DESIRE FOR POWER IN SOPHOCLES’S ANTIGONE DRAMA
(496 BC-406 BC):

A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The major problem of this study is how the desire for power is reflected in the major character’s personality. The object of the study is Antigone drama written Sophocles in 496 BC – 406 BC. The aim of this study is to analyze Sophocles’s Antigone drama based on the Psychoanalytic Perspective. This study focuses on the major character, namely Creon. The method of data collection is qualitative method. This study uses two data sources, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the script of the play itself, while the secondary data source includes books and other data that have relationship with the research. Technique of the Data Collection is taking note, while the technique of Data Analysis in this study is descriptive. Based on the psychological analysis, it clear that in Antigone drama Sophocles describes a psychological perspective, in which the major character, Creon has some qualities as ambitious to get the highest position and authority to achieve power.

Keywords: Desire for Power, perspective, Creon, Sufferings

INTRODUCTION

Basically, human is social creature which cannot life without other helps. The interaction with others in society will makae them understand about their tasks as human and be able to survive in their life. Everyone has the same purpose in life. People have the desire to be happy and can live well. According to Merriam (1998: 208), desire is wish, want, crave, covet mean to have a longing for. Desire stresses the strength of feeling and often implies strong intention or aim.
People think that if they have high position and power, they will get honor and happiness. According to Merriam (1998: 567), power is possession of control, authority or influence over others; ability to act or produce an effect. Most people think, if they have much money, power, and position; it is everything. They will do everything to get them. It will cause competition each other and make potential criminals. So, desire for power make people do anything ways. They will do anything to realise their desire. Some people have false representation of happiness. They think power can give happiness. They use anything way to release his desire. It can cause suffering to us or others.

Antigone Drama was written in 496 BC – 406 BC by Sophocles in Athens, Greece. It was translated in English by Dudley Fitts and Robbert Fitzgerald. In 429 BC, this drama was performed in Dionysus Theater, Athens. Antigone drama has 5 scenes. It also consists of 41 pages. This drama contains 9 characters. There are Antigone, Ismene, Creon, Haimon, Euridice, Chorus, Sentry, Teiresias, and Messenger. This Greek drama describes the struggle and competition which is full with a war, tragic incident, the struggle of power, etc. Antigone drama tells about conflicts in the family and the state which happen because ambitious of someone for getting the power.

This drama, Antigone, have been studied by Samantha Fitzsimons. The title of the study is “Law and Order in Sophocles’s Antigone” (2006). The result of the research, the tragic Creon victimized himself with his own pride and desire for complete loyalty to the state. His assertions as king led to demise by Antigone, who challenged his supremacy with divine law.

The second study is “Conflicts of Interest between the Family and the State in Sophocles' Antigone” by Nunung Soliah. This study aims to explore the conflicts of interest between the family and the state in sophocles’ Antigone drama.

Different from the other studies, this study explains the desire for power in Sophocles’s Antigone drama by using psychoanalytic perspective.

According to Gilmer (1984:60), “Psychoanalytic theory sees the work of our minds and emotions as a product of the dynamic interaction between our
instincts and the counter forces set up by external environment”. As a method of psychotherapy developed by Freud, it involves uncovering the individual conflicts, repressed memories, sexual hung-ups and many such difficulties. Gimler (1984:60) also states, “Its aim to help the individual understand and reeducate him or herself.

The objectives of the study are to analyze Antigone drama based on the structural elements of the drama and to analyze Antigone drama by using Psychoanalysis perspective. Based on the title and background of the study, the researcher will focus on the analysis of how the desire for power is reflected in Sophocles’s Antigone drama.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is categorized as qualitative research. The steps to conduct this research are determining the type of the study, determining the object of the study, determining data and data source, determining technique of data collection, and determining technique of data analysis. The object of this study is Antigone drama written by Sophocles in 496 BC – 406 BC. There are two sources that are needed to do this research. The primary data source is the data taken from the text Antigone. It covers such thing as words, phrase, sentence and dialogue in the drama. The second data source is the data taken from some materials selected in the relation with the problem exposed such as biography of Sophocles. The technique of data collection is library research, the steps are. Reading the drama script, determining the character that will be analyzed, Taking note of important parts in both primary and secondary data, Classifying and determining the relevant data, and Taking notes from the material and some other resources related to the drama. The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It focuses with the structural elements of the drama and Psychoanalytic perspective.
RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the desire for power, the study of Antigone drama is reflected in psychoanalytic perspective. According to Freud, there are three principles of personality psychoanalytic namely, id, ego and superego. In the discussion analysis, the researcher will analyze the desire for power of the major character named Creon. This study tries to discuss them and correlate all of them. Sophocles in Antigone drama generally wants to express that desire for power can motivate someone action to do something.

1. System of Personality
   a. Id

   According to Freud (Pervin 1984: 76) id represents the biological substratum of humans, the source of all drive energy. The energy for a person’s functioning originally resides in the life and death, or sexual and aggressive instincts, which are part of the id. The id seeks the release of excitation, tension and energy. The id is demanding, impulsive, blind, irrational, asocial, and selfish and finally pleasure loving.

   According to Freud (Burger, 1986:56), “the id impulses are ever present and are held in check by other parts of the adult personality”. The id serves the pleasure principle, since its sole function is to seek satisfaction of pleasurable drives (Feist, 1985:25).

   Creon’s first id begins when he knows both of his nieces, Polyneices and Eteocles have died in the battle. They kill each other. He tells in his speech about them death. He faces their death has related with their father, King Oedipus. Creon has willing to influence citizen to believe him.

   Creon:
   ... This is my command, and you can see the wisdom behind it. As long as I am King, no traitor is going to be honored with the loyal man. But whoevershowed byword and deed that he is on the side of the state,-he shall have my respect while he is living and my reverence when he is dead... (Antigone: Page 7, first line)
His second id occurs when he knows that Antigone tries to bury her brother. Creon is so angry. They are in debating about each opinion. Antigone wants to bury her brother without care that Polyneices is a traitor or not because she thinks that all of people have died must be buried. Creon keeps his opinion that all traitor must not get burial. He wants to be in command the kingdom.

**Creon:**
He would: for you honor a traitor as much as him.

**Antigone:**
His own brother, traitor or not, and equal in blood.

**Creon:**
He made war on his country. Eteocles defended it.

(Antigone: Page 16, Last line)

His third id occurs when he knows that Ismene comes to share the punishment her sister. Creon thinks that people who help a traitor, they will faced as traitor too. So, Ismene and Antigone will get a punishment like what he said. That punishment is death.

**Creon:**
You too, Ismene, 
Snake in my ordered house, sucking my blood 
Stealthily-and all the time I never knew 
That these two sisters were aiming at my throne! 
Ismene, 
Do you confess your share in this crime, or deny it? 
Answer me. (Antigone: Page 17, Scene II)

His fourth id comes again when he has dialogue with his son, Haimon. They speak about rule in the state. Haimon tries to give explanation to his father. Antigone keeps her brother’s corpse from dogs and vulture. It is not a crime or an indecent. Haimon wants his father to realize that his act is wrong. He hopes Creon give empathy to a woman and then Creon freed Antigone from the punishment. But Creon is not care what Haimon said, he also is not care that Antigone is a fiancé of his son. A woman is very loved Haimon.

His fifth id occurs when Old Teiresias give him advice. Teiresias predicts that something bad will happen in the state and his family. It is
caused by Creon’s act to punish Antigone. It is also the advice from the Gods because Creon forbids burying Polyneices’s body. There is one way to prevent bad something. He must free Antigone from punishment soon. But Creon is so angry with old Teiresias. He ignores Teiresias’s statement. He chooses to keep his consistent. No one can defy his rule.

b. Superego

The *Superego* is the last component of personality to be developed and represents an internalized version of society’s norms and standards of behavior (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:90).

The *superego* serves positive functions by preventing the individual from expressing primitive urges publicly and by encouraging the individual to set goals that would establish him or her in career as a productive citizen, it also has negative implications. It may be too harsh and demanding (Ryckman, 1985:33).

Creon’s *superego* begins when he hears the report from Sentry that the gods have do burial Polyneices’s corpse. Creon tells that it is impossible. He faces Polyneices is a traitor in the state. Creon gives explanation that the gods do not love the honor of bad men.

His second *superego* comes when he debates with Antigone. He keeps his founding that a traitor must not get honor. Everyone who denies the state must get punishment as in rule. Their death is different. Creon faces Polyneices to made war is country, whereas Eteocles does not do it. So, they have also get burial that different.

His third *superego* occurs when he debates with Ismene. Ismene tries to realize Creon. Antigone is a woman that is loved by Haimon. She is his son’s bride. Creon keeps his willing to give punishment to Antigone.

**Ismene:**
But your own son’s bride!

... 

**Choragos:**
Do you really intend to steal this girl from your son?
His fourth *superego* occurs when Creon debates with Haimon. They defend his opinion each other. Haimon tries to give explanation about act of Antigone that does to bury her brother. It is not wrong act. It is not crime. She only tries to keep her brother from dogs and vulture. He tries to realize his father that Antigone just protects his brother’s body. It is not indecent.

His fifth *superego* comes when Teiresias realizes that his act is wrong. He is too pride for his stubborn. Teiresias tells to him that he must free Antigone quickly and builds a tomb for the Polyneices’s body before it is late.

c. *Ego*

The *ego* is the decision-making component of the psychic apparatus that seeks to express and gratify the desire of the *id* in accordance with the constraints imposed by the outside (Hjelle and Ziegler, 1992:89). Feist (1985:25) states that the *ego* is governed by the reality principle, which it tries to substitute for the pleasure principle of the *id*.

The *ego* is able to separate wish from fantasy, can tolerate tension and compromise, and changes over time (Pervine, 1984:77). Ryckman (1985:33) states that the *ego* therefore develops partially to carry out the aims of the *id*. It also functions to keep the impulses of the *id* in check until a suitable.

Creon’s first *ego* begins when he forbids citizen to bury Polyneices’s corpse and he begs all of people to obey his rule. He wants to know whether society may obey him or not. It is a strategy to fulfill his willing.

**Creon:**
Your figures of speech
May entertain you now; but unless you bring me the man,
You will get little profit from them in the end.
(Antigone: Page 10)
His second *ego* comes when Creon finds Antigone who wants to bury Polyneices’s body. Creon will give her a punishment. That punishment is death like what he said.

Creon feels satisfied if he can punish traitor. Creon will give punishment to everyone who denies the law. It is included his niece. He debates with Antigone. Antigone says that the death comes from the Gods. She believes, the Gods give the death to human not a wicked. That is fate. Creon does not care it. For him, an enemy is even dead.

His third *ego* occurs when he says to Ismene that Creon faces Antigone has done a big wrong. He thinks that Antigone is not suitable to live with his son. He does not think feeling Haimon, although he knows that Haimon loves her so much. Haimon will be fine without Antigone.

**Creon:**
There are places enough for him to put his plow.
I want no wicked women for my sons!
(Antigone: Page 19, Scene II)

Creon does not want to hear anyone. He says that Antigone is not suitable with his son because she has denied the law. Creon influences society in order to see his consistent. He interests society’s attention with the rules that are made by Creon. He wants to make society obeying him. So, he will give punishment to Antigone and Ismene.

His fourth *ego* occurs when he asserts to Haimon that Creon will punish Antigone in front Haimon’s eyes. Creon wants to show his bridge has died. It is bad act as a father to his son. For him, obeying the law is more important than family. Creon really wants to show evidence to society what he said will be done. He looks for empathy of society, although he knows that Haimon’s statement is true.

His fifth *ego* comes again when Teiresias realizes that his act is wrong. He is too pride for his stubborn. Teiresias tells to him that he must freed Antigone quickly and builds a tomb for the body Polyneices
before late. Finally, Creon has recognized his guiltiness. He goes to bury Polynoece’s body himself, and to free Antigone from her vault. He does it in order Gods may cancel certainly soon. He is afraid if bad something will happen to his family and the state.

2. Type of Personality

From the analysis of Creon’s personality above, the researcher can make a conclusion that Creon is concluded in pleasure seeking type. Her id is bigger than her superego and ego. For Creon, power is more important than anything. He does many bad things to get power and makes everyone to follow his desire. He uses his position to fulfill his ambition. He does not bury Polynoece’s body honorary, and he punishes Antigone in a vault. He does it for his desire for power, although they are his family. Creon’s bad action is the result false representation of power.

3. Desire for power

After observing the story, the researcher finds some way that Creon does to realize his desire for power. The way which Creon does, sometimes is a bad thing. For Creon, it is not a big problem if it makes closer with his desire. The desire for power is reflected in the following behavior.

1. When Oedipus goes to exile, there is no one that leads the kingdom. Creon uses this opportunity to occupy the position as King. He wants his son to become next King in the Thebes. The fact, there are children of Oedipus. They are Polynoece and Eteocles.

2. Creon thinks that if he takes king’s position, citizen cannot achieve it. They know that Oedipus still has children to replace his position. So, Creon makes conflict between Polynoece and Eteocles. They are killing each other.

3. Polynoece and Eteocles have died in the battle. Creon takes this opportunity. He wants to know how the societies obey his rule as a new King. He gives statement in his speech that no ruler can expect complete loyalty from his subjects until he has been tested in office. From the
quotation, Creon tries to examine society’s loyalty to bury Eteocles, but Polyneices is not buried. He wants to examine society whether they obey him or not.

**Creon:**

Gentlemen:...

I have summoned you here this morning because I know that I can depend upon you: your devotion to king Laios was absolute; you never hesitated in your duty to our late ruler Oedipus; and when Oedipus died, your loyalty was transferred to his children. Unfortunately, as you know, his two sons, the princes Eteocles and Polyneices, have killed each other in battle, and I, as the next in blood, have succeeded to the full power of the throne. ...

(Antigone: Page 6, First Paragraph)

4. Creon explains his rule explicitly that everyone who denies will get punishment. The kind of punishment is throwing stone to person until dead. Creon says that their death relates with their father’s mistake. Suffering in the state is caused by damnation from their father’s mistake, Oedipus. He thinks that suffering will lose if he does not bury a traitor as Polyneices. That is rule in the state.

**Creon:**

... This is my command, and you can see the wisdom behind it. As long as I am King, no traitor is going to be honored with the loyal man. But who ever shows by word and deed that he is on the side of the state,-he shall have my respect while he is living and my reverence when he is dead... (Antigone: Page 7, first line)

5. The fact, the person who denies is his niece but he must be consistent with his rule. He changes the punishment. Creon will put Antigone in a vault until she dies.

6. For Creon, the state is more important than the family. He keeps his commitment, although Antigone is his family. Here, Antigone is also fiancé of his son, Haimon. For Creon, everyone who denies the law, she must get punishment.

**Ismene:**

But your own son’s bride!

...

**Choragos:**

Do you really intend to steal this girl from your son?

(Antigone: Page 19, scene II)
7. Creon arranges strategy to support his purpose. He always looks for opportunity to accommodate the society. When he has debate with Haimon, he knows that Haimon’s word is true. He defends his opinion to show to society that he has authority as King.

8. Creon debates with Haimon. Haimon says that the rules of the law do not have relation with the death. Haimon tries realizing his father but it is not useful. Creon always says that he does it for safety of the state.

**Haimon:**
… They say no woman has ever, so unreasonably, Died so covered her brother’s body. Is this indecent? “She kept him from dogs and vultures. Is this a crime? Death? —she should have all the honor that we can give her!”
(Antigone: Page 22, Scene III)

9. After Creon sees all of family have dead, they are Haimon, Euridice, and Antigone, he just recognizes that his act is wrong. His stubborn causes suffering in his family and the State.

10. Creon very regrets with what he did. Now, he is alone. He feels very sad and lonely. He wants to kill himself but he realizes that he must continue to lead his state.

**CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION**

Based on the psychoanalytic analysis, it is evident that in Antigone drama, Sophocles wants to convey the psychological phenomena in which an individual is obsessed by the desire for power. By using Sigmund Freud’s theory of psychoanalytic, the researcher analyzes the personality of Creon which relates to desire for power personality and have correlation with irrational personality. Creon as the important character in this play is an ambitious and stubborn men. He always gives highest priority for his id. He uses his position as King to realize the desire. In this drama, Sophocles wants to convey a perspective that society culture makes people have false representation of position. They think, if they have high position, they will get happiness and honor. Then, it makes people
desire for power. Desire for power can cause suffering to us or other. Sometimes it also makes the death.

Related to the conclusion above, it is hoped it can give pedagogical implication such as:

1. The writer suggests to the other researchers can analyze this drama deeper from another issue and perspective. For example, the other researchers can analyze from feminist approach which focuses on life condition of Antigone, the title is “The struggle for Justice”. Finally, the writer hopes that this research can contribute to the reader’s reference.

2. The writer hopes the readers can take the message from this drama and also can take lesson from Creon personality.

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