

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

This chapter contains analysis answering the statement of the problems in Chapter I. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first is the analysis of John Dowell as the main character and his relationship with the other characters in the novel. The second is the analysis of John Dowell's self-experience discrepancy phenomenon and the analysis of John Dowell's sense of life as the main character of the novel.

A. John Dowell's Life Companions

Here the writer of the thesis starts analyzing the characters in the novel that have a great influence to the main character, John Dowell. It is important to know how far those persons influence him. As the main character, John Dowell is to be the main object whose various aspects of his life is to be analyzed in this study, including the person surrounding him. There are four persons who greatly influence John Dowell.

The first is Florence, John Dowell's legitimate wife. Florence comes from a well-respected family. However, this respectability seems to be a burden for her. The position offers her nothing. Because she has a heart problem and her family treats her like a "doll", something to be kept and loved. Florence shares great attention on literature and social studies, which later shapes her desire to see the place where all beauty of sciences comes from, Europe.

It is clear that Dowell marries Florence without any particular feeling or love, even after he finds out that Florence marries him just because she wants to set herself free from her family and to give her a chance to go to Europe. Dowell still assures him that he has done a heroic deed by saving the woman's life.

“I don't think that before that day I had ever wanted anything very much except Florence. I have, of course, had appetites, impatiences... Why, sometimes at a table d'hote, when there would be, say, caviare handed round, I have been absolutely full of impatience for fear that when the dish came to me there should not be a satisfying portion left over by the other guests”. (43)

Then the couple leads a life that makes the readers feel confused. Never once in the novel described that Dowell has taken the role as a husband. Florence, reasoning to have a heart problem, asks for separate bedroom. Dowell has never glanced at his wife, and therefore he doesn't know what clothes his wife is wearing at the time.

The second person is Edward Ashburnham, an England Soldier. He is John Dowell's close friend whom he met at a healthy spa Nauheim, England in 1904.

“We had known the Ashburnham for nine seasons of the town of Nauheim with an extreme intimacy – or, rather with an acquaintanceship as loose and easy and yet as close as a good glove's with your hand”. (3)

Edward is described as a man of honor. Despite his character that he can easily fall in love with women— no matter from what class the women belongs to—, in general he is a man of attitude. Someone, as stated by Dowell, that he was just exactly the sort of chap that you could have trusted your wife with. And I trusted mine and it was madness. (11)

The third person influence him greatly is Ashburnham's wife to whom Dowell loves her, Leonora Ashburnham.

“I loved Leonora always and, today, I would very cheerfully lay down my life, what is left of it, in her service. But I am sure I never had the beginnings of a trace of what is called the sex instinct toward her”. (30)

She is shaped by her economic background and her Catholicism. Though she is not on the surface religious, she believes in right and wrong, and in making the best of one's situation. Most of all, she values propriety and she insists that the Ashburnhams maintain the appearance of the perfect couple. Although she loves Edward deeply, especially at the beginning of their marriage, she grows frustrated with his uselessness. Though Leonora tries to keep control over her emotions at all times, she, too is vulnerable to sudden occurrence. When she hits Maisie Maidan (one of women who get affair with Edward Ashburnham), Leonora is really striking. Leonora tries to remain in control so that, unlike Dowell, she may be aware of the world gone wrong around her. Dowell describes Leonora as a perfectly normal woman. Normality here is associated with coldness, boredom, and complete lack of passion. Dowell is jealous of Leonora, but she is the

character who most intrigues him. Leonora, in her utter normality is the sample of the new, powerful woman. She acts to control not only Ashburnham's money, but also his loving affairs as well. Such power and control is utterly threatening to man like Dowell, one who fears and chooses to remain ignorant of all female courage.

The last person also influence Dowell greatly is Nancy Rufford. The young Nancy is such an innocent girl. Being in love with Edward Ashburnham, she can't accept that she has chosen the wrong man. Dowell, whether intentionally or not, learns after the death of Edward and his wife Florence that he can possibly marry the young lady.

Nancy Rufford becomes part of Edward Ashburnham's family, after her mother abandons her and when her father leaves for India. She has been educated in religious and conventional school with a holy man. Nancy remains very naive and inexperienced. She in fear of what she feels to be her heroic uncle (Edward) and his wonderful marriage. She willingly sacrifices herself to save Edward at the end of the story, but ultimately, along with the other passionate people, she is destroyed by madness. Then, John Dowell becomes Nancy's caretaker in Branshaw Manor in England.

The word "shuttlecocks" uttered by Nancy Rufford when she is crazy, is a symbol of the things that have happened and been experienced by some of the characters in the novel.

“And as for Nancy... Well, yesterday at lunch she said suddenly: ‘Shuttlecocks!’ and she repeat the word ‘shuttlecocks’ three times. I know what was passing in her mind, if she can be said to have a mind, for Leonora has told me that, once, the poor girl said she felt like shuttlecock being tossed backwards and forwards between the violent personalities of Edward and his wife Leonora”. (235)

“Shuttlecocks” are symbol for the way each person is flippantly thrown by fate, by society, and by other people. Edward and Florence can be categorized as the people meant by the word “shuttlecocks”. John Dowell himself represents the symbol described by the word itself. This kind of character, especially John Dowell, who is easily anxious, will be then the main topic in this study.

The four characters are to be the most significant people who are close to John Dowell. He is trying to put himself in a position “outside” of the existence of these people and to precept them according to his own point of view which is not based on rational thoughts.

“I know nothing – nothing in the world – of the hearts of men. I only know that I am alone – horribly alone. No hearthstone will ever again witness, for me, friendly intercourse”. (7)

B. John Dowell’s Self-experience Discrepancy Phenomenon

John Dowell, as depicted in the novel, is just a man in the street. He is a kind of man that people will take a glance for a while without any appreciation. Yet, despite this, he is still able to survive among the society. He has a chance to

make up himself to the higher position, or he can go down and later enjoys his life together with the lower classes.

John Dowell makes himself a person who is full of uncertainty in his life. The topic of his talks and his manner are easily changed. Moreover, he often denies the reality he is facing. His perception of the reality he experiences is so different from the reality itself. This kind of denial he does results in the assumption that he is a naive and abnormal. Carl Rogers, one of American humanistic psychologists noted that there is a state in which the individual undergoes an incongruent between the experiences and the self-structure. This condition is known as self-experience discrepancy. The results is a rigid, defensive maintenance of the self against the experiences that threaten the wholeness of the self and frustrate the need for positive self-regard. (Pervin, 1993: 197)

The distinction between appearance and reality is one important themes of the novel. No one in the novel is really like they seem to be, or who Dowell thinks him to be. Edward is not an honest, trustworthy person; Florence is not a shy and faithful wife; Leonora is not an honest, woman lack of passion or emotion. The novel traces Dowell's realization that appearances are not reality, that the four are not really good people.

Dowell's gradual realization, however, is triggered by the fact that the idea of good people seems to lose its definition as the novel progresses. If this well-born and well-mannered English couple is not good, and if his own wife is deceiving him, then he feels he has nothing to believe in. Without appearances,

Dowell is left only with madness, an untrue perception of reality. Reality is only one individual's side of the truth. Dowell's different point of view towards the reality he faces makes him seem to have self-experience discrepancy phenomenon. Dowell himself exploits the different side of him throughout the novel. The analysis then is trying to convey the happening and the fact which describe Dowell's self-experience discrepancy phenomenon.

"This is the saddest story I have ever heard" (3), this is the line written by John Dowell that opens the novel and will be starting point of our discussion. He prefaces his story with his own judgment, saying that the "tale of passion" he promises will also be a tragedy. The word chosen in this quotation is very important. This is the saddest story that Dowell has ever heard. The word "heard" implies that he has not lived the story or experienced the events, but merely "heard" about them. His statement is accurate. Although Dowell was present in many of the scenes he described, his eyes were closed to the reality of what was occurring. He was so blind, ignorant, or naïve, that the significance of the events can only be felt as he writes and reflects upon what has happened.

The title of the novel *The Good Soldier* represents the character Edward Ashburnham. On the other hand, John Dowell hates Ashburnham's attitudes and habits so much, especially about liaison and his uncontrolled passion. But still naively Dowell gives the attribute of good soldier to the character Edward Ashburnham. The first reality which shows Dowell's psychological disorder is that he is not jealous when he sees his wife having an affair with Edward Ashburnham, who is to be his own best friend he respects.

Coming to Philadelphia, Dowell's meeting with Florence later on directs his wild life. The nature of human kind to help one another suddenly arises when he is aware that he can do his best to change the world—in particular her world, regardless whether it means something to him or it just brings nothing. He then marries the woman without having normal personal desire. Dowell's motivation for marries Florence just for sympathetic pity with Florence's heart condition, he cares for woman who are not even aware of his existence. Florence (as well as Edward) pretends to have a heart condition in order to get what her want. Florence uses the excuse to betray her husband and keep him quiet.

Dowell naively is trying to keep loving his wife even though the fact that the woman has at all not respected him—having an affair and being not serious about her marriage. This affair and the other ones Ashburnham does with other women are to be the main issue throughout the novel.

The second thing that indicates Dowell as a person who has a self-experience discrepancy phenomenon can be seen in Part I, section V of the novel:

“I don't think that before that day I had ever wanted anything very much except Florence. I have, of course, had appetites, impatiences. Why, sometimes at the table d'hote, when there would be say, caviar handed round, I have been absolutely full of impatience for fear that when the dish came to me there should not be a satisfying portion left over by the other guests. I have been exceedingly impatient admising trains. The Belgian State Railway has a trick of letting the French trains miss their connections at Brussels” (43).

This quotation above, Dowell tries to describe his own personal mistakes. He admits that he, like Edward has had appetite and impatience. But this passage is ridiculously ironic. Dowell's passions are not like Florence's or Edward's at all. Though his appetites are somewhat sexual, he quickly puts an end to such a misperception. Dowell's appetite is for caviar; his passion is for the Belgian trains to run on time. Though he denies it to himself, Dowell is a passionless and sexless. He is very different from his good friend, the passionate and heroic Captain Ashburnham.

The next happening is Dowell laughs at the cows. Dowell laughs at an act of violence among animals in a strange and disgusting way. He notices the complicated relationship between the cows, but he does not notice the emotional violence among his very intimate group. Reflecting, Dowell compromises that he should have felt pity for the animal that was thrown into the river. But he did not feel pity at all. Likewise, normal people fail to pity Dowell because his situation is abnormal. He is so ignorant and naive that he can inspire only a strange fascination in the outside observer.

“I was so relieved to be off duty, because she couldn't possibly be doing anything to excite herself or set her poor heart a fluttering – that the incident of the cow was a real joy to me. I chuckled over it from time to time for the whole rest of the day. Because it does look very funny, you know, to see a black and white cow land on its back in the middle of a stream. It is so just exactly what one doesn't expect of a cow”. (39)

The writer of the thesis finds in every details of the work how Dowell acknowledges his self-experience discrepancy phenomenon. The way Dowell builds his relationship with every character in the novel obviously lead the readers into the world of mystery. Since the very beginning of the story, the attention have already fallen into questions can we put our trust on him? and how can the others believe on him when he positions himself as an outsider to his own life?

John Dowell naively is trying to show his self-experience discrepancy phenomenon by reversing the meaning of the phrase “extreme intimacy”.

“This is the saddest story I have ever heard. We had known the Ashburnham for nine seasons of the town of Nauheim with extreme intimacy — or, rather with an acquaintanceship as loose and easy and yet as close as a good glove’s with your hand”. (3)

The true meaning of this phrase is the close and comfortable relationship with someone. But here Dowell wants to give a description that his relationship with Ashburnham is a mistake and only a sorrowful part of the story of his life. Thinking about it, then, it becomes clear that Dowell is still unaware, at some primary level, of the story he knows and is about to tell. Unsure of his status, as the means of its transmission, he is clinging to both. Dowell supports by his ignorance the world that belongs to Edward and Leonora Ashburnham, and to his wife, Florence. He allows it to happen. There is a world of upper-class selfishness and sex, and he, the symbol of sexual repression, renders their expression possible. John Dowell is telling about the cruelty of those classes that holiday in

Europe, at spa towns, during the season; the hypocrisy of a society that cannot control itself. To do this he needs Dowell's naive, and his status as an outsider. As knowledge grows, and then becomes nearly complete (no one knows everything), the condition must end. People will be destroyed, especially those who are assumed to be guilty by John Dowell in their society. The people like Edward Ashburnham and Florence, who have done something abnormal by letting their sexual desire uncontrolled, must be sentence to death for what they have done in their lives.

C. John Dowell's Sense of Life

The title of the novel, and the degree of social, sexual, psychological and bodily destruction that occurs, also seems to reflect upon the First World War that raged as it was published: the 4th August is the date in the novel upon which everything hinges. The Dowells and the Ashburnham met sometime in August 1904. Then, the writer will find that August 4th play a significance role in building the shape of the story. It was Florence's birthday; the day she started her journey around the world; the day she lost her virginity, the day she married Dowell, the day she seduced Edward, and unexpectedly it was the day she died. Dowell, on the same day, starts his 'dangerous' story. It is also the date on which Great Britain declared war on Germany. But the tone of comic irony that overlays the tragedy exists because of Ford Madox Ford's privileging of epistemology, and Dowell's struggle with knowledge; when knowledge does come, the sense of

tragedy is supreme. The true genius of this text, then, lies not in the what but in the how of its telling.

The good soldier is obviously aware and sensitive of the danger of language, its influence on its characters and readers, its power to deceive and destroy, its effect on transforming or even constructing realities. Knowledge of this story merely comes from the main character, John Dowell, so that what the reader can know about this story is just his own version of the realities which is vague, unclear and to some extent self contradictory. The reader cannot even be sure whether the story he gives them is what he thinks after all those misfortunes, or what actually occurs to him as the event happens. Before he speaks, there was nothing, afterward, it was the integral fact of his life.

In the story, we are given only how he acts so awkwardly towards of his life. It seems so ridiculous, when most people engrossed with the essence of life that everything happens for a reason, Dowell just sees life with his peeping eyes and, may it is the worst thing, wishes to gain nothing. Although Dowell was present in many of the scenes he described, his eyes were closed to the reality of what was occurring. He was so blind, ignorant, or naïve, that the significance of the events can only be felt as he just tells and reflects upon what has happened.

Dowell says in the text that, "I have, I am aware, told this story in a very rambling way so that it may be difficult for anyone to find their way through what may be a sort of maze" (213). He is not being shy. He has told it as it has appeared

to him a sexually naive, likewise, John Dowell wants anyone not to know where they are.

The phenomena can be caused by the uncertainty inside John Dowell's mind about the moral chaos happening that moment. This true considering that the setting of the novel is Edwardian and Victorian Era (1904-1914). At that time, there was a moral degradation happened to the society in Europe, especially in England (online).

John Dowell compares the life style of English people, which is represented by Edward Ashburnham in the novel, with the life style of American people, which is represented by John Dowell himself in the novel. Dowell reveals his wonder about the life style of English people at that time that they like to have fun, party, and free sex. This is similar to the affairs done by Edward with many women; Maisie Maudslayi, Florence, and Nancy Rufford. Meanwhile, Dowell who comes from America, claims himself that he is a kindly good person and never done an affair and glamour life like what many English people did at the time.

Another thing that causes the uncertainty of John Dowell in going through his life is that his difficulty in enjoying his social relationship and understanding the surrounding community. There are some communities which assume that "the look in the eye" to someone is to be a new conflict to be avoided and required the impossible way out. Dowell assumes that the people surrounding him, especially Edward Ashburnham, Florence, Leonora, and Nancy, abnormal. He can hardly enjoy his relationship with them. He seems to more comfortable of being 'outside'

from the people which he has claimed as the abnormal persons (Barten, 1996: 101).

Jean Paul Satre, a French philosopher, in the relation with the social interaction difficulty, mentions that "Hell is the others" and "My origin of sin is the existence of others" (Barten, 1996: 101). This describes that social interaction, for some people, is to be a great difficulty. This phenomenon happens to John Dowell, who has blamed the others irrationally due to the badness happens to him.

Dowell's inability to understand the events that are about to happen create a good deal of dramatic irony. One significant irony is the inconsistency between Dowell's perception of himself and others perception of him. For example, Dowell considers himself extremely perceptive and insightful. Because he has had nothing to do for nine years, he reasons that he must be a faithful person. His attention, he explains, was entirely focused on the world around him: the decorations in the dining room, the plan of their hotel, the coquettish actions of Florence. But as he relates the story of their day at Nauheim, Dowell is the opposite of insightful. He is so enraptured in seeing things as they appear to be and in trusting good people, that he is incapable of suspecting the beginning of a romance between Florence and Edward. Even when Leonora desperately attempts to point out the truth to him, Dowell does not understand. He happily accepts her excuse that as a Catholic, she is offended. Dowell can only recognize details which have little attitude and no importance. His wife's betrayal and Leonora's disgust remain

utterly invisible to him. That is, what Dowell discovers about the truth is actually based upon the false acceptance of the reality, he may take the false as the reality.

By mirroring moral confusion in this novel, John Dowell's suggests he tells without an ordered mind. By jumping from past to present, Dowell challenges all chronology, mixing stories of past events with his current reflections. These reflections change as Dowell tells and as the story progresses; though he begins by calling his wife "poor Florence" he later corrects himself and changes tone completely, expressing his deep hate for her.

Dowell is an unreliable character. Cheated on and easily deceived for thirteen years of his marriage, Dowell is neither insightful nor perceptive. So destroyed is he over the realization of his "saddest story" that he is utterly unable even to relate emotion. Asked what it feels like to be a deceived husband, he replies that "it just feels nothing at all". We cannot trust his judgments, because it seems clear that he has little basis for them; Dowell has a distorted perspective. For example, he concludes at the end of the novel that he and Edward are "just alike". But such a comparison is ridiculous; Dowell is passive and helpless, while Edward serves as the example for the sexually aggressive and passionate male. Ultimately, *The Good Soldier* is the tale of Dowell's attempt to plan his way through social and moral confusion.

In *The Good Soldier*, Ford is able to suspend his own judgment of the adulteress by inserting the thoughts and feelings of John Dowell. Dowell may dismiss or condemn Florence's actions as he wishes, while Ford remains beyond reproach for his portrayal of marital deception.

In English literature, the adulteress has always held a very unique place. She represents instability, a challenge to the order and morality of society. In Edwardian and Victorian novels, characters who committed such acts were deemed "fallen women", those who suffer or are destroyed for their transgressions. Such punishment serves as a lesson for the reader, that disobeying the sacred rules of marriage has harsh consequences. In Ford's novel, Florence is destroyed not by fate, but by her own hand. *The Good Soldier* signals a new kind of adultery novel, one in which the woman maintains great control over her affairs and her fate.

The novel presents two kinds of adultery: the conservative type practiced by Rodney Bayman and the passionate type led by Edward Ashburnham. Of the two, it is the passionate type that is dangerous, because such an affair leads to impracticality and instability. Edward's "abnormal" attachment to his mistresses, not sex, brings about the collapse of his marriage, and his eventual suicide. *The Good Soldier*, through John Dowell's perspective, constructs adultery as a destabilizing force in society. At its very core, it is a violation of the marriage contract, and the betrayal of a promise. But more deeply, adultery undermines the family structure on which the unity of the country is built. It can be both an act of power and of passion. Edward seeks the arms of another woman in order to escape Leonora's total control. Conversely, Leonora regains power by attempting to control even his adulterous liaisons.

In *The Good Soldier*, Dowell assumes faithfulness in marriage to be a very basic level of human morality. When faithfulness is questioned, all morality

seems threaded. Confused, Dowell wonders about that condition that happen in his society.

"I don't know. And there is nothing to guide us. And if everything is so nebulous about a matter so elementary as the morals of sex, what is there to guide us in the more subtle morality of all other personal contacts, associations, and activities? Or all we meant to act on impulse alone? It is all a darkness". (11)

Besides the expressions of Dowell's uncertainty about the situation of morality in the society, the also tells great attention on the things which are to be the exploration of the different side of him. For example, Dowell shows his impression to gender problem that happen in this novel with said:

"For, though women, as I see them, have little or no feeling of responsibility towards a county or a country or a career—although they may be lacking in any kind of communal solidarity—they have an immense and automatically working instinct that attaches them to the interest of womanhood ". (227)

This quotation is written by Dowell in Part IV, Section V of the novel, as he reflects on the tragic story he has just told. Dowell perceives women to be the radically different other. He assumes that they think and act in a way which is completely foreign to his own. He also considers them to be individualists, more concerned with their own happiness and well being than with their country or with

anything larger than themselves. By blaming womanhood for its irrationality and individualized nature, he allows himself to feel that he is the rational, victimized party. He believes that they act together to do what is best for themselves and their gender. In this way, they help to maintain power over men. By accepting this view of womanhood, Dowell helps himself to give some order and structure to what appears to be an entirely chaotic situation.

In Part IV, Section VI of the novel, Dowell also try to add his intention to gender with said:

“Leonora, as I have said, was the perfectly normal woman. I mean to say that in normal circumstances her desires were those of the woman who is needed by society. She desired children, decorum, an establishment; she desired to avoid waste, she desired to keep up appearances. She was utterly normal even in her utterly undeniable beauty. But I don’t mean to say she acted perfectly abnormal situation. All the world was mad around her and she herself, agonized, took on the complexion of a mad woman; of a woman very wicked; of the villain of the piece. What would you have? Steel is a normal, hard, polished substance. But, if you put it in a hot fire it will become red, soft, and not to be handled. If you put it in a fire still more hot it will drip away. It was like that with Leonora”. (223)

To John Dowell, the normal woman is the traditional woman. She is one only submits to, but desires her role in the old establishment. She does not seek greater freedom or increased power. The normal woman seek to maintain good behavior and to “keep up appearances”, this is why she is needed by society. By desiring both children and an establishment, she not only preserves the social

structure, but continues it by reproducing and teaching these traditional values to a new generation.

If woman disobey her traditional role, then she threatens not only men, but also the very core of society. In *The Good Soldier*, Leonora disobedience gives the climax and tragedy of the novel. The comparison of Leonora, the normal woman, to Dowell's conflation of women with both strength and inhumanity. But the emphasis in this passage is on the common danger of change. As women were important to the family, steel was essential to the economy, and the threat that either may prove unreliable, that they may dissolve in a situation of extreme intensity was a frightening prospect. Leonora, in act did not continue to act normally when faced with a chaotic situation. She became mad, which to John Dowell is associated with being "wicked", and "a villain". By quitting to act normally, and by joining the other characters in her instability, Leonora brings the destruction of the family.

On the other hand, Dowell also get big attention to definition of normality, he try to redefinition again about normality the term, he said that:

"Mind, I am not preaching anything contrary to accepted morality. I am not advocating free love in this or any other case. Society must go on, I suppose, and society can only exist if the normal, if the virtuous, and the slightly deceitful flourish, and if the passionate, the headstrong, and the too truthful are condemned to suicide and madness". (236)

Dowell defines and redefines normality. He uses the term to assign people to categories: normal or abnormal, passionate or restrained, hero or villain. Such a system allows him to restore order to a morally chaotic world. He considers women like Leonora and men like Rodney Bayham to be perfectly normal individuals, content to live according to society's rules. Dowell associates normality with a lack of passion, and he uses the term in an increasingly arrogant manner. But Dowell's use of the term marginalizes passionate, socially threatening people like Edward and Florence. By considering them abnormal and out of the mainstream, he makes them pose less of a threat to a stable order. However Dowell's sympathy lies with the villains, and he is eventually forced to the realization that normality is something which does not exist. He sees that one group is not more right than another but that there is an irreparable pluralism of truths in a world that remains essentially dark. Leonora, the normal woman, has acted in a decidedly abnormal way, losing her pride and nobility and becoming darkly false. Yet Dowell also faces the fact that such uncontrolled passion is a serious threat to society.

Dowell attempts to overlay order onto the tragedy and moral confusion of the story. He believes that society is made for normal people, and that those who attempt to break its rules are destroyed by it. Society is not fit for the passionate or the sentimental. This state of affairs depresses Dowell that he wishes society should not have to go on as it seems to do. Dowell places a higher value on Edward's type of person, who is carried away by passion. Ironically, he is not that type of person at all. Dowell, as much as he can in his chaotic situation, acts a

normal part in a normal life. In the end, he survives madness and death, but he is left with moral confusion.

“Edward was the normal man, but there was too much of the sentimentalist about him; and society does not need too many sentimentalists. Nancy was a splendid creature, but she had about her a touch of madness. Society does not need individuals with touches of madness about them”. (222)

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION