life, one of them is working as a salesman. Samsa had to be friendly with anyone all the times, traveling from one place to another by train every day and having an irregular food. Samsa took the job because he must pay off his father's debts who had retired and supported the life of his father, mother and sister.

According to Freud, the unconscious was the result of repression and what were repressed were all those thoughts, desires and feelings which the conscious self-found unacceptable.⁹ It proves that Samsa repressed all his feeling in his consciousness. His felt that salesman made him hard to taking his time. Time to There was Id that Samsa hide before he turned into bed bug. When he turned into

a bed bug, Samsa's Id appear following the animal instic.

Samsa tried to hide his anxiety about the work he was doing to support his family. The job as a salesman makes Samsa feel emotional pressure which ultimately makes Samsa lose direction and purpose in life. Samsa considered the work that he took only on the wishes of his parents, not on his own desires so that Samsa felt burdened with the condition of the family that still needed him to support his family life.

Another reason Samsa's Id expressed his Id when he transformed a bed bug, because his manager. His manager never treated Samsa like a worker. Samsa frustration to his manager when his manager said that Samsa was a person with laziness, ineptitude, and even embezzlement even though Samsa tried doing his job well.

The transformation as a bed bug made Samsa utter the anxiety he has been

⁹ Rennison, Nick. *Freud & Psychoanalysis*. (Great Britain: Pocket Essential), p.30

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hide with spin out time to wake up and ignore his daily life activities, the compulsion about his job as a salesman. Samsa's Id appeared because Id is related to a human's desire for pleasure, but Samsa suppressed it. It means, when he became a human, there was a lot of repression that suppressed in his subconscious so when he turns into a bed bug, the repression follows the animal's instinct and appears in the form of anger that he had as lived a human.

b. Ego

Ego is the result of decisions taken by humans as a form of consciousness in interacting with reality. Ego is also synonymous with the personality that etymologically departs from the Latin persona meaning Mask.¹⁰

Ego is a psychological aspect of personality whose activities in human consciousness. It will control Id and Superego. It means, there is always a tug of war between Id and Superego which eventually creates the Ego or the mask in

humans to face in social. Ego always questions all actions taken by correcting these actions to bring up what mask a person will use in dealing with others, so from that side of pretense that makes a person depressed, which eventually gets repressed in the subconscious so that it gives rise to the Ego or mask presented to others in the form of statements with other people.

In Metamorphosis, Samsa's Ego appeared when he turned into a bed bug, he wanted to sleep again to forget about all this nonsense but before he back to sleep, he questioned about the changed. As expressed in the monologue below:

Samsa : What's happened to me ?

From the monologue above, when Samsa woke up from his sleep, he questioned the transformation that happened to him. Samsa realized that it was not a dream. He uttered like a human normally to cover up his consciousness while move his body and legs which had turned into a bed bug, he realized that it

¹⁰ Walgito, Bimo. *Pengantar Psikologi Umum*. (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset), p.77

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was impossible for his legs and body to move on bed. Samsa thought that he would still be able to work even if his body turned into a bed bug. There is a feeling of pressure and compulsion that is repressed in him because of external factors, namely family and social, which makes Samsa have to stay up and go to work.

Samsa showed his Ego to creates his consciousness like a human. He interacting all the actions to bring up what mask a person will use in dealing with others. Ego determines humans acting and deciding whether to follow the primitive human instinct that is Id, or follow the social norm standard that is the Superego.

Samsa's Ego reflects Samsa's anxiety and fear of the life he lived when he became a human. Samsa keeps a lot of these emotions, which eventually get repressed in the subconscious so that his Ego often appears by constantly questioning his presence. This condition arises because of the formation of his

family and work environment, which makes Samsa continue to pretend to be doing activities that are watchful and unpleasant.

c. Super Ego

Superego controls the standards and values that direct which behaviors can be done and cannot be done. According to Freud, Super Ego is an aspect of the human personality whose actions are based on normative values or social rules. There is a law that influences all the implementation of human action. It means when they do not follow the value, they will be felt punished.¹¹

Super Ego follow the social rules and also the basis of human conscience. The existence of morals and norms that apply in terms of acting makes a human obey the rules, but when humans do not follow it, they will feel punished in the form of guilt, regret, etc. It was to control Id in social rules and direct Id to fulfillment with moral principles so Super Ego identical to moral principles. Super Ego formed from

¹¹ Wiyatmi. *Psikologi Sastra*. (Yogyakarta: Kanwa Publisher), p.11

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the outside of human mind because there are restrictions from the outside such as our parents. This is why all human actions not only based on the Id. There are some morals and norms that influence the Id as well as the rules that limit how it works.

In Metamorphosis, Super Ego showed when Samsa followe the social rules, especially his parents. He always lived from the shadows of his family and his work. His family demands that Samsa must follow the standard norms of social life. Where, the children especially a boy child must be able to work and support all family members, this was experienced by Samsa when he had to carry out his family's wishes and replace his father's position as the backbone of the family.

As transformation into a bed bug, Samsa was still in the room, he thought about how to get out of bed and get ready for work because the train he used left soon. Suddenly, Samsa's mother, Mrs. Samsa, knocked on his son's room door because Samsa was almost late for work. As expressed in the dialogue below:

Mrs. Samsa : Samsa, it is quarter to seven.

Didn't you want to go somewhere ?

Samsa : Yes, mother, yes, thank-you, I'm getting up now.

From the dialogue above, Samsa showed his Samsa's superego appears when his mother calls him ready for work. It means that Samsa's moral value to his mother by immediately answering the word "Yes, yes" to his mother. Samsa shows obedience to his mother without having to argue and explain about the condition he is experiencing.

This condition occurs because every morning, his mother always woke Samsa up to work. Samsa followed his parent's wished to get up early. Whatever his parents said, Samsa always obeyed without resistance even though Samsa felt burdened by his parent's requests.

Superego formed from the outside of human mind because there are restrictions from the outside such as our parents. It showed that all the rules in social formed because there are some morals and norms that built in themself. Samsa always follows his parents' orders

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without any prior negotiation. The situation is standart norm in the social life that a child must support his family and become the backbone of the family.

The conclusion about Samsa's personality that Samsa has a lot of repression in his subconscious. Before he turned into a bed bug Samsa expressed a lot of repression in his life. It was caused many problems his repressed. Before turning into a bed bug, his family and his work controlled his life, which made Samsa felt pressured by the activities. Samsa suppressed many repressions when he became a human; that restraint then came to the surface when he turned into a bed bug. Samsa followed a primitive human instinct, which can be interpreted as his animal instinct.

Samsa has a lot of Id or desire that is in him. The ego of Samsa still follows his animal instincts or his Id so that his great desire defeats the Superego that is within him. The Superego within itself regresses when it turns into an animal. Superego was only presented when his mother and father asked Samsa to get ready to go to

work. Finally, in the end story Samsa choose to die alone without anyone and his family leaved him alone in their apartement.

2. Kafka's Personal Life

Metamorphosis is one of Kafka's works which is based on his personal experience and his anxiety about the condition of society in the 1920s in Prague. Kafka wrote the story based on his life story in the family environment he lived. Kafka wrote the story Metamorphosis in late 1912 after he wrote another literary work entitled The Judgment.

In the write of story, Franz Kafka has his own genre. It was called Kafkaesque. Kafkaesque is a literary genre in existentialism genre with dark things, nuances of sadness, nightmares, and human adversity in living life. This is line with one of the stories he wrote, it is Metamorphosis. Where the main character, Gregor Samsa, lived in the dark inside and did not experience freedom in his life. Samsa had experience

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oppression towards his own family and had no meaning in running his life. Kafka wrote *Metamorphosis* to convey the emotions that he suppressed in his life, especially on his father, into literary works.

In the *Metamorphosis* story, a salesman named Gregor Samsa turned into a large, disgusting bed bug. This change made Samsa's father, Mr Samsa hate his son and almost killed his son by throwing an apple at Samsa, while his mother very loved her son but she can not doing anything. It was same with his younger sister. His sister tried to accept and understood the changes her brother but in the end story his sister wants he died.

The conflict between Samsa's story and Kafka is very similar. Kafka's father, Hermann Kafka, came from a low-income family who married a bourgeois woman named Julie-Lowy. The large socio-economic and educational differences between his parents made the situation for Kafka's family difficult. The family conditions experienced by

Kafka made Kafka grow up to be a child with deep levels of anxiety and self-doubt. Kafka's anxiety was expressed in the *Metamorphosis* story and was welcomed by the European community at that time.

Franz Kafka is one of the child that have deep anxiety because he had incident when he was a small child. when he woke up at night to ask his father for a drink, but his father left Kafka outside with the door locked. Kafka left this trauma and became afraid of his father.

An obvious way to escape from Hermann's world, Kafka escaped from his father through wrote the literary literature. The condition that Kafka experienced when he was young was a lot of mental stress due to the influence of her father, thus forming a prolonged trauma for Kafka.

The trauma Kafka experienced when he woke up at night to ask his father for a drink, but his father left Kafka outside with the door locked. Kafka left this trauma and became afraid of his father. Kafka felt there was no freedom in

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his life. Kafka poured his anxiety about his father or society into Kafka in literary works. Kafka preserves all of his expressions in the art form, which the expression can see through the main character Gregor Samsa.

Kafka is someone who is self-analytic (people who analyze themselves without the help of other people), or self-obsessed, as a writer. This condition makes Kafka's ego visible because he was always correcting himself. The situation can see through Kafka's "self-analytic" personality.

In the story, Kafka describes his Ego in the form of the Ego Samsa. It showed when Samsa questioned about his change as a bed bug even though he only pretended to reveal it to look normal. Samsa's Ego was always questioning itself. There was an awareness that must be done when something weird becomes in us. This is in line with Kafka's Ego. Kafka was aware of the work he was doing but still had to do it fulfill his parents' wishes.

Kafka took a position with the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute in 1908 and worked there until he retired in 1922: it was an ideal job for Kafka due to its relatively short work day and the freedom it gave him for writing and thinking. Kafka chose to work in an insurance company because of demands from his father and mother.

Kafka's literary works are based not only on personal experience but also on social conditions during the Kafka era. These conditions make up the Superego in him. The family or community system presents some values and norms to openly limit a person from venting their emotions or desires. It was like Samsa in Metamorphosis story. Samsa appeared obedience to his father. Samsa immediately said "I'm ready, now" when his father knocked on the bedroom door. The Superego shown by Samsa represents the Superego that was owned by Kafka when he wanted to work as an insurance worker after he completed his study in the legal department.

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The process of developing Id Kafka was due to childhood trauma to his father, which made him pretend to do everything, including working as a consultant. Kafka presented this ego to remain hidden and write literary works. His superego follows his parents' wish to continue working as a consultant without following Kafka's desire to become a writer. This proves that the main character, Gregor Samsa, represents Kafka himself in living his life. Kafka poured it into the *Metamorphosis*, which is an existentialism genre with his thoughts, it was Kafkaesque.

In the end, Kafka's concept in literary works with the existentialism genre represents the life of society in general. The existentialism idea of Franz Kafka is the expression: "One learns when one needs a way out". It means that when a person experiences ignorance of his existence, that person cannot understand the learning position to

reach the solution that Kafka meant, namely the meaning of human existence itself.

The other idea of existentialism from Kafka's writing is the description of the unknown word, the nightmare of his own anxiety-ridden existence in such fearfully dense diction and representation of the animal as unconsciousness word¹² Therefore, Kafka's writing style, Kafkaesque, is an important contribution to seeing the social context situation related to the crisis of existence in the form of alienation and turmoil and becomes a reference for literary works next era to capture the social phenomena that occur.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion the study found of Gregor Samsa's psychological analysis as the main character using Sigmund Freud's theory of personality, Id, Ego and Superego. Samsa's

¹² Czermak, Herberth, M.A. *Franz Kafka: The Metemorphosis & The Other Stories*. (New York: Hungry Minds. Inc), p.61

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Id showed that Samsa has many psychological emotions are anxiety, sadness, fear, and anxiety about his life while being a human. Kafka's Id formed due to childhood trauma that he repressed and became a shadow for Kafka himself. In the end, Kafka channeled his Id into this literary work which was represented by the character Gregor Samsa. The Ego occurs there was an emotion that Samsa repressed, so that it showed the pretense in carrying out his life. Samsa's Ego represents Kafka's Ego. Kafka tries to present his Ego by still working as a consultant. Kafka still wrote stories to channel the anxiety that she could not show to others. The Superego emerged because of Samsa's obedience to his parents and manager. Samsa follows the standard values or norms in the family and society. This condition same e with Kafka's life. Kafka was never able to felt freedom. His life always arranged by his father.

Finally, Kafka's personality and Samsa's personality became introvert

even with his family or social. This condition made Franz Kafka poured his anxiety into literary works. For Kafka, there is a dark side that not shown by other authors. It is a fear from the other people to recognize their animal side, which has been hidden all this time. Kafka represents their animal side as a cockroach in the Metamorphosis. The condition of Kafka's life became a support to genre that he introduced, the namely is Kafkaesque.

In this study, the researcher only focuses analyzes the main character in narrative structure using the theory of literary psychology through the psychoanalysis approach of Sigmund Freud especially about the author's psychology. Hopefully, further research will using another approach, such as the impact of literature on readers. The researcher also recommends further research using other other techniques of analysis in book rather than the narrative analysis used by this study, such as the semantic and other methods.

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