

# A FREUDIAN ANALYSIS OF THE FATHER IMAGE IN LA SYMPHONIE PASTORALE BY ANDRÉ GIDE

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## Abstract

Sigmund Freud has a great influence in many scientific fields such as psychology, philosophy and literature. Especially in literature, *Civilization and Its Discontents* is one of his works which has become an inspiring source for scholars. His main discussion in this book centres on how civilization controls human instinct. 'Storification' of such an instinct is well-provided in Andre Gide's novel, *La Symphonie Pastorale*. The family depiction in this work embodies a relationship between a father and a son, which can be effectually analysed in Freudian theories regarding the primitive instinct behind the human will and act.

*Keywords: Father image, Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, Andre Gide, La Symphonie Pastorale*

## ANDRÉ GIDE'İN LA SYMPHONIE PASTORALE ESERİNDE BABA İMGESİNİN FREUDYEN İNCELEMESİ

### Öz

Sigmund Freud psikoloji, felsefe ve edebiyat gibi birçok bilim dalında büyük bir öneme sahip bir yazardır. Özellikle edebiyat alanında *Medeniyet ve Hoşnutsuzlukları* adlı eseri araştırmacılar için ilham verici eserlerinden biri olmuştur. Bu kitapta ana tartışma medeniyetin insan içgüdüsünü ne denli kontrol ettiği üzerine yoğunlaşır. Öte yandan Andre Gide'in *La Symphonie Pastorale* adlı romanı bu tür bir içgüdünün 'hikayeleştirilmesi'ne dönük önemli bir çalışmadır. Bu eserdeki aile betimlemesindeki ilişki türü, insan iradesinin ve eyleminin arkasında yatan ilkel içgüdüye dönük Freudyen teoriler bağlamında etkin bir şekilde incelenebilecek bir baba-oğul ilişkisini örnekler.

*Anahtar Kelimeler: Baba imgesi, Sigmund Freud, Medeniyet ve Hoşnutsuzlukları, Andre Gide, La Symphonie Pastorale*

André Gide's *La Symphonie Pastorale* is considered as a novella because of its length. Although it is a short novel, it is full of images and themes that take the attention of a critical reader and provide comprehensive discussions. First of all, for instance, blindness is dealt with not only physically but metaphorically. Furthermore, the idea of sin is paradoxically presented through a character, the father, who should be totally against it. On the top of these contents, the representation of the father serves as a primitive figure in Freudian view. In this paper, 'father image' in terms of Freudian doctrines will be examined by referring to theoretical Freudian terms written in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

*La Symphonie Pastorale* was written by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is about a pastor who brings home a blind orphan, Gertrude, who has recently lost her deaf grandmother with whom she used to have an estranged relationship. She has never been talked and has never gone out of her own house. Therefore, she cannot talk and is even believed to be deaf. The pastor takes responsibilities of her education and spends more of his time with her, to the degree of neglecting his children. His wife is aware of his attachment to her and cannot do anything, though she has warned him many times. One day, the pastor sees his son, Jacques, talking to Gertrude in his absence. Getting furious, he talks to him and bans him from any type of communication with her. He also makes Jacques set off on a pre-arranged one-month-journey. The reason why he treats him like that is actually because he is jealous of them. In fact, the pastor is in love with Gertrude, but he rejects this idea and replaces it with the love given by God's grace. Therefore, it is Gertrude who first mentions their love, which the pastor does not deny. After talking to one of his friends who is a doctor, he learns that she will be able to see after an operation. Thereupon, he starts to become anxious as she will see his face. After a successful operation, she gains sight. However, what she sees is different from what the pastor has told her. She does not find the world as beautiful as the pastor has been telling her. Disillusioned, she jumps into a river to commit suicide. She gets terribly ill and just before her death, she confesses to the pastor that she has imagined Jacques' face instead of his face while she was blind.

Considering the relationships of the characters, it can be observed that none of the characters express their feelings overtly, except Gertrude. The pastor's wife implies her husband's love for her many times, but cannot say it directly. On the other hand, Jacques is in love with Gertrude and wants to marry her. Just before revealing this to his father, he gets caught while talking to Gertrude and severely punished. He is accused of complicating Gertrude's inexperienced mind by his father. Similarly, the pastor loves her, but it takes some time to tell her. Jacques is not aware of his father's love for her, though his mother suspects and insinuates this. This lack of communication and the confidentiality of feelings and thoughts hint Freudian observations stated in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

The pastor as a father in this novel can be observed in two ways in Freudian terms. The father can be taken as the controlling figure, the rival for the child who has reached his phallic phase once his interest is centred upon his penis, on which "this interest soon gives rise to a feeling of sexual attraction towards the mother associated with feelings of jealousy or resentment directed against the father" (Brown, 1964: 24). This notion can be interpreted in terms of the pastor's relationship with his son, Jacques. The second one is the primitive man who adopts "the habit of forming families" (Freud, 1994: 29). This can be explained in the sense of the pastor's relationships with all the members of the family, including Gertrude.

The tension between a father and a child, explains Freud, goes back to the end of the third year of a child when he directs his sexual interest towards his mother. This tension, however, is eliminated "because of the boy's fears that his illicit desires might be punished by the father with castration (the castration complex)" (Brown, 1964: 24). Jacques, at the age of 15, has certainly overcome this sense of attraction for his mother; however, this archaic sense or instinct is unearthed. This phase can be called "second phallic phase" or "late phallic phase" as the drives are similar as in the previous one. Mother as the object of desire is replaced with Gertrude with her inclusion in the family. The mother is no longer an object of the rivalry between him and his father, and that is why the first conflict is aroused in the novel when Jacques talks to Gertrude:

*When I saw Jacques again the next morning, I seemed to be looking at him for the first time. I suddenly realized that my son was no longer a child but a young man: so long as I thought of him as a child, the love which I had accidentally discovered might appear monstrous. I had passed the whole night persuading myself that on the contrary it was perfectly natural and normal. Why was it that my dissatisfaction only became keener still? It was not till later that this became clear to me. In the meantime I had to speak to Jacques and tell him my decision. Now an instinct as sure as the voice of conscience warned me that this marriage must be prevented at all costs (Gide, 1963: 40)*

Gertrude becomes the second sexual object for them after the mother/wife. Therefore, it will be natural for the pastor to threaten his son, again, with the activity of castration. The fear inside Jacques unconsciously comes to the surface and he obeys his father's will. In the novella, castration as a punishment by the main authority here is expulsion from Gertrude. The father dispels the threats and once more shows that it is him who has the only right over his sexual object: "*It is I who have charge of Gertrude and I will not suffer you to speak to her, to touch her, to see her for one single day more*" (1963: 39. *Italics mine*). He does not hesitate to practise his power over his son once more.

For the mother and her daughters, Gertrude is not a property of gain. Therefore, there is no tension of self-possession between them and the pastor. However, for the wife, there is an apprehension of over-negligence.

She is not content with the situation, naturally, and implies this many times but she is still submissive in front of that absolute power:

*[Pastor] 'For that matter, perhaps Jacques will have got over his love by the time he gets back. At this age one hardly knows what one wants.' [The wife] 'And even later one doesn't always know,' said she at last, rather oddly. Her enigmatical and slightly oracular way of speaking irritated me, for I am too frank by nature to put up easily with mystery-making. Turning towards her I begged her to explain what she meant to imply that. 'Nothing, my dear,' she answered sadly. 'I was only thinking that a moment ago you were wishing to be warned of the things you didn't notice yourself'. (1963: 44)*

The wife is helpless in this matter, and no matter what she says, the pastor does not accept it or he behaves as if he does not understand her. The strength that his wife can find in herself to tell the truth (that he is in love with Gertrude and socially, no nobody will appreciate their love) is overcome by the ultimate authority's selfishness. As being the father, the pastor not only punishes his son but also the mother (by ignoring her) in order to fight against the risk of losing his second sexual object.

As for the primitive man, Freud puts forward that "the life of human beings in common ... had a twofold foundation, i.e., the compulsion to work, created by external necessity, and the power of love, causing the male to wish to keep his sexual object, the female, near him, and the female to keep near her that part of herself which has become detached from her, her child" (1994: 30). First, primitive man realized the advantage of living with somebody "to improve his lot on earth by working". Thus, "his first helpers were probably the members of the family". Apart from establishing a family as a result of searching for a 'fellow-worker', "forming families can be connected to the need for genital satisfaction, no longer appearing like an occasional guest who turns up suddenly and then vanishes....the male acquired a motive for keeping the female, or rather, his sexual objects, near him" (24). The female wanted to stay by the stronger male, too. Consequently, a grouping based on mutual concerns was established. These two factors led to living together in common (29). When this theory is considered in terms of the world of the novel, the pastor can be seen as the primitive man who has fulfilled his aim by having an ideal family. First, he finds his business and sexual partner and establishes his basement. Then, they multiply co-workers by giving birth to 'detached' parts, the children, and keep them near, too, by living together. However, when the pastor's interest is diverted to Gertrude, the foundation of this association is shaken. The pastor, now, wants to keep Gertrude near him, a new member who can damage this reunion. He inexhaustibly has taught this unnatural detached part, guided her and finally fell in love with her. His ex-love object is replaced with a new one. Consequently, this new membership needs new arrangement in the family, which is suggested by the journey of Jacques.

Jacques, previously losing his sexual object regarding the final phase of the 'Oedipus complex', challenges his father once more; not as a child now,

but as a primitive rival who is seeking for fulfilling his wish of 'genital satisfaction'. The pastor, as the father and fellow primitive co-worker, is sure that he has to rule out this menace: "The extra-ordinary self-possession he showed brought my exasperation to a climax. Feeling that I was about to interrupt him, he raised his hand, as much as to say, 'No, you can speak afterwards; let me finish first.' But I seized his arm and shook it" (Gide, 1963: 38-39). Jacques, once again, is defeated by both his father and this ancient, prehistoric man.

In "Totem and Taboo", Sigmund Freud recounts the "communal existence in the form of a band of brothers. By overpowering father, the sons had discovered that several men united can be stronger than a single man" (Freud, 1994: 30). After killing their father, brothers eat his flesh as the sign of respect. This ceremony is exemplified in *La Symphonie Pastorale*. After the father quarrelled with his son about seeing Gertrude, he makes him agree with him on remaining away for at least one month:

*(Jacques) 'Very well, Father, I will obey'.*

*I thought he turned extremely pale- so pale that the colour even left his lips. But I persuaded myself that such prompt submission argued no very great love, and I felt inexpressibly relieved. I was touched besides by his obedience.*

*'That's the child's love,' I said gently. And drawing him to me, I put my lips to his forehead. There was a slight recoil on his part, but I refused to feel hurt by it. (1963: 41)*

This ritual of kissing the forehead is the gift for the son, according to primitive father, as he is a well-bred member of the family who obeys and respects the head of the family.

Civilization is formed by men who consciously or unconsciously perform certain acts that regulate human relations. Sigmund Freud decodes these relations and skilfully unveils the subconscious urges within these structures as a psychologist, whereas one can find a storification of these hidden compulsions by Andre Gide, an author who tries his hand at illustrating such primordial motives. The father, both in oedipal period and primitive time, is mainly up against his closest enemy, the son. In both situations, it is the father who wants to enjoy the total freedom of possessing the sexual object, and encounters other candidate possessors of the same object. The role of the woman becomes an article on which the father cherishes his own might. While Freud takes this instinct to the prehistoric times and subconscious domain, Andre Gide successfully displays this in a narrative example.

## Geniřletilmiş Öz

### André Gide'in *La Symphonie Pastorale* Eserinde Baba İmgesinin

#### Freudyen İncelemesi

Sigmund Freud psikoloji, felsefe ve edebiyat gibi birçok bilim dalında büyük bir öneme sahip bir yazardır. Özellikle edebiyat alanında *Medeniyet ve Hořnut-*

*suzlukları* adlı eseri araştırmacılar için ilham verici eserlerinden biri olmuştur. Bu kitapta ana tartışma medeniyetin insan içgüdüsünü ne denli kontrol ettiği üzerine yoğunlaşır. Öte yandan Andre Gide'in *La Symphonie Pastorale* adlı romanı bu tür bir içgüdünün 'hikayeleştirilmesi'ne dönük önemli bir çalışmadır. Bu eserdeki aile betimlemesindeki ilişki türü, insan iradesinin ve eyleminin arkasında yatan ilkel içgüdüye dönük Freudyen teoriler bağlamında etkin bir şekilde incelenebilecek bir baba-oğul ilişkisini örnekler.

Romandaki papaz bir baba olarak Freud açısından iki bağlamda değerlendirilebilir: kontrol figürü ve ilkel adam. İlkinde cinsel organı ile ilgili farkındalığı oluşmuş 'fallik' dönem aşamasındaki çocuğun rakibi baba konumundadır. Anneye karşı hissedilen aşırı sevginin kıskançlık nedeniyle babaya karşı öfkeye dönüştüğü bu dönemde çocuk hadım edilme korkusuyla babaya itaat etmekle sonuçlanan bir dönemden geçer. Papaz ve oğlu Jacques arasında 'geç fallik dönem' yada 'ikinci fallik dönem' olarak nitelendirilebileceğimiz bir aşamada evin yeni üyesi Gertrude için yeni bir mücadeleye girilmiştir. Rakiplerin çatışması burada da kontrol figürü babaya itaatle sonuçlanmıştır. İkincisinde ise baba bir aile kurma alışkanlığını yerine getiren ilkel adamdır. Diğer bütün aile bireyleri ile ilişkisini düzenleyen bu kimlikle baba çalışmakla yükümlü iken sevdiği insanları ve özellikle cinsel nesnesini yakınında tutmaya programlanmış ilkel bir benliğe sahiptir. Bu bağlamda kadın kendi için bir eş olmanın yanında aileyi kurmasında yardımcı olan bir "iş arkadaşı"dır. Roman dünyasında bu eş/iş arkadaşlığı sonucunda kurulan ailenin temelinde aileye yeni dahil olan Gertrude ile çatlak oluşur. Yeni cinsel nesnesini yanında tutmaya çalışan ilkel insanın modern temsili babanın karşılaştığı bu durumda eskiden gelen arkaik dürtülerin yeni düzenlemelemleri zorladığı görülmektedir; çünkü Jacques'in evi terk etmesi gerekmektedir. Her iki durumda da baba galip gelir, ancak asıl yenilgiyi beklemediği cepheden alır. Uğruna oğlu ile savaştığı Gertrude aslında Jacques'i sevmektedir.

Freud'un kuramları çerçevesinde Gide'in hayal dünyasındaki karakterler incelendiğinde birbirinden bağımsız olan bu kuram ile kurgusal uygulamanın ne denli örtüştüğü görülmüştür. *Medeniyet ve Hoşnutsuzlukları*'ndaki baskı uygulayan babanın ve aile kuran ilkel babanın bu yönleri *La Symphonie Pastorale*'daki baba karakterinde birleşerek Freudyen bir baba figürüne tanıklık edilmektedir.

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