The Significant Expressions of Distrust and Pessimism to the Police in Franz Kafka's *Give It Up!*

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Info Artikel	Abstract
	This paper investigates matters of district and pessimism to the police in Franz Kafka's flash fiction entitled *Give It Up!*. The story is about a walker who gets lost on a town street and then asks a policeman to find the route to his destination. Unexpectedly, the policeman told the man to give up looking for the path while turning away and laughing. This story reflects the author's expression of distrust then leads to a state of pessimism either as a philosophical doctrine or as a psychological mentality. In analysis through qualitative method, the figure of the police is an analogy of how the attitude of distrust emerged and developed into a form of pessimism especially to public apparatus. In conclusion, distrust and pessimism are not *ex nihilo*, but such reaction of any ignorance from public apparatus to any civilian.

INTRODUCTION

Flash fiction, a form of fictional writing characterized by its extreme brevity, has been a subject of interest in recent years (McCormack, 2021; Kiosses, 2021). This genre often captivates readers with its concise yet intriguing plot and character development. Moreover, the brevity of flash fiction allows for multiple interpretations to emerge from within the text, adding to its allure. In fact, some scholars argue that flash fiction possesses a distinct literary quality, as it has the remarkable ability to hint at or imply a larger narrative (McCormack, 2021; Kiosses, 2021).

Comparable to Kafka's other works in this genre, the flash fiction pieces serve as catalysts for numerous questions regarding the interpretation of the stories. Are the plot and characters intended to convey specific messages? Alternatively, does Kafka intentionally leave room for individual readers to derive their own meanings? These enigmatic aspects of Kafka's works are what continuously captivate scholars and inspire further discussions and analyses (Kafka, 1936; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). Consequently, his flash fiction, including the thought-provoking piece *Give it Up!*, remains timeless due to its capacity to stimulate profound philosophical conversations.

Written approximately around the year 1936, with the original title in the German language being "Gibs auf!", the literary work known as "Give it Up!" recounts the tale of a pedestrian who embarks on his journey in the early hours of the morning, traversing a road that is both immaculate and serene, with the sole objective of reaching the railway station in due time (Kaffa, 1936; Rapparport, 2022). As this individual glanced at the towering timepiece, a realization dawned upon him, revealing that his personal wristwatch was lagging behind, thus compelling him to hasten his pace.

Concurrently, he became acutely aware of his unfamiliarity with the intricate web of streets that comprised this particular town. In the midst of his disoriented state, he happened upon a nearby police officer, and he felt an overwhelming sense of serendipity upon encountering this individual (Kafka, 1936; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). It is also prompting him to approach the officer in order to seek guidance towards his desired destination, the railway station.

However, the response he received from the police officer far exceeded his expectations (Kaffa, 1936; Rapparport, 2022). In a manner that can only be described as callous, the officer advised the pedestrian to relinquish his futile attempts at locating the appropriate route, employing the phrase "Give it up! Give it up!" as a means of conveying his cynicism and utter lack of sympathy. Without delay, the officer abruptly averted his gaze and erupted into laughter, leaving the pedestrian to grapple with the bewildering encounter.

METHOD

Using qualitative method, certain theories and written data are analyzed to answer the questions in this paper. Literary resources are used to explain the analysis of the expression of distrust and pessimism reflected in the portrayal of police in the flash fiction *Give It Up* by Franz Kafka. Sources were obtained from various physical and digital libraries and also obtained from several credible websites. Data analysis includes obtaining sources, reading carefully, comparing

with other issues, quoting expert opinions in the field and not forgetting to write them in a reference list. The stages of the methodological process are understanding the theory of distrust and pessimism in a philosophical and psychological review, deep reading on *Give It Up!* by Franz Kafka, interpreting and analyzing the story with existing theories of distrust and pessimism, explaining how expressions of distrust lead to pessimism, and making conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Pessimism in Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives

The term pessimism, derived from the Latin word "pessimus" meaning worst, encompasses a philosophical standpoint that ascribes a negative value to life and existence, positing that the world is predominantly characterized by pain and suffering (Bethari, et al., 2023; Dienstag, 2009). Pessimists tend to approach situations from a pessimistic perspective, focusing on the unfavorable aspects. It is often linked to nihilism, although it does not necessarily lead to it. As the philosophy of pessimism has evolved, its adherents have presented diverse perspectives (Adair-Toteff, 2021; Bethari, et al., 2023).

One such perspective is cultural pessimism, which asserts that all cultures are destined to fade away, with no possibility of averting this fate. Tragic pessimism, on the other hand, seeks to affirm the inherent meaninglessness of the world and life, as famously proposed by Nietzsche (Bethari, et al., 2023; Dienstag, 2004). Additionally, defensive pessimism emerges as an attitude characterized by harboring low expectations in anticipation of a given situation and contemplating the potential actions that can be undertaken when confronted with the worst-case scenario.

Beyond being a philosophical doctrine, pessimism can also be defined as a psychological condition of the mind. From a psychological standpoint, pessimism pertains to an individual's mindset wherein their acceptance of reality is inversely proportional to their expectations (Bethari, et al., 2023; Sari, 2019). Such individuals habitually believe that their endeavors will inevitably fail and exhibit a sense of feebleness in their pursuit of them. Pessimism often arises from the continuous contemplation of negative aspects within the social environment. This line of thought can be associated with a social theory that posits a society that is structurally and functionally feeble (Akbar, et al., 2023; Brantingham, et al., 2022).

Pessimistic perspectives within the field of psychology can be categorized into three distinct stages: low, moderate, and hard pessimism. The initial stage, low pessimism, emanates from an individual's perception of their own self-worth, which may manifest as an overwhelming sense of inferiority or a lack of belief in their own capabilities (Akbar, et al., 2023; Sari, 2019). Moving on to the stage of moderate pessimism, this mindset is predominantly influenced by external factors, particularly environmental attitudes, which can exert negative influences on an individual's psyche, oftentimes without their conscious awareness. Consequently, they find themselves inadvertently adopting these pessimistic attitudes (Akbar, et al., 2023; Brantingham, et al., 2022). Lastly, people may encounter the stage of hard pessimism, characterized by an individual's perpetual inclination towards negative thinking. This extreme form of pessimism can be so severe that it may even drive someone to contemplate or engage in self-destructive behaviors, such as suicide (Akbar, et al., 2023; Brantingham, et al., 2022).

Distrust: Origins and Development

Distrust is characterized by a firm and resolute anticipation that the motives, intentions, and conduct of another individual are wicked and prejudicial to one's own interests (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). This particular state of affairs inherently propels individuals to adopt measures that mitigate their vulnerability in an earnest endeavor to safeguard their interests. Henceforth, it is worth noting that distrust is inherently linked to diminished levels of contentment, commitment, and motivation (Hamdani, et al., 2023; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). It is worth pointing out that all instances of distrust are spawned from an attitude of incredulity.

The emergence of distrust can be attributed to disparities in group affiliation, whereby individuals positively identify and form bonds with their respective groups. However, the different situations concurrently harbor negative stereotypes towards individuals beyond the confines of their group, often regarding them with suspicion and hostility (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that distrust may also arise directly as a consequence of personal encounters between individuals, such as instances where one party fails to uphold a promise made to another party (Akbar, et al., 2023; Sari, 2019). It is pertinent to emphasize that the level of distrust tends to escalate in tandem with the severity of the transgression, the frequency of previous transgressions, and the perception that the perpetrator had the intention to commit said transgression.

The concept of distrust can be delineated into two distinct facets, namely functional and dysfunctional distrust. Functional distrust can prove advantageous for the individual exhibiting such behavior. Distrust can be regarded as a valuable defensive mechanism that effectively shields individuals from falling prey to deceitful acts perpetrated by others (Hamdani, et al., 2023; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). By exercising distrust towards others, one also has the opportunity to meticulously assess the underlying reasons for the erosion of trust. It is since distrust is not an independent term. It comes from the absence of belief in something.

Conversely, dysfunctional distrust engenders deleterious ramifications that can engender a state of paranoid cognition. Such perceptions propel individuals to an extent where they become hyper-vigilant, often resulting in erroneous judgments concerning the correctness or incorrectness of a particular action, as well as the trustworthiness of the other

party involved (Calista, et al., 2024; Hamdani, et al., 2023; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). If not managed adeptly, distrust has the potential to yield an all-encompassing negativistic outlook towards others. It is also quite plausible for the notion to arise that one is unerringly correct while others are invariably in the wrong.

Distrust to Policemen in General Aspects

The history of distrust of the police has existed for a very long time. The idea is related to how police has to be professional, but anyhow they do not. As an organization who works in public service, their main purpose must be the public itself (Mourtgos, 2020; Pass, 2020). Somehow, there are those who are prioritized more by them. It could be richer people, VIP persons, or even their own selves. It is clear that such public apparatus should pay more attention to what the public needs. However, people could not ignore that the situation is actually in reverse in various cases. The policemen actually are binded by such ethical codes, but many times they deny the codes (Mourtgos, 2020; Pass, 2020). That is the main reason why the distrust and pessimism are thick in the images of the police.

In general, there are some main points why the distrust and pessimism flourish against the police. Those are as follows as the reasons do not merely happen in Indonesia, but also worldwide. First, there are various immoral offenses. The policemen are the ones that keep people by regulations. That is why people should be morally right (Mourtgos, 2020; Pass, 2020). Police as the one who should enforce the moral aspects are seen as the ones who violate them as well. The police become bad, fired, or hated by the community since some of them are used to commit immoral offenses such as murder, sexual harassment, and etc (Mourtgos, 2020; Pass, 2020). This is not only against the law but also not good in the norms and cultural customs everywhere.

Second, policemen could always tend to be the one that commits the crime itself. It is quite bad when the one who must say no to the crime becomes the criminal itself (Baranauskas, 2022; Brantingham, 2022). They are the ones that must enforce the law but then they become the object of it. Indeed, it is strong enough for them to be given appropriate punishment. Anyone must not have any impunity before the law. It is not only against the law, but the criminals from the police side shape the idea that the public must no longer trust the police (Baranauskas, 2022; Brantingham, 2022).

Third, the distrust is due to such undisciplined attitudes. It is very obligatory for every police officer to always behave in a disciplined manner. However, laziness may become the one that rejects the obligation (Baranauskas, 2022; Brantingham, 2022). Even some of them will move if only money or certain interests talks. Discipline is only considered if it brings advantages to them. This situation is so bad that sometimes it becomes a habit (Baranauskas, 2022; Brantingham, 2022). Then, it does not only flourish distrust, but also cultivates such a pessimistic point of view towards the police.

Fourth, the distrust is worsened by the corruption in the body of the police: There are many corruption cases involving police agencies. In Indonesia, it is tragic how the Corruption Eradication Commission or KPK caught some police since they were bribed for some money. It is such a pity when such law enforcers become law enforced as well (Baranauskas, 2022; Brantingham, 2022). The trust is diminishing since corruption could also include protection for some special persons. It is unethical since it may involve blackmailing and hiding the truth as well.

Fifth, the distrust also comes to the surface since such discriminations happen. There are different treatments from one to another person (Ikhsan, 2022; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). Those who are not public officials and do not have much money will tend to be ignored. Even today, some cases will only get spotlight if they got viral enough. It also applies to indications of excessive use of force. It is true that they are law enforcers, but somehow violence must not be the one to solve all problems (Ikhsan, 2022; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). The use of excessive force or involvement in violence for no apparent reason can create distrust and a sense of insecurity among the public. The Kanjuruhan incident becomes one prominent proof of the violence. However, the case is not either open or closed until now.

Sixth, there is still injustice happening in societies and it is even caused by the police. Injustice also means the absence of fairness especially in how the police hides behind the law but works underhand (Ikhsan, 2022; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). Even the police could not reason at all that they could easily violate human rights. They become so stiff, but so flexible when they want to bend the rules. There is such less consistent doing by them (Ikhsan, 2022; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). That is why distrust and its worsened version of pessimism could always be intact in the image of the police.

Portrayal of Policeman in *Give It Up!*

The depiction of a policeman in Give it Up by Kafka is quite short in the middle and end of the story, but it is very important and interesting to analyze it more deeply. The emergence of the policeman character begins when the walker gets lost and sees a policeman (D'Cruz, 2020; Kafka, 1936). Kafka writes in the quotations below:

> *I did not yet know my way very well in this town; luckily, a policeman was nearby, I ran up to him and breathlessly asked him the way. He smiled and said: "From me you want to know the way?". "Yes," I said, "since I cannot find it myself." "Give it up! Give it up," he said, and turned away with a sudden jerk, like people who want to be alone with their laughter.* (Kafka, 1936)

Seeing the police, the walker then hopefully immediately approached the policeman to ask him for directions as told (D'Cruz, 2020; Kafka, 1936). However, the walker received an answer that was far from expectations and it was in

the form of a question. The answer in the form of a question is certainly very confusing for the walker. It is common that the police are often portrayed as protectors and servants of the community. The police are also the ones who best know the directions around the area they guard (D'Cruz, 2020; Kafka, 1936; Liberman, 2021).

Then Kafka continued the story with the answer of the walker, as this answer shows how much he needs to know the direction of his goal. Nevertheless, this sincerity of hope is then only answered with cynical remarks and a negative attitude which provides pessimistic advice for the walker (D'Cruz, 2020; Kafka, 1936). This is shown by the policeman's words and attitude at the end of the story as listed. It is clearly shown that the policeman, who should be a place of great hope for the walker to get road direction information, actually gave a disappointing answer and showed an attitude that was far from sympathetic (D'Cruz, 2020; Kafka, 1936; Liberman, 2021).

Distrust to Pessimism in Kafka's Flash Fiction

It all started with the walker who had hope of the policeman. Hope is also followed by high expectations that the existence of the policeman will provide a solution to the problem, namely showing the direction of the walker's destination (Chopik, et al., 2020; Pass, et al., 2020). This is because the police's job is to protect and serve the community. Apart from that, the policeman is the person who knows the roads best in the area where he is assigned. It is usual for everyone to ask something to the police from Kafka's time until now. However, the walker's high hopes and expectations disappeared and turned into disappointment after receiving a negative attitude from the policeman (Chopik, et al., 2020; Pass, et al., 2020).

The policeman's negative attitudes in the story include several ideas. First, he is not responsible for carrying out his duties as a protector and servant of the community. He should be the one that has answers to directions (Chopik, et al., 2020; Pass, et al., 2020). Even if he does not have the answer, he should direct the walker to a proper place to get the answer. The policeman totally shows such ignorance that instantly diminishes the walker's hope to get better way.

The second one is that the policeman does not give directions even though he is the person who knows best. Indeed, this attitude is a bad one that easily directs the lame to the institution either (Calista, et al., 2024; Hampshire, 2023; Vick, 2023). Any policeman should keep a good image in front of any civilian, but this policeman is different. He holds the profession, but not the professional attitudes. He ignores the walker which then leads to distrust and pessimism. Indeed, the story also triggers the readers to feel the same problem with the public apparatus, even until today that is almost a hundred years from the year when Kafka wrote this fiction (Hampshire, 2023; Kafka, 1936).

The third one is that he utters pessimistic doctrine so that the walker gives up looking for a way. This should not be necessary, especially in public places. The situation may reflect the idea of individualism. However, it is also thick with an attitude of being indifferent (Hampshire, 2023; Vick, 2023). The fourth one is that he shows a bad and egoistic attitude by turning away and laughing without caring. The laugh is not because something is funny, but it is a mocking utterance. The worst is that it comes from the saying of a public servant. Then, it comes to the fifth one that he does not show sympathy and empathy but acts antipathy by laughing and enjoying other people's difficulties (Hampshire, 2023; Vick, 2023). There is no care shown which may reflect the situation when Kafka lives. Somehow, the situations still happen until now as distrust and pessimism still flourish from civilians to public apparatuses.

The feeling of disappointment due to the mistake of giving positive expectations to the policeman then leads to a negative response. Consequently, it indicates the loss of hope that will give rise to distrust to the policeman (Baranauskas, 2022; Van Prooijen, et al., 2022). Kafka expresses this distrust through the negative attitude of the policeman. Kafka indeed left the continuation of the story to each reader. He stopped in his flash fiction as the policeman walked away laughing. However, this is precisely what is interesting about Kafka's work, he invites readers to feel what the walker feels and leaves the next attitude up to the readers. Kafka brilliantly managed to convey an expression of distrust in a policeman through only a very short flash fiction (Kafka, 1936; Van Prooijen, et al., 2022).

This expression of distrust that develops into pessimism may or may not happen to the walker since the story had finished until the police left. However, the power of Kafka's writing is that he succeeded in transferring this attitude of distrust to readers (Baranauskas, 2022; Van Prooijen, et al., 2022). Moreover, for readers who have experienced disappointment with the policeman in the context of a similar situation or even the same as the walker. For example, in Indonesia, in 2021, viral *#PercumaLaporPolisi* (Report to Police is useless) on Twitter went viral. This happened because of the police's slow response to many reports of crime cases from residents (Baranauskas, 2022; Ikhsan, 2022; Fitria & Candrasari, 2023).

As explained in the theory of the development of distrust, the distrust that occurs can be functional or dysfunctional. Functional distrust can increase public awareness of police officers and also provide constructive criticism for the police institution if it is responded to properly (Baranauskas, 2022; Van Prooijen, et al., 2022). Dysfunctional distrust can give rise to a negative stereotype of all police in a country. Moreover, the distrust of the story pushes the police to develop into an attitude of pessimism. The pessimism that appears here is closely related to police services to the community, social security, and also legal justice in the real world. This pessimism can take the form of a philosophical doctrine and also a state psychological mentality (Prescott, 2012; Thomassen & Strype, 2020).

Readers may believe in the philosophy of pessimism after reading *Give It Up!* by Franz Kafka. This happens when people reflect on their real life and finally generalizes an attitude of distrust towards police institutions and beyond (Mourtgos, et al., 2020; Thomassen & Strype, 2020). After that, it spreads negative stereotypes towards everyone. Then look at everything, including life, from a negative perspective. If anyone takes this view to the extreme, then it is very

possible that he will eventually fall into tragic pessimism which will lead to Nihilism and absence of any moral value among people (Hampshire, 2023; Yuliastuti & Pasopati, 2022).

However, it is different if the readers then believe in defensive pessimism. This happens when readers use a negative view of life as an attitude of anticipating the worst possible situation so that they can take alternative actions to avoid or prepare themselves for various negative situations and find the best solution (Craig, et al., 2021; van der Lugt, 2021). This is as George Bernard Shaw said, "Both optimists and pessimists contribute to society. The optimist invented the airplane, the pessimist made the parachute." These two possible views of pessimism really depend on how readers reflect on the writing of *Give it Up!* according to their own experience (Craig, et al., 2021; Kafka, 1936). What is important is that Kafka successfully makes his readers imagine far beyond the brevity of his fiction.

Even though it does not happen automatically, the reading process can also gradually lead to a psychological mental condition of pessimism (Norem, 2001; van der Lugt, 2021). This is especially true for readers who experience an unresolved conflict. The psychology of pessimism experienced can be at a moderate level because this mental condition of pessimism comes from distrust that originates from external factors, namely the police institution (Hampshire, 2023; Yuliastuti & Pasopati, 2022). It can even reach the hard level if the reader himself already has a personality that is insecure, weak, and easily discouraged. This pessimistic mental psychology is not good because it will result in depression and in severe cases it can result in suicide (Inayah, 2021; van der Lugt, 2021). Somehow, any ignorance could also be worse if not properly handled, especially through psychological treatments.

CONCLUSION

Give It Up! by Franz Kafka expresses distrust towards police. Through this work, Kafka succeeded in conveying an expression of distrust to the readers so that they can reflect this distrust in their experience of the police in the real world. The negative attitudes shown by the policeman in the flash fiction include not carrying out their duties, giving pessimistic doctrines through words and actions, being egoistic, and not showing sympathy. The distrust that arises can be in the form of functional distrust that creates a wary attitude towards police officers as well as constructive criticism for the police. It may also arise to dysfunctional distrust as it gives rise to negative stereotypes of all police and leads to pessimism either as a philosophical doctrine or as a psychological mental condition. Later on, the distrust will always have a chance to give opportunities to pessimism in both tragic and defensive ones.

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