

The Substantial Sides of Purity in Honore de Balzac's Innocence

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the matter of purity in Honore de Balzac's flash fiction entitled *Innocence*. Purity refers to the idea that certain actions or behaviors are considered morally pure or impure based on societal norms and values. *Innocence* is a Honore de Balzac's flash fiction that talks about innocence or a high curiosity spirit possessed by children. Through qualitative method and explorative approach, it is analyzed through this flash fiction that innocence is the main symbol of purity. Little Francis and Margot are two little pure spirits who live. They try new things. They notice a portrait of two figures, which is actually an image of Adam and Eve. However, because the children's minds have not matured enough and they have not been exposed to more knowledge, they do not recognize which one is Adam and which is Eve, because the figure does not wear clothes, therefore Little Francis and Margot are unsure which is Adam and which is Eve. The purity of the children is a direct mirror of innocence, which is the essence of Balzac's flash fiction. Children will only know some things because they are still pure. Purity is a natural aspect that all children have. In conclusion, adult people will laugh at them, but the children are still pure since they reflect their childhood matters.

Keywords: honore de Balzac, innocence, purity

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengupas masalah kemurnian dalam cerita kilat karya *Honore de Balzac* yang berjudul *Innocence*. Kemurnian mengacu pada gagasan bahwa tindakan atau perilaku tertentu dianggap murni atau tidak murni secara moral berdasarkan norma dan nilai-nilai masyarakat. *Innocence* merupakan cerita kilat karya *Honore de Balzac* yang bercerita tentang kepolosan atau jiwa keingintahuan yang tinggi yang dimiliki oleh anak-anak. Melalui metode kualitatif dan pendekatan eksploratif, melalui cerita kilat ini dianalisis bahwa kepolosan merupakan simbol utama kemurnian. *Little Francis* dan *Margot* adalah dua roh kecil yang murni yang hidup. Mereka mencoba hal-hal baru. Mereka memperhatikan potret dua sosok, yang sebenarnya adalah gambaran Adam dan Hawa. Namun, karena pikiran anak-anak belum cukup matang dan mereka belum terpapar lebih banyak pengetahuan, mereka tidak mengenali yang mana Adam dan yang mana Hawa, karena sosok itu tidak mengenakan pakaian, oleh karena itu *Little Francis* dan *Margot* tidak yakin yang mana Adam dan yang mana Hawa. Kemurnian anak-anak merupakan cerminan langsung dari kepolosan, yang merupakan esensi dari cerita kilat *Balzac*. Anak-anak hanya akan mengetahui beberapa hal karena mereka masih murni. Kesucian merupakan aspek alami yang dimiliki semua anak. Singkatnya, orang dewasa akan

menertawakan mereka, tetapi anak-anak tetaplah suci karena mereka mencerminkan hal-hal yang terjadi di masa kecil mereka.

Kata kunci: *honore de Balzac*, kepolosan, kesucian

INTRODUCTION

Pandemic Covid Purity is the state of being physically or morally clean and free from contaminants. It can refer to the absence of impurities in substances like water or chemicals, but also to a moral standard that values honesty, virtue, and righteousness (Haidt, 2001; Putriana, et al. 2024). Purity refers to the state or quality of being pure, uncontaminated, or free from anything that is harmful, impure, or unwanted. It can be used in relation to physical substances like water or food as well as abstract concepts such as emotions and intentions. Simply put, purity is what is contained in something without any interference or even combination from any other thing.

In literature, purity often refers to the innocence or moral goodness of a character. It can also be used to describe the clarity and simplicity of language or writing style. In a psychological sense, the concept of purity points out that the pureness of children's curiosity about things is reasonable. Purity in a child is candid and therefore they are pure. It is different with a grown man. Any grown man could be pure but it is more like being naive, not pure at all (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020). Children do not really know about anything, they are still pure.

Innocence by Honore de Balzac was written in 1840. This flash fiction tells about the curiosity of the two little souls about a picture of a painting that was owned by their grandfather, The King. One day the children of Queen Catherine, Francis and little Margot, want to see the painting (Balzac, 1840; Kant, 2020; Klebl, et al., 2022). They do not know the real meaning behind the picture and why the painting is not wearing clothes. Meanwhile The King and The Queen Catherine just laugh when seeing the innocence of the child (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020).

There was another research done before by a researcher. That research is entitled *The Purity Problem: analyzing American women's literature and sex expression of the nineteenth century* in 2021 by K. R. Thompson (Thompson, 2021). It speaks about purity which has similarity of purity theory with this research. It also shows differences as this research focuses on children while the former research pays more attention to women beings.

METHOD

By using qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. Written through description, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between Honore de Balzac's *Innocence* and Purity point of view by Katherine Mullin alongside literary concepts and psychological ideas. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes obtaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in reference lists. The research data comes from both Honore de Balzac's flash fiction and Katherine Mullin's arguments. Each of them is read then broken down into its every particular element. The discourses of the flash fiction are mainly included to pinpoint significance of purity through the premises and logics used in Katherine Mullin's ideas. The

following analyses then include how the story illustrates the side of purity. Here, Honore de Balzac's flash fiction is the object while Katherine Mullin's idea is a tool to analyze.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

CHILDREN IN THEIR STRAIGHTFORWARD AND SINCERE DEEDS

Regarding the data analysis, there are some findings. The first finding deals with pre-service English teachers' The topic of purity has been a high interest in moral psychology (Gray, et al., 2022; Putriana, et al. 2024). The term has been used to show such examples of what humans have been and should be. It is morally ethical since purity is how people may reflect truth, justice and even freedom. Purity in a moral sense also means as a condition out of any interest interfered. It is what it is (Haidt, 2001; Putriana, et al. 2024). It relies on when people were born in the beginning then continues until they reach wider knowledge in further civilization. Matter of purity is reflected in Balzac's flash fiction. This story underlines the relationship between adult people and children, especially in their different perspectives. It is unique how Balzac pictures the tensional understanding between adolescent people and children. Those are listed below;

"By the double crest of my fowl, and by the rose lining of my sweetheart's slipper! By all the horns of well-beloved cuckolds, and by the virtue of their blessed wives! The finest work of man is neither poetry, nor painted pictures, nor music, nor castles, nor statues, be they carved ever so well, nor rowing, nor sailing galleys, but children."

This quotation is about the work of man that they satisfied is not an art, building, poetry, pictures but children. They are proud to have a children's work of art worthless, but children cannot be compared to anything and whatever the value is (Balzac, 1840; Fitouchi, et al., 2023; Wijaya, et al., 2024). The idea is clear; the children are the most beautiful creatures on earth. They are the ones that flourish from nothingness and come in their main innocence. It is true that children are like plain papers as they are clean from any sin (Balzac, 1840; Kant, 2020; Klebl, et al., 2022). The beauty of theirs is different from adolescents. While adult people are considered good if they know many things, children are good in themselves without any dictation from other values.

"Watch them playing, prettily and innocently, with slippers; above all, cancellated ones, with the household utensils, leaving that which displeases them, crying after that which pleases them, munching the sweets and confectionery in the house, nibbling at the stores, and always laughing as soon as their teeth are cut, and you will agree with me that they are in every way lovable; besides which they are flower and fruit—the fruit of love, the flower of life."

This quotation describes a child as like a flower, a flower representing a beautiful, lovely and precious fruit and a fruit depicted as sweet and lovable. The fruit of love is a symbol that children are a precious love of an innocent soul. The flower of life means the sweet and pure beautiful life of a child (Balzac, 1840; Kant, 2020; Klebl, et al., 2022). Children are the fruit of

love as they are indeed the fruit of the womb. They are not otherness since they are familiarized through the existences of the mothers. Those are mothers who have transformed from women who cultivate the flower of life in their wombs. As women are beautiful, so are the children as their fruit of love.

"...Before their minds have been unsettled by the disturbances of life, there is nothing in this world more blessed or more pleasant than their sayings, which are naïve beyond description. This is as true as the double chewing machine of a cow. Do not expect a man to be innocent after the manner of children, because there is an, I know not what, ingredient of reason in the naivety of a man, while the naivety of children is candid, immaculate, and has all the finesse of the mother, which is plainly proved in this tale."

This quotation is about before the children become a mature, a grown-up man or woman, all the words, statements or questions they ask are purely unintentional. Their great curiosity triggers them to say something that is purely out of curiosity. Their mind is not disturbed by anything and it is just purely thinking (Balzac, 1840; Klebl, et al., 2022; Kupfer, et al., 2020). Their perspectives are naive in the eyes of adult people. However, they are free to do whatever they want. Children are the most transparent reflections of human beings. Indeed, they are differentiated from the opaqueness of the perspectives of adult people (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020).

"Which of the two is Adam?" said Francis, nudging his sister Margot's elbow. "You silly!" replied she, "to know that, they would have to be dressed!" This reply, which delighted the poor king and the mother, was mentioned in a letter written in Florence by Queen Catherine.

This quotation is about Francis the son of Queen Catherine, asking about the picture on the wall of his grandfather's room. He asked it with a big curiosity. People in the portrait do not wear clothes. The children are just a child; they do not know where the two in the portrait are (Balzac, 1840; Klebl, et al., 2022; Kupfer, et al., 2020). It is going to be different when the adult just in one look and they recognize which one is Adam. It is also about Margot, she is the little sister of Francis and also the daughter of Queen Catherine. It turned out that Margot also did not know and replied with a silly answer. Just like her brother who asked innocently, she also answered innocently, like a child at that time (Balzac, 1840; Klebl, et al., 2022; Kupfer, et al., 2020). Margot answered it, they have to be dressed, and so they would know which one is Adam just from what they wear. This quotation is about The King and The Mother of those two pure kids. They hear it understandably because they are still a child. With their pure answer, The Mother and The King understand what they think (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020).

"No writer having brought it to light, it will remain, like a sweet flower, in a corner of these Tales, although it is no way droll, and there is no other moral to be drawn from it except that to hear these pretty speeches of infancy one must beget the children."

This quotation is about that this story does not contain a moral story. It is just describing a purely of the child, the child who looks curious and generous on the portrait of Adam and

Eve. The pretty speeches of the children are just like a sweet flower of the story. The aesthetic of the story is the innocence of the children. That is exactly how the world should be (Balzac, 1840; Klebl, et al., 2022; Kupfer, et al., 2020). Every adolescent person must always reflect on the innocence of the children. It is since they are the origins of this world. They are the future generation in which their purities are always intact alongside the innocence of this cruel world. It is also implying that it is always better to be naive like children many times rather than pretending to know anything in this world. It is also better to have no conflicting ideas and always helps others people in need.

PURITY AND DYADIC MORALITY

It is not an exaggeration to assert that the notion of purity had a transformative impact on the field of moral studies. As individuals presently engage in a brief reflection, they recognize that purity research had three primary effects. Firstly, it instigated a transition from models that championed a singular moral truth, as exemplified by Kohlberg in 1969, to the widespread acceptance of cultural diversity and moral pluralism (Kohlberg, 1969; Pasopati, et al., 2024). By making this declaration, one can appreciate the increased recognition of pluralism in the realm of morality studies. The concept of being deontological gradually shifts due to the origins of purity in relation to the everyday existence of humans.

Secondly, it expedited a shift from rationalist models of moral judgment to the acceptance of intuition, as highlighted by Haidt in 2001, thereby distancing moral psychology further from its foundation in moral philosophy (Haidt, 2001; Suyaji, et al., 2024; Watson, et al., 1988). Intuition, therefore, is comprehended not as something mystical, but rather as closely associated with the realm of the unconscious. In fact, the deontological aspects proposed by Kant are more closely linked to intuition than rational considerations. Individuals are aware of what is good and bad automatically, not because they consciously deliberate on these matters first. It is rather because these values are already deeply ingrained in their unconscious mind (Watson, et al., 1988; Suyaji, et al., 2024).

Purity research, as a third aspect, played a crucial role in elucidating the broader scope of morality that transcends beyond the realm of tangible physical and emotional harm. This expansion of morality engenders a newfound positivism that permeates various facets of human existence (Watson, et al., 1988; Suyaji, et al., 2024). By eclipsing the presence of minimal or negative elements, purity research underscores the significance of embracing the utmost wholesome and constructive aspects of morality, as exemplified by the positive issues that emerge. Consequently, by centering their focus on the affirmative dimensions of morality, individuals are able to delve deeper into the very essence of life itself, thereby diverting their attention away from mundane practical matters that might otherwise consume their thoughts and actions (Watson, et al., 1988; Suyaji, et al., 2024). In this manner, purity research serves as a catalyst for a heightened understanding and appreciation of the fundamental principles that underpin human existence.

Through extensive research on purity, the field of moral psychology has widely acknowledged the existence and significance of moral diversity, as well as the authenticity of non-Western moral concerns (Schein & Gray, 2018; Van Kleef, et al., 2011). Purity has been one of the moral concepts that were discussed to capture the moral differences among politics; it is to show the development of morality from its roots. However, the underlying causes of these cultural variations in morality and whether they necessitate differences in psychological

mechanisms remain open questions that demand further exploration (Fahnani, et al., 2023; Pasopati, et al., 2024).

Most psychological are defined “positively” it suggested that purity is defined “negatively”. This negative definition does not mean interpersonal harm. It allows for a very heterogeneous set of acts, qualities, and characteristics to count as purity (Gray, et al., 2022; Putriana, et al. 2024). Due to its lack of coherence as a construct, purity cannot be considered as a distinct foundation for moral judgment, nor can it be exclusively linked to disgust. Instead, it is more accurately conceptualized as a loose collection of themes within moral rhetoric, which are based on cultural understandings of harm, particularly within the framework of the Theory of Dyadic Morality.

The Theory of Dyadic Morality (TDM) posits that acts are condemned in proportion to three key elements: norm violations, negative affect, and perceived harm. This harm is dyadic in nature, as it involves intentional infliction of damage upon another individual, thereby disrupting their purity (Schein & Gray, 2018; Van Kleef, et al., 2011). Consequently, it can be argued that the existence of harm itself represents immorality in this sense, as it compromises the purity of an individual. In simple terms, harm serves to undermine the moral norms that purity is derived from, thereby undermining its very foundation.

The most fundamental prediction of dyadic morality lies in the causal links between harm and immorality, suggesting that the extent of harm involved (or implied) fundamentally determines the immorality of an act (Fahnani, et al., 2023; Pasopati, et al., 2024; Schein & Gray, 2018). Furthermore, TDM redefines the significance of harm in moral judgment by positing that it is not a calculated decision, but rather an intuitive perception that varies across cultures, much like morality itself (Fahnani, et al., 2023; Pasopati, et al., 2024; Schein & Gray, 2018). It is through this concept that purity is not something derived or acquired, but rather an inherent norm within human beings.

Furthermore, the purity domain contains at slightest two partitioned sets of norms for behavior, or likely more. One set of norms rooted from biological objectives, basically the behavioral immune system, but conceivably others. The other set of norms, for non-health purity violations; it could be rooted to a great extent from ideology, often religious or political beliefs. (Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022; Kollareth, et al., 2023). Any harm inflicted upon this morality serves as a complete negation of purity, as its essence lies in the preservation of goodness and the prevention of its pollution on Earth as a whole.

PURITY AND ITS CONTINUATION IN CHILDREN’S INNOCENCE

Innocence by Honore de Balzac is a flash fiction that actually does not have a hard meaning, just like in the end of the sentence in this flash fiction. This flash fiction seems like a glimpse of speeches that do not have moral values (Balzac, 1840; Klebl, et al., 2022; Kupfer, et al., 2020). However, that is the interesting part of this story. It tells the audience to think about children’s innocence. Children see the world differently as they are covered in purity as the original form of human beings. They may be naive, but it is not because of their ignorance, it is because they are stated as so due to their sincere heart as the fruit of the womb of mothers.

This story is describing two little children of Queen Catherine, Francis and Margot. These two little children are curious about a thing they see in their grandfather’s room, The King. The portrait is Adam and Eve, but because they are just a little kid, they do not know the gender of the portrait. It is because the portrait is just of two humans living without clothes (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022). So, they were confused about which one

was Adam. This flash fiction also showed that the older, like Queen Catherine and Their grandfather, The King just responded with a laugh. It is shown that they laugh about the purity of the child. The children do not know anything about the portrait, but that is their trueness in real form.

As a child, purity comes naturally within them, since they were born with a sincere and genuine heart, what Francis and little Margot asked was out of their curiosity and their answer also show how pure children are. It would be a different case when the adult saw the picture, they would immediately recognize which one was Adam and which one was Eve (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022). But for these two, their genuine thought was it would be hard to know which one was men and women if they were not wearing clothes, since the two only acknowledged that men and women specifically wear different clothes at that time. The situation will also change once they grow up and having more knowledge to learn, as an adolescent and adults, their purity is very different than a child. As an adult, the more exposed someone is to the outside world; he or she will get more knowledge and awareness of his or her surroundings (Schein & Gray, 2018; Van Kleef, et al., 2011). It is easier to be contaminated from the outside world since naivety of adulthood is no longer like children. It is not as pure as it designed to be. As an adult, being knowledgeable is good and better than being naïve, because it would come off as an ignorance and even callousness (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020). Adults can be said to be moral through their rational and logical considerations. People usually would be aware of what things are good, bad, positive, and negative because of the value and beliefs that they have. It is believed to be one of the norms of purity domain which is the set of norms for non-health purity violations (Schein & Gray, 2018; Van Kleef, et al., 2011). It related to people's ideology, religious and political beliefs. The other set of norms is from biological objectives such as immune system, it is believed not only the term disgust that are used to describe unhealthy things but also for strong negative emotional reactions, grossed out works the same. It refers to genuine reaction of someone to unhealthy things. These two convinced the determination that people react almost the same reaction to a moral violation. (Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022; Kollareth, et al., 2023).

Purity itself is one of the concepts whenever morality is being discussed, it is not something that people can achieved, it comes from within as a human being. Purity is not well defined or characterized; it could be interpreted as the lack of coherence. The roots of purity are from ancient concept. The authentic significance of purity concerns is broader on the off chance if people consider the significance of taboos over. Taboos are by and large thought of as socially disallowed acts and hones related to sacredness, cleanliness, and virtue. (Gray, et al., 2022).

Adults who is impure might also be seen as immoral, they have wronged they three key elements that are condemned in TDM; norm violations, negative affect, and perceived harm. However, these again could be different because of the difference cultural diversities and the moral pluralism (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022). These connections seem to be connected across the domains of morality. Furthermore, it is also depend on how it can cause effect whether negative of positive and how it could be harmful. It could affect the punishment and the response for the moral violation, but those are not applied to children. However, from the flash fiction, later on it shows that the reactions from the mother and the grandfather are just laughing. That shows how pure and innocence Francis and Margot demeanor as a child. It comes naturally, therefore there will not be any negative affect from it or it does not count as norm violations (Hester, et al., 2017; Turiel, et al., 1987). Both Francis and Margot indicate such purity in which they try to learn more. People may laugh at them

through two senses; these children as still innocent and their innocence really amaze these people.

The purity portrayed by Francis and Margot is because they eventually experience such lack of life experience. They are not exposed to complexities of the world. They are even not in position to be challenged by challenging problems of the earth. They are out of any negative influence. They are so new and fresh to their own world (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022). They are also quite unmarked, unaffected, and even uninfluenced. They are not even the masters of their own since they are not even ready to define themselves. They are the one that contains such *tabula rasa* regarding their own presuppositions of everything else. Their innocence is also clear reflection of their own genuine emotion. They are the ones that display such transparency in both of their hearts and minds. They are such direct indications of being sincere and open. They are ready to study more and those are shaped from their genuineness. They are honest, absolute, and even natural in their own sayings (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022). Their uninhibited, unfiltered expressions of joy, curiosity and innocence make them as totally pure. By stating so, it is also clear that there is also less possibility for them to feel sadness in life's problems. If they want to speak, they will speak. They will always speak either as their ways to define anything as matter of studying the world outside. They are direct reflection of any spontaneity since they have no intention to hide or even pretend their feelings (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020).

Their pure emotions are also indication of their natural curiosity. They always have desire to reveal anything. Their main intention is only to discover anything. That is done by practicing language told to them both directly and indirectly. They always know this as new for them. Their passionate exploration and interest in the simplest of things can yet be seen as a reflection of their innocent nature. The passion is how third innocence symbolizes purity. To know is to get more knowledge for them. They have no other intention than gaining knowledge (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020; Gray, et al., 2022). They are not adult people who seek things for such tangible and intangible things. They are who they really are.

Their condition is also matter of lack of judgment. Children never have prejudices unless being taught by their surroundings. Therefore, development with age and experience are not their characteristics. They will be happier opening up with other people without knowing the dangers of getting to know new people. By having no judgment, the children are also indications of absence of any bias (Hester, et al., 2017; Turiel, et al., 1987). They never value others so fiercely. They will accept everything since their purity shapes their exact conditions. By doing so, children's deeds are the ones out of any discrimination. They never care of any differentiation since their purity always pushes them to accept more, not to deny more. Their exact points are about enthusiasm of learning without having any idea to be selfish or even mean.

They are also such space of good soil to plant trust. They may be vulnerable, but they always open to any understanding, including putting trust to other people (Hester, et al., 2017; Turiel, et al., 1987). They are the ones that have goodness in sincere aspects. They believe that goodness is the way to prolong wellness of being either. They even only find joy if interactions with new people who they think look good. It is true that their innocence works like an instinct to find comfortable space for them to grow. Their vulnerability and openness can be seen as a sign of their innocence alongside with any purity intact.

The purity of children, including Francis and Margot, is quite fresh. They do not yet develop more about any cognitive moral understanding. Their idea is simple and exact. They are not to be influenced by any complex moral considerations (Balzac, 1840; Frankena, 2020;

Gray, et al., 2022). They are not in the living dilemmas of this world. They are not ambiguous as they are who they really are. They are harmless and trust people within their true innocence. They are even also sinless since they only know good things.

CONCLUSION

Concept of the sides or purity is a social psychology and refers to the idea that certain actions or behaviors are considered morally pure or impure based on societal norms. It can cause norm violations, negative affect and perceived harm. This flash fiction of *Innocence* shows the purity of children. Little Francis and Margot are two little pure souls living. They experience new things. They see a portrait of two figures, which is actually a portrait of Adam and Eve. However, because the mind of the children has not grown up enough, they have not exposed to more knowledge, they do not recognize which one is Adam and which one is Eve, because the figure does not wear clothes, so Little Francis and Margot do not know which is Adam and which is Eve. The purity of those children is the direct reflection of the innocence as the essence of this flash fiction by Balzac.

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