



## Dorian Gray's Psyche : A Study in Aesthetics, Narcissism, and The Impact of Society

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**Abstract.** Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* delves deeply into themes of aestheticism, influence, and the complexities of the human psyche. This article explores the powerful yet destructive role Lord Henry Wotton plays in shaping Dorian Gray's journey, steering him toward a life of vanity and moral decay. Lord Henry, a character who embodies Wilde's provocative hedonistic ideals, acts as both a mentor and a manipulator, introducing Dorian to a philosophy that ultimately leads to his ruin. The discussion also highlights the homoerotic undertones in the relationships central to the story, along with the psychological fragilities that make Dorian so susceptible to external pressures. Wilde's novel serves as a sharp critique of Victorian values while offering a timeless warning about the dangers of unrestrained indulgence and society's obsession with youth and beauty.

**Keywords:** Lord Henry, Dorian Gray, Influence, Aestheticism, Hedonism.

**المخلص.** رواية أوسكار وايلد "صورة دوريان غراي" تتناول بعمق مواضيع الجمالية، والتأثير، وتعقيدات النفس البشرية. تستكشف هذه المقالة الدور القوي والمدمر الذي يلعبه اللورد هنري ووتون في تشكيل مسار دوريان غراي، موجهاً إياه نحو حياة من الغرور والانحلال الأخلاقي.





اللورد هنري، شخصية تجسد المثالية الهيدونية الاستقراطية لوايلد، يعمل كمرشد ومتحكم في الوقت نفسه، مقدماً لدوريان فلسفة تقوده في النهاية إلى هلاكه. كما تسلط المناقشة الضوء على التلميحات المثلية في العلاقات المركزية في القصة، إلى جانب الهشاشة النفسية التي تجعل دوريان عرضة للضغوط الخارجية. تقدم رواية وايلد نقداً حاداً للقيم الفيكتورية في حين تقدم تحذيراً خالداً حول مخاطر التمتع المفرط واهتمام المجتمع المبالغ فيه بالشباب والجمال.

الكلمات الرئيسية: لورد هنري، دوريان جراي، التأثير، الجمالية، اللذة.

### Introduction

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) emerged in the late Victorian age. As the strongest country of its time, Britain was the first to complete the Industrial Revolution. Consequently, its thriving manufacturing industry was referred to as the 'world's factory'. The British tradition was highly strict, and people were expected to comply with rigid societal norms in their speech and actions during this era. Any slight deviation from the Victorian social norm would be viewed as deviant. Even the core tenets of art and literature were discarded, and social norms had to be complied with.

The rise of capitalism widened the gap between the wealthy and the poor. As a result, all social classes became devoted to materialism, leading to a deep void in spiritual life. In this era, the gentleman society was glorified, where people advocated moral refinement, reasoning, and discipline. Yet, in reality, individuals' personal lives were hectic and filthy.

In this climate, Wilde's lifelong ambition was to overcome these shackles. He argues for the belief in aestheticism and strives to preserve art from the corruption of society. Instead, art should remain a guide to life. For Wilde, aestheticism is the quest to find the essence of life, yet he is completely entangled in the confinement of hedonism. He strives for fame and affluence, seeking both self-concept and sexual identity.

In the *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde crafts distinct layers within his narrative. In the initial layer, it gives the impression that he simply presents the poignant narrative of a young man. Yet, on a deeper level, a serious condemnation is hidden beneath regarding the way social interactions were navigated in Victorian society. Oscar Wilde covertly condemns the moral



values and virtues of the era by detailing the pursuit of pleasure, the hedonistic lifestyle, and the insincere values of society (Manganiello, 1983, p. 30).

### 1. Lord Henry: The Incarnation of Aestheticism, Hedonism, and The Philosophy of Oscar Wilde

In *Aspects of the Novel*, Forster clearly expresses that characters ought to be viewed as well-rounded individuals. They should not be seen as mere vessels (Ellmann, 1988) (Forster, 1956, p. 95).

In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry is a crucial figure. He embodies the aesthetic and hedonistic principles and values that Wilde espoused. The cultural and social currents of the Victorian era were closely link to Wilde's life and literary works. They reflected an intricate interplay of aestheticism, individualism and cultural criticism. The fundamental influence of this dynamic is for analyzing both Lord Henry's character and Wilde's literary works. Lord Henry serves as a conduit for Wilde's philosophical reflections on the nature of art, beauty, and morality.

Wittiness, cynicism, hedonism, and a well-rounded education are characteristics of Wilde's public image. These qualities are embodied by Lord Henry. Lord Henry's extensive and nihilistic remarks deeply reflect Wilde's personal convictions (Pacheco Da Luz, 2021, p. 23).

In Richard Ellmann's biography of Wilde, he notes that "Through carelessness, impatience, or whim, Wilde sometimes forgot that his characters should always carry aestheticism to excess, and allowed them to articulate his own sentiments" (Ellmann, 1988, p. 318). Richard Ellmann highlights how Wilde occasionally used his characters to express his personal beliefs. This is particularly evident in Lord Henry's philosophical statements. Lord Henry embodies Wilde's philosophical musings and reflections, as seen in this passage:

I believe that if one man were to live his life out fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream – I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of medievalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal, to something finer, richer, than the Hellenic ideal

(Wilde, 2000, p. 21).

This quote reflects Lord Henry's embodiment of Wilde's persona and lifestyle, molded by his belief in aesthetic ideals and his controversial sexuality, as well as by the world's perspective on his character. This portrayal



highlights Lord Henry's negative influence on Dorian, instigating him to indulge in his impulses and cravings.

Lord Henry manifests capricious instincts while continually rationalizing and validating aesthetic motivations (Pacheco Da Luz, 2021, p. 25). Dorian observes that Henry "spends his days in saying what is incredible, and his evenings in doing what is improbable" (Wilde, 2000, p. 112). This quote highlights the character's oscillation between impulsive behavior and calculated rationalizations, as well as his enigmatic reputation. Lord Henry is most akin to Wilde's public image among the three key figures in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He embodies the outward characteristics of the novelist's persona (Pacheco Da Luz, 2021, p. 25).

While Lord Henry advocates for his hedonistic beliefs, his inner doubts and emotional detachment intensify his influence on Dorian. He spares no effort in urging Dorian to squander his youth and immerse himself in sensual pleasures. At the same time, he encourages Dorian to disregard the distorted norms of the era. Under the guise of his fearless challenge to Victorian society's depraved societal norms and manipulating Dorian, lies insecurity (Shen, 2023, p. 182). Still, behind Lord Henry's self-assured demeanor and hedonistic philosophy lies a more intricate and vulnerable psyche. This becomes evident in his interpersonal connections and emotional distance.

Lord Henry exhibits symptoms of neurosis, marked by the opposing tendencies of moving toward people and withdrawing from them. Lord Henry refuses genuine sympathy and camaraderie, frequently grappling with his own sensitivity, as he himself states: "I can sympathize with everything except suffering... It is too ugly, too horrible, too distressing" (Wilde, 2000, p. 41). Truthfully, he is sympathetic to suffering, yet this sense of sympathy signifies the necessity of a submissive nature. Lord Henry's most pressing need is to reject everything. Not only does he lack sympathy for suffering, but he also professes sympathy for joy. He lacks a deep bond with others, whether they are romantic partners, family members, or friends. He must maintain an emotional detachment from others. Lord Henry is a person with objective interest, who recognizes his own cravings and relishes them (Shen, 2023, p. 183).

## 2. Lord Henry's Corrupting Influence: Mentorship, Hedonism, and Moral Decay in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

New Hedonism is symbolized by Lord Henry, who emphasizes the pursuit of beauty and pleasure as core tenets of human behavior in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (Saputr, 2015, p. 62). Lord Henry's dynamics



with Dorian Gray and Basil Hallward reveal his dominant influence on Dorian's aesthetic experiences, molding his worldview and leading him toward a life of moral decay. Through Lord Henry's influence, Wilde portrays the degradation of philosophical spirit. He depicts Lord Henry as a seducer who draws Dorian into a life of 'unprincipled freedom' (Altun, 2023, p. 229; Riley, 2017). Lord Henry's controversial mindset challenges conventional moral tenets, ultimately driving Dorian toward moral decay (Zhengxiao, 2023, p. 58). In the progression of the narrative, Dorian's course of action is shaped by Lord Henry's hedonistic philosophy, resulting in a drift into vanity and detachment from cultural norms (Yang, 2018, pp. 81-2).

Lord Henry remains steadfast and self-possessed. He sustains his persistent ironic wit in the final pages of the novel, just as when he is first introduced (Johnsto, n.d.) Lord Henry's influence on Dorian is crucial to the novel's exploration of hedonism and aestheticism. He urges Dorian to give priority to pleasure and beauty above all else (Foster, 2012, p. 360).

Unlike Basil Hallward ethical and moral stance, Lord Henry's philosophies progressively distort Dorian's innocence. This leads him toward an egocentric and immoral lifestyle. As Basil Hallward mentions, Lord Henry has a "very bad influence over all his friends" (Wilde, 2013, p. 20). Dorian's vulnerability to his beliefs signifies a significant transformation in his persona (Taghizadeh, 2014, p. 1447; Tang, J., 2013, p. 8). Lord Henry's corrupting influence is evident in Dorian's transformation from an uncorrupted soul to a hedonistic and immoral individual. Differing from Lord Henry and Basil, Dorian is the sole character who experiences a radical metamorphosis. He shifts from a humble young man to a narcissistic and deceitful persona. Although Lord Henry's profound influence has an impact, the path Dorian takes is ultimately shaped by his own unrelenting thirst for beauty and youth. His yearning for eternal youth and aesthetic pleasure contradicts his inner fear. It is the fear of revealing his authentic self through the painting.

Wilde develops Lord Henry's character as a mirror of the irrationality of Victorian Society's moral frames (Kiryaman, 2019, p. 75). On the surface, Lord Henry's influence seems to affect only Dorian. Yet, at his core, he adheres to a moral philosophy that conflicts with the ethical codes of his time. Lord Henry announces boldly beliefs and convictions that contradict his status as a gentleman. However, Basil's earlier observations reveal dichotomy in Henry's persona within the narrative: "(...) you are thoroughly ashamed of your virtues... You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing" (Wilde, 2000, p.11). Although Lord Henry outwardly opposes the moral codes of his



era, he rarely contradicts them in actions. Rather, one of his qualities is manipulating and promoting beliefs that corrupt their life journey, particularly Dorian.

Henry's influence plays a central role in Dorian's transformation. It sparks narcissism and results in his prioritization of youth and beauty above every thing else. However, while he draws Dorian into chasing a life of hedonism, Lord Henry does not adhere fully to his own beliefs. For example, Lord Henry never visits London's East End where prohibited pleasures are found. He praises them, but never engages in such extreme indulgences. Still, he encourages Dorian to indulge in a frivolous life, using his natural manipulating tactics (Stern S. , 2017, p. 759). In spite of Lord Henry's substantial influence, he undervalues the profound extent of Dorian's degradation. When Dorian hints at his role in Basil's death, Henry dismisses the possibility, When Dorian alludes to his involvement in Basil's murder, lord Henry denies the possibility. He then proclaims: "It's not in you, Dorian, to commit a murder" (Wilde, 2013, p. 203). This quote reveals lord Henry's unwillingness to perceive the repercussions of his manipulations, as well as Dorian's capability for wrongdoing.

The influence and manipulation emerge through the corrupting relationship between Dorian and Lord Henry. Lord Henry's manipulative and narcissistic ideals progressively contaminate Dorian's worldview and morals (Stern, 2017, p. 10). How their mentor-mentee bond unfolds reveals the influence of mentorship. It plays a significant role in shaping ideals, choices, and ultimately fate (Steele, 2012, p. 1130).

Ultimately, Lord Henry performs a key role as both an influence and mentor in Dorian's life. His path becomes one of decadence and moral degradation, shaping his beliefs and distancing him away from conventional principles. In The Picture of Dorian Gray, the intricate interplay of influence, mentorship, and self-determination stresses the serious impact of guidance. It emphasizes how mentors can shape an individual's beliefs and actions.

### 3. Dorian Gray's Psychological Descent: Narcissism, Youth Obsession, and Moral Degradation

The protagonist of Wilde's narrative, Dorian Gray, embodies an intricate interplay of psychological struggles, narcissism and pursuit of eternal youth. His persona acts as a mirror of societal values and deep desires, resulting in a tragic downfall.



Scholarly works explore a psychological fragility and vulnerability in Dorian's persona due to his pathological obsession with maintaining an ageless look (Ambalal, 2023, p. 2). The narcissistic tendencies, psychological trauma, and social isolation are the forces that result in his narcissism and consequent breakdown (Kumar, 2022, p. 2670). Dorian Gray exhibits symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder through pathological self-absorption and a disregard for others. Moreover, his growing obsession with beauty and youth leads to interpersonal mistreatment and monstrous behaviors, highlighting his personality disorder (Weiss, 2018, p. 4; Writes, 2023).

Wilde condemns society's fixation on youth and beauty in the narrative. He portrays it as a destructive force. The philosophical idea of idolizing beauty and youth may be viewed as an aspect of dark romanticism. On the other hand, it introduces a dark element to the novel when it transforms into a fixation (Altun, 2023, p. 228). This fixation leads the characters to overlook the personality traits of those they interact with. Instead, they prioritize the beauty of individuals.

This narcissism not only influences Dorian himself, but also alters the morals of those in his circle. Dorian's obsession with youth and beauty triggers his ethical and psychological downfall. It also brings suffering to those around him. The consequences of his fixation on beauty include Basil's murder, the painting horrific alteration and other elements of the novel. Dorian's destructive obsession also influences the values of other characters, such as Basil and Lord Henry (Atun, 2023, p. 228). Basil, for instance, embodies this influence in his paintings and obsession with aesthetic ideals. Henry's mantra, "there is absolutely nothing in the world but youth" (Wilde, 2013, p. 25), reflects the alignment of his hedonistic philosophy with Dorian's obsession (Altun, 2023, p. 228).

Dorian's psychological struggles encompass narcissistic regression, body dysmorphism, and denial of aging. These symptoms are collectively known as Dorian Gray Syndrome (Ambalal, 2023, p. 1). Dorian's outward behavior seems respectable, yet beneath the surface, it is immoral. This reflects the imbalance of his state of mind, driven by emotional conflict and societal challenges (Tang, J., 2013, p. 5).

Dorian's inner conflict intensifies his psychological imbalance. The imbalance and fragility of his spiritual journey result in his doomed destiny (Hegazi, 2024, p. 81). Dorian's dual nature, outwardly decent yet inwardly debauched, reflects the burdens of Victorian society. This contributes to his agony (Hegazi, 2024, p. 72). The intricate interplay among appearance,





personality, and morality reveals the objectification of characters like Sibyl Vane (Zebrowitz, 1998, p. 736; Ullah Khan, 2023, p. 191).

To sum up, Dorian's fixation on youth and beauty, egocentrism, societal expectations, and moral deterioration shape his psychological vulnerability. Dorian's descent into psychological and moral anguish serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of vanity and unchecked hedonism.

#### 4. Hedonism, Aestheticism, and Secrecy: Exploring the Intricate Dynamics in The Picture of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* highlights the complex relationship between Lord Henry and Dorian. This relationship is interwoven with themes and motifs of identity, morality, and aestheticism. This intricate bond serves as a catalyst for Dorian's monstrous transformation. It also reflects the larger societal concerns of the Victorian era.

Dorian is profoundly influenced by the hedonistic lifestyle and the philosophy of aestheticism that Lord Henry advocates and embodies. Lord Henry's charm and wit convince Dorian to adopt the belief that beauty and sensory experiences are essential. He dismisses moral concerns, which ultimately result in his moral degradation (Muriqi, 2007, p. 8).

Though aestheticism promotes beauty and pleasure, Wilde condemns its uncontrolled pursuit. He reveals its possible descent into moral degradation. Hedonism function as the core principle of aestheticism. It encourages the pursuit of happiness and beauty as life's ultimate goals. For the devotee of aestheticism, the ideal life embodies art. It is beautiful yet devoid of practical value, concentrating solely on individual pleasure. Outside pressures are deemed inconsequential (Duggan, 2008, p. 61). Still, Oscar Wilde censures this doctrine. He elucidates the manner in which aestheticism, if left unchecked, frequently matches with immorality. To construct meaning in Wilde's life, the novelist applies aesthetic principles. He also advocates an aesthetic philosophy that is rooted in realistic concern. Art is independent of life; perfect art should imitate the decaying life as a replica. This reflects Wilde's desire to achieve social redemption through aestheticism. Though Wilde appears to be a scholar of aesthetic philosophy, he markets the ideas he champions to amass fortune and fame for himself (Shen, 2023, p. 184).

Wilde presents a moral lesson about the risks of pursuing a life of self-gratification and aesthetic pleasure through Dorian's behaviors. In spite of Dorian enjoying his pleasures, his hedonistic behaviors ultimately lead to his





downfall and the agony of others. This leaves him more miserable than ever and functions as a poignant critique of pure aestheticism (Duggan, 2008, p.62).

Dorian is caught between the extremes of a life of affluence and comfort, and a life of indulgence and daring. His addiction to fantasy objects like perfume, music, and jewelry helps him seek relief from the fear that occasionally borders on the unbearable. Dorian indulges in repetitive, pointless hedonism because he can no longer simply chase the happy life he yearns for. Dorian's aestheticism was also threatened by these fears (Shen, 2023, p. 183). He once abhorred ugliness, but now he is entangled in it. Dorian despises his true self, feels inferior, and is driven to attack others. He scoffs at the uncanny shadow on the canvas that must endure for him. Dorian blames the portrait for coercing him into degeneration. He revels in his sins and faults, pretending to be a mythic, morally flawed historical figure. Truthfully, Dorian detests Basil, the painter of his portrait, and takes his life with his own hands. Notwithstanding the fact that taking Basil's life with his own hands fills him with unusual pleasure, Dorian's self-loathing deepens to the point of despair (Shen, 2023, p. 183).

Apart from the aesthetic and moral challenges, The Picture of Dorian Gray delves deeper into intricate emotional and potential romantic struggles. These are especially highlighted in Dorian's bonds with Lord Henry and Basil Hallward. Homoerotic undertone is another intriguing aspect in the relationship between Dorian Gray and Lord Henry. Lord Henry's fascination with Dorian's allure suggests cravings that extend beyond innocent fascination. The narrative refrains from clear pronouncements of homoeroticism. However, its suggestive nature promotes analysis. (Muriqi, 2007, p. 3). Wilde himself positioned this admiration as central to the aesthetic movement. For many of the era, aestheticism and homoeroticism were intertwined. The latter was regarded as a consequence of the former (Glick, 2001, p. 130).

Wilde's employment of homoerotic elements is meant to deepen the narrative's gloomy ambiance and strengthen interpersonal dynamics. Homoeroticism, first used by Freud, refers to same-sex desire. It is distinct from homosexuality, which denotes a sexual orientation (Bergeret, 2002, p. 352). Basil Hallward, for instance, has deep feelings for Dorian, which may include romantic or sexual interest. Basil divulges that he is completely "dominated, soul, brain, and power" by Dorian (Wilde, 2000, p. 18). He also acknowledges his feelings of envy.

Basil and Dorian's first encounter intensify these homoerotic undertones. Basil recalls how they were "quite close, almost touching," and their eyes met



again, Basil Basil's allure for Dorian is obvious. However, he never reveals it openly, since it would have disregarded Victorian moral norms (Carroll, 2005, p. 298; Leonard, 2019, p. 140). Basil assumes that Dorian can fulfill his emotional cravings, hoping to be his only and closest friend. Dorian succumbs to Lord Henry and embarks on a different path in life. As a result, Basil becomes disillusioned because his ideal model no longer exists. On top of that, there is Basil's unconscious influence. He hopes for Dorian to remain flawless eternally, serving as inspiration for his artwork. Still, this urgent need to take advantage of Dorian clashes with Basil's desire to love him. Basil also wishes for Dorian to be close to him as well. He accuses Dorian of lacking empathy for Sybil's death and doubts the validity of others' allegations. Ultimately, Basil wins Dorian over, forgiving him time and time again (Shen, 2023, p. 182). No matter when he realizes that Dorian has ended others' lives, used drugs, and succumbed to vice. He believes "it is never too late" (Wilde, 2000, p. 151).

Secrecy and shame characterize these dynamics, reflecting societal views concerning homosexuality during Wilde's time (Muriqi, 2007, p. 14), reminisces about how they were "quite close, almost touching," (Wilde, 2000, p. 10). How their eyes met once more. A scene that suggests an interaction deeper than aesthetics. This interaction can be analyzed as flirtatious and was indisputably uncommon between men in Victorian society (Muriqi, 2007, p. 12). Basil reveals his delight in flattering Dorian, as well as the "strange pleasure in saying things that [he] know[s] [he] shall be sorry for having said" (Wide, 2000, p. 14). He takes in saying things he later self-reproaches. This expresses emotions he struggles to grasp, alluding to the stirring of unknown feelings.

Secrecy has become an integral part of Basil's life, as he admits. This amplifies the secretive nature of his feelings. Wilde's calculated use of secrecy elicit mystery. This leads to question the readers about seemingly straight relationships and interpret them as hidden messages of homoeroticism. Basil states that he has "grown to love secrecy" (Wilde, 2000, p.7). Dorian's painting bears the secret of his own soul, accentuating these themes (Muriqi, 2007, p. 13).

Shame acts as a pivotal element in the novel, frequently linked to secrecy. Rasmussen argues that "relationship between inclusivity and coming out, [is] a relationship that often situates the closet as a zone of shame and exclusion" (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 2). Lord Henry remarks upon recognizing Dorian's inner conflict "You, Mr. Gray, with your rose-red youth and rose-white boyhood,



you have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have filled you with terror, daydreams and sleeping dreams whose mere memory might stain your cheeks with shame” (Wilde, 2000, p. 21).

Lord Henry causes Dorian’s self-ruin by igniting his infatuation with youth and beauty. As a result, Dorian becomes the Gothic villain of the story, Consequently, as a result of this corrupting influence, Dorian transform into the dark villain in the narrative. However, it is worth noting that while Lord Henry encourages Dorian to embrace his hedonistic ideals, he never truly believes Dorian will fully adhere to them. Even so, it is notable that while Lord Henry pushes Dorian to adopt his hedonistic values. He never expects Dorian to fully commit to them. Unexpectedly, Lord Henry does not adhere to the philosophies he promotes (Makalesi, 2023, p. 229).

### 5. Dorian Gray’s Shattered Psyche: Societal Expectations, Internal Fears, and External Impact

Many forces shape Dorian’s persona. Societal norms, inner fears, and personal experiences all contribute to the complexities of his psychological makeup. This web of influences affects Dorian’s development and ultimately leads to his downfall.

In contrast to Lord Henry and Basil, Dorian is the sole one whose persona transforms. He evolves from a modest and stubborn young man into an egoistic and two-faced executioner. Dorian’s fate is not only the result of Lord Henry’s persuasive power. It is also shaped by his insatiable hunger for beauty, and he strives to modify his appearance. His longing for immortal youth, a prosperous life, and aesthetic pleasure resisted his fear. The fear that the painting could be revealed at any moment. Dorian manipulates his appearance to craft an impeccable persona (Shen, 2023, p. 182). He continuously maintains his image in elite circles and compels others to treat him as a man who “make themselves perfect by the worship of beauty,” combining “a type that was to combine something of the real culture of the scholar with all the grace and distinction and perfect manner of a citizen of the world” (Wilde, 2000, p. 125).

Beauty and youth are obsessions of Victorian society that place a heavy burden on Dorian. They coerce him to strive for an unrealistic image of perfection at great expense. The obsession with appearance creates an impaired self-regard, rendering him psychologically vulnerable and heavily reliant on the admiration of others (Ambalal, 2023, p. 1). Dorian labors to embody the image of an ideal man, as depicted in the narrative., “make[s] themselves perfect by the worship of beauty,” (Wilde, 2000, p.125). This endeavor entails



combining a scholar's intellectual grace with a man's worldly charm in the high society. Still, this insatiable need to convey an image of perfection deafens Dorian to the ethical repercussions of his behavior (Peng, 2024, p. 2). This societal obsession with appearance not only defines Dorian's public image. It also cultivates a fragile sense of identity, driving him further to rely on admiration.

Despite societal demands, Dorian's fragility is heightened by the influence of those around him. Defying societal norms, the dynamics between Dorian and his peers, as well as authoritative figures, further influence his actions. The findings on externalizing behavior propose that peer influence can result in emotional and psychological vulnerability. The lack of positive role models intensifies this vulnerability (Peng, 2024, p. 2). These influences are apparent in Dorian's susceptibility to Lord Henry's beliefs. These beliefs urge him to adopt a life of indulgence and value pleasure over morality, accelerating his slide into narcissism.

Dorian's inner fears and conflicts are aggravated by his own vanity and the persistent pursuit of self-indulgent pleasures. His self-absorption, driven by a preoccupation with aestheticism, creates a deep struggle between his desires and societal expectations. This inconsistency undermines him. It carries him further into ethical and spiritual collapse (Duggan, 2008, p. 61).

In closing, Dorian Gray's shattered psyche is defined by unspoken fears, societal expectations, and external factors. Wilde's characterization of Dorian operates as a narration of caution. It warns against the threats of giving in blindly to narcissism and self-indulgence without contemplating the moral costs.

### Conclusion

Wilde's only narrative, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, acts as a symbol of sharp criticism of Victorian society. It employs supernatural and mysterious elements to delve into the destructive effects of vanity and hedonism. Wilde underscores the dangers of societal demands and the tireless quest for beauty and pleasure. This is evident through Dorian's metamorphosis from a naïve young character to a morally decayed individual. Unlike characters such as Basil and Lord Henry, who stay trapped in their debasement. This proves Wilde's theory that some characters are stuck with their inherent nature. Wilde alerts to the perils of yielding to outward temptations and living in moral indifference through Dorian's self-destruction. This everlasting advisory





narrative echoes Wilde's perspective. It addresses the balance between personal accountability and the influence of societal superficial principles.

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