The Unstoppable Force versus the Immovable Object

Morality: It is an issue that people must come to terms with. Moral and immoral choices can greatly affect an individual’s life, in both good ways and bad. Robert Louis Stevenson’s Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is the story of one man who is two. Utterson, a respected lawyer in Victorian London, is worried about his friend, Dr. Jekyll, after he discovers that Jekyll has made his will out to a man by the name of Edward Hyde. Eventually, after two deaths, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are revealed to be the same person, and, with Hyde in total control, Jekyll and Hyde both die. Stevenson develops the idea of people’s moral choices and how they affect lives from Dr. Jekyll’s experimentation through Jekyll’s loss of control over Mr. Hyde’s actions to the inevitable loss of control, and eventual death, of Jekyll at the hands of Hyde.

Scientific research is one of the best ways for the advancement of knowledge, but sometimes it can get out of hand. When the lives of others are at stake, no research can be done, so sometimes scientists experiment on themselves. This is the case with Dr. Jekyll. He wanted to separate out the good and evil parts of a man, and in order to do so, he experimented on himself. The fact that Dr. Jekyll had “learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man [,]” (57) as well as his wish to “no longer [be] exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of extraneous evil [,]” (57) indicated that he believed man’s duality was primitive, and that to advance further, the wholly good man needed to be unhindered by it. This choice , to divide the moral and immoral aspects of man, is the first step to achieving absolute good, or absolute evil. In order to accomplish this mighty task that he was faced with, Dr. Jekyll “purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required [,]” (58) and after he “drank off the potion [,]” (58) his purpose was beginning to be accomplished, but he would soon come to regret that night for the rest of his days. The first sign of success in Dr. Jekyll’s experiments was “a grinding of the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death [,]” (58) which was just the beginning. After this occurred, Dr. Jekyll “felt younger, lighter, happier in body [,]” (59) indicating that something has happened, which turned out to be “the evil side of [Dr. Jekyll’s] nature, to which [Jekyll] had now transferred the stamping efficacy,” (59) illustrating that the newly born Mr. Hyde was the representation of true evil, the master of sin, and the evil that men have inside of them. Dr. Jekyll’s experimentation led to this remarkable discovery, but this would later become the worst decision that he ever made, as Hyde would begin to do things that only the most evil of men would even imagine.

Many people have gone to jail for crimes that they have committed against others, but they are not inherently evil. These men and women have made choices that have forced their lives to go this way. Mr. Hyde, however, is the true manifestation of evil, and he behaves like it too. Peoples moral codes dictate the way they behave, and their choices are not affecting only them, but all of those around them. For instance, when Mr. Hyde was first spotted by Enfield, he was behaving like “some damned Juggernaut” (5) and he “trampled calmly over [a little girl’s] body and left her screaming on the ground [,]” (5) establishing that Hyde’s actions do not include remorse or empathy, but only his immorality and lack of penitence. This, combined with Enfield and the doctor’s “desire to kill him” (6) only further proves the point that the immoral actions of Dr. Jekyll have created this being, and is affecting many lives. Unfortunately, Mr. Hyde does get much more violent than this. Mr. Hyde’s violence comes to a climax when “he broke out in a great flame of anger. Stamping with his foot, brandishing his cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman [,]” (22) demonstrating that Mr. Hyde can get very angry, very fast. He also could get murderous in this angry state, which was caused for no apparent reason. This is evident when “Mr. Hyde broke out of all bonds and clubbed [Sir Danvers Carew] to the ground [,]” representing Hyde’s true nature of evil and immorality. This act alone caused Hyde to be hunted by men, because the unethical choices of one should not affect another. Personal virtuous decision, however, can come back to bite you, just as is the case with Dr. Jekyll.

People need to pay for their crimes. Some go to prison. Others thrown into a life of solitude, and then there are those who punish themselves. Dr. Jekyll, in a way, served all of these punishments, by his own hands and the hands of his alter ego, Mr. Hyde. Crimes often come out of immoral choices, and these choices affect the lives of a great many people. Dr. Jekyll lost total control over his transformations, and he paid the price for his previous actions. The first instance of involuntary transformation is one night when Dr. Jekyll went to sleep. He woke up “in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde [,]” (62) stating the fact that in the night, Jekyll had transformed, and Hyde had gone to his bed. These involuntary transformations would give Hyde more leeway to do the corrupt actions that he wished to do, and these actions would take their toll of Jekyll. The toll was paid when Jekyll “resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past [,]” (66) indicating that Jekyll is making up for the immoral acts of Mr. Hyde by doing moral acts himself. However, in the park, when Jekyll, unexpectedly “once more [became] Edward Hyde […]from that day forth […] only by a great effort as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, was [Jekyll] able to wear the countenance of Jekyll [,]” (69, 70) indicating that this is the beginning of the end of Dr. Jekyll, and the immorality of Mr. Hyde was much stronger that the limited morality of Dr. Jekyll. When Dr. Jekyll was locked in his laboratory by Mr. Hyde, the last words he wrote were “Here then, and I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy henry Jekyll to an end [,]” (72) explaining that Dr. Jekyll life, the life of the moral side of humanity, died long before the evil, immoral side would. The actions of Dr. Jekyll served him a punishment that he did not necessarily deserve, but it was the one that he needed.

The experimentation of Jekyll, the unethical actions of Hyde, and Jekyll’s loss of his body to Hyde all show that the decency and depravity of an individual has great power over that individuals choices. The experiments that Jekyll did put him in a spot to attempt to rid the world of evil, but it only brought evil into a more prominent place. The evil actions of Hyde showed the world that immoral actions change the lives of not just one person, but many, and once Hyde took over, all hope of morality was lost, and good died while evil survived. Decency and depravity are the two aspects of human nature that affect people the most, and these two are arguably the only two people do not have total control of in their lives. In the fight for a good, war free, civilized world, the good shall thrive, and men, women, and children need to have a balance of opposites.