THE EVIL SIDE OF HUMAN NATURE IN *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

*Hacer Nur Yıldırım*

_The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_ is a novel that was published by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850 – 1894) in 1886. Stevenson was a Scottish writer. He was one of the second class novelists of the Victorian Era (1837 – 1901). Stevenson was inspired by a dream, so he wrote the novel thanks to his dream. Besides, the novel belongs to the Victorian Era. In other words, it is the last nineteenth-century novel. Although in the Victorian Era, there were movements like romanticism and especially realism, Stevenson was against these movements. According to Peck and Coyle (2002), “there is an idea of irrational concealed or repressed elements within the individual mind that are fundamentally at odds with a sense of humanity’s rational identity” (p. 217). Thus, Stevenson focuses on a different issue in _The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_. The novel dwells on the duality of human nature. In other words, humankind consists of two different sides as evil and good sides. Moreover, Stevenson was trying to tell the effects of human nature. This article explains the good vs evil concept and how this concept is associated with religion and psychology in _The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_.

First of all, humankind always has the other side. Therefore, humankind can not live one-sidedly. That’s to say, each person is not totally good or evil at birth. Moreover, humankind is full of sins at birth. It is explained with the story of “Cain and Abel”. Although they are twin sons of Adam and Eve, they do not share the same features. To illustrate, Cain kills Abel due to his jealousy and he is punished by God, so we can say Cain represents the evil side of humankind. On the other hand, Abel represents the good side of humankind. However, humankind can not reveal their real side or evil side because humankind creates this other side in their mind. It is seen as one-sided in real life. We can not recognize the other side or the real side of the human. Thus, it is understood that human nature has both good and evil sides.

In _The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde_, Stevenson tells the concept of duality of human nature. To Koçyiğit (2019), he creates a character, Dr. Jekyll who is a tall and handsome man. Unlike him, Mr. Hyde is depicted as a small and diabolic man (p.103). These characters are actually the same person. For example, Dr. Jekyll is defined as a talented doctor

* Selçuk Üniversitesi
who is generally seen in the daytime. Mr. Hyde is defined as a bad and mysterious man who
wanders at night. Although we see them as a different person, readers can understand that they
are actually the same person. In this respect, Stevenson wants to create obscurity in our minds.
For example, Mr. Hyde reflects the evil side of humans. The house of Mr. Hyde is reflected in
a dark mood. Besides, it creates a dark and mysterious atmosphere, because he murders two
different people. One of them is a child and the other one is an old man. In the scene, however,
there is encountered with a stick that belongs to Dr. Jekyll. Therefore, good vs evil concept is
clearly explained in the novel.

Accordingly, according to Mina Urgan (2003), Stevenson states that Dr. Jekyll is a
good doctor, so he can understand the complexity of his soul and body. Thus, he can perceive
both the good and evil sides of him. Dr. Jekyll invents medicine. Thanks to this medicine, he
thinks that he can be a good or bad person whenever he wants (p. 1277). For that reason,
Stevenson aims to show human nature in the real world. He tries to reveal the mystery of human
nature. Furthermore, we can understand the evil side of human nature from the quote of Mr.
Utterson who is a lawyer. He says that “I incline to, Cain’s heresy” he used to say, “I let my
brother go to the devil in his quaintly (Stevenson, p.3). There is an emphasis on “Cain” because
every person has a potential being a killer. Thus, the relationship between religion and the story
is expressed clearly. To Comitini (2012), “It focuses on the double has also become part of
popular culture in that many versions of the story present Jekyll and Hyde as the representation
of the struggle between good and evil that occurs within everyone” (p. 113). Thus, we see how
human nature is expressed in the novel. Yılmaz explains this good vs evil concept with a
different viewpoint. Yılmaz (2019) states that there is a German term “doppelganger”. It can be
described as “soul mate or “evil twin”. Although “doppelganger” is described differently, it can
be used for two people who are quite different as to their soul, even though they closely
resemble each other. Besides, the novels that include this kind of theme focus on failures of the
main character and being defeated by evil twins (p. 111).

Concerning the aspect of psychology, Stevenson uses “Structural Theory” of Sigmund
Freud (1856 – 1939). According to the theory of Freud, it consists of three different levels,
namely the id, ego, and superego. Therefore, we see this theory in the characters of the novel.
Singh Sm and Chakrabarti S. explain how the theory is used by Stevenson. To exemplify, they
state that “Mr. Hyde would seem easily recognizable as the id, seeking instant gratification,
having an aggressive instinct, and having no moral or social mores that need be followed”
(2008, p.223). Thus, we can say that Mr. Hyde represents the id because he goes with his
instincts. He displays aggressive behaviours. For that reason, he is involved in crimes and evil events. On the other hand, to Sing Sm and Chakrabarti S., “Dr. Jekyll is then ego; he is conscious and rational, and is dominated by social principles. He has a difficult time juggling between the demands of the id” (2008, p.223). In this respect, Dr. Jekyll represents the ego, since he displays real behaviours. In addition, he acts in accordance with society. In general terms, there is a conflict between good and evil or the ego and id. Put it differently, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are opposite characters. In brief, we can understand the relationship between psychology and human nature thanks to Freud’s theory.

Consequently, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a novel that belongs to the last nineteenth-century literature. Stevenson, however, adopts a different aspect toward his contemporaries. Hence the novel focuses on the duality of human nature. Besides, Stevenson especially wants to show the evil side of human nature. Therefore, this article aims to tell the concept of good vs evil in The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and the relationship between the concept of good vs evil and religion, psychology.

REFERENCES


