

THE INFLUENCE OF SCOUT'S PERSPECTIVE OF THE COEXISTENCE OF GOOD AND EVIL TOWARDS HER CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN HARPER LEE'S TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to understand the influence of the main character, Scout Finch's perspective of the coexistence of good and evil toward her character development in Harper Lee's novel entitled To Kill a Mockingbird. The writer applied library research to analyze the findings. Some theories used to analyze the data are Discrimination, Post-structuralism, and Psychosocial. Moreover, the approaches used in this research are sociological approach, psychological approach, and post-structuralism approach. Good and evil do coexist in society and witnessed by a child named Scout Finch. She is a White who lives within a racism neighborhood towards Black people. As a child of a White lawyer, Scout grows excellently even without a presence of a mother. Some events happen that make her question about definition of good and evil. It develops Scout's perspective towards the coexistence of good and evil that influence her character development.

Keywords: *good and evil, discrimination, character development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, minority all over the world experience racial discrimination. Racism is the most crucial problem in every multicultural society, even in a so called "melting pot" country like the United States. Racism can be expressed from people's actions and attitudes toward minority. Based on Gordon Allport (1954), one type of discrimination is segregation which is when people actively exclude members of a disadvantaged racial group from the allocation of resources and from access to institutions. The society see the minority as a nuisance for the harmony in their life. The racial discrimination has been one of topics that used by many writers in their novels. One of the authors is Harper Lee with her novel entitled *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Nelle Harper Lee (known as Harper Lee) was a novelist who only published two books in her lifetime. Her first book, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) won the Pulitzer Prize only a year after it was published and is widely taught in schools in United States with lesson that emphasize tolerance and decry prejudice. The story in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is what Lee's herself saw in her childhood in Monroeville, Alabama. The story is delivered by perspective of two kids named Scout and Jem who witness an innocent people is accused because the racial prejudice that thinks that black people are more suspicious to commit a crime.

The topic corresponds to the theory of post structuralism that one may understand human culture by means of a structure that differs from concrete reality and from abstract

ideas. This paper aims to understand the influence of the coexistence of good and evil that witnessed by Scout towards their character development. Character development refers to how developed and complex a character is. In this research, the theory of eight stages of psychosocial by Erikson (cited in McLeod Saul, 2013) is used to analysis the problem.

Erikson extends on Freudian thoughts by focusing on the adaptive and creative characteristic of the ego, and expanding the notion of the stages of personality development to include the entire lifespan. Like Freud and many others, Erik Erikson maintained that personality develops in a predetermined order, and build upon each previous stage. This is called this the epigenic principle. He promotes eight stages of psychosocial development, they are:

1. Infancy: Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust

Erikson's first psychosocial crisis occurs during the first year or so of life. During this stage the infant is uncertain about the world in which they live. To resolve these feelings of uncertainty the infant looks towards their primary caregiver for stability and consistency of care. If the care the infant receives is consistent, predictable and reliable they will develop a sense of trust which will carry with them to other relationships, and they will be able to feel secure even when threatened.

2. Early Childhood: Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt

The child is developing physically and becoming more mobile. Between the ages of 18 months and three, children begin to assert their independence. The child is discovering that he or she has many skills and abilities, such as putting on clothes and shoes, playing with toys etc. Such skills illustrate the child's growing sense of independence and autonomy.

3. Preschool Age: Initiative versus Guilt

Around age three and continuing to age five, children assert themselves more frequently. During this period the primary feature involves the child regularly interacting with other children at school. Central to this stage is play, as it provides children with the opportunity to explore their interpersonal skills through initiating activities. Children begin to plan activities, make up games, and initiate activities with others. If given this opportunity, children develop a sense of initiative, and feel secure in their ability to lead others and make decisions.

4. School Age: Industry versus Inferiority

Children are at the stage where they will be learning to read and write, to do sums, to make things on their own. Teachers begin to take an important role in the child's life as they teach the child specific skills. It is at this stage that the child's peer group will gain greater significance and will become a major source of the child's self esteem. The child now feels the need to win approval by demonstrating specific competencies that are valued by society, and begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

5. Adolescence: Identity versus Role Confusion

Children are becoming more independent, and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, housing, etc. The individual wants to belong to a society and fit in. During this stage the adolescent will re-examine his identity and try to find out exactly who he or she is. Erikson suggests that two identities are involved: the sexual and the occupational.

6. Young Adult: Intimacy versus Isolation

Occurring in young adulthood (ages 18 to 40), we begin to share ourselves more intimately with others. We explore relationships leading toward longer term commitments with someone other than a family member. Successful completion of this stage can lead to comfortable relationships and a sense of commitment, safety, and care within a relationship. Avoiding intimacy, fearing commitment and relationships can lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes depression. Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of love.

7. Adulthood: Generativity versus Stagnation

During middle adulthood (ages 40 to 65), we establish our careers, settle down within a relationship, begin our own families and develop a sense of being a part of the bigger picture. We give back to society through raising our children, being productive at work, and becoming involved in community activities and organizations. By failing to achieve these objectives, we become stagnant and feel unproductive. Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of care.

8. Mature Age: Integrity versus Despair

As we grow older (65 years and over) and become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity, and explore life as a retired person. It is during this time that we contemplate our accomplishments and are able to develop integrity if we see ourselves as leading a successful life.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied qualitative method. Shank (2002:5) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning.” It means that in qualitative research, the researcher try to understand how others make sense of their experience. The data of this study are words, sentences, and dialogues of the novel by Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which shows the coexistence of good and evil. The writer chooses qualitative method because this research deals with social issue happen in society and human behavior.

The technique of collecting data in this research is library research because the data are in the form of written text. Bowen (2009) states that document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic.

In conducting the research, some steps are being used. Firstly, the writer read Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The next step, the writer chooses the problems to be analyzed as the coexistence of good and evil and Scout’s character development in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then, in analyzing the problems, the theories and approaches are used. There are three approaches used to conduct this research. They are sociological approach, psychological approach, and post-structuralism approach.

The first approach is sociological approach. In *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism* (1963), Wilbur S. Scott claims that “sociological approach gives on understanding that art’s relations to the society are vitally important and that the investigation of these relationships organizes and deepens one’s response to a work of art.” It means that sociological approach is the suitable approach to analyze social problem. In this research, the sociological approach used to analyze the coexistence of good and evil in Scout’s perspective.

The second approach is psychological approach. According to Rohrberger and Woods Jr (1971), “the psychological approach is an approach that uses psychological theories to explain

human motivation, personality, and behavior written in literary object.” Since psychological approach has many varieties, Erikson’s theory about the specific psychosocial aspect is chosen to analyze data because this study dealt with psychological aspects in human thought and behavior. This theory considered to be the most appropriate approach to analyze Scout’s character development influenced by the coexistence of good and evil.

The third is post-structuralism approach. Andrea Hurst (1998) states that post-structural approach is to resist extremes and adopt a theoretical attitude that accommodates complexity. Post-structuralism identifies a way of theorizing that belongs equally to literary theory (the systematic study of literary texts), philosophy (especially the study of how thought works), and critical theory (emancipatory social science via discourse analysis and ideology critique). In this research, post-structuralism approach is used to analysis the how Scout’s perspective towards good and evil change. It is influenced by the situation that happen in their neighborhood.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To Kill a Mockingbird is a novel about the childhood of a girl named Scout Finch and her brother, Jem Finch who live with their widower father, Atticus Finch, and their black housekeeper named Calpurnia. They live in a small city called Maycomb in Alabama during the Great Depression. Atticus is a prominent lawyer and always encourages his children to be empathetic and unprejudiced. He tells them that it is “a sin to kill a mockingbird”, based on the fact that the bird is innocent and harmless.

Scout, Jem, and Dill, their friend are interested in Boo Radley, their neighbor who never goes outside. They are curious about his appearance, reason why he remains hiding, and they fantasize about how to get him out of his house.

One day, Atticus decides to defend Tom Robinson, a black man who is accused of raping a white woman named Mayella Ewell. Because of Atticus’ decision, his family get mockeries from the racist white community of Maycomb. Scout and Jem are subjected to abuse from other children, even when they celebrate Christmas at the family compound on Finch’s Landing. People even his own sister, Alexandra, call Atticus a Nigger lover. All the mockeries make Calpurnia takes them to the local black church where the warm community largely embraces the children.

Tom Robinson’s trial begins, and when the accused man is placed in the local jail, a mob gathers to lynch him. Scout and Jem who sneaked out of their house joined Atticus to face the mob down the night before the trial. Atticus provides evidence that Mayella Ewell and her father, Bob Ewell have lied. The wound in Mayella’s face is from Bob’s beating. However, the white jury still convicts Tom. The innocent Tom tries to escape from the prison, but ends up shot to death. From this, Scout’s perspective about good and evil gradually change.

In this novel, reader can see that Scout’s characters are developing gradually influenced by events that they witness in society. It affect to their perspective and how they respond the events around them. Therefore, it is interested to analyze the coexistence of good and evil from the character’s perspective.

1. Scout Finch’s Character Development

Based on Holman’s theory (1986), Scout’s character is included in dynamic character. The dynamic character changes Scout’s characteristics and personality influenced by her experiences around her environment. This novel shows the two characters of Scout, Scout as

an adult and Scout as a child. The adult Scout is the narrator in the book who tells story based on the perspective of young Scout. Scout is a brave girl with a high curiosity. She always ask Atticus, Calpurnia, and Jem about anything she does not know or she wants to know.

The writer utilizes Erikson's theory of social psychology development. However, the writer only uses the first four stages of psychosocial development, they are, 1) Infancy: Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust; 2) Early Childhood: Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt; 3) Pre-school: Initiative versus Guilt; 4) School Age: Industry versus Inferiority. These four stages help the writer analyze the events in the novel and its influence towards Scout's character development.

1.1. Infancy: Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust

Erikson believes that this stage started from birth up to eighteen months. This is when children are most dependent on adults. If the care the infant receives is consistent, predictable and reliable, they will develop a sense of trust which will carry with them to other relationships, and they will be able to feel secure even when threatened.

Their mother a great mother who always takes care of her children, Scout and Jem, with love. Because of love and affection that her mother gives to her, Scout can develop a sense of trust to the world. It can be proven from the statement "I did not remember our mother, but Jem did—he would tell me about her sometimes—" (TKAM, Chapter 11. 1960: 115). Scout trusts her brother that he will always tell her about their mother whenever Scout asks.

Her father affection also helps Scout develop her sense of trust. He always reads book for Scout before she sleeps. It can be proven from the statement "Jem and I found our father satisfactory: he played with us, read to us, and treated us with courteous detachment" (TKAM, Chapter 1. 1960: 6). Scout even believes that her father's satisfactory is spending time with his children.

1.2 Early Childhood: Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt

This stage happens between the ages of eighteen months and three years. The child is discovering that he or she has many skills and abilities, such as putting on clothes and shoes, playing with toys etc. Such skills illustrate the child's growing sense of independence and autonomy.

Scout has a good sense of independence. She develops the sense of independence from a very young age since her mother has already passed away when she was two. Even, Scout and Jem go to school by themselves without sent by their father or Calpurnia. It can be seen from the statement "Jem condescended to take me to school the first day, a job usually done by one's parents, but Atticus had said Jem would be delighted to show me where my room was" (TKAM, Chapter 2.1960: 17).

1.3 Pre-school: Initiative versus Guilt

This stage starts around age three and continuing to age five. The primary feature involves the child regularly interacting with other children at school. Based on Papalia (2007), during this stage, the child is increasingly capable motor activity, refined use of language and vivid use of imagination.

The story starts when Scout is five years old. On summer, she plays drama with Jem and Dill. Playing drama is one of activities that increase Scout's motor activity, language, and imagination.

"...running through our list of dramas based on the works of Oliver Optic, Victor Appleton, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. In this matter we were lucky to have Dill. He played the

character parts formerly thrust upon me—the ape in Tarzan, Mr. Crabtree in *The Rover Boys*, Mr. Damon in *Tom Swift*. Thus we came to know Dill as a pocket Merlin, whose head teemed with eccentric plans, strange longings, and quaint fancies” (TKAM, Chapter 3. 1960: 8-9)

In this stage, Scout develops her sense of imagination. She likes to guess the possibility of what happened to an event. She thinks that Atticus and Jem have a conspiracy on her first day of school. She suspects that there is money transaction so that Jem is kindly willing to send her to school.

“Jem condescended to take me to school the first day, a job usually done by one’s parents, but Atticus had said Jem would be delighted to show me where my room was. I think some money changed hands in this transaction” (TKAM, Chapter 2. 1960: 17)

The statement shows how wild Scout’s imagination. Although she does not know the fact, she keeps thinking that way since she has a good sense of imagination.

1.4 School Age: Industry versus Inferiority

This stage happens from about the age of six until eight. Teachers begin to take an important role in the child’s life as they teach the child specific skills. The child now feels the need to win approval by demonstrating specific competencies that are valued by society, and begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

Scout feels so excited on her first day of school. Even though she is disappointed because her friend, Dill, returns to his home, Scout still feels the excitement to go to school.

“Dill left us early in September, to return to Meridian. We saw him off on the five o’clock bus and I was miserable without him until it occurred to me that I would be starting to school in a week. I never looked forward more to anything in my life” (TKAM, Chapter 1. 1960: 8).

Long before she entered school, Scout is good at writing and reading thanks to the upbringing from her father. This condition makes Scout set her expectation of school too high. In the first day of school Scout has already felt upset because her teacher, Miss Caroline, tells her that it cannot be accepted to write and read magazine clearly in the first grade.

“Miss Caroline caught me writing and told me to tell my father to stop teaching me. “Besides,” she said. “We don’t write in the first grade, we print. You won’t learn to write until you’re in the third grade.” (TKAM, Chapter 2. 1960: 18).

This makes Scout feel inferior instead of industry. She thinks that Miss Caroline does not like that she reads well and blames Atticus.

She discovered that I was literate and looked at me with more than faint distaste. Miss Caroline told me to tell my father not to teach me anymore, it would interfere with my reading. (TKAM, Chapter 2. 1960: 19)

Miss Caroline apparently thought I was lying. “Let’s not let our imaginations run away with us, dear,” she said. “Now you tell your father not to teach you anymore. It’s best to begin reading with a fresh mind. You tell him I’ll take over from here and try to undo the damage-” (TKAM, Chapter 2. 1960: 19)

Scout really feels discourage. She loses her passion to go to school. She even tells her father not to send her to school. “Bit by bit, I told him the day’s misfortunes. “-and she said you taught me all wrong, so we can’t ever read any more, ever. Please don’t send me back, please sir.” (TKAM, Chapter 3. 1960: 33). From the statement, it can be seen how upset and discourage Scout is. A girl who is very curious of everything and full of imagination is asked by her teacher not to study and read with her father.

Atticus understands his daughter's problem. He tells Scout to look the problem from different point of view, not only from her own since she is very fussy asking not to go to school. Atticus understand well that Scout is in the phase where she need to deal with new academic environment.

"First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—"

"Sir?"

"-until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."

Atticus said I had learned many things today, and Miss Caroline had learned several things herself. She had learned not to hand something to a Cunningham, for one thing, but if Walter and I had put ourselves in her shoes we'd have seen it was an honest mistake on her part. We could not expect her to learn all Maycomb's ways in one day, and we could not hold her responsible when she knew no better. (TKAM, Chapter 3. 1960: 33).

Fortunately, the smart Scout understands what her father tries to tell her. Scout feels motivated to go to school and it helps her developing her self-esteem. In this stage, Scout still shows her high curiosity. She always asks Atticus regarding his decision to defend Tom Robinson.

"If you shouldn't be defendin' him, then why are you doin' it?" "For a number of reasons," said Atticus. "The main one is, if I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again." (TKAM, Chapter 9. 1960: 86)

"Atticus, are we going to win it?"

"No, honey."

"Then why—"

"Simply because we were licked a hundred years before we started is no reason for us not to try to win," Atticus said. (TKAM, Chapter 9. 1960: 87)

The thing that has the biggest influence for Scout's character development is when she has to deal with mockeries that come around since her father decides to defend Tom Robinson's case. The first person who tests her patience is her school friend named Cecil Jacobs. He announces that Scout's father is a nigger defender. "Cecil Jacobs made me forget. He had announced in the schoolyard the day before that Scout Finch's daddy defended niggers." (TKAM, Chapter 9. 1960: 85). The second is Scout's cousin, Francis Finch. He says that Atticus is a nigger lover states that his decision is downgrading the image of the rest of the Finch family.

"If Uncle Atticus lets you run around with stray dogs, that's his own business, like Grandma says, so it ain't your fault. I guess it ain't your fault if Uncle Atticus is a nigger-lover besides, but I'm here to tell you it certainly does mortify the rest of the family—" (TKAM, Chapter 9. 1960: 94)

Thirdly, Scout also needs to deal with mockery from the adult. Her racist neighbor, Mrs. Dubose says that Atticus is not better than the niggers. Moreover, she calls the niggers as trash. "Yes indeed, what has this world come to when a Finch goes against his raising? I'll tell you! ... "Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for!" (TKAM, Chapter 11. 1960: 177)

Scout witnesses how bad the discrimination towards Black people in her neighborhood. When she and Jem join Calpurnia to her church which is a church for Black people, she knows that the church is also used by White men to be a place to gamble. It shows the highest level of racism because it related to one's religion. Group of people do gambling in other group's holy place.

“First Purchase African M.E. Church was in the Quarters outside the southern town limits, across the old sawmill tracks. It was an ancient paint-peeled frame building, the only church in Maycomb with a steeple and bell, called First Purchase because it was paid for from the first earnings of freed slaves. Negroes worshiped in it on Sundays and white men gambled in it on weekdays.” (TKAM, Chapter 12. 1960: 128)

Atticus also has a very big role in Scout's character development. He always tells her that what the society do by discriminating Black people is unethical. It can be seen from, “Don't say nigger, Scout. That's common.” (TKAM, Chapter 9. 1960:85). Atticus also advises Scout to do the right things and stick with her principle of right and wrong. One day he says,

“Scout,” said Atticus, “when summer comes you'll have to keep your head about far worse things... it's not fair for you and Jem, I know that, but sometimes we have to make the best of things, and the way we conduct ourselves when the chips are down—well, all I can say is, when you and Jem are grown, maybe you'll look back on this with some compassion and some feeling that I didn't let you down. This case, Tom Robinson's case, is something that goes to the essence of a man's conscience—Scout, I couldn't go to church and worship God if I didn't try to help that man.”

“Atticus, you must be wrong...”

“How's that?”

“Well, most folks seem to think they're right and you're wrong...”

“They're certainly entitled to think that, and they're entitled to full respect for their opinions,” said Atticus, “but before I can live with other folks I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience.” (TKAM, Chapter 11. 1960:120)

From the dialogue above, it shows that Scout experiences doubt in judging who is right and who is wrong. Fortunately, Atticus gives an explanation that they should everyone's opinion regardless their background.

Through some events that she experienced, Scout realizes that right or wrong cannot be judge only with skin colors. Scout successfully pass this stage positively and understands how to behave in such as diverse neighborhood. It can be seen form the statement, “Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.” (TKAM, Chapter 31. 1960:321)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Scout's character develops well in every stages from she was born until her school ages. Her parents take an important role in Scout's character development. Love and affection from her mom and dad help Scout in developing her trust to the world. Scout is an independent girl since her mother has already passed away when she was in a very young age. Scout grows to be an active and full of imagination child. This is inseparable from the role of her brother, Jem and her friend, Dill who always play with her. Different from her pre-school age that seems perfect and full of happiness, Scout's school age makes her once feel upset because there are

many things that she cannot do at school. Scout also start to question about good and evil that makes her confused. Mockeries that she gets and racism towards Black people that she witnesses bring her to realize what happens with the world she lives. Also, wise guidance form her father helps her to understand on how to behave fairly in society.

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