The Strange Case Of Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde: The Importance Of Balance

The dual nature of mentality, as shown in the novel The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, is seen in every individual to some degree. While everyone wants to display a pleasant facade, the opposing nature is still within. Robert Louis Stevenson provides insight on this reality when referring to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He does this by exaggerating the theme and splitting the good and evil into “two separate characters”. If Henry Jekyll was not a character, Mr. Hyde could not endure. Without the good in oneself, evil cannot exist.

In the book, Stevenson creates two characters who coexist with each other who have opposing personalities. Jekyll represents his good personality, who people praise, while Hyde represents the evil, in which society chooses to suppress. Jekyll is described as, “a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty... but every mark of capacity and kindness —you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection” (Stevenson, 12), while his alter ego “gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation” (Stevenson, 10). The description of Jekyll shows his kindness and how he holds those close to him near and dear. According to most that know him, he is considered a role model who does no wrong. However, knowing that Hyde is the opposing personality of Jekyll, the reader knows that Jekyll does in fact have a dark side to him. Hyde allows for him to pursue his guilty pleasures and desires without ruining the superb reputation that Dr. Jekyll has built for himself. For a majority of the book, no other characters know that the two are the same person. They see Edward Hyde as a terrible person who murders and does no good, so when it is revealed that Jekyll and Hyde are one in the same, it comes as a surprise.

Dr. Jekyll came from a well endowed family, and had everything needed to set him up to be successful. Due to him being the “straight-edged” person he had been made to be, he never “stepped out of line”. When he finally gives into these dark impulses, he does so under Mr. Hyde’s identity, who becomes his “id” side of his personality. Hyde becomes his evil outlet, so he doesn’t feel guilty as Jekyll. As revealed by Dr. Jekyll’s letter in the last chapter of the book, he stated, “from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame” (Stevenson). The build up due to suppressing his corrupt thoughts his whole life made Mr. Hyde so much more aggressive than if he would have maintained a balance of both good and bad in him. When Jekyll finally succumbs to these desires, and he begins transforming into Hyde, he goes to the extreme and commits terrible crimes, such as when murdered Sir Danvers Carew. Perhaps if Dr. Jekyll would have recognized and accepted both of his personalities, he wouldn’t have had an outburst of evil impulses. This lesson can be applied to every individual because without acknowledging the evil in one's personality, it can spin out of control once given into. This is why it is important to recognize and appreciate the “id”, “ego”, and “superego” in not only surrounding people, but also within an individual.

While good and evil exist naturally in all people, there are physical things that can exaggerate the evil in one’s personality, such as drugs and alcohol. Addiction comes in many different forms, but in Dr. Jekyll’s case, he happened to be addicted to drinking the potion to turn into Mr. Hyde. This becomes clear when Jekyll writes, “It was on this side that my new power tempted me until I fell in slavery. I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted

professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde" (Stevenson 44). The "slavery" that he had fallen into is the same "slavery" that drug addicts fall into. He even says that he "concealed his pleasures" (Stevenson 40), which is also a trait seen in addicts. Dr. Jekyll begins turning into Hyde in order to act on his desires every once in a while, but soon finds himself becoming Mr. Hyde without having to drink the potion at all; this shows the evil consuming him. People with addictions truly have two sides to them. If they don't give into their impulses, then they have withdrawals and become uncontrollable, although in theory the addiction is what caused a change in their personality to begin with. By the end of the book, Dr. Jekyll does not want his evil alter ego, Hyde, to win this internal battle, so he kills himself, in which also exterminates Mr. Hyde. It was at this point that he had realized how powerful evil desires can be, and he did not want that to overcome him. He had kept his addiction a secret from everyone, and therefore was able to get the help he needed. With help, he could have learned to control his desires and impulses, and become Dr. Jekyll wholly once again.

After being analyzed, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde teaches the reader many important lessons. One of Stevenson's most important themes was that both good and evil exist in everyone, but without one, there could not be the other. It is important that a balance is maintained between the two of them so that one does not become entirely evil. The temptations that one experiences is considered the "id" of their personality, which is what Mr. Hyde represents. Dr. Jekyll represents the "ego" in this novel because he was very austere with himself, and did no wrong. Becoming Hyde became an addiction for Dr. Jekyll, which soon became out of control. In order to keep Hyde from "winning" Jekyll killed himself, which represents the good beating the evil. However, without Henry Jekyll, Edward Hyde could not exist.