

Eros and Thanatos in W. H. Auden's Poetry: Analyzing Life and Death Drives in light of Freudian Theory

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Abstract:

This study explores the life and death drives in selected poems of W. H. Auden depending on Freudian psychoanalytic theory of Eros and Thanatos that assures the existence of two opposing instincts leading human behavior: the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct (Thanatos). The research analyzes three of Auden's key poems, namely "O Where Are You Going," "The Unknown Citizen" and "September 1, 1939." It tries to scrutinize the themes, imageries, and symbols of the selected poems to show the interacting presence of Eros and Thanatos. It discusses how these conflicting instincts are manifested in the nature and actions of the poetic personae, as well as in the broader thematic concerns of the poems, such as the tension between self-preservation and self-destruction, absurdity, authenticity, and the search for meaning in the face of mortality in the modern age.

The study summed up that Auden's sophisticated treatment of the Eros-Thanatos conflict is dynamic in his poetry. In "The Unknown Citizen," the protagonist's conformity and bureaucratic life reflect the dominance of Thanatos over Eros. Conversely, "Where Are You Going" presents a more nuanced interplay between the two drives, with the speaker grappling with both the charm of self-annihilation and the yearning for existential and

creative fulfillment. In "September 1, 1939," the tension between Eros and Thanatos is central to human nature and community.

Keywords: (Eros, Thanatos, W.H. Auden, Life and death drives, Individuality, Authoritarianism).

Methodology

The study employs a textual analytical approach to investigate the tension arising from the Eros–Thanatos conflict in Auden's poetry. It is based on Freud's psychoanalytic ideas in his later years, especially after 1920. It explores three poems out of Auden's oeuvre namely "O Where Are You Going," "The Unknown Citizen" and "September 1, 1939." The methodology involves close reading and detailed textual analysis of the selected poems, drawing on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts to investigate the underlying psychological conflicts and tension in the mind of Auden's personae.

1-Introduction

1-1- General Overview About Auden's Selected Poems

The three selected poems in this study are taken from Auden's collection of poetry entitled "W. H. Auden Selected Poems," which is edited by Edward Mendelson. The first poem, "Where Are You Going," is one of his early poems that was written in 1932. It is part of Auden's earlier works and is often included in his collections of poetry. It reflects his interest in folklore and the timeless nature of human fears and quests. It deals with themes of fear, courage, inevitability, and fate. It is structured as a dialogue, with a question–and–answer layout.

The second poem, "The Unknown Citizen," was published in 1939, shortly after Auden moved to America. It reveals Auden's critique of modern society, chiefly the bureaucratic

and indifferent nature of the state and its influence on individual identity. It deals with themes of individuality, control, and conformity.

The third poem, "September 1, 1939," was written on the eve of World War II. As its title refers to, the poem marked the beginning of the conflict when Germany invaded Poland. It deals with numerous themes such as political and social critiques, human nature, morality, absurdity, and individuality.

Hence, the three poems address different aspects of human experience and societal critique. They share central topics and themes relating to the most influential issues of the modern age, especially individuality, absurdity, and the quest for a meaningful life.

1-2- Theoretical Framework

This research is based on Freud's psychoanalytic ideas in his later years, especially after 1920. In his early career phase, Freud adopted a monist psychoanalytic approach to the pleasure principle, where human beings seek pleasure and avoid pain. However, he later came to believe that humans possess an inherent drive towards self-destruction and, ultimately, death. He draws parallels between the ego and death instincts, as well as between sexual and life instincts (1920, p.38). Therefore, there are tendencies towards self-harm and self-annihilation.

Freud's views on human motivation changed in a way that human actions cannot solely be attributed to survival and pleasure; in addition to our innate desire to live, there is also a desire to die. According to his theory of the death drive, humans may consciously and unconsciously prefer death over life, and the 'death drive' is a biological urge in living organisms (Freud,1920,p.39).

Freud posits that humans are driven by two opposing instincts: the life instinct (also known as 'Eros') and the death instinct (later termed 'Thanatos') (Freud, 1920. p.43).

While the death drive (Thanatos) involves aggressiveness, self-destruction, and violence, the life drive (Eros) encompasses self-preservation, reproduction, and creativity. Eros also represents the will to live, evident in daily activities like seeking nutrition, protection, health, and pleasure. On the other hand, the death drive is an inherent longing to return to an inanimate state, the original state from which the living organism emerged. Freud states: "If we accept as truth that everything that is alive dies due to internal reasons and returns to an inorganic state, then we must conclude that 'the aim of all life is death' and that 'inanimate objects existed before living ones.'" (1920, Freud, 1920. p.43).

As everyone eventually faces death, the death drive goes beyond the physical aspect of dying. People may exhibit unexplainable desires for self-harm, engaging in violent or self-damaging behaviors causing harm. Freud suggests that these inclinations stem from an elusive inner yearning for demise. There is an unconscious force that craves annihilation, which is the death drive.

Freud (1920) illustrates the oscillation between these two forces as follows:

"It is as if the organism's life moved in a fluctuating rhythm. One set of instincts moves forward rapidly towards the ultimate goal of life, but once a certain stage is reached, the other set pulls back to a specific point to initiate a new beginning and prolong the journey" (pp.34-35).

Consequently, the life of organisms follows a wavering path; the death instinct (or Thanatos) urges individuals towards self-destruction or a return to an inorganic state, pushing towards the final end of life, which is death. However, when reaching a certain stage, the life instinct often resists the swift progression towards death and instead prompts a fresh start to enhance life and its experiences. Essentially, Freud highlights the dynamic interplay between these opposing forces within living beings, resulting in a

balancing act throughout the journey of life. Therefore, "The aim of all life is death" (Freud, 1920. p.33). The death drive is an active force, where death signifies a desire to go back to nothingness, a state from which we originated.

The life drive, or the "libido of our sexual instincts," would coincide with the Eros of the poets and philosophers, which holds all living things together (Freud, 1920. p.44). These drives are also called the "self-preservative instincts" (Freud, 1920. p.47). The life instincts are also related to the "reproduction function" (Freud, 1920. p.55).

One example of the behavior of Thanatos is the concept of "repetition compulsion," which is the repetition of the traumatic or melancholic moments or evoking the traumatic past experiences (Freud, 1920, p.14). Bringing back all these reminiscences is hurtful and does not contribute to any happiness and well-being. Nevertheless, there's something strangely satisfying about it. In this case, it's a tendency to seek pain instead of pleasure, which Freud saw as a subtle manifestation of the death drive.

The theory speculates that Eros operates from the beginning of life and appears as a "life instinct" in opposition to the "death instinct," which comes into being by the coming to life of inorganic substance. This theory seeks to solve the riddle of life by supposing that these two instincts were struggling with each other from the very first (Freud, 1920. p.56).

The death drive allegedly provokes us to repeat traumatic experiences, engage people in events that lead to demise, or cause violence externally toward other beings. It also underlies bizarre desire for pain, tendency to undermine one's self. Man carries his or her "death instincts from the very beginning of life on earth" (Freud, 1920. p.40). The root of these desires all comes from longing to return to the inorganic state we all came from: the great nothingness (Freud, 1920. p.56).

2-Discussion and Analysis

2-1- W. H. Auden's "O Where Are You Going"

Auden's 'O Where Are You Going' is a four-stanza poem written in the form of a ballad. The poem is a conversation between two persons. In the first three stanzas, the first person, who is dubbed "reader, fearer and horror," (Auden, 1979,p.20) asks three pondering questions which all show overthinking and fear from the unknown future. The second person, who is addressed as rider, farer and hearer," (Auden, 1979,p.20) answers the three questions in the fourth stanza. The poem overlaps the pessimism of the interrogator with the optimism of the answerer to show the conflict of two attitudes in life.

Although the poem, on the surface level, shows a conversation between two persons, it may convey a great message on the deeper level where it displays the eternal struggle of the mind and exposes the human oscillation between desire and fear. It can also reflect the oscillation between authentic and inauthentic life of an individual. On top of that, the poem shows the tension between the life drive and the death drive within the aspects of the human psyche according to Freud's theory of Eros and Thanatos.

In the first stanza, the reader warns the rider about the risk of going ahead to the fatal valley where death waits brave people to take their lives. The reader refers to that valley as a "grave" and it is "fatal where furnaces burn."(Auden, 1979,p.20) Thus, the reader's desire represents the life drive (Eros)that prevents anyone of taking a step towards danger. On the other hand, the rider's desire represents the death drive (Thanatos) that urges man to go ahead regardless of the circumstances that he faces. The reader's question in the first stanza, "where are you going?"(Auden, 1979,p.20), finds its answer in

the last stanza when the rider answered "out of this house" (Auden, selected poems, p.20) The rider's marching out of the house despite the reader's warning of the possible threats of the fatal unpaved valley, furnaces burn and the intolerable stink of the rubbish dump represents the desire to follow death drive. The first stanza shows the start of the tension between Eros and Thanatos.

In the second stanza, the tension is heated and heightened. The reader now becomes "the fearer" and the rider becomes "the farer." The fearer uses a new scenario to warn the rider that the fall of dusk can interrupt his journey, as there will be no lighting in the valley. The fearer also warns the farer that his "diligent looking" and respectable lifestyle will alter completely and his adventure of going ahead in this journey will "discover the lacking" (Auden, 1979, p.20). To ensure his warning, the fearer presents an imagery of moving from granite to grass as a metaphor of losing comfort and moving from a stable state into a wild area. In this way, the farer's footsteps will feel unstable because they move "from granite to grass." Thus, the fearer warns the farer from leaving the life drive and marching the death drive.

In the third stanza, the warning reaches its climax when the rider, who is now being addressed as the "hearer," is warned exaggeratedly by the addresser, who becomes a "horror" of how birds can be fatal creatures and how every animal can cause a "shocking disease"(Auden, 1979,p.20).

In the last stanza, the rider replies negatively to all worries and advice of the reader. Moreover, the dangerous creatures that may cause harm to the rider are "looking for" the reader now. All worries never stir the life drive (Eros) in the rider's psyche. Instead, the death drive (Thanatos) was pushing the rider to follow his own way of adventure.

Living in such an over-thinking state and anxiety, the reader follows the life drive and inauthentic existence. He represents people who are very afraid or who question things too much, losing out the opportunity to succeed. On the other hand, the adventurous rider chooses to activate his death drive and experience the authentic existence. The tension between the two drives in this poem shows that death drive leads people widely than life drive does. This elaboration goes side by side with the poet's main theme of the poem, in which taking actions instantly is the most reliable way to succeed.

2-2-W. H. Auden's "The Unknown Citizen"

The second poem that can be interpreted through Freud's theory of Eros and Thanatos is "The Unknown Citizen." Starting from the inscription of the poem, the "erection of a marble monument" (Auden, p.85) suggests Eros (the life drive) where a monument is built by the state to preserve the memory and celebrate the contributions of an individual. Erecting the monument shows that the citizen's life had value and significance within the societal structure according to the standards of the state.

On the other hand, the erecting of the marble monument covertly acknowledges the death of the unknown citizen, highlighting the inevitable end of life and the presence of death, which is central to Thanatos. Giving the citizen a sterile code ("JS/07 M 378")(Auden, p.85) rather than a name proposes a dehumanizing feature. It implicitly reduces the individual to an impersonal statistic. This can reflect the elimination and destruction of personal identity in death, indicating the destroying force of Thanatos.

Erecting the citizen's statue by the state rather than the family highlights state control and acknowledges the dehumanization and elimination of individuality in a totalitarian system. It refers to the control of authoritative structures over citizens' life and death.

This dual perspective in the inscription of the poem invites beholders to reflect on the contrast between societal value and individual identity, and the controlling, bureaucratic manner in which life and death are often handled by modern states.

The metaphors and imagery in the poem reflect a tension between the life instinct and the death instinct. The behavior of the citizen, serving the Greater Community like a saint, his steady employment, satisfaction of his employers, ownership of modern conveniences (phonograph, radio, car, Frigidaire), marriage, and having five children are all signs of aligning with Eros's drive.

The citizens' activities and contributions adhere to social norms to enhance communal life. These signify material success and societal approval, reflecting life drives (Eros). Praised for being a "saint," his positive societal contributions fulfill social duties, symbolizing material success, and pursuit of comfort and modernity aiming to sustain and improve life. He is "One against whom there was no official complaint" (Auden,1979, p.85). His popularity, social habits, and status reinforce Ethos.

While the persona's conformity to social standards is life-affirming, it also shows suppression and annihilation of individuality connected to the death instinct (Thanatos). The absence of any "official complaint" (Auden,1979, p.85) indicates a life devoid of personal freedom and authentic self-expression, resulting in a metaphorical death of individuality. His focus on "health-card and insurance" coverage may symbolize a fear of sickness or death, recognizing a fear against which society guards, showcasing the triumph of Thanatos over Eros.

The final lines question if he was free or happy, dismissing these concerns as absurd. This discharge represents the triumph of Thanatos, sacrificing personal fulfillment and freedom for societal conformity. While Eros drives the citizen to maintain societal

standards, Thanatos lurks in the background through the suppression of personal desires and freedom.

The poem differentiates between material success and societal endorsement with the unspoken question of spiritual and emotional fulfillment in the final lines: "Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd/Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard" (Auden, 1979, p. 86).

The perfect conformity of the citizen's life can also be seen as a form of inauthentic living or living death where real individuality and personal wishes are muted by the death drive Thanatos. The numerous reports and statistics that expose the citizen's life provide an image of a dehumanized lifestyle in which conformity to social standards is valued more highly than individual achievements or contentment. The dehumanizing component of Thanatos is reflected in this bureaucratic reduction of existence to measurable data points. The social expectation to hold suitable opinions and react normally according to the customs of the state indicates a life controlled by external powers, not by personal choice.

Contemplating the ironic tone of the poem and the final lines, it appears that there seems to be a disconnection between the appearance of a disciplined life and the reality of the citizen's existence. Although everything appears superficially perfect (Eros), the underlying reality is one of latent dissatisfaction and lack of real individuality (Thanatos). This struggle between appearance and reality highlights the tension between preserving societal norms and achieving personal serenity.

According to Martin Heidegger, living a life that is dictated by the "they," where people lose their own sense of self in the process of fitting in with society's expectations and conformity to the societal norms, is what defines inauthenticity. Heidegger states: "The

'they' prescribes one's state-of-mind, and determines what and how one 'sees'" (1962, p.165).

Heidegger's theory reflects on the life of the "unknown citizen," whose life is not based on personal convictions but rather on official validation, bureaucratic validation and cultural standards.

Heidegger's theory is about living in a way that is true to oneself, rather than merely following the herd. Heidegger states "Authenticity means coming back to one's own self" (1962, p. 312). However, the unknown citizen, is portrayed as an individual who has not returned to his own self but has instead obeyed strictly the societal norms, thus losing his individuality.

Aligning with Heidegger's perception of living according to the "they," where someone's true self is immersed in the expectations and norms of society, the unknown citizen, in Auden's poem, lives an inauthentic existence. Heidegger describes this as a kind of death (thanatos) because "Inauthenticity is a mode of being in which the individual is lost in the publicness of the 'they'." (1962, p. 223).

The whole poem, including its title which reflects the destruction of individuality, reflects this inauthentic life where the citizen becomes "unknown". Thus, the final verses of the poem, questioning if he was free or happy and dismissing these concerns, underscore the inauthenticity. "Was he free? /Was he happy? The question is absurd/Had anything been wrong,/ We should certainly have heard" (Auden, p.86).

To delve deeper into the analysis of Auden's "The Unknown Citizen," Nietzsche's concepts of the Übermensch (Superman) and the herd mentality can be applied to understand the tension between societal conformity and individual authenticity in light of

ethos and thanatos. The concept of the Übermensch is central to Nietzsche's critique of modern society and its tendency to suffocate individuality. Instead, an individual has to transcend the conventional values and norms of society to create his own values and live authentically. Nietzsche states, "I teach you the Übermensch. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?" (2006, p.3). For him, the Übermensch is an individual who creates new values and meanings for life and stands apart from the herd. If someone becomes an Übermensch, it is a great achievement because "no price is too high to pay for the privilege of owning yourself." (Nietzsche, 2002, p.212).

The situation of the unknown citizen in modern society aligns with Nietzsche's critique of the herd. He/She exemplifies the herd mentality because of complete conformity to societal standards and expectations where every part of his existence is controlled by external authorities and statistics. The citizen's life in this poem lacks the qualities of the Übermensch where the Übermensch emphasizes the life drive (Eros) in a great sense—one that involves individual growth, self-overcoming, and the creation of new meanings. On the other hand, the citizen follows the herd mentality and becomes unknown after his death, which emphasizes death drive (Thanatos).

In summary, "The Unknown Citizen" depicts a life that, on the outside, embodies Eros via contributions to society, financial success, and social conformity. A deeper reading of the poem, however, exposes Thanatos's ubiquitous effect in the shape of suppressed individuality, a lack of personal autonomy, and possible spiritual emptiness. The existential conflict that permeates modern life is reflected in this tension between Eros and Thanatos, where the wish to fit in and achieve frequently comes at the expense of authentic happiness and real self-expression.

According to Freud, as death drive is a force which signifies a desire to go back to nothingness, the unknown citizen chooses the death drive and goes back to the state from which we originated.

"The Unknown Citizen" is a criticism of modern social standards that prioritize conformity and external endorsement over true individuality and self-awareness. The poem captures the tension between Eros (societal success and material well-being) and Thanatos (loss of authentic self and individuality), emphasizing the existential cost of living a life dictated by the "they" rather than one's own authentic existence.

3-3- W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939"

W. H. Auden's "September 1, 1939" depicts the tension between life and death on the eve of World War II and the critical socio-political climate of the time. Auden employs vivid ideas, imagery, and symbolism that the concepts of life and death in this poem. He vividly portrays the struggle between constructive and destructive forces within society and human nature. Therefore, Freud's theory of Eros and Thanatos can offer a valuable perspective for exploring this poem.

In the first stanza, the speaker feels 'Uncertain and afraid' due to the war situation in Europe. He views the 1930s as 'a low dishonest decade' because during this time "Waves of anger and fear/ Circulate over the bright/ And darkened lands of the earth"(Auden, 1979, p.86). The place is portrayed as a "darkened land"(Auden, 1979, p.86). Anger in Europe arose from the destructive policies of totalitarian states that invade private life. Everything seems to carry evil including states, time, land, notions. The result of this evil and horror circulating in Europe is the "unmentionable odour of death". This circulation of evil, anger, and fear represents Thanatos.

The death drive, illustrated by the horror and aggressive situations in Europe at that time, conflicts with the life drive represented by private life in the poem, causing the "odour of death"(Auden, 1979, p.86) to circulate rather than the odour of life.

Therefore, the "waves of anger and fear" and the "unmentionable odour of death" manifest Thanatos, emphasizing the collective fear and anticipation of war. The life drive (Eros), shown by sitting in a bar and reflecting, is overwhelmed by the death drive which leads to disillusionment and the decline of moral and social structures. The first stanza unveils the conflict between the two drives. External conflict leads to internal conflict, resulting in uncertainty and fear.

The speaker mentions the despotism and cruelty of Adolf Hitler and Germany invading European countries. Despite their evil actions, they were victimized by other forces: "Those to whom evil is done/ Do evil in return"(Auden, 1979, p.86); Hitler by his father and Germany by the victorious nations at Versailles. Auden describes Hitler as "The Psychopathic God" (Auden, 1979, p.86), to illustrate his brutal nature. This term reflects the strength of the death drive embedded in Hitler's character that drives him to commit evil deeds. Robert Waite argues in his book that the sadomasochism observed in adult Hitler originated in his childhood when he was beaten by his father and teachers at school. (Waite, 1977, p.138). Hitler's sadomasochism symbolizes the death drive overpowering the life drive and leading to destructive outcomes. The speaker in the poem asserts the principle that "Those to whom evil is done/ Do evil in return" (Auden, 1979, p.86), emphasizing the destructive and self-perpetuating aspects of Thanatos. Furthermore, the cyclical nature of suffering "We must suffer them all again"(Auden, 1979, p.86) echoes the unavoidable human anguish and mismanagement, resonating with the death drive.

According to the poem, Martin Luther has "driven the culture mad" (Auden, 1979, p.86). The speaker denotes that Luther's notions lead to the enlightenment being driven away, causing present nations to suffer: "Accurate scholarship can/ Unearth the whole offence/ From Luther until now" (Auden, 1979, p.86). It seems that the speaker criticizes the image or perception of God that Luther or his followers supported, highlighting the Thanatos elements. On the other hand, the poet aims to mitigate the cycle of destruction and "unearth the whole offence" (Auden, 1979, p.86) through the quest of "accurate scholarship" (Auden, 1979, p.86), which represents a life-affirming drive towards understanding and truth and the will to follow the Eros.

In the third stanza, the speaker shows another kind of evil drive represented by the speech of dictators and leaders. He alludes to the "exiled Thucydides" who criticized the leaders of Athens, where "enlightenment driven away" at that time, and accuses them of talking 'elderly rubbish' (Auden, 1979, p.87). In his time, Auden, like Thucydides, criticizes the leader of Europe whose speeches are "elderly rubbish," leading to an "apathetic grave" (Auden, 1979, p.87). The poem laments the failure of the norms that we have been taught in schools, especially the religious orientation of Luther and the lies of the authorities. The governors' speeches about doing well for their citizens lead to the rise of fascism in Europe. Dictators vomit worthless rubbish talk that drives people's thinking away; the "huge imago" created in the mind of the citizen makes a psychopathic god that leads people to do the evil they had done to them.

Dictators' talk leads Auden's people to "grief" and "suffering" (Auden, 1979, p.87), caused by the world wars, representing the Thanatos side of human behavior. The leaders' inaction and empty rhetoric contribute to societal destruction and suffering, embodying the death drive.

On the other hand, pondering Thucydides' criticism and reflection on democracy and dictatorship represent a life drive (Eros) towards knowledge and historical awareness, aiming to avoid the repetition of the earlier mistakes.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker emphasizes a sense of indifference or lack of engagement because America shuts its eyes to the totalitarian threat. Thus, the "blind skyscrapers" (Auden, 1979, p.87), symbolizing the modern industrial age and urbanization, are described as 'blind'. Blindness suggests a lack of awareness or vision, indicating that these evidences of urbanization are devoid of true insight. The proclamation of the "strength of Collective Man" (Auden, 1979, p.87) is contrasted with the underlying emptiness and vanity of such proclamation.

Hence, the apathy towards the dictatorial threat represented by the blindness of the skyscrapers, the "vain competitive excuses" (Auden, 1979, p.87) of the indifferent nations and the "imperialism's faces" can all be seen as manifestations of Thanatos where such "international wrong" (Auden, 1979, p.87) leads to loss and destruction. According to the poem, people cannot live for long in such "an euphoric dream," aligning temporarily with Eros, because in spite of the illusion of progress and harmony, the poet questions the sustainability of such illusions, arguing that they cannot withstand the harsh realities of the world. When people stare at the mirrors of the skyscrapers, they will see "imperialism's face" (Auden, 1979, p.87) and the "international wrong" which reflect the darker side of human personalities.

The manifestation of Thanatos and Eros can be seen in the contrast between illusion and reality in the poem. While the high skyscrapers present the euphoric dream that stands for Eros, these high buildings are "blind" and their mirrors reflect the harsh reality of the "Imperialism's face" and the "international wrong" that stand for Thanatos.

The reflection of the "Imperialism's face" on the mirror exposes the aggressive, unjust, and destructive behaviors (Thanatos) that oppose the ideals of peaceful and constructive progress (Eros). The Enlightenment ethics of reason, progress, and humanism are associated with Eros. These ethics aim to produce a pleasant and rational society. On the other hand, the failure of these ethics, as Europe descends into war, is aligned with Thanatos. The growth of totalitarian regimes and the outbreak of fight signify the triumph of destructive forces (Thanatos) over the constructive aspirations of the Enlightenment (Eros).

The desire for peace and stability is a manifestation of Eros, while the outbreak of World War II is the manifestation of the death drive.

The theme of escapism dominates the fifth stanza of the poem. An attempt to maintain normality: "The lights must never go out,/ The music must always play" (Auden, 1979, p.87), reveals the life drive's attempt to preserve permanence and comfort within chaos. People sitting in the bar seek solace in routine and feign comforts to avoid facing the harsh realities of their existence. The constant presence of light, playing music, and social conventions creates an illusion of security and normalcy that can be seen as manifestations of Eros. These actions aim to create a harmonious and comforting environment amidst chaos. The poet uses sensory and auditory imagery to emphasize the need for constant distraction and avoidance of darkness or silence. On the other hand, fear and sorrow: "Children afraid of the night / Who have never been happy or good" (Auden, 1979,p.87), align with the death drive's impact on the human psyche. Sometimes, confronting reality leads to fear, confusion, and desolation (Thanatos). If people do not seek solace in their daily routine, they will feel lost and fearful like children in a terrifying, "haunted wood", constantly unhappy and morally frustrated. Thus,

"conventions" are metaphorically depicted as conspirators that transform the "bar" into a "fort", providing the illusion of a homely and safe environment. Escapism can be linked to Thanatos, as it signifies self-deception and rejection that ultimately avoids confronting reality. Additionally, fear and confusion represent the omnipresent influence of the death drive, challenging the superficial comfort provided by Eros.

In the seventh stanza, the speaker describes the routine of daily commuters, moving "from the conservative dark/ into the ethical life" (Auden, 1979, p.88). Those commuters are described as "dense" not only because they live in a crowded city but also because they repeat the routine of their life absurdly and stupidly with helpless governors. Both governors and their subjects are trapped in the routine of a "compulsory game" (Auden, 1979, p.88), leading them to be "deaf" and "dumb" (Auden, 1979, p.88).

The imagery of the mass of people commuting to their work with the same morning vow implies the idea of loss of individuality. It reflects the big brother regimes in a totalitarian state where individuals are unheard and unrepresented. Thus, the poet highlights the mechanical and hypocritical nature of daily ethical vows made by ordinary people and the futile, compulsory roles of their governors.

Working for the "ethical life," promising to be true to one's wife, and to concentrate more on work represent the drive towards constructive and harmonious behaviors (Eros). These deeds propose an obligation to sustaining personal relationships and societal structures.

On the other hand, the automatic and hypocritical repetition of these vows, along with the depiction of governors as "helpless" who are playing their "compulsory game," suggest the destructive aspects of Thanatos.

The tension between these two drives, the desire for sincere ethical behavior and

meaningful transformation (Eros) and the persistent sense of helplessness and inefficacy (Thanatos) is represented by the questions mentioned at the end of the stanza: "Who can release them now,/ Who can reach the deaf,/ Who can speak for the dumb?"(Auden, 1979, p.88). The psychological tension between the two drives also appears in the powerlessness to help the marginalized or change the mechanical nature of daily routines.

Highlighting such a complex interaction between Eros and Thanatos in societal routines and governance, the poem clearly shows the poet's aim of critiquing the mechanical and ineffective nature of both individual ethical commitments and the futile leadership. As there is an artificial commitment to ethical behavior and social harmony (Eros), the underlying deceit and futility of these efforts disclose the sway of the death drive (Thanatos).

The waking of governors to "resume their compulsory game" and the way the consumers follow in keeping their ideal life are mere attempts to fulfill the constructive roles suggesting the helpless routine of life. This psychological tension of repetition and helplessness reflects the absurdity of life at Auden's time. This result aligns with the destructive and self-destructive aspects of Thanatos over Eros.

The depiction of people as "dense commuters" who are engaged in a daily ritual and societal expectations, such as "repeating their morning vow" and being "true to the wife(s)," reflects Foucault's concept of disciplinary power where the states establish norms and make individuals comply with them, often without conscious awareness. Foucault states, "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise"(1977, p.170). In this stanza, individuals are regulated and normalized through routines, surveillance, and

subtle coercion. In addition, the "helpless governors" effortlessly resume their compulsory game on those individuals, which enforces the triumph of Thanatos over Eros.

In the eighth stanza, the speaker shows two contrastive worlds: Thanatos and Eros. The first one is related to the lie of the authorities and "the romantic lie in the brain/ of the sensual man-in-the-street," while the latter is the voice of the poet unfolding the "lie of Authority/ whose buildings grope the sky" (Auden, 1979, p.88). Suggesting the limitation of his voice in healing the situation, the speaker gives a reason to raise his voice that "We must love one another or die" (Auden, 1979, p.88); everyone in society contributes to the common good or evil, which means everyone carries the drives of life and death inside him/herself. The poet's voice embodies the life drive's pursuit of truth and integrity. Therefore, the lie of the authority leads to destruction and death, while the voice of the poet stands for construction and life; his voice highlights Eros's ultimate aim of connection, unity, and the preservation of life. If people do not love each other, they will kill each other because "no one lives alone" (Auden, 1979, p.88). Hate, the lie of authority, and wealth disparity between people of authority who own skyscrapers and hungry people can all drive human behavior towards conflict and despair.

4-Conclusion

This study offers a fresh interpretation of the three selected poems of Auden, "O Where Are You Going," "The Unknown Citizen," and "September 1, 1939," in light of psychoanalytic theory developed by Freud. It draws attention to the underlying tension that arises when the events of the poems are seen from the perspectives of life drive (Eros) and death drive (Thanatos). The analysis shows that throughout the chosen works, Auden's complex and dynamic handling of the Eros-Thanatos struggle is evident.

In "O Where Are You Going," the dialogue between the adventurous rider, motivated by the death drive, and the circumspect reader, representing the life drive, emphasizes the struggle between Eros and Thanatos. This struggle represents the drive for existential adventure (Thanatos) and the longing for safety (Eros).

This exchange illustrates the universal conflict that exists in the human situation between the need for transcendence and the want for self-preservation. Hence, the rider's resolute reaction shows the death drive's unquestionable triumph over the life drive's fears. This victory is also demonstrated in Auden's "The Unknown Citizen," where the citizen's demise highlights Thanatos as a result of identity destruction and dehumanization in a totalitarian society. The poem's last words emphasize Thanatos' supremacy over Eros, as the departed citizen forfeits his or her own happiness in favor of social obedience. The study proposes that the unknown citizen chooses Thanatos, based on Freud's idea of Thanatos, which denotes a wish to return to nothingness.

The entire poem in the third stanza, "September 1, 1939," has a Thanatos tone that evokes the gloomy mood of war. This poem's examination of absurdity and warfare highlights the actions of Thanatos the most. The analysis finds that Auden's "September 1, 1939" eloquently portrays the horrors of war, the fall of civilization, and the predominance of violence and destruction over parts of Eros that are life-affirming. The poem highlights the great psychological and existential struggle that people and nations on the verge of conflict endure with its compelling imagery and symbolic language. But the poet tackles Eros' actions in each of the three poems, offering hope for a brighter future.

All personae in the three poems either lost their individuality, like the past citizen in "The Unknown Citizen" and the depressed and frightened people in "September 1, 1939," or

struggle to regain their individuality, like the character of the "rider" in Auden's "O Where Are You Going." It can be resulted that Auden's community, in the modern age, experience and lead an inauthentic life due to the triumph of Thanatos over Eros in their psyches.

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