



A Freudian Analysis of Joseph Cooper's Id in *Interstellar*

Ni Luh Vania Mitha Apsari

Udayana University

vaniamitha8@gmail.com

Abstract: Psychoanalysis plays an important role in understanding human behavior by revealing the influence of unconscious processes on actions and decisions. In literary and film studies, however, many analyses tend to apply Freud's structural model broadly without focusing on a single dominant component, particularly the id as the primary driving force of behavior. This study aims to analyze the representation of the id in the character of Joseph Cooper in *Interstellar*. This research employs a qualitative method using documentation techniques, including screenshotting, note-taking, and highlighting selected dialogues and scenes from the film. The data are analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, focusing specifically on the characteristics of the id. The findings reveal that the id functions as a dominant psychological force in Cooper's character, manifested through impulsive anger, protective instinct, emotional urgency, and resistance to separation from his family. These instinct-driven responses emerge in various contexts, ranging from everyday interactions to moments of crisis, demonstrating that the id operates dynamically depending on emotional situations. In conclusion, this study shows that focusing on the id provides a deeper understanding of character behavior in cinematic narratives and highlights the relevance of psychoanalytic theory in interpreting psychological complexity in film.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis; Freudian Theory; Id; Character Analysis; *Interstellar*

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychoanalysis is defined as a theory that explains human mental life as consisting of both conscious and unconscious processes (Freud, 1927, p. 3). Human behavior, according to this theory, is influenced not only by conscious reasoning but also by unconscious desires and internal drives. Sigmund Freud proposes that the human psyche consists of three interrelated components: the id, ego, and superego. Among these, the id represents the most primitive aspect of the psyche, operating based on instinctual desires and the pursuit of immediate satisfaction (Herdayanti and Satria, 2021, p. 232). As the source of basic human impulses, the id plays a crucial role in shaping behavior, often functioning beyond conscious awareness. Freud (1927) states that "the id devolves upon instinct," suggesting that the id forms the instinctive basis of the human psyche. It is the most basic and primitive component of the mind, operating entirely at an unconscious level. The id embodies innate drives, impulses, and biological needs that seek immediate gratification without consideration of morality or external reality.

In literary analysis, the id is commonly reflected in characters' unrestrained emotions, such as intense desire, anger, or self-centered behavior. In this study, the concept of the id is utilized as an analytical framework to examine moments in *Interstellar* where Cooper's decisions are influenced more by emotional impulses, instinctive hope, or psychological denial than by rational thought. His optimism, deep emotional bond with his family, and difficulty in accepting loss can be interpreted as expressions of the id's influence. By highlighting these instinct-driven reactions, the id is positioned as a central psychological force within Cooper's character that shapes his inner conflicts and guides his decision-making throughout the film. For this reason, psychoanalytic theory has been widely applied in literary and film studies to explore characters'

hidden motivations and unconscious drives that are not directly visible. Because psychoanalysis emphasizes the psychological dimension of human experience, it offers a valuable framework for analyzing narrative works, including cinema, that depict the complexity of the human mind.

Cinema is regarded as an art form because it is used by filmmakers to construct meaningful narrative experiences for audiences (Bordwell et al., 2017, p. 3). These experiences are shaped through elements such as plot, character, and dialogue, and remain significant regardless of cultural or artistic classification. Within this process, characters serve as central figures through which emotions, ideas, and conflicts are conveyed (Annisa, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, since cinematic narratives often reflect the internal dimensions of human psychology through characterization, psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concept of the id, becomes a useful approach in film and literary analysis. Developing this idea further, *Interstellar* presents a compelling example of a film that combines scientific exploration with psychological depth. Despite being released in 2014, *Interstellar* remains relevant due to its portrayal of enduring human concerns such as survival, instinct, and sacrifice.

Several scholars have examined *Interstellar* and other works from different perspectives, providing a foundation for the present study. Loway and Nurochman (2023) identified the dominance of the id in *10 Things I Hate About You*, but their analysis remains limited to general personality traits rather than deeper psychological processes. Aulia (2021), Kariimah (2022), and Amany (2021) also applied Freud's theory to various literary works, focusing on identity and social aspects rather than emphasizing instinctual drives as the core of character behavior. Taken together, these studies highlight the broad application of psychoanalytic theory while revealing a gap in the focused analysis of the id as the primary driving force within a central character in a complex cinematic narrative.

Considering these gaps, the present research focuses on the role of the id in shaping the character of Joseph Cooper in *Interstellar*. This study specifically examines how the id is represented in Cooper's actions throughout the film. This topic is important because it provides a deeper understanding of how instinctual drives influence character behavior. It is also significant as it demonstrates how a science-fiction film can serve as a medium for psychological exploration. By analyzing the dominance and influence of the id in Joseph Cooper, this study aims to contribute to literary studies by emphasizing the relevance of psychoanalytic theory, particularly the concept of the id, in interpreting cinematic narratives.

II. METHODS

Qualitative research focuses on collecting data in the form of texts and images, follows systematic stages of analysis, and can be implemented through various research designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 292). Furthermore, Sugiyono (2016, p. 8) describes qualitative research as naturalistic because it is conducted in natural settings. In this study, the qualitative approach encompasses four essential components, namely data sources, techniques of data collection, methods of data analysis, and techniques of presenting the findings. The data are obtained through a documentation method supported by screenshot, note-taking, and highlighting techniques. Relevant dialogues and scenes are captured, carefully noted, and highlighted to indicate their connection to Freud's theory, while redundant data are removed to ensure that only the most representative examples are analyzed.

The primary source of data is the film *Interstellar* (2014), directed by Christopher Nolan, which is accessed through a legal streaming platform such as Netflix to ensure complete and high-quality material. The analysis focuses on selected dialogues taken from the official English subtitles provided by the platform. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative and character development, the film is watched repeatedly, and dialogues as well as character actions reflecting the psychological aspects of Joseph Cooper are identified and documented. The identification of data is guided by Freud's structural model of the psyche, with particular attention to the id, which is indicated through instinctual impulses, emotional reactions, and personal desires, while other psychological aspects are considered only as supporting elements when relevant. All identified data are then organized systematically, and unnecessary repetitions are eliminated to maintain relevance to the research objectives.

The data are analyzed using a qualitative descriptive method following Creswell (2018), as the psychological condition of a character can only be interpreted through dialogues, behaviors, and interactions

presented in the film. The analysis begins by examining selected dialogues and scenes to identify representations of the id in Joseph Cooper's character based on Freud's theoretical framework. The data are then interpreted to explain how instinctual drives influence Cooper's actions and decisions throughout the narrative. Finally, the findings are synthesized to demonstrate how the id functions as a dominant psychological force shaping Cooper's internal conflicts and decision-making process in the film. The results of the analysis are presented using an informal method, meaning that the findings are described in clear and accessible language (Sudaryanto, 1993, p. 145). The presentation is organized according to the research focus and delivered through descriptive explanation, supported by selected dialogues and character actions from *Interstellar* (2014) to illustrate the analysis clearly.

III. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the representation of the id in the character of Joseph Cooper in *Interstellar*. As proposed by Sigmund Freud, the id is the most primitive component of the human psyche, operating unconsciously and driven by instinctual desires, emotional impulses, and the pursuit of immediate satisfaction. In this study, the id is examined as a central psychological force that influences Cooper's behavior, particularly in situations where his responses are shaped more by emotion and instinct than by rational consideration.

1. Cooper's Impulsive Anger and Protective Response toward Murph

[Data 1]

Murph: "Dad, can you fix this?"

Cooper: "What the heck did you do to my lander?"

Murph: "Wasn't me."

Tom: "Let me guess, it was your ghost?"

Murph: "It knocked it off my shelf. It keeps knocking books off."

Tom: "No such thing as ghost, dumb-ass"

Cooper: "Hey!"

This dialogue occurs during a family interaction at the dining table, involving Joseph Cooper and his two children, Murph and Tom Cooper. In this scene, Murph asks her father to fix a broken lander model that she believes was knocked down by a "ghost" in her room. At the same time, Tom rejects her belief and responds with a mocking remark, which adds tension to the interaction. As a result, the conversation reflects a mix of confusion, skepticism, and emotional sensitivity within the family setting.

The presence of the id can be identified through Cooper's immediate emotional response when he realizes that his lander has been damaged. Instead of asking for clarification in a calm manner, he directly responds with the statement "What the heck did you do to my lander?", which conveys irritation and frustration. This reaction appears spontaneous and is not preceded by careful consideration of the situation. In Freudian terms, this kind of response reflects the operation of the id, which is driven by instinctual impulses and immediate emotional expression.

Furthermore, Cooper's response to Tom's insulting comment toward Murph, expressed through the brief exclamation "Hey!", also indicates an instinctive reaction. This short utterance functions as a direct emotional response to protect his daughter from verbal attack. The reaction emerges immediately, without any sign of deliberate reasoning or controlled judgment. Therefore, this moment further illustrates how Cooper's behavior is influenced by the id, particularly through his spontaneous protective instinct and emotional impulse in a casual family interaction.

2. Cooper's Escalating Anger and Defensive Reaction toward His Son's Future

[Data 2]

School Principal: "So, uh.. We got Tom's scores back. He's going to make an excellent farmer."

Cooper: "Yeah, he's got a knack for it. What about college?"

School Principal: "The university only takes a handful. They don't have the resources to..."

Cooper: "I still pay my taxes. Where's that money go? There's no more armies."

School Principal: "Well it doesn't go to the university. Look, Coop, you have to be realistic."

Cooper: "You're ruling my son out for college now?"

School Principal: "The kid's 15. Tom's score simply isn't high enough."

Cooper: "*What's your waistline? About what, 32? About 33 inseam?*"

School Principal: "I'm not sure I see what you're getting at."

Cooper: "*Are you telling me it takes two numbers to measure your own ass but only one to measure my son's future?*"

This dialogue takes place in a school setting during a meeting between Joseph Cooper and the school principal, where they discuss the academic future of his son, Tom Cooper. In this situation, the principal explains that Tom's academic performance is considered insufficient for university admission and suggests that he is more suited to becoming a farmer. Cooper initially responds calmly by asking about the possibility of college, but the discussion gradually becomes tense as the principal emphasizes limitations and urges him to be realistic. This interaction creates a conflict between institutional judgment and parental expectation, highlighting Cooper's emotional investment in his son's future.

The representation of the id can be seen in Cooper's growing emotional reaction as the conversation develops. When he says, "I still pay my taxes. Where's that money go? There's no more armies," his response reflects frustration and dissatisfaction expressed spontaneously rather than through structured reasoning. Instead of addressing the issue logically, Cooper shifts to an emotional complaint that reveals his internal irritation. This reaction suggests that his response is driven by instinctive feelings of injustice and anger, which aligns with Freud's concept of the id as the source of immediate emotional expression.

The influence of the id becomes more evident when Cooper responds with sarcasm and verbal aggression in the statement, "What's your waistline? About what, 32? About 33 inseam?" This remark shows a shift from rational discussion to a personal and emotionally charged response. His final statement further intensifies this reaction, as he criticizes the principal's method of evaluating his son's future in a confrontational manner. These responses demonstrate how Cooper's behavior is dominated by emotional impulses, particularly frustration and protectiveness, rather than controlled reasoning. Therefore, this scene illustrates how the id operates through spontaneous emotional outbursts that shape Cooper's reactions when faced with threats to his son's future.

3. Cooper's Urgent and Desperate Reaction to His Daughter's Absence

[Data 3]

TARS: "How did you find this place?"

Cooper: "Where's my daughter?"

TARS: "You had the coordinates for this facility marked in your map. Where did you get them?"

Cooper: "*WHERE'S MY DAUGHTER?*"

This dialogue takes place when Joseph Cooper arrives at a secret NASA facility after discovering the hidden coordinates in his house. Upon entering the location, he is confronted by TARS, an artificial intelligence robot, who questions how he managed to find the place. However, instead of responding to the question, Cooper immediately shifts his attention to the whereabouts of his daughter, Murph. The situation is tense and urgent, as Cooper is separated from Murph and is unsure of her safety, which heightens his emotional state during the interaction.

The representation of the id can be observed in Cooper's immediate and repetitive response, "Where's my daughter?", which reflects a strong instinctive concern driven by emotional attachment. Rather than engaging in a rational exchange with TARS or explaining how he found the facility, Cooper ignores the question entirely. This reaction demonstrates that his behavior is dominated by an urgent emotional impulse, specifically his need to ensure his daughter's safety. According to Freud's theory, the id operates based on instinctual drives and seeks immediate satisfaction, which in this case is reflected in Cooper's overwhelming focus on locating Murph.

The intensity of the id becomes more evident when Cooper repeats the question in a louder and more forceful manner, "WHERE'S MY DAUGHTER?", indicating a loss of emotional control. This escalation

shows that his response is not regulated by rational thinking but is instead driven by anxiety and fear. The use of repetition and increased volume emphasizes the dominance of his emotional impulse over logical communication. Therefore, this scene illustrates how the id manifests through urgent, instinctive reactions, particularly in situations involving strong emotional bonds such as parental attachment.

4. Cooper's Emotional Resistance to Separation from His Children

[Data 4]

Cooper: "How long would I be gone?"

Professor Brand: "Hard to know.. Years?"

Cooper: "*I've got kids, professor.*"

This dialogue occurs during an early conversation at the NASA facility between Joseph Cooper and Professor Brand. In this scene, Professor Brand explains the mission that requires Cooper to travel through space in search of a new habitable planet for humanity. When Cooper asks about the duration of the mission, he is informed that it could take years, with no certainty of return time. This information creates a moment of emotional tension, as Cooper must confront the possibility of being separated from his children for a long period.

The representation of the id can be identified in Cooper's immediate response, "I've got kids, professor," which reflects an instinctive emotional reaction to the situation. Rather than continuing the discussion in a rational or strategic manner, Cooper expresses his concern through a personal and emotionally driven statement. This response indicates that his thoughts are dominated by his attachment to his children, showing an instinctive prioritization of his role as a father. In Freudian terms, this reaction illustrates the operation of the id, as it is driven by emotional needs and the desire to maintain close bonds with loved ones.

Furthermore, the simplicity of Cooper's statement emphasizes the directness of his emotional impulse. He does not elaborate or provide logical arguments but instead conveys his concern in a brief and immediate way. This suggests that his response emerges spontaneously, without being filtered through careful reasoning or long consideration. Therefore, this scene demonstrates how the id influences Cooper's reaction through emotional attachment and instinctive concern, particularly when faced with the threat of separation from his family.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the representation of the id in the character of Joseph Cooper in *Interstellar* by applying Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The findings demonstrate that the id functions as a dominant psychological force that shapes Cooper's behavior, particularly in situations involving strong emotional pressure. His responses are consistently driven by instinctive impulses rather than rational consideration, indicating the central role of the id in influencing his actions throughout the narrative.

The analysis of the four data reflects distinct patterns that correspond to each identified form of the id. First, the id is expressed through impulsive anger and protective response toward Murph, as seen in Cooper's spontaneous emotional reaction in a family setting. Second, it develops into escalating anger and defensive reaction toward his son's future, where his frustration intensifies into confrontational behavior when facing institutional judgment. Third, the id appears as an urgent and desperate reaction to his daughter's absence, marked by repetition and heightened emotional intensity in a moment of crisis. Fourth, it is represented through emotional resistance to separation from his children, showing Cooper's instinctive attachment and reluctance to leave his family. These variations indicate that the id is not static but dynamic, emerging in different forms depending on the emotional context of each situation. Thus, the study confirms that instinctual drives play a significant role in shaping both Cooper's internal conflicts and his decision-making process.

In conclusion, this study advances the understanding of psychoanalytic application in film analysis by demonstrating that the id can function as the primary lens to interpret a character's behavior in a complex

narrative. By focusing specifically on the id, this research offers a more concentrated analysis compared to studies that treat the structural model as a whole. It also highlights that cinematic narratives, even within the science-fiction genre, can effectively represent fundamental psychological processes through character behavior. Therefore, this study reinforces the relevance of psychoanalytic theory in literary and film studies and provides a clearer insight into how unconscious emotional drives contribute to character development and narrative meaning.

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