

## Dewey Finn's Will Power in Teaching: A Psychoanalysis on School of Rock, a Film

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### Abstrak

*Makalah ini bertujuan untuk meneliti sebuah film yang berjudul School of Rock (Linklater, 2003) dalam perspektif psikologi karakter utama dalam film ini yaitu Dewey Finn. Penelitian ini lebih lanjut ditujukan untuk menganalisis kekuatan kemauan dari si karakter utama tersebut dalam menggapai mimpinya dengan menggunakan pendekatan psiko analisis. Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah dalam bentuk elemen struktural dalam film berupa transkrip film. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya negosiasi yang terjadi dalam psikologi karakter Dewey Finn's inner character yang melibatkan id, ego, dan superego serta persona dan shadow sebagai seorang guru yang kesemuanya itu merupakan elemen kekuatan kemauan dalam menggapai tujuan.*

**Kata Kunci:** Analisis Psikologi, Guru, Karakter

### Introduction

School of Rock is a 2003 American musical comedy film directed by Richard Linklater, written by Mike White, and starring Jack Black. The main story centres around a hard rock singer and guitarist, Dewey Finn (Black), who is kicked out of his band and subsequently disguises himself as a substitute teacher at a prestigious prep school and forms a band of fifth-grade students to win the upcoming Battle of the Bands so he can pay back what his former band did.

Dewey is forced to take the chance to be a teacher under a condition where he could not cope with his social life and environment so that he takes short cut to handle the situation by being somebody else who he is not. He presents himself in a regulated place called a school and it causes conflict of interest where the students are expecting to learn something from the teacher while Dewey is unable to teach so that he provides the students unusual condition where they have recess all the time as cover for his inability.

Soon after he discovers that the kids have musical talent. After that, he changes his class drastically by turning it entirely into a music class about the history of rock, and preparing his kids to compete in a band contest. Dewey teaches them all what they should know about rock and roll and how rock and roll could change the way of life and perception in seeing the world.

From the review above, there are some interesting aspects related to the film. They are the psychological aspects of the characters since this film puts its emphasis on the story of Dewey Finn. The artistic experience of watching a film from the point of view of consumption gives a particular shape of experience yielding its own general system of criticism (Monaco, 2000, p. 25). Further, Monaco (2000) affirms that the expressive function of a film leads to the psychoanalytical criticism on it centered on the connection between the work and its consumer, the observer. Therefore, this study will further investigate the psychological development of the character from the point of view of psychoanalysis.

### Theories of Psychoanalysis

The relationship between psychoanalysis and movies was born to live at the end of the nineteenth century. Both disciplines shape the modernity based on shared cultural, social, and historical background. They share a common historical, social, and cultural background shaped by the forces of modernity. Theorists commonly explore how psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the importance of desire in the life of the individual, has influenced the cinema. But the reverse is also true—the cinema may well have influenced psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis was founded by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Seeing things through the psychoanalysis lens is understanding psychological history that begins in childhood experiences in the family and each with patterns of adolescent and adult behaviour that are the direct result of that early experience.

Basically, according to Castle (2007, pp. 163-173) psychoanalysis concerns with the articulation of sexuality in language and it has moved through three main emphases in its pursuit of the literary 'unconscious': on the author (and its corollary, 'character'), on the reader, and on the text. It starts with Sigmund Freud's analysis of the literary work as a symptom of the artist, where the relationship between author and text is analogous to dreamers and their 'text' (literature = 'fantasy'). It is then modified by post-Freudians in a psychoanalytic reader-response criticism where the reader's 'transactive' relation to the text is the focus. Later, it is also challenged by Carl Jung's 'archetypal' criticism viewing the literary work does not focus on the writer's or reader's personal psychology but it is a representation of the relationship between the personal and the collective unconscious, the images, myths, symbols, 'archetypes' of past cultures. More recently, psychoanalytic criticism has been modernised in the context of poststructuralism by the work of Jacques Lacan and his followers, in which the coupling of a dynamic notion of 'desire' with a model of structural linguistics has been influentially innovative (Selden, Widdowson, & Brooker, 2005, p. 153).

Freud (Tyson, 2006, pp. 24-26) mentions the "structure" of the mind, one in which the ego, the super-ego, and the id signifying certain kinds of relationships between conscious and unconscious elements of the ego. Id consists of all the inherited (i.e. biological) components of personality present at birth, including the sex (life) instinct – Eros (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct - Thanatos. The revised theory of instincts offered in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* subsumes the ego and sexual instincts into a single sexual instinct towards self-preservation (Eros) and offers a new category, the death instinct (Thanatos), which is dedicated to the paradoxical quest of short-circuiting the sexual instinct and ending life. The id remains infantile in its function throughout a person's life, and does not change with time or experience, as it is not in touch with the external world. The id is not affected by reality, logic or the everyday world, as it operates within the unconscious part of the mind. The ego develops in order to mediate between the unrealistic id and the external real world. It is the decision making component of personality. Ideally the ego works by reason, whereas the id is chaotic and totally unreasonable. The ego operates according to the reality principle, working out realistic ways of satisfying the id's demands, often compromising or postponing satisfaction to avoid negative consequences of society. The ego considers social realities and norms, etiquette and rules in deciding how to behave. Lastly, the superego incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others. The function is to control the id's impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression. It also has the function of persuading the ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection. The superego consists of two systems namely the conscience and the ideal self. The conscience can punish the ego through causing feelings of

guilt. For example, if the ego gives in to the id's demands, the superego may make the person feel bad through guilt. The ideal self (or ego-ideal) is an imaginary picture of how you ought to be, and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society.

Carl Gustav Jung is one of the leading mythologists at our time. His 'archetypal' criticism sees the literary work not on the focus of the writer's or reader's personal psychology. It tends to study the literary work as the representation of the relationship between the personal and the collective unconsciousness, the images, myths, symbols, and 'archetypes' of past cultures (Selden et al., 2005, p. 153). Further, archetypes are described as factors and motives building the psychic elements into certain images that become a content of consciousness, even though they can be recognized only from the effects they produce. Jung claims to identify a large number of archetypes but pays special attention to four, i.e. the persona, anima/animus, the shadow, and the self. The "persona" (or mask) conceals our real self and Jung describes it as the "conformity" archetype. This is the public face or role a person presents to others as someone different to who he really is (like an actor). The "anima/animus" is the mirror image of our biological sex, that is, the unconscious feminine side in males and the masculine tendencies in women. Next is the shadow. This is the animal side of our personality (like the id in Freud). It is the source of both our creative and destructive energies. Finally, there is the self which provides a sense of unity in experience. The ultimate aim of every individual is to achieve a state of selfhood (similar to self-actualisation) and in this respect, Jung is moving in the direction of a more humanist orientation.

The concept of "archetypes" in Jung' psychoanalysis is similar to the use of metaphor by teachers in describing their jobs, teaching philosophy, and teaching practice in their daily routine (ŞİMŞEK, 2014).

Lacan's theory of the psychological development of the infant known as the idea of the "mirror stage" is an important early component in Lacan's critical reinterpretation of the work of Freud (Tyson, 2006, p. 2634). In its early months, Lacan maintains, the infant experiences both itself and its environment as a random, fragmented, formless mass. Indeed, the infant does not even differentiate itself from its environment and does not know that parts of its own body are, in fact, parts of its own body because it does not have a sense of itself that is capable of such an understanding. For Lacan, the mirror stage establishes the ego as fundamentally dependent upon external objects. As the so-called "individual" matures and enters into social relations through language, this "other" will be elaborated within social and linguistic frameworks that will give each subject's personality (and his or her neuroses and other psychic disturbances) its particular characteristics (Selden et al., 2005, pp. 156-161).

### **Finding and Discussion**

The main character is Dewey Finn finding himself in the middle of a contradiction. In the beginning of the movie, Dewey is an unsuccessful rock musician, expelled from the band he created with friends. His lack of success seems related to his lack of real talent, but it is helped by his willingness to be successful. In his home life he finds himself threatened with rejection from his roommate, Ned Schneebly. Ned himself has abandoned his dreams of rock stardom for a job. He takes trainings to become a teacher, and working as a substitute in the meantime. As we look at these two characters, the contradicting pair presents itself. Dewey is lazy but believes in "rockin'." Ned is hardworking, but dull. This contrast is emphasized with the presence of Ned's girlfriend. She has a 9-to-5 job in government (she works for the mayor) and she hates Dewey, who is the opposite of everything she stands for.

Faced with an ultimatum from Ned and desperate for cash, Dewey embraces the trickster archetype. Instead of selling one of his beloved guitars, he accidentally intercepts an offer, intended for his roommate, to substitute teach at a local private elementary school. Dewey steals Ned's identity and takes the job. This is classic trickster behaviour, lying and stealing to get what you want.

Dewey was forced to take the chance to be a teacher under a condition where he could not cope with his social life and environment so that he took short cut to handle the situation by being somebody else who he was not. He presented himself in a regulated place called a school and it caused conflict of interest where the students were expecting to learn something from the teacher while Dewey was unable to teach so that he provided the students unusual condition where they had recess all the time as cover for his inability. Below is the excerpt depicting Dewey's inability to teach.

It doesn't stop there, of course. Listening to his new charges rehearse in music class gives Dewey a wonderful awful idea: he decides to turn the class into a rock band, so he can use them to compete in a Battle of the Bands contest. He accomplishes this by telling the kids that it's a school project, and a win would be prestigious.

This begins Dewey psychological negotiation of his real life and his mask as a teacher. To keep his job, he must at least maintain the appearance of teaching a classroom full of elementary students. Much of this is accomplished through tricks such as recording a fake lecture to be played while he and the band ditch school to apply for the contest, or convincing the principal that the music heard next door was really a singing math lesson. On the other hand, Dewey, possibly for the first time in his life, applies himself. He shows up every day to work, and while the traditional reading, writing and arithmetic get short shrift, he does show remarkable discipline in teaching his students the fundamentals of rock.

The police are informed, and Dewey beats a hasty retreat from Parents' Night at Horace Green Prep, guitar in hand, crash-landing on his friend's floor, right back where he started. The next day, his students abscond with him to the Battle of the Bands, where they play a "kick-ass show." While he's learned to accept his limitations as a performer, Dewey ends the film rockin'.

According to the father of psychology Sigmund Freud, the unconscious mind (or the unconscious) consists of the processes in the mind that occurs automatically and is not available to introspection, and include thought processes, memory, affect, and motivation. Dewey's unconscious mind leads him towards something he could never have, but wants so badly.

Dewey's "feeling of inferiority" which refers to a group of representations and affects reflecting an individual's self-devaluation in relation to others that it can have a positive or negative impact on self-esteem. It is reflected from the scene when Dewey makes a phone call to sell his guitar. As it is widely known, a guitar is his only chance to create another band, yet, he is trying to sell it.

In relation to his ambition to win the Battle of the Bands, Dewey's internal motivations are one of the strongest powers that drive the character to act and to place him behind particular occurrences. Freud's tripartite of mind structures id, ego and superego serve as the mobiles which the character inevitably drives down to his own goals. Dewey is driven by his desire for winning the Battle of the Bands to get money on the id level. On the ego level, he develops a conflicting personality on the superego level, paradoxically moral and immoral at the same time. His persona as a teacher is mainly acting as Dewey's superego, continuously giving boundaries and judgments to him.

In addition to Jung's archetypal criticism, Dewey Finn conceals himself as a substitute teacher. He appears to the public differently to who he really is (like an actor). He presents himself in a regulated place called a school and it causes conflict of interests where the students are expecting to learn something from the teacher while Dewey is unable to teach so that he provides the students unusual condition where they have recess all the time as cover for his inability. Below is the excerpt depicting Dewey's inability to teach.

Oh, you wanna learn something? [Summer: Yes, I do.] You want me to teach you something? [Most of the students nod] Here's a useful lesson for you: give up. Just quit. Because in this life, you can't win. Sure, you can try. [Really getting angry] But in the end you're just gonna lose BIG TIME. Because THE WORLD is run by the Man. [Frankie: Who?] The Man. Oh, you don't the Man? [class shakes their heads] The Man is everywhere. In the White House, down the hall, MRS. MULLINS, she's the Man. And the Man ruined the ozone, and he's burning down the Amazon, and he kidnapped Shamu and put her in a chlorine tank! And there used to be a way to stick it to The Man. It was called rock 'n' roll. But guess what. Oh, no. The Man ruined that too with a little thing called MTV! So don't waste your time trying to make anything cool or pure or awesome, because The Man's just going to call you a fat, washed up loser and crush your soul. So do yourselves a favour and just give up!

From the above dialogue, it can be inferred that the demands from his students of proper teaching and learning processes in the classroom frustrates him since he undeniably could not teach them the proper teaching.

Soon after he discovers that the kids had musical talent. After that, he changes his class drastically by turning it entirely into a music class about the history of rock, and preparing his kids to compete in a band contest. Dewey teaches them all what they should know about rock and roll and how rock and roll could change the way of life and perception in seeing the world.

Dewey is able to teach his students about the world outside dogma of academic life and parents. Though what he teaches is beyond curriculum standards that the students should learn. Dewey is able to reveal potential gifts in some of his students through music and turns them into having social existence among their society and within the parents' perception on what their children could do with their music ability. Dewey is able to have the students learn through what they do best namely through music.

Which are different from any other conventional teaching is that he teaches the students with impolite words and rather mean for kids in an elementary school. His teachings also somehow changes the students' behaviour and attitude from being obedient, compliant, ordered types into rebellious type. This is shown in the scene when Zak's father tells him to focus only on classical guitar rather than electric, and he is only allowed to play music after studying. From this scene, Dewey makes some kind of scene where he asks his students on the things which made them uneasy and what they should do when such happened. For today's "lesson," he becomes 'The Man' and asks them to hurl their best insulting at him to express their deepest anger. Being kids, their insults are weird, wonderful, and varied. And a little personal. Dewey does this in rock musical way by playing his guitar. He asks questions by singing and whatever answers given by his students, he utters controversial words of "step off" as response on what students should do. What Dewey teaches here is an obvious direction that students could be rebellion over some things that they disliked, even to their own parents. Here Dewey puts profession of teacher into way of implanting his own ideas and thoughts towards social order and even to what children should

behave to their social surroundings, even to their parents. By not telling their parents on what Dewey says as "class project" is an example of changing behaviour and attitude as obedient, compliant and honest.

From the above explanation, the negotiation between Dewey's shadow and persona results in a unique self of a teacher. There is a strong drive within Dewey's mind to win the Battle of the Bands so that he needs to appear and act as a teacher so that he could gain trusts from his students in the school. His shadow as a hard rock singer and guitarist has great influence on his persona as a teacher. He teaches the students with impolite words and rather mean for kids in an elementary school. Here Dewey puts profession of teacher into way of implanting his own ideas and thoughts towards social order and even to what children should behave to their social surroundings, even to their parents. By not telling their parents on what Dewey says as "class project" is an example of changing behaviour and attitude as obedient, compliant and honest. Dewey's self is as a unique teacher who could really be able to disclose potential gifts in some of his students through music and turn them into having social existence among their society and within their students' parents' perception on what their children can do with their music ability. Dewey is able to have the students learn through what they do best namely through music.

### **Conclusion**

School of Rock impresses on the audience as a film on a hard rock musician with poor beginnings who is in a pursuit of winning the Battle of the Bands. The affection of unconsciousness mind, feeling(s) of inferiority, id, ego, and superego obviously have seen in the film. Despite this capacity, however, the work fascinates its audience more by its characters' interesting intrigue and student-teacher relationships ended ultimately by a success. In this light, therefore, the appeal of the story seems to ensue not from its mere progression but largely from the dramatization of the psyche of the characters who are engaged in the relationships filled of genuine emotional supplements and trickery at times.

Dewey's irresponsibility in taking a profession as a substitute teacher by pretending to be someone else for motive of having money is the starting point of many interesting catastrophes and spin in education. What Dewey thought to be an easy pretending until he can finally sets a new band of his own after being sacked of his old band, takes a turning point as he sees musical potential in his students and in a way manipulates them into the so called class project by making the class as his ride to fulfilling his ambition in winning a band contest and win \$ 20.000.

Dewey changes all paradigms of what teacher as profession should be. He shamelessly deceits his students into his personal interests while teacher as profession supposedly put students' interests as priority and single motivation in teaching. He changes academic atmosphere into his atmosphere of band practice and rehearsal.

Many new phenomenon, representation and shifting of norms happen during his times of teaching the students. By changing the students' interests into his own, the students become personalities which are not them before hence making them somewhat becoming Dewey with overt expression and harsh wordings. Students' behaviour and attitude are changed into social opposition to rules, regulation and order. Dewey is "successful" in crossing over separation of propriety from rebellious attitude, norms and deviance, piety, and blasphemy, and the overall outlook of what is right and wrong. Yet he is also successful in bringing up hidden good potential of his students.

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