

**NASKAH PUBLIKASI**

**SPLIT PERSONALITY OF COBB IN *INCEPTION* MOVIE (2010)  
DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN:  
A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH**



by:  
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**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**

**2012**

**APPROVAL**

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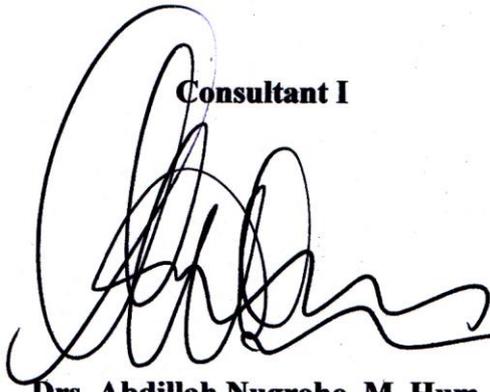
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ACCEPTANCE

SPLIT PERSONALITY OF COBB IN *INCEPTION* MOVIE (2010)

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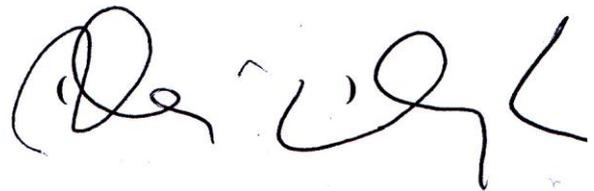
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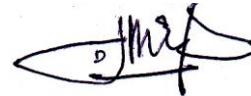
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Herewith, I testify that in this research paper, there is no plagiarism of the previous literary work which has been raised to obtain bachelor degree of a university, nor there are opinions or masterpieces which have written or published by others, except those which the writing was refered in the manuscript and mentioned in bibliography.

Hence, later, if it is proven that there are some untrue statements in this testimony, I will hold full responsibility.

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**SPLIT PERSONALITY OF COBB IN *INCEPTION* MOVIE (2010)  
DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN:  
A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The research is proposed to analyze the split personality of Cobb's personality with Psychoanalytic Approach. The objectives of this study are to analyze the Inception movie based on Psychoanalytic approach and analyze the movie based on its structural elements. The researcher used descriptive qualitative method as the type of the research. The writer uses the movie of Christopher Nolan entitled Inception as the object of the study. There are two kinds of data sources used in this analysis, namely primary and secondary data source. The technique of the data collection in this research is library research by summarizing, paraphrasing and documenting the data. In analyzing the data, the writer employed descriptive qualitative analysis. Based on the psychoanalytic analysis, in "Inception" movie, the researcher makes an analysis of Cobb's personality. The researcher uses the theory of Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud that is relevant to the problem. Based on the analysis, the outcome of this study shows that the split personality of Cobb is caused by the traumatic experience in the past.*

**Key words:** *split personality, inception, and psychoanalytic approach*

**A. INTRODUCTION**

Psychology is a methodology of studying mental behavior and mental process. Psychology also learns about the function of physic of healthy people, the relation between people behavior and the other human. It comprises everything related to the feeling, thought, ideas, behavior, etc. Related to the psychology,

every person has a different character or personality. Personality is the particular combination of emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral response patterns of an individual. The term personality is difficult to define because there is little common agreement on how the term should be used.

Person may have a good or bad personality. However, in other case there is a person who has two personalities; in psychology, it is called *Split Personality*. It is a multiple personality disorder, a neurosis in which the personality becomes dissociated into two or more distinct parts each of which becomes dominant and controls behavior from time to time to the exclusion of the other parts. *Split Personality* is a relatively rare dissociative disorder in which usual integrity of the personality breaks down and two or more independent personalities emerge. The *Split Personality* case is also reflected in Christopher Nolan's movie entitled, *Inception*.

*Inception* (2010) is a science fiction action film, written, co-produced, and directed by Christopher Nolan. The film starred by Leonardo Di Caprio, Ken Watanabe, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Marion Cotillard, Ellen Page, Tom Hardy, Cillian Murphy, Dileep Rao, Tom Berenger, and Michael Caine. Development began roughly nine years before *Inception* was released. *Inception* premiered in London on July 8, 2010, and was released in both conventional and IMAX theaters on July 14, 2010. *Inception* received wide critical acclaim, with numerous critics praising it for its originality, cast, score, and visual effects. The film received eight Academy Award nominations, including Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay, and won four awards for Best Sound Editing, Best Sound,

Best Cinematography and Best Visual Effects. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/inception>).

*Inception's* director, Christopher Nolan was born at 30 July 1970 in London, England. His birth name is Christopher Jonathan James Nolan. Chris studied English Literature at University College London while starting to make films at the college film society.

*Inception* began with a story of Dom Cobb, a professional thief who specializes in stealing secrets from his victims by infiltrating their dreams. Cobb leads a team consisting of Arthur, Ariadne, Eames, Saito, and Yusuf, with the goal of influencing Robert Fischer's actions via his dreams. Cobb also struggles with memories of his dead wife, Mal who manifests within his dreams and tries to sabotage his efforts. Cobb approached by the wealthy Mr. Saito, Cobb's last extraction target, asks him and his team to perform the act of "*Inception*", planting an idea within the person's subconscious mind. Saito wishes to break up the vast energy empire of his competitor, Maurice Fischer, by suggesting this idea to his son Robert Fischer who will inherit the empire when his father dies. The film cuts to the end credits from a shot of the top wobbling ambiguously, inviting speculation about whether the final sequence was reality or another dream. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/inception>).

The writer discovers four reasons to choose this movie. The first reason is that *Inception* is interesting movie. It means that this movie has a best visual effect, unique story line and also consists of a science, fiction, and action that can make viewer interested in this movie. Secondly, there are many good messages

that can be found in this movie. Some of them are about loyalty and love. Thirdly is conflicting which is interesting to study. The conflict here appears when Cobb tries to incept his mind to his wife's mind and wishes to change her mind. He tries to control the unconscious mind of his wife with inception process of dreams, but it is failed, His wife died and it makes a mental traumatic for Cobb. The last reason is the personality of the major character which is interesting to study.

Concerning the idea which has been explained in the previous background of the study, there is one single problem that arises in this study namely: "How is the split personality of Cobb reflected in *Inception* movie ?"

## **B. Research Method**

The type of the study is descriptive qualitative research. Moleong (Moleong, 1989: 3) provide the various steps of conducting qualitative study in his book. The steps of conducting this qualitative study are 1) determining the object of the research, 2) determining the source of data, 3) determining the method of data collection and 4) determining the technique of data analysis. This research is proposed to identify the split personality of Cobb on *Inception* movie directed by Christopher Nolan.

Data of the study is literary taken from two data sources, namely, primary and secondary. The primary data source is taken from the movie directed by Christopher Nolan entitled *Inception* published by Warner Bros. And Legendary Pictures, and the secondary data sources are materials taken from books and internet related to the study.

The data collection is done through library research. Some steps of collecting data are: (a) watching the movie several times, until the writer gets an adequate information or data to be analyzed, and then read the script to adjust it with the movie. (b) Reading some other resources related to the movie, (c) Taking notes for the important parts both in primary and secondary sources in data book or notebook or by using computer, save the data on the disc, (d) Classifying the data into categories and develop them into a good unit.

In this study, the technique which is used to analyze the data is descriptive analysis. This technique describes the event better than the summary. It is begun with the author and his work, the structural analysis of the movie and finally psychoanalytic analysis of the movie.

## **C. Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Structure Personality of Cobb**

Cobb is the major character, that has contradiction of his *id*, *ego* and *superego*.

#### **a. *Id* of Cobb**

*Id* is the basic system of personality to satisfy the need, wished by the human. This tendency of the *id* to devote itself exclusively to immediate reduction or tension is called the pleasure principle.

The first *id* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb wants Saito to trust him, so he can accomplish his ambition easily infiltrating Saito's conscious mind and stealing some information from it.

Cobb : But, Mr. Saito, we can train your subconscious to defend itself from even the most skilled extractor.

Saito : How can you do that?  
Cobb : Because I am the most skilled extractor. I know how to search your mind and find your secrets. I know the tricks, and I can teach them to your subconscious so that even when you're asleep, your guard is never down. (00:03:15)

The *next id* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb wants to meet and come together with his children. Cobb accepts Saito's offer because he knows that it is the only way to come home and meet his children.

Saito : Mr. Cobb...? There is one other thing I could offer you. How would you like to go home? To America. To your children.  
Cobb : You can't fix that. Nobody could.  
Saito : Just like inception. (00:20:14)

*Cobb* also shows his *id* when he wants to meet Eames in Mombasa. Cobb wants Eames to help him. Cobb knows that Eames has a capability to help him and he hopes that Eames can be a part of his team. Cobb just uses his instinct to decide it without considering the impact.

Cobb : I've got to talk to Eames.  
Arthur : Eames? But he's in Mombasa. Cobol's backyard.  
Cobb : Necessary risk. (00:34:49)

In the next story, Cobb also shows his *id* when Cobb tells that he regrets the moment when he leaves his children. Cobb feels sad because he can completely see his children's smile for the last time when he leaves them.

Cobb : I thought about calling out, so they'd turn and smile those incredible smiles... but I'm out of time  
Cobb : Then I panic that I'll always wish I'd seen them turn, that I can't waste this chance... (00:57:26)

Cobb also shows his *id* when he doesn't allow Ariadne to go with him to perform inception within Robert Fischer's mind. Cobb wants to protect Ariadne as he promises to Miles.

Ariadne : I'm coming with you.  
Cobb : No. I promised Miles. (01:00:57)

Cobb also shows his *id* when he feels angry with Arthur.

Cobb : So why the hell didn't it?!  
Arthur : Calm down.  
Cobb : Don't tell me to calm down-you were meant to check Fischer's background thoroughly. You can't make this kind of mistake-we're not prepared for this kind of violence-(01:08:01)

The next *id* of Cobb can be seen when he is angry with Mal, because Mal wants him to follow her way and leave their children.

Mal : Admit it, Dom. You don't believe in one reality anymore. So choose. Choose your reality like I did. Choose to be here. Choose me.  
Cobb : (rising anger) I have chosen, Mal. Our children. I have to get back to them. Because you left them. You left us. (02:00:40)

The last *id* of Cobb can be seen when he feels guilty with a mistake he made in the past. Cobb feels that he cannot do anything to fix that.

Mal : You keep telling yourself what you know... but what do you believe? What do you feel?  
Cobb : Guilt. I feel guilt. And however confused I might get. However lost I might seem... it's always there. Telling me something. Reminding me of the truth. (02:02:26)

#### **b. *Superego* of Cobb**

The *superego* as the principle of morality consists of some values and evaluated norms. The function of *superego* is to decide whether something is right or wrong, good or bad, and moral or amoral in standard authorized by the society. In *Inception* movie, Cobb also shows some of his *superego* such as when he offers Saito to protect his conscious mind from the extractor. Cobb thinks that it is good for him to do that. Cobb wants Saito to trust him and then he can easily extract some information from Saito's mind, because if Saito accepts him to become

Saito's trainer, Saito has to open his mind completely, and let Cobb infiltrate his mind. Cobb also shows his *superego* when he decided to accept Saito's offer. Cobb realizes that it is impossible to perform inception, but Cobb thinks it is good for him to accept that, because he knows that it is the only way he can go back to his children.

Arthur : I know how much you want to go home-  
Cobb : No, you don't.  
Arthur : But this can't be done. (00:21:38)

Cobb also shows his *superego* when he decides to meet Eames in Mombasa. Cobb knows that he shouldn't do that, because it is dangerous for him to meet Eames in Mombasa, there are too many people from Cobol Engineering that will catch him if he goes there, but Cobb thinks that is the only way he can get Eames. Although that is too dangerous for him, there is possibility for him to get Eames and Cobb should take that chance.

Cobb : I've got to talk to Eames.  
Arthur : Eames? But he's in Mombasa. Cobol's backyard.  
Cobb : Necessary risk. (00:34:49)

The next *superego* of Cobb can be seen when he decides to leave his children. Cobb thinks that is the best way for him to leave his children. If he doesn't do that, he will go to jail because he is accused that he is the killer of his wife.

Cobb : Then I panic that I'll always wish I'd seen them turn,  
that I can't waste this chance...  
Cobb : But the moment's passed. And whatever I do, the  
dream's always the same... When I'm about to call...  
they run. (00:57:44)

Cobb also shows his *superego* when he rejects Ariadne to go with him. Cobb thinks it is better for Ariadne not to come with him, because he wants to protect Ariadne. Cobb also shows his *superego* when he blames Arthur. Cobb

thinks that Arthur is the person who is responsible to check everything about Fischer, and when Arthur doesn't do his duty well, he puts them in the dangerous position. Cobb thinks that Arthur should be the one to blame.

Cobb : So why the hell didn't it?!  
Arthur : Calm down.  
Cobb : Don't tell me to calm down-you were meant to check Fischer's background thoroughly. You can't make this kind of mistake-we're not prepared for this kind of violence. (01:08:01)

The next *superego* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb thinks that he must go back to his children, because they need him. Cobb refuses Mal's offers to stay with her. And the last *superego* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb regrets his mistakes. Cobb thinks that it will be better if he doesn't do that.

### c. *Ego of Cobb*

The ego is the buffer between the *id* and the world's realities. *Ego* connects with real world. The *ego* operates on the reality principle. In *Inception* movie, Cobb also shows some of his *ego*. The first *ego* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb fails to persuade Saito to trust him. Cobb fails to make Saito open his mind, let him infiltrate and softly extracts some information there, so Cobb decides to steal information from Saito's conscious mind. Cobb thinks that it is the only way he can get information from Saito's mind.

Arthur : He knows. What's going on up there?  
Arthur : Saito knows. He's playing with us.  
Cobb : I can get it here. The information's in the safe.. He looked right at it when I mentioned secrets. (00:05:12)

The next *ego* of Cobb can be seen when he recruits some people to help him. Cobb knows that it is impossible for him to perform inception alone, so he decides to assemble a team to help him.

Saito : Assemble your team, Mr. Cobb. And choose your people more wisely. (00:21:26)

The next *ego* of Cobb can be seen when he goes to Mombasa to meet Eames. Cobb hopes that he can find Eames and asks him to become his team, because Cobb needs a person who has specialties as a forger not just a thief. So Cobb decides to go to Mombasa to find Eames.

Cobb : I've got to talk to Eames.  
Arthur : Eames? But he's in Mombasa. Cobol's backyard.  
Cobb : Necessary risk.  
Arthur : There are plenty of other thieves.  
Cobb : We don't just need a thief. We need a forger.  
(00:34:49)

Cobb also shows his *ego* when Cobb decides to get back in the real world. Cobb wants to see his children again, so Cobb decides to find a way to get back to the real world to come together with his children.

Cobb : If I'm going to see their faces again-I've got to get back here in the real world... (00:58:10)

The next *ego* of Cobb can be seen when he finally allows Ariadne to go with him. Cobb allows Ariadne to go with him, because Cobb thinks that no one knows what he struggles in the dreams better than Ariadne.

Ariadne : The team needs someone in there who understands what you're struggling with. If you don't want it to be me then you need to show Arthur what I just saw.  
Cobb : We need one more seat on the plane. (01:01:01)

Cobb also shows his *ego* when he decides to move on and fight with Fischer's security, because Cobb thinks that it is the only way for them to finish their mission. Cobb thinks that it is impossible for them to finish it without being killed if they just sit it out on this level and wait for the times to come and wake them up.

The next *ego* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb refuses Mal's offers to stay with her, and Cobb decides to get back to his children, because he knows that they need him.

Mal : Admit it, Dom. You don't believe in one reality anymore. So choose. Choose your reality like I did. Choose to be here. Choose me.  
Cobb : I have chosen, Mal. Our children. I have to get back to them. Because you left them. You left us.  
(02:00:40)

The last *ego* of Cobb can be seen when Cobb decides to let Mal go. Cobb realizes that she is just a projection and she is not real, so Cobb lets her go and then tries to move on to continue his life.

Cobb : I can't stay here to be with her because she's not real.  
Mal : Not real? I'm the only thing you do believe in anymore. Here-doesn't this feel real, Dom?  
Cobb : I wish you were. But I couldn't make you real. I'm not capable of imagining you in all your complexity and... perfection. As you really were. You're the best I can do. And you're not real. (02:07:50)

## **2. Split Personality of Cobb**

Cobb's split personality has close relationship with the system of personality which consists of *id*, *superego*, and *ego*. His split personality is reflected in his system of personality. Cobb's split personality begins when he fails to perform an inception in his wife's mind, and then his wife is died. It makes a traumatic experience for him. He is confused whether his wife is already died or still alive. Cobb's personality is split into two kinds of personalities. Cobb realizes that his wife is already died, but in the other side, he still keeps the projection of his wife alive in his subconscious mind and it controls his personality that makes Cobb think that his wife is still alive.

Split personality case of Cobb cannot be separated from the traumatic experiences through his past. Cobb has traumatic experience when he fails to plant an idea within his wife's mind and finally makes his wife died by killing herself. This case makes Cobb's personality change. Cobb is confused whether his wife is real or not, because the projection of his died wife always comes in his subconscious mind and tries to control him.

Mal : So certain of your world. Of what's real. Do you think he is- (points at Cobb) Or do you think he's as lost as I was?

Cobb : I know what's real.

Mal : What are the distinguishing characteristics of a dream? Mutable laws of physics? Tell that to the quantum physicists. Reappearance of the dead? What about heaven and hell? Persecution of the dreamer, the creator, the messiah? They crucified Christ, didn't they?

Cobb : I know what's real.

Mal : No creeping doubts? Not feeling persecuted, Dom? Chased around the globe by anonymous corporations and police forces? The way the projections persecute the dreamer? Admit it, Dom. You don't believe in one reality anymore. So choose. Choose your reality like I did. Choose to be here. Choose me. (02:00:10)

Finally, with the help of Ariadne, Cobb can release his problem step by step. Of course, the domination from the projection of his died wife also takes an effect to him. His second personality finally disappears when he decided to let her go, by killing the projection of his wife and leaving the memories of them. However, from the reference of the other cases of split personality; it does not fully disappear. The second personality may appear again in the future when he gets another traumatic problem.

### 3. Discussion

After analyzing the major character's personality elements, it can be concluded that each of them possesses important rules in building the character of Cobb.

In *Inception* movie, Christopher Nolan as the director of the movie focuses both on the external conflict and internal conflict of the major character namely Cobb. Cobb is a professional thief who has specialties in stealing a secret within his target's mind or called as extractor. Nolan describes Cobb as a man who has a problems caused by the traumatic experiences through his past. Cobb makes a mistake in the past when he fails to plant an idea in his wife's mind. Cobb performs an inception in his wife's mind, because he wants to change her. In *Inception* movie, Cobb is also described as a person who has a problem with his personality. It is called split personality. Cobb's split personality is caused by the traumatic experience in the past. It begins when Cobb's wife died, and it makes Cobb's life covered with a guilt. Cobb thinks that he makes a big mistake and it affects his personality. Cobb is confused whether his wife is already dead or still alive. In the real world he realizes that his wife is dead, but when he is drown in some level of dreams, the projection of his wife comes, and he thinks that she is real.

Christopher Nolan makes a good relation between *id*, *ego* and *superego* of Cobb's personality. He draws the conflict between *id* and *superego* and how the *ego* obeys the *superego*, because the power of the *id* always pressures the *ego*. The example of the conflict can be seen in the beginning of the story when Cobb

accepts Saito's offer to perform an inception in Robert Fischer's mind. Cobb's *id* suggests him to accept Saito's offer, because Cobb wants to get back to his children again, and that is the only way to go home and come together with his children. The *superego* of Cobb suggests him not to do that, because it is almost impossible for him to do that. The other reason is that Cobb has a traumatic experience when he fails to perform an inception in his wife's mind. Because Cobb's *id* is more dominant than his *superego*, Cobb finally accepts Saito's offer. Cobb knows that he must take that chance because that is the only way for him to come together with his children.

After analyzing Cobb's personality, it can be known that Cobb is a person who has a unique personality. It is called split personality. Cobb's split personality rises when he is confused to define whether his wife has died or still alive. Cobb realizes that his wife has already died, but in the other side, he still keeps the projection of his wife alive in his subconscious mind and it controls his personalities that makes Cobb think his wife is still alive.

Split personality case of Cobb cannot be separated from the traumatic experiences through his past. Cobb has traumatic experience when he fails to plant an idea within his wife's mind and finally makes his wife died by killing herself. This case makes Cobb's personalities change. Cobb is confused whether his wife is real or not, because the projection of his died wife always comes in his subconscious mind and tries to control him.

Based on the Psychoanalytic analysis above, the conflict of three elements of Cobb's personality occurs, influencing his character in this movie.

His personality is one of the most important aspects to support the story of this movie. Christopher Nolan makes a good relation between *id*, *ego*, and *superego* in Cobb's personality. In conclusion, Cobb finally can release his problem. Cobb opens his mind that he must go back to reality and realizes that his wife has already died. Cobb can do nothing to fix his mistakes, but he can learn from his experiences.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Referring to the previous analysis, the researcher takes some conclusions. As it has been discussed above, the researcher uses the psychoanalytic approach to analyze the data of the research.

Firstly, the structural elements of *Inception* movie present unity. The interesting points are shown by the character and characterization and also the theme of this movie. In the character and characterization, this film focuses on the major character namely Cobb who has a strong character. Cobb has a role as the main focus of the movie. Cobb is described as a person who has a strong personality although he gets many problems of his life. He is not easy to surrender. That is one of the moral messages that the director suggests to the viewer. The other interesting points are the theme of the movie. The theme of the movie is really interested to be studied.

Secondly, based on the psychological analysis, Christopher Nolan reflects psychological phenomenon that split personality could happen through someone's personality caused by the traumatic experiences in the past. The split

personality of Cobb rises when he fails to perform an inception in his wife's mind and it causes his wife died. The split personality toward the major character reflected in *Inception* movie is the personality reaction. In this movie, it can be seen that the major character's personality has changed.

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