

UNA VISIÓN DE LA MORALIDAD EN “UN CUENTO DE NAVIDAD” DE CHARLES DICKENS

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Resumen

Este trabajo explora el concepto de moralidad en *Un Cuento de Navidad* de Charles Dickens. Contrastando la conducta de los personajes principales (Scrooge y Cratchit), se analizaron las actitudes morales y amorales en intercambios sociales dentro del contexto de la historia tomando en cuenta la visión de los valores morales existente en la sociedad del siglo XIX. Para explorar los patrones de conducta de los personajes principales, se utilizaron los estadios del desarrollo moral propuestos por Kohlberg (1984) para poner a prueba las reacciones de Scrooge y Cratchit. Además, se utilizó un enfoque histórico para el análisis literario del texto en cuestión. Se concluye con un diagnóstico general de su conducta que, a la luz de la evidencia textual, concuerda con la conducta social común de la Era Victoriana. Se hace, además, un apartado final relacionado con la importancia que tiene el uso del texto literario en la enseñanza del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE), y sus implicaciones en el campo educativo.

Palabras clave: Moralidad, sociedad victoriana, patrones de conducta.

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A VIEW OF MORALITY IN CHARLES DICKENS'S *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Abstract

This article explores the concept of morality in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. By contrasting the two main characters' behavior (Scrooge's and Cratchit's), moral and amoral attitudes in social exchanges were analyzed within the context of the story, by taking into account the perspective that people during the 1800's had on moral values. To explore the two main characters' behavioral patterns, the five stages of moral development, proposed by Kohlberg (1984) were used to test Scrooge's and Cratchit's reactions. Also, a historical approach to literary criticism was used to analyze the literary text. This article concludes with an overall diagnosis of their behavior, which, in the light of the textual evidence, matches the common social behavior of the Victorian Era. A final note is made regarding the importance of the use of the literary text in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and its implications in the field of education.

Key words: Moralism; Victorian society; behavioral patterns.

UNE VISION DE LA MORALITE DANS « UN CONTE DE NOEL » DE CHARLES DICKENS

Résumé

Dans ce travail, on explore le concept de moralité dans *Un Conte de Noël* de Charles Dickens. En contrastant le comportement des personnages principaux (Scrooge y Cratchit), on a analysé les attitudes morales et amorales lors des échanges sociaux encadrés dans l'histoire tenant compte la vision des valeurs morales de la société du XIXe siècle. Pour explorer les patrons de comportement des personnages principaux, on s'est servi des stades du développement moral proposés par Kohlberg (1984) afin de mettre à l'épreuve les réactions de Scrooge y Cratchit. On termine par un diagnostic général de leurs comportements que, à la lumière de la preuve textuelle, correspondent au comportement social commun de l'Époque Victorienne. On présente aussi une section finale liée à l'importance de l'usage du texte littéraire dans l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère (ESL) et ses implications dans le domaine éducatif.

Mots clé : moralité, société victorienne, patrons de comportement.

UNA VISIONE DELLA MORALITÀ IN “UN RACCONTO DI NATALE” DI CHARLES DICKENS

Riassunto

Quest'articolo esplora il concetto di moralità in “Un racconto di Natale” di Charles Dickens”. Nel confrontare il comportamento dei personaggi principali (Scrooge e Cratchit), sono stati analizzati gli atteggiamenti morali e amorali negli scambi sociali all'interno del contesto della storia tenendo conto della visione dei valori morali che esistevano nella società del XIX secolo. Con lo scopo di ripercorrere i modelli di comportamento dei personaggi principali, sono stati usati gli stadi dello sviluppo proposti da Kohlberg (1984) per mettere alla prova le reazioni di Scrooge e Cratchit. La diagnosi conclusiva è quella di considerare che la condotta sociale espressa nell'opera è in linea con l'atteggiamento comune dell'Età Vittoriana. È creato, inoltre, uno scritto finale in relazione all'importanza dell'uso del testo letterario per l'insegnamento della lingua inglese come lingua straniera (ILE) e la sua applicabilità nell'educazione.

Parole chiavi: Moralità. Società Vittoriana. Norme di condotta.

UMA VISÃO DA MORALIDADE EM “UM CONTO DE NATAL” DE CHARLES DICKENS

Resumo

Este trabalho analisa o conceito de moralidade em *Um Conto de Natal* de Charles Dickens. Contrastando a conduta dos personagens principais (Scrooge e Cratchit), foram analisadas as atitudes morais e amorais nos intercâmbios sociais no contexto da história, levando em conta a visão dos valores morais existente na sociedade do século XIX. Para explorar os padrões de conduta dos personagens principais, foram utilizados os estágios do desenvolvimento moral propostos por Kohlberg (1984) para avaliar as reações de Scrooge e as de Cratchit. A conclusão, depois de ter feito um diagnóstico geral de sua conduta que, como se observou na evidência textual, é que a conduta deles coincide com a conduta social comum da Era Victoriana. Além disso, foi desenvolvida uma parte final que se relaciona com a importância que tem o uso do texto literário no ensino do Inglês como Língua Estrangeira (ILE), e suas implicações no âmbito educacional.

Palavras chave: moralidade, sociedade victoriana, padrões de conduta.

“The most important human endeavor is the striving for morality in our actions. Our inner balance and even our very existence depend on it. Only morality in our actions can give beauty and dignity to life.”

Charles Dickens

Introduction

What is morality? How does it affect our lives? Is it really necessary to be a moral entity in society to guarantee the safety of its members? Should we try to eradicate negative values and cultivate the good ones? These are questions that may probably make us think about the true nature of man, and the way people behave in society. We may even reflect on what we do and how we do it in contrast to what other people do and how they do it. But then, other questions may arise; for instance: What if we delete negative behavior? Is it possible to have only a “good” side without a counterpart? And last, but not least: If what is good for a group of people, is bad for other groups, how can we determine what *really* is good or bad? When we talk about morality there seems to be a dichotomy of terms in which “good and bad”, “right and wrong”, and “good and evil” are the main ones, particularly when we talk about morality as a reflection of society in literary expression, like short stories, poems, or novels.

Ever since the English novel was born in 1830, its evolution in the history of literature has undergone many changes because novels have been constantly shaped by society according to the impact they produce (Hauser, A., 1988, p. 139). As for the production of literature in those times, there were several authors who were the main representatives and pioneers of particular styles in writing. Authors like Oscar Wilde, George Eliot or Charles Dickens were of paramount importance during the 19th century for different reasons which involved, basically, social and moral issues. Dickens, who was first thought to be a social reformer or revolutionary, was later taken as a moralist instead, first and foremost, because his novels involved a great amount of moral behavior (whether good or bad) which was meant to teach a lesson at the end of the story, suggesting a change in human condition rather than in society itself. Still, it is logical to think that by modifying human behavior individually, in the long term, there will also be a change in society as a whole because society is made by individuals who are susceptible to moral and social change for the better.

One of the ways authors tried to reinforce moral values during the 19th century was by means of fictional literature like the novel because from the 1840s on people increasingly became more interested in reading fictional pieces of work (Hauser, A., 1988, p. 142). The main reason for this is that in those days novels became more accessible to the public by being published in monthly installments. Therefore, when we talk about morality we can hardly detach it from the social contexts upon which historical facts may have a strong impact as well. If people feel identified with, or they can picture themselves in the piece of work they are reading, they are more likely to be influenced by it, and change is more likely to occur. Dickens used to depict the society of his time in order to trigger a sense of awareness regarding moral values and promote, if possible, social change.

The main idea of the present research involves the review of the concept of morality in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. In this article, I aim to analyze the period in which the story is framed in the light of the Historical approach to literary criticism for this offers us a comprehensive view of the social, cultural, and even the intellectual context in which the piece of work under scrutiny was created (Kennedy, J. I., & Gioia, D., 1995, p. 1798). "What we call 'culture' is not an independent reality but is inseparable from the historical conditions in which human beings create their material lives" (Selden, R. Widdowson, P. & Brooker, P., 2005, p. 83); such lives might be directed by particular ideological systems which result from the social and the economic dimensions.

As for the story itself, I will be dealing with the moral opposition between the two main characters; that is, morality as perceived through *Ebenezer Scrooge* and *Bob Cratchit*. This is another aspect that can be taken into account to complement the moralistic view that will be supported by means of the historical review of the social context in which the story is framed. The main purpose of this research is to identify traces of morality in the novel from the perspective of each of the two characters mentioned before, and contrast them so as to match the outcome with the social issues that were taking place in the 19th century. I will look for a reflection

of the Victorian society in the piece of work by focusing my attention on morality as it was perceived in the society of the 19th century.

In order to achieve the main purpose of the research, I will make use of Kohlberg's theory of moral development (1976) in order to be able to operationalize the traits inherent to the behavior of the two main characters in the novel. This theory will help me devise a set of categories of analysis in order to better understand the moral behavior of the aforesaid characters. It is necessary to pinpoint that the fact that I will be using a set of categories that belong to the field of psychology does not mean that the Historical Approach is irrelevant in the study, basically because these two fields of analysis (psychology and history) are not mutually exclusive.

The categories selected are just a tool to carry out the specific analysis of the characters in terms of morality, whereas the Historical approach will provide us with a more general view of the social and cultural context in which *A Christmas Carol* was written. The Historical approach will help us locate and justify the story within a time frame in which a number of specific events were taking place, and in which a set of behavioral patterns was expected from the members of that society. This fact somehow involves the author and his decision to select such topic to write about. In the following section, we will observe the general traits of the 19th century society and some general facts about the author's life, so that we can place the novel in a more specific time frame.

The analysis carried out in this research also has a set of implications that derive from the analysis to be done. These implications may be separated into two groups: (a) cultural implications, and (b) pedagogical implications. Part of what justifies this article precisely involves the impact the results of the analysis will have on the field of education regarding the use of literature in the EFL context. Beyond the mere use of the text as an object of analysis, within the academic context, the text under scrutiny, as well as many others, can be used to broaden the cultural scope EFL learners have regarding the society of the 19th century in England, as well as in other contexts.

Cultural awareness, being one of the main targets of the teaching of literature to EFL learners, is an essential component within the learning of a foreign language that needs to be highlighted; one practical and effective way to teach EFL is by means of the reading and analysis of literary texts that may well represent the society of a particular time period. *A Christmas Carol* is a perfect example of the aforementioned. As we can see, both the cultural and the pedagogical implications are interconnected to build up the methodology of an EFL class in which the literary text is used as a means to help the learners develop their linguistic competence as well as their sense of cultural awareness which will influence the learners' performance as future teachers.

Charles Dickens and the 19th century

In the following paragraphs a brief review of Charles Dickens's life will be provided so as to get familiar with such a widely recognized and influential author during the 19th century and up to this day. Also, to provide a clear view of the time frame in which *A Christmas Carol* was written, various facts about the author's life will be presented according to the context in which he lived, and which later on became a motivation for him to write novels like the one under scrutiny in this article.

Charles Dickens was born on February 7th, 1812 at Portsmouth, England. His childhood was normal as any kid's childhood; he was a comfortable, well-educated boy who used to have exposure to fine literary English works (Busby, B., 2009). Dickens suddenly started having problems after his father was imprisoned for debt; he was only twelve years old when he was forced to work in a factory, a warehouse, pasting labels. He had to work in conditions of extreme poverty for around three years during which he could evidence the hardships of the working poor in that factory as a representative of the whole low-class, working people. After those horrible days, according to Dickens, he could continue with his education. In 1833, he started studying journalism through which he later became an editor and a writer of fiction. Later on, he started writing novels, and not long

after that, he came up with his first complete novel: *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836. He finished his second novel, *Oliver Twist*, in 1837 which was delivered in monthly installments during two years until 1839.

It is a fact that Dickens was a prolific author during his active life as a writer completing around thirteen novels (including *The Mystery of Edward Drood* which was left incomplete in 1870, after he died). He also wrote at least five novellas, numerous short stories, plays and pieces of journalism. Some of his most known novels are *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1855), *Great Expectations* (1860); *David Copperfield* (1849) and *A Christmas Carol* (1843). In most of his works Dickens used to criticize society from different points of view in order to make changes that went beyond a social dimension, and into a moral one (Orwell, G. 1940). He would do this by displaying situations that reflected the role of human beings in society as well as a range of values that influenced particular people in a particular time. We can therefore say that, even though Dickens was believed to be a revolutionary writer when he was first analyzed by critics, most recent studies picture him as a moralist, instead. (op. cit.)

When we talk about Charles Dickens, we need to take into account the historical and social context in which he lived. This means, taking into consideration the events that had taken place and were taking place in the society of his time; what was called the Victorian Age. It was a society affected by the French Revolution in previous years, for instance, as well as the constant social and political conflicts and confrontations that led poor people to live in worse terrible conditions than Dickens himself experienced. Therefore, most of his novels were framed in the social conditions of the time as well as of previous years.

The society of the Victorian period has been described by sociologists and economists, such as Beatrice Webb (cited in Ford, B., 1963, p. 29), as a period in which the degree of respectability of a person was graded according to social, political and even industrial power. People were judged by their social standards, leaving aside their personal relationships. According to Webb, "what was demoralizing...was the making and breaking of personal friendships according to

temporary and accidental circumstances in no way connected with personal merit.” (op. cit.)

The writer’s response to the social conditions of the time was an important step towards the development of fictional literature (the novel, in this case) by means of criticizing the social and moral behavior that was common in those days. Social, experiential, and even moral awareness on the part of the writer allowed him or her to define the implications of experience as a prerequisite to the “right order” of personal and social life.

The concept of the family was of high importance as well when it came to the portrayal of social and economic conflicts in the fictional literature of the time. Historically speaking, the traits of the family during the nineteenth century reveal the powerful role of ideologies at work and focus on the role of power relations involved, particularly by age and gender (Williams, C., 2004, p. 257), not to mention by social class. This shows that there was a firm connection between the state of the family and the working conditions that influenced the social and economic status of the household. Regarding this respect, “...the capitalist and patriarchal logic of the labour market that allocated better-paid work to men, also meant that it made more sense for married women to withdraw from waged work.” (op. cit., p. 258)

Towards the 1850s husbands and wives worked in different fields unlike pre-industrial times in which both the husband and wife would work together in the farming industry, for instance.

The beginnings of the industrial revolution may not have been so severe towards the end of the 18th century, but towards the middle of the 19th century the consequences that industrialization brought over Britain were many. Most of the inventions that had taken place during the 18th century had been improved and put to use by the late 1820s and mid 1830s (Gombrich, E., 2004, p.301). During this time, the ‘supremacy’ of the machine replaced the handcraft of hundreds of workers who were left out of the industry to starve to death.

This logically indicates that the rate of unemployment and subsequent poverty in the country increased dramatically, and the working conditions of the fortunate few who had the chance to operate machinery were practically devastating. Some of the company owners would hire only those people who were willing to work more hours for less payment.

Perhaps, one of the most serious consequences of industrialization over the family was that, as stated by Sercombe's Marxist (cited in Williams, C., 2004), it depended on the over-exploitation of workers who exhausted themselves to the extent that working families could not possibly keep up the productive workforce "...neither in the medium term (paying the price in ill-health and shortened lives) nor by being able to reproduce the succeeding generation of fit and productive workers." (p. 258)

Morality

Given the fact that the moral dimension is central in this article, it is then relevant to determine various conceptions that complement each other to make up a very specific view of what moralism is within the boundaries of this research. The concept of moralism will be briefly presented as it is conceived from different perspectives: (1) the philosophical perspective; (2) the social perspective; and (3) the psychological perspective.

From the philosophical perspective, morality is an essential human component made up of fixed patterns related to social traditions as well as with ethics (Burk, I., 2001). A moral person would then be, according to this view, anyone whose behavior adjusts to the customs of a particular society.

From the social point of view, Rokeach (1973) argues that morality is seen through the scope of values (also called "moral values") which are described as beliefs evidenced through a "more or less" permanent behavior. Values are also "standard", and, therefore, may be used with different purposes such as: (a) guides to carry out actions, (b) guides to evaluate or judge situations, and (c) the basis for

analyzing behavior and beliefs (Salazar, J., Montero, M., Muñoz, C., Sánchez, E., Santoro, E., Villegas, J., 1979).

In a definition of morality provided by Rest (1983), he stresses the concept of morality as “standards that govern human cooperation” (p. 558). The idea of cooperation is also important to the development of human behavior from a social point of view. This makes it possible for researchers in other areas, like psychology, to expand the concept of morality in order to have a wider understanding of how humans behave and are expected to behave.

From the psychological point of view, according to Lawrence Kohlberg in his theory of moral development (1976), we go through a process of internalization of rules and norms dealing with the family and the sociocultural dimensions through which we create a system of values (Lagonell, M. de, Ríos, P., Silva, A., Figueroa, R., Van Der Biest, T. Palacios, H., et al., 2004).

According to Kohlberg’s model as presented by Colby & Kohlberg (1987), there are five stages of moral development. They are:

Stage 1 Morality is defined in terms of avoiding breaking rules that are backed by punishment, “obedience for its own sake,” and “avoiding damage to persons and property”.

Stage 2 Morality is defined in terms of instrumental exchange, “acting to meet one’s own interests and needs and letting others do the same,” making deals, and engaging in equal exchanges.

Stage 3 Morality is defined in terms of upholding mutual relationships, fulfilling role expectations, being viewed as a good person, showing concern for others, and caring for others; trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude are important moral values.

Stage 4 Morality is defined in terms of maintaining the social systems from which one benefits

Stage 5 Morality is defined in terms of fulfilling the social obligations implicit in social contracts that are “freely agreed upon” and a “rational calculation of overall utility, ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’ ”

In these five stages of moral development, the internalization of rules, and even moral thought, starts in early stages (stage 1 and 2) as a more superficial reasoning, and as the individual moves on to higher stages, the reasoning becomes more abstract and deeper. In Kohlberg's theory (op. cit. p. 126), it is important to highlight that in the chronology of the moral stages, age is not a determining factor to move to higher levels. Therefore, this model is flexible enough to be used in the analysis of children, teenagers and adults. According to Kohlberg (cited in Crain, 1985), everyone, no matter the culture of the person, goes through these developmental stages in order from stage 1 to stage 5. The whole stage model, Kohlberg explains, is a tool that serves the purpose of analyzing people's moral development by means of their reasoning and not their behavior.

Kohlberg (1975) also explains that the stages are not taught, but they rather emerge from our own thinking about moral problems. Moral development may also depend on social exchange, but social interaction will only take effect as long as our way of thinking is stimulated. As we interact with others and engage in debates that stimulate our thinking, we can question our views regarding the way we see the world that surrounds us in order to rebuild our conception of certain ideas, and to comply with what other people also believe. As people reflect these broader points of view, they are also showing their moral development according to Kohlberg's model (op. cit.)

For the analysis that this article contains, Kohlberg's model will be used taking into account what values are and how they can be tracked through moral behavior. This will be done in order to identify positive values if the characters follow such "rules" and negative values if the characters do not follow them. By providing evidence from the text, I will show opposite behavioral patterns according to what Kohlberg, and even Rokeach, state regarding their views on moralism.

The analysis of the novel will be done assuming that the moral behavior of the characters is a clear and direct reflection of their moral reasoning. We then assume that there is a high degree of consistency between moral thought and moral behavior throughout the plot of the story. Even though the observable

behavior of the characters and their intentions or moral thought may not be parallel, as Kohlberg himself doubts (Crain, W., 1985), we will guide the analysis through what is purely observable in order to carry out a more impartial and practical analysis.

In the following paragraphs an overview of the plot of the story will be provided so that we have a clear idea of the flow of events that took place and how such events relate to the main idea of this article.

A Christmas Carol

A Christmas Carol is one of the shortest Christmas tales by Dickens. The plot is very simple and there is a small group of characters that makes it easy to understand the story without major complications. The story goes around the life of Ebenezer Scrooge who is a rich, arrogant, moody and selfish old man. Once his old business partner, Jacob Marley, dies seven (7) years before the starting point of the story, he takes over the business as if no one had died, paying little (if any) attention to the incident. Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's assistant, is the target of the old man's lack of patience and mistreatment. He never says a word to defend himself because he is afraid of Scrooge who might fire him, leaving him without any source of income. Bob is a very poor man and the salary he gets by working for Scrooge is so little that he can barely survive along with his wife and kids.

Scrooge, then is visited by the ghost of his ex-partner, Jacob Marley, who tells the old man that if he does not stop being such a bad person, he will be a mourning, wandering soul for eternity (as Marley himself), carrying heavy chains around his neck that would be full of each and every one of his misdeeds. Of course, Scrooge did not believe any of Marley's words, and he even doubted that the apparition was real. Marley, then, warned the old man that he was to be visited by three spirits (one each night from that moment on). Each spirit would represent a different Christmas time: present, past and future.

Even though Scrooge did not believe a word Marley said, he was terribly afraid of what might happen. And of course, Jacob Marley was telling the truth. The

spirits did appear one by one, one per night just as Marley had said. The first of the spirits, The Ghost of Christmas Past, showed Scrooge the life he used to have before he became an arrogant, moody and hideous old man. He was able to see himself sharing with friends, leading a life full of happiness and joy. The spirit also shows Scrooge how he lost everything, including the love of the woman he was about to get married to. Scrooge seemed to have forgotten everything he was seeing because his reaction was that of a person who suffered from amnesia. Surprised, sad, and crying he finds himself in his bedroom one more time, in which the second spirit awaits: The Ghost of Christmas Present.

This spirit shows Scrooge how the people who used to love him, shared together and remember him with pity and disgust as an old man who should not even deserve to be thought of. Scrooge also sees the condition in which his clerk, Bob Cratchit is living in along with his family: A condition of extreme poverty. Scrooge knows that a great deal of all the hardships Bob is going through are due to him. If Cratchit earned more money, he would be able to give his family a decent dinner, and would be able to take better care of his little son, Tiny Tim, who is very ill. Then, tormented, disturbed, and even sadder than before, Scrooge is left alone by the spirit who is almost immediately replaced by the third one: The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

The last spirit takes Scrooge to a graveyard in which he can see his assistant crying next to his wife after their little son, Tiny Tim, had been buried. After they leave, Scrooge is left alone with the spirit who points at a different direction. There's another grave which has been recently open, and which after making a great effort to see the name in the tombstone, Scrooge can finally find that the grave bears his own name: Ebenezer Scrooge; a man who had never changed and who was condemned to wander as a mourning soul for eternity like his ex-partner, Jacob Marley.

Scrooge wakes up in despair after he finally gets rid of the vision provided by the last of the spirits. He notices that everything he saw was part of his subconscious mind, and that he still had a chance to change his life as well as

other people's lives by doing good. He hurried up and started helping people, including his own clerk, Bob Cratchit, whose little son did not die after all thanks, of course, to Scrooge's intervention.

This is a story that may even be viewed as a children's story, but which was also highly enjoyed by adults who during the 19th century would set meetings to read it aloud as part of a tradition each Christmas season. The question some people may ask themselves is: What is so attractive about this story? The answer is that it highlights some of the main values society is built upon. It also shows other values which are negative, in opposition to the bright side of the story. Apart from this, the story, as I said at the beginning, is not difficult to understand; the plot is simple and the topic is appealing. The main conflict resides in Scrooge who has become a greedy person; someone whose love for money is greater than his love for people. So, then, the interesting part is to see how this character, who seems to be "amoral", undergoes a change of personality after learning his lesson; in this case, through the visit of the three spirits.

Methodology

We can focus on how the previously stated information will be used to guide the analysis in order to achieve the purpose presented at the beginning of this article. In the following paragraphs, the methodological procedures will be discussed.

The treatment of the topic selected in this research was done through a descriptive study, with a qualitative approach in which numeric data will also be taken into account in order to make a more objective and practical analysis. What justifies the selection of such methodological approach is the fact that the topic of the research is so abstract that it is hard to measure in an objective and efficient way. Therefore, I will mostly show, by means of textual evidence, the moral tendency of the characters in a descriptive way that will be supported by percentages. The numeric data will facilitate the presentation of results towards the end of the research.

The data will be taken from the story itself which is the focus of analysis. For the selection of the literary work, aspects such as: **(a)** length, and **(b)** topic dealt with were paid attention to. As it is a short novel, the whole of it could be taken in order to evidence moral behavior in context. The topic dealt with within the story (morality) is one of the most relevant issues of the 19th century, and that makes it appealing as an object for research.

When it comes to the categories of analysis, the main stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development previously presented in the review of the literature were taken into account. Then, each of Kohlberg's stages of moral development were simplified in order to facilitate the process of analysis. Table 1 illustrates what results after simplifying each of the stages.

Table 1**Simplified version of Kohlberg's stages of moral development**

1. Avoiding breaking the rules
 2. Avoiding damage to persons and property
 3. Acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same
 4. Making deals, and engaging in equal exchanges
 5. Being viewed as a good person and showing concern for others
 6. Displaying trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude as important moral values
 7. Maintaining the social systems from which one benefits
 8. Fulfilling the social obligations implicit in social contracts
 9. Making decisions having in mind the greatest good for the greatest number
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Even though there are only five (5) stages of moral development, each of the stages was divided in two different categories, except for stage 4 which is short enough. Therefore, categories of analysis 1 and 2 correspond to stage 1,

categories 3 and 4 correspond to stage 2, categories 5 and 6 correspond to stage 3, category 7 corresponds to stage 4, and categories 8 and 9 correspond to stage 5.

Each of the categories corresponds with one characteristic a person is supposed to comply with in order to be considered “moral.”

Analyzing the story

Once one has the chance to read the whole story, and to think about it carefully, it is quite clear that morality is one of the main topics the author deals with. Also, there are two marked different perspectives regarding moral behavior. On the one hand, we have Scrooge, and on the other we have his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

The analysis of the main characters' behavior is based on the opposition that both characters represent to each other. As stated by Bal (1985), in any piece of fictional literature there will always be a kind of relation or opposition among the characters in the fictional world. This relationship may be psychological or ideological, for instance.

Therefore, in order to analyze the main characters, attention will be paid to the ideological relationship among characters which has to do with the opposition between extreme concepts like “...liberalism and socialism or between the individual and the representatives of power.” (op. cit. p. 44). This last kind of opposition is what we can particularly find in *A Christmas Carol* because there are obvious differences between the two characters in terms of ideology as well as regarding their social and economic status. Bob Cratchit would be a representation of the individual whereas Scrooge would be a representative of power.

When we take a closer look at the characters, we can see that Scrooge is seen as the bad character whereas Cratchit is seen as the good counterpart. Why is this?

Let us start by saying that throughout the whole novel, Cratchit, as well as other characters, follow a line of behavior that, according to Kohlberg, represents

'the greatest good for the greatest number'. Scrooge, on the other hand, only thinks of the greatest good for *himself*. He follows the behavior of the typical greedy person whose main interest is getting access to valuable material things which he will use without sharing with anyone. In Scrooge's case, we are talking about money. At the beginning of the story, Scrooge, after his nephew tells him not to be cross, clearly states:

"What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this?...What's Christmas time to you, but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer..." (ACC, p.6)

Additionally, he reinforces the idea of money by saying: "My clerk, with fifteen shillings a-week, and a wife and a family, talking about marry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam¹⁶." (p. 9)

When it comes to Bob Cratchit, there is an obvious difference in attitude that makes him a clear counterpart to Scrooge. He uses values to guide, evaluate or judge situations when talking of his boss in front of the children in his home, taking into account it is Christmas time. Despite what his wife says: "It should be Christmas Day; I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.", he still keeps himself calm and just says in a mild way: "My dear, Christmas Day."

Even in his position, Bob is thankful to his boss, and drinks his health on Christmas Day (even though deep inside he knows, his boss does not deserve it). This is an important element in stage three (3) of Kohlberg's model of morality. This stage corresponds to category four (4): being viewed as a good person and showing concern for others, and category five (5): displaying trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude as important moral values.

According to stage five (5) in the same model, Cratchit follows the social obligations implicit in social contracts that are "freely agreed upon" and a "rational calculation of overall utility." To understand this, there is no particular linguistic

¹⁶ Abbreviation for the Hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem, an institution based in London that cared for lunatics.

evidence, but rather contextual evidence that is clear after the novel has been read.

Definitely, Bob needs to keep his job, and to do so he follows the rules (stage 1) by avoiding damage to property and people, so that he can fulfill his own as well as his family's needs and interests (stage 2). Finally, Bob Cratchit maintains the social system and environment from which he benefits (stage 4) because he needs to get along with his boss so that he is not fired. Keeping social conditions stable in his working environment by means of patience, for example, is a way of accomplishing moral behavior according to Kohlberg's model. If that is so, then we can surely say that Bob Cratchit is a character we can refer to as "a moral character."

As for the conditions presented by Salazar, et al. (1979), values serve different functions such as: (a) guides to carry out actions, (b) guides to evaluate or judge situations, and (c) a base to analyze behavior and beliefs. As we can see, one may comply with these conditions to be whether a moral or an amoral person because it depends on the perspective of the person who carries actions, evaluates situations, and analyzes behavior to do what is supposed to be "right". Kohlberg definitely presents a much more complete model that may be complemented with the latter conditions so as to identify the nature of the actions preformed by these two characters (Ebenezer Scrooge and Bob Cratchit).

We already characterized the overall of Bob Cratchit's behavior. We will now check whether these characteristics also apply to Scrooge. We already gave an impression on the character, and that impression was not positive (even the narrator's appraisal on the old man is negative¹⁷). But let us try to find evidence of a mismatching attitude between Scrooge's behavior and Kohlberg's stages of moral development. Throughout the story, Scrooge flouts some of such stages. Let us see how.

¹⁷ "Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire." (The narrator, p. 2)

Scrooge underpays his employee who does extra work for his boss (the laundry, for instance). Bob Cratchit works overtime to get some extra money to be able to keep his family alive, being this, as we can remember, one of the typical characteristics of the type of work most people had to go through during the 19th century; this would happen because of the great rate of layoffs in companies in which machines were then doing the job a hundred people would do. In order not to be fired and die of hunger along with their families, workers would do almost anything to have a job position, even at the expense of getting a surprisingly low salary (Gombrich, E., 2004, p. 302). Scrooge therefore takes advantage of this to exploit his clerk. That would not only mean he is breaking the rules, but that he is also putting Tiny Tim's life in danger given the fact he needs medical treatment because he is very ill (flouting of stage 1).

Additionally, Scrooge works to meet his own needs, disregarding other people's needs, including his clerk's who is not allowed to do the same due to his extremely low salary. Scrooge never had a discussed deal with his clerk regarding his salary; he imposed such condition in which definitely there are no equal exchanges. It is obvious that Bob Cratchit is in a disadvantaged position (flouting of stage 2).

In the light of all this, we can say Ebenezer Scrooge is not viewed as a good person who cares for others. He shows disrespect, untruthfulness, and ungratefulness to his clerk (flouting of stage 3). We can say that given the characteristics of Scrooge as presented by the narrator, Scrooge is a clear representation of the then ongoing industrial revolution whose big thirst for production would put at risk the integrity of his own workers. The cold idea that workers had to keep up with the machines was common in those days (op. cit., p. 304).

Scrooge is the kind of person who keeps the social system from which he benefits (stage 4); still, if we take into consideration the way in which he maintains the working system (not what he does, but *how* he does it), for instance, we can understand that such stage is not totally fulfilled. As stated in stage 5, one of the

main premises is: ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’, and as Scrooge does not comply with this condition which is an ingredient that makes stage four (4) possible, then it is a fact the old man flouts both stage four (4) and stage five (5) simultaneously. Not to mention that this kind of behaviour, a cold and even abusive behaviour from the employer to the employee, is a very clear representation of the industrial revolution that was taking place in Britain at the time.

Once we compare the behavior of the main two characters in the story in the light of Kohlberg’s model of morality, we can realize that our first impression when we read the story is valid. This is so because each one of them follows particular behavioral patterns that are obviously opposites. According to universal beliefs, and to what we could see in Kohlberg’s model, Scrooge’s behavior is not “good” or “moral”, whereas in the case of Bob Cratchit we find totally the opposite.

Results

The categories of analysis used to describe both characters are dichotomic categories because the characters whether comply with them or flout them, but not both; if the characters comply with the category, there is no way of giving a degree of compliance to it.

In the following chart, we can see how each of the two main characters, Cratchit (C), and Scrooge (S), are placed in order to check if they comply with each of the categories of analysis described in the methodology of the article.

The plus symbol (+) signifies the compliance of the moral principle, whereas the minus symbol (-) signifies the flouting of the moral principle. This chart is a more graphic representation of the analysis that was done before. The idea is to briefly state the analysis in a much clearer way so that it is easier to understand.

Table 2
Results of the analysis

CATEGORIES		C	S
1	Avoiding breaking the rules	+	-
2	Avoiding damage to persons and property	+	-
3	Acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same	+	-
4	Making deals, and engaging in equal exchanges	+	-
5	Being viewed as a good person and showing concern for others	+	-
6	Displaying trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude as important moral values	+	-
7	Maintaining the social systems from which one benefits	+	-
8	Fulfilling the social obligations implicit in social contracts	+	-
9	Making decisions having in mind the greatest good for the greatest number	+	-

In the light of the textual evidence, there is a dichotomy of attitudes and moral behavior. If we follow Kohlberg's model of moral development, we can realize that Scrooge is 100% amoral whereas Cratchit is 100% moral. These results may be hard to believe in real life, and may be deemed highly improbable and even deceitful, but given the fact that these are fictional characters, we can easily accept that both characters are fully consistent when it comes to moral behavior (even though such behavior is not parallel to their moral thought.)

We can accept that the fictional world in which both characters are immersed is predetermined by a set of rules and conventions that somehow make us understand and accept the "reality" portrayed in the context of the novel. As Searle (1975) explains, "What distinguishes fiction from lies is the existence of a separate set of conventions which enables the author to go through the motions of making statements which he knows to be not true even though he has no intention

to deceive.” Searle goes on explaining each of these conventions that give support to the idea that the behavior of fictional characters is not to be parallel to that of non-fictional people.

Apart from this fact which is merely theoretical, the results obtained are also useful to interpret the function of each of the characters and what they might symbolize beyond the realms of the fictional world. Regarding this respect, we may say that both characters are mere representations of the two faces of society which are ever present counterparts; where there is one, there is the other. Both characters are representations of the historical context in which the novel was written, a post-revolution and industrialized society in which we could basically find two kinds of people: (a) those with power –usually the oppressors– and (b) those who were subordinated –usually the oppressed–, but we could rarely see an in-between.

Even though these dichotomic elements can be found in most societies around the world in any time in history, we can say that those times of change and ‘revolution’ make such extremes more obvious. From a literary perspective, such historical representation also makes *A Christmas Carol* a universal piece of work.

Final Considerations

The strict behavioral code and moral customs in the Victorian society were highly emphasized in different ways. Literature was one of those ways in which the tradition of a moral society was represented and kept through time. Charles Dickens was one of the main representatives regarding the portrayal of moral and amoral behavior, and moral values. This was possible for him by creating situations that were immersed whether in social disputes or fantastic –almost oniric– situations like the one depicted in *A Christmas Carol*. The confrontation between opposite attitudes and behavior was a key element in his works. Taking the archetypical symbol of “Good” and “Evil”, Dickens made sure that there was a clash of morality (moral vs. amoral behavioral patterns).

Moralism in Dickens's works plays an important role because he showed people how to behave (or, at least, how they should do it) by presenting, in some cases, just the opposite of what he sought to achieve (e.g. arrogant, disrespectful or aggressive behavior). This was the case of Ebenezer Scrooge. By means of literature, Dickens insisted on showing what the consequences of amoral behavior were in society. We may state that Dickens was an instrument of society that "manipulates" people's ways of thinking in order to keep a social order. As stated by Krebs and Denton (2005): "All societies attempt to foster morality by manipulating people's beliefs about the benefits of moral lifestyles and the costs of immoral lifestyles." (p. 646).

That is a clear message to the reader who should understand how to behave and how the use of punishment or reward is a basic and automatic reaction of society which bases its judgements and evaluations upon the grounds of how people do things in society. This, taking into consideration that people may use moral judgments as well with immoral purposes. This particular writing style was typical of Dickens and, in *A Christmas Carol*, that is no exception.

One of the most relevant concepts presented in the story, to illustrate morality and values, is that of the family. The concept of the family that suffers the effects of the industrial revolution is very well presented in the novel in opposition to the injustice that arises as a consequence of an excess of power in particular social contexts. The concept of a family whose members stay together and help each other in the hardships of life is also easy to perceive because of the clear contrast that exists between the working class and the upper-class.

After reading the novel, identifying the most representative elements that relate to morality, analyzing such elements, and producing a set of results, we can conclude that the whole content of the novel as a tool to teach and learn about morality may also serve instructional purposes regarding the use of the literary text in an EFL class to teach not only language, but also values and culture. One of the most important implications of this research, beyond the mere analysis of the

representation of moral behavior, is that which is linked to the pedagogical uses of a literary text within the EFL context.

Kohlberg, in his theory of moral development, also states the implications such theory has in the field of education. He argues that moral change can happen by offering people the chance to consider other people's viewpoints in interactive situations, like role-taking activities. Like this, participants can work out their differences regarding a variety of issues in order to develop new conceptions that will help them reach a point of balance to objectively understand what is fair for everyone.

This step towards moral development can be linked with the affective domain skills that we can find in the field of critical thinking, and this of course is of high importance to promote the development of a positive attitude, not only a critical attitude, but also an emotional one within the field of education. We can say that using a moral model to analyze a literary text can help unify different thinking fields in order to create an integral teacher, conscious, and able to face complex situations in the working field, and in life.

In order to accomplish this, the use of the literary text within a foreign (or second) language class is of high importance because of the cultural-catalyst effect it may have regarding the balance that there should be in relation to the conceptions teachers have about the world that surrounds them. The cultural and social content of a literary text in the light of a moral-psychological theory shows that a fictional text can be a potential tool to develop abstract abilities for the subsequent development, not only of the linguistic competence, but also of a socio-moral awareness.

By means of a historical approach to the analysis of the literary text, the teacher of an EFL class may also make use of the text and its social implications to promote not only cultural awareness and values, but also to stimulate the critical thinking of the learners so that particular social conflicts taking place within the context of the story are identified and attempted to be solved.

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