
Hegel, Stoker and the Conflict of Worldviews: A Study of Dialectic Triad in Dracula

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Abstract

Bram Stoker's Dracula has long been regarded as a foundational work of Gothic horror, but its philosophical and cultural significance remains largely unexplored. This study contends that Stoker's novel transcends its reputation as a simple horror story, presenting a multifaceted and thoughtful analysis of human experience. A notable aspect of this analysis is the novel's engagement with the Hegelian dialectic triad (thesis, antithesis & synthesis), which yields valuable insights into human condition. It is this uncharted territory that the present study explores, delving deep into the intricate web exploring profound implications of Hegelian dialectics for understanding reality, morality, and human existence. Through a critical analysis of the novel's characters, themes, and narrative structure, this research reveals how Stoker employs the dialectical process to illuminate the tensions between good and evil, reason and passion and civilization and savagery. By examining the novel's use of the dialectic triad, this study demonstrates how Dracula reflects and comments on the societal tensions of the late Victorian era, including the anxieties of imperialism, the rise of scientific rationalism, and the decline of religious faith. This research offers a fresh and subtle perspective on a literary classic, unveiling the dialectical depths that have captivated readers for generations and solidifying Dracula's place as a work of profound philosophical and cultural significance. This research on the Hegelian dialectical triad in Bram Stoker's Dracula will benefit scholars and researchers in literature, philosophy, and cultural studies, providing new insights into the novel's philosophical and cultural significance. It will also enrich our understanding of the human condition, literature, and culture, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersections between philosophy, literature, and cultural contexts.

Key Words: Dialectical triad, Hegel, Dracula, gothic literature, human existence.

Introduction

Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, published in 1897, has long been regarded as a foundational work of Gothic horror, captivating readers with its chilling tale of the vampire Count Dracula and his preying upon the living. However, beyond its surface-level horror elements, the novel conceals a profound philosophical engagement with the dialectical tensions of its time. As the Victorian era wrestled with the contradictions of modernity, Stoker's work probed the darker aspects of human nature, revealing the struggles between reason and passion, civilization and savagery, and light and darkness (Hollingsworth, 2019; Kern, 2020).

The late Victorian era was a time of significant social, cultural, and economic changes. The Industrial Revolution had transformed the urban landscape, while the rise of scientific discovery

and technological innovation challenged traditional religious and philosophical beliefs (Mukerjee, 2013). The British Empire was at its zenith, yet concerns about imperialism, colonialism, and racial superiority simmered beneath the surface. Amidst this backdrop, Stoker's *Dracula* emerged as a work of fiction that not only reflected the anxieties of its time but also engaged with the fundamental questions of human existence (UKEssays, 2018).

Hegel's dialectical philosophy, which posits that historical and philosophical development arises from the conflict of opposing forces, offers a compelling framework for understanding the complexities of *Dracula*. Through the lens of Hegelian dialectics, this study will examine how Stoker's work embodies the dialectical process, revealing the tensions between opposing worldviews and motifs. By exploring how the novel negotiates the contradictions between thesis and antithesis, we will uncover the synthesis that emerges from this dialectical struggle.

In *Dracula*, the dialectical process manifests in various guises. The struggle between good and evil, embodied in the characters of Van Helsing and Count Dracula, represents a clear thesis and antithesis. However, as the novel progresses, the boundaries between these opposing forces blur, revealing a more complex synthesis. Similarly, the tension between science and superstition, personified in the characters of Dr. Seward and Professor Van Helsing, reflects the dialectical struggle between reason and passion. The novel's exploration of civilization and savagery, as embodied in the characters of the refined Lord Byron and the primitive Quincey Morris, further highlights the dialectical process at work.

Through a close reading of the text, this study will unravel the dialectical threads that weave together the complex tapestry of *Dracula*. By examining the novel through the lens of Hegelian dialectics, we will uncover how Stoker's work reflects and comments on the fundamental questions of human existence, illuminating the enduring relevance of this Gothic horror classic in the modern era. As we delve into the heart of *Dracula*, we will discover how the novel's engagement with dialectical philosophy continues to haunt us, offering insights into the human condition that remain as pertinent today as they were in the late Victorian era.

Statement of the problem

While Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is widely recognized as a classic of Gothic horror, its engagement with fundamental philosophical debates and cultural tensions remains understudied. Despite the novel's exploration of themes such as good vs. evil, science vs. superstition, and civilization vs. savagery, the ways in which these contradictions reflect and comment on the societal tensions of the late Victorian era remain unclear. Furthermore, the novel's use of the Hegelian dialectic triad to structure its narrative and thematic concerns has yet to be fully examined. As a result, the depth and complexity of *Dracula*'s engagement with philosophical and cultural issues remains underappreciated, and its continued relevance to contemporary debates about reality, morality, and human existence is yet to be explored.

Research Questions

1. How do the characters of *Dracula* embody the Hegelian dialectic triad (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) in their struggles against each other?
2. How does the novel's use of dialectic triad to reveal the tensions between opposing worldviews?

3. How does the novel's exploration of the dialectic triad relate to broader philosophical debates about the nature of reality, morality, and human existence?

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the characters of Dracula as embodiments of the Hegelian dialectic triad, identifying how their struggles against each other represent the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.
2. To examine how the novel uses the dialectic triad to reveal tensions between opposing worldviews and motifs such as, good vs. evil, light vs. darkness and civilization vs. savagery.
3. Examine how the novel's exploration of the dialectic triad sheds light on fundamental questions about reality, morality, and human existence.

Significance of the Study

This research aims to examine how Bram Stoker's *Dracula* employs the Hegelian dialectic triad to reveal tensions between opposing worldviews and motifs, including modernity vs. tradition, science vs. superstition, good vs. evil, life vs. death, reason vs. passion, and civilization vs. savagery. By analyzing how the novel uses the dialectic triad to explore these contradictions, this study seeks to uncover the ways in which Stoker's work reflects and comments on the societal tensions and contradictions of his time. Through this analysis, this research will demonstrate how the novel's use of the dialectic triad illuminates the complex struggles between opposing forces that defined the late Victorian era, and how these struggles continue to resonate in contemporary debates about the nature of reality, morality, and human existence.

Literature Review

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) has been a subject of scholarly interest for over a century, with various interpretations and analyses emerging over the years. This literature review aims to provide an overview of the existing research on *Dracula*, focusing on the themes of dialectical struggle, good vs. evil, light vs. darkness, and the Hegelian dialectic triad. Early criticisms of *Dracula* viewed it as a simple horror story, but later scholars like Senf (1982) and Auerbach (1995) recognized its philosophical and cultural significance. Senf argued that *Dracula* represents the fears and anxieties of the Victorian era, while Auerbach saw it as a reflection of the cultural and political tensions of the time.

Gelder (1994) explored the theme of good vs. evil in *Dracula*, highlighting the binary opposition between Count Dracula and Professor Van Helsing. Gelder argued that this opposition represents the struggle between darkness and light, with Van Helsing embodying the values of Christianity and Dracula representing the forces of evil. Also the novel's vampire, Count Dracula, has been interpreted as a symbol of the capitalist class, preying on the blood of the working class to sustain his own power and wealth (Moretti, 1988). The bourgeoisie, represented by characters like Jonathan Harker and Arthur Holmwood, are similarly critiqued for their complicity in perpetuating social and economic injustices (Craft, 1984).

The novel has also been interpreted as a feminist critique of Victorian culture, exploring female sexuality and symbolism. The female characters, Mina and Lucy, embody traditional Victorian gender roles, with Mina representing purity and Lucy representing promiscuity. Soyokaze's

analysis (2005) suggests that Stoker's portrayal of Lucy's sexual liberation after becoming a vampire serves as a warning against the dangers of female sexuality.

The thriller elements of *Dracula* serve as a vehicle for exploring these deeper socio-economic themes. The novel's use of suspense and horror allows Stoker to critique the social and economic structures of his time, including the rise of capitalism and the exploitation of the working class (Botting, 1991). The vampire's ability to transcend borders and manipulate the capitalist system highlights the instability and vulnerability of the social and economic order (Klinger, 1993). Recent scholarship has continued to explore the philosophical and cultural depths of *Dracula*. Scholars like Spencer (2017) and Jones (2020) have examined the novel's engagement with themes like modernity, imperialism, and gender roles. Spencer argued that *Dracula* reflects the anxieties of modernity, while Jones saw the novel as a critique of patriarchal society.

In conclusion, the literature on *Dracula* reveals a rich and complex exploration of philosophical and cultural themes. The novel's engagement with dialectical struggle, good vs. evil, light vs. darkness, and the Hegelian dialectic has been a recurring focus of scholarly attention. As research continues to uncover the depths of *Dracula*, it is clear that Stoker's work remains a significant cultural and philosophical touchstone.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the dialectical struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, and the Hegelian dialectic triad in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. A thorough and systematic textual analysis is conducted to uncover the dialectical themes and motifs, considering the novel's language, imagery, and symbolism. The study also contextualizes the novel within its historical and cultural context, acknowledging the social, political, and philosophical currents of the late Victorian era that influenced its writing. A hermeneutic approach is employed to interpret the text, recognizing that meaning is constructed through the interaction between the reader and the text. The study applies Hegelian dialectical theory to examine the contradictions and tensions within the novel, revealing the synthesis that emerges from the dialectical struggle. Through a close reading of the text, the study identifies and analyzes the themes of light and darkness, good and evil, and the Hegelian dialectic, and their interrelationships within the novel. The characters of Count Dracula and Professor Van Helsing are examined as embodiments of the dialectical struggle, highlighting their contradictions and tensions. By employing this qualitative research approach, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the dialectical struggle in *Dracula*, illuminating the novel's engagement with philosophical and cultural themes that continue to resonate today.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of Hegelian dialectics, which posits that historical and philosophical development arises from the conflict of opposing forces. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectical philosophy as presented in his *Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* (1991) is applied to examine the contradictions and tensions within Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, revealing the synthesis that emerges from the dialectical struggle. The Hegelian dialectic is comprised of three stages: the thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The thesis represents the initial idea or state, the antithesis is the opposing force that challenges the thesis,

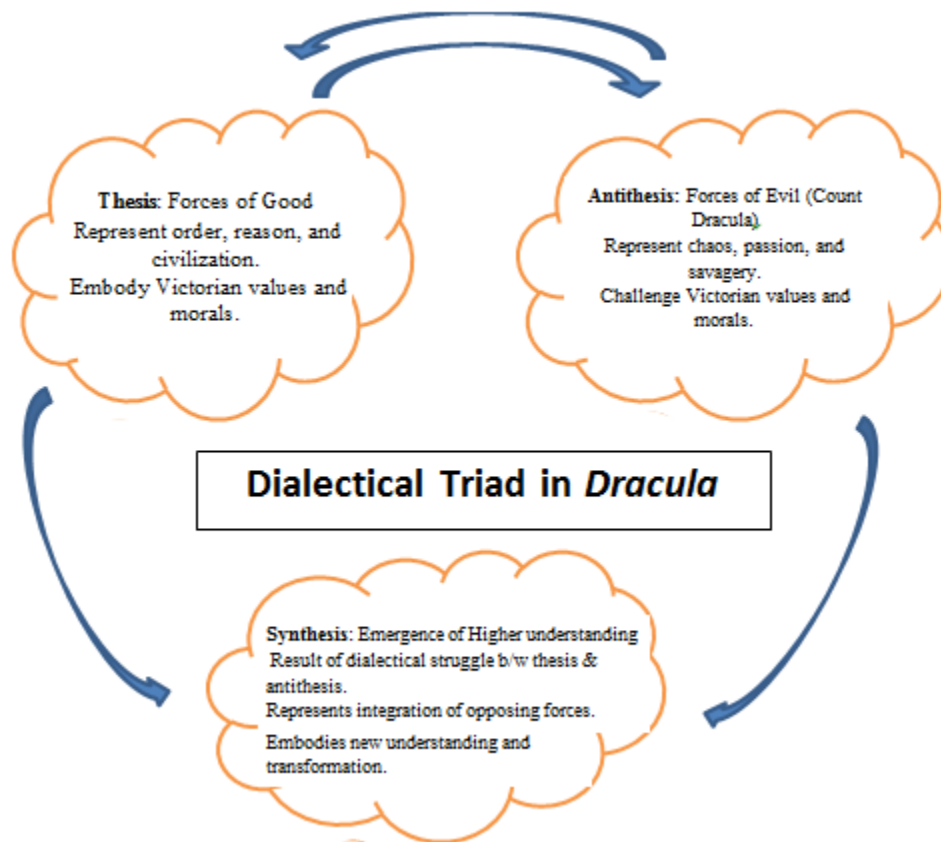
and the synthesis is the higher level of understanding that emerges from the conflict between the two.

In *Dracula*, the thesis is represented by the forces of good, embodied in Professor Van Helsing and his companions. The antithesis is embodied in Count Dracula, representing the forces of evil. The dialectical struggle between these opposing forces gives rise to the synthesis, which is the higher level of understanding that emerges from their conflict.

By applying the theoretical framework of Hegelian dialectics this study aims to provide a complex understanding of the dialectical struggle in *Dracula*, illuminating the novel's engagement with philosophical and cultural themes that continue to resonate today.

Theoretical Model:

Based on the theoretical framework, the following model is proposed to illustrate the dialectical struggle in *Dracula*:



Analysis and Discussion

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a masterpiece of Gothic horror that has captivated readers for over a century. The novel's enduring appeal lies in its exploration of fundamental human concerns: good and evil, life and death, and the human condition. Allan Johnson in his essay *Modernity and Anxiety in Bram Stoker's Dracula* (2009) comments:

Dracula continues to be studied as a central work of British Literary history and routinely subjected to intense literary criticism that seeks to examine the novel's treatment of mass culture, mental health, Freudian/Jungian sub-sexuality, female sexuality, reverse colonization and modernity. This is *Dracula* (like Count himself) possesses deeper secrets and hidden complexities that challenge readers to enter into the dark and profoundly sinister world of the novel prepared for the unexpected. (Johnson, 2009, p.1)

Beginning the Dialectical Process

Through the lens of the theoretical model, this analysis will delve into the dialectical struggle between good and evil and the transformation of the characters, revealing the deeper meanings of the novel. The dialectical struggle between good and evil is a pervasive theme in *Dracula*, reflecting the contradictions and tensions of the late Victorian era. The thesis, represented by Professor Van Helsing, embodies the forces of good, order, and reason. Van Helsing's pursuit of knowledge and his determination to defeat *Dracula* exemplify the Victorian values of individualism and heroism.

Van Helsing represents the thesis, embodying the initial stage of the dialectical process. Despite lacking economic resources, he possesses knowledge and expertise that serve as the foundation for the struggle against *Dracula*. His understanding of the supernatural and multiple disciplines constitutes the initial position, the thesis, which sets the stage for the dialectical struggle.

Through his leadership and strategic thinking, he drives the action forward, configuring the plans to track down *Dracula* and uncover the mysteries of the vampire's powers. His knowledge and expertise serve as the starting point, the thesis, which will eventually be challenged and sublated by the antithesis, leading to the ultimate synthesis. Moretti complements Dr. Van Helsing referring to him as *Dracula*'s chief nemesis,

The German man of science is particularly poor, and indulges, like a German in a weak sentiment...isolated scenes and touches are probably quite uncanny enough to please those for whom they are designed. (1983, p. 7)

Lord Godalming and Dr. Seward represent the thesis, embodying the initial position of good men of enlightenment, bearing titles of learning and aiming to be helpful in any way they can for the collective purpose of the personnel. Jonathan Harker also exemplifies the thesis, with purposely impersonal motives, going to Castle *Dracula* for a purpose, not personal choice, and resolving to free society from the threat of *Dracula*. The following lines from the novel portray the collective resolve and determination of the three characters, Lord Godalming, Dr. Seward, and Jonathan Harker, to work together to defeat the evil of *Dracula*, embodying the thesis of good men of enlightenment and action:

'We are men of action, and we will not rest until the evil is vanquished,' said Lord Godalming, his voice firm and resolute. 'We will work together, using our collective knowledge and skills to hunt down and destroy the monster that has brought terror to our doors,' added Dr. Seward, his eyes shining with determination. 'And I will be the one to strike the final blow,' said Jonathan Harker, his jaw set in a fierce resolve. 'For I have seen the horror that *Dracula* is, and I will not rest until he is defeated.' (Stoker, 1897)

Hence, the characters' initial positions and motivations represent the thesis, which will eventually be challenged and sublated by the antithesis, leading to the synthesis. The thesis represents the starting point of the dialectical journey, where the characters' beliefs, values, and actions are initially defined.

Emergence of Opposing Forces

In contrast, the antithesis, represented by Count Dracula, embodies the forces of evil, chaos, and passion. Dracula's supernatural powers and his ability to manipulate others exemplify the repressed aspects of human nature. The dialectical struggle between Van Helsing and Dracula drives the plot of the novel, as they engage in a battle of wits and strength. As the antithesis to the forces of good, embodied by Mina, Harker, and Van Helsing, Dracula's cunning and deceitful nature drives him to attempt to destroy the evidence and clues that threaten to expose his evil existence, thereby heightening the dialectical struggle between light and darkness, good and evil. Van Helsing approves his crafty nature later in the novel, as:

He is cunning, as I know from Mr. Jonathan and from the way that all along he have fooled us when he played with us for Miss Lucy's life, and we lost..... His hunting ground is more full of game than the churchyard where the UnDead woman sleeps, and the one old man watches. (Stoker, 1897, p.364)

Like the power elite, Dracula's self-esteem and sense of sublimity are challenged by the antithetical force of Harker and Van Helsing, who dare to confront him and threaten his dominance. This encounter triggers a dialectical struggle, as Dracula's thesis of superiority is met with the antithesis of resistance, fueling his anger and humiliation. In a desperate attempt to reassert his dominance and preserve his ego, he seeks revenge by sullyng Mina's blood, thereby perpetuating the cycle of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. His pride and arrogance oozes out from the words in which he mocks at Mina for interfering in his affairs:

You know now....what it is to cross my path. They should have kept their energies for use closer to home. Whilst they played wits against me, against me who commanded nations..... And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, kin of my kin, my bountiful wine-press for a while, and shall be later on my companion and my helper. (Stoker, p. 521)

Synthesis Unfolded Transformation

Mina Harker's character represents the synthesis, embodying the transformation that emerges from the dialectical struggle between thesis and antithesis. Mina is a passive and naive character, but as the novel progresses, she becomes more assertive and independent. Initially, she personifies the thesis, a passive and naive individual, but as the novel unfolds, she encounters the antithesis, Dracula, and undergoes a transformative journey turning into a vampire thus, symbolizing the integration of the opposing forces, as she embodies both good and evil. Her subsequent transformation into a vampire symbolizes the synthesis, as she integrates the opposing forces of good and evil, embodying both the light and darkness. Stoker comments on her as

She was a creature of the night, a creature of the shadows, a being of the darkness and the cold, a thing of evil and of horror... and yet, she was also a woman, a

woman with a heart and a soul, a being of warmth and of light, a thing of beauty and of love. (1897).

This quote is a great example of the synthesis of opposites in Mina's character. The phrase "creature of the night, creature of the shadows" evokes the imagery of darkness, evil, and the supernatural, which are typical associations with vampires. However, the addition of "and yet, she was also a woman, a woman with a heart and a soul" synthesizes these opposing forces by combining the monstrous with the human, the dark with the light, and the evil with the good. This synthesis blurs the boundaries between binary oppositions, creating a more complex and nuanced character that defies simple categorization. Mina is neither purely good nor purely evil, but a being that embodies both aspects, creating a richer and more compelling character. In Hegelian terms, this synthesis represents the *Aufhebung* (sublation) of the thesis (creature of the night) and antithesis (woman with a heart and soul), resulting in a higher level of understanding and being that reconciles and preserves the contradictions.

Through this transformation, Mina transcends her initial limitations, becoming a more assertive and independent individual, reconciling the contradictions and embodying the higher level of understanding that characterizes the synthesis. Her encounter with Dracula and her subsequent transformation into a vampire symbolize the integration of the opposing forces, as she embodies both good and evil.

The transformation of the characters is a significant aspect of the novel, as they grapple with the dialectical struggle between good and evil. Van Helsing's determination to defeat Dracula leads him to confront his own mortality and the limits of his knowledge. Mina's transformation into a vampire forces her to confront her own desires and fears, leading to a deeper understanding of herself and her place in the world.

In short, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a masterpiece of Gothic horror that explores fundamental human concerns through the dialectical struggle between good and evil. The novel's embodiment of transformation of the characters reveals the deeper meanings of the novel. Through its exploration of the human condition, *Dracula* continues to captivate readers, offering a timeless and universal message that transcends the boundaries of time and culture.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated how the characters in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* embody the Hegelian dialectic triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in their struggles against each other. The novel's use of the dialectic triad reveals the tensions between opposing worldviews, highlighting the contradictions and limitations of each perspective. Through this dialectical process, the novel explores broader philosophical debates about the nature of reality, morality, and human existence, offering insights into the complexities and intricacies of human experience. Specifically, the research has shown how:

1. The character of Van Helsing and the crew of light (Lord Godalming, Dr. Seward, and Jonathan Harker) represent the thesis, embodying the forces of good, order, and reason.
2. The character of Dracula represents the antithesis, embodying the forces of evil, chaos, and passion.
3. The character of Mina represents the synthesis, embodying the transformation that results from the dialectical struggle between good and evil.

The novel's use of the dialectic triad reveals the tensions between opposing worldviews, highlighting the contradictions and limitations of each perspective. Overall, this research has demonstrated the value of applying philosophical theory to literary analysis, offering new insights into the meaning and significance of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The findings of this research have implications for our understanding of the novel and its themes, as well as for our understanding of the philosophical debates that underlie human existence.

Recommendations

Further research can be carried out exploring the dialectical process in other literary works and philosophical theories. Such analysis can be invested to investigate dialectic triad influences in their themes and characters, uncovering new insights and meanings. The research can also be conducted to examine how different literary genres and styles utilize the dialectic triad. Research can also be oriented to explore how the dialectical process in *Dracula* relates to other disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, and history, analyzing how the novel's use of the dialectic triad influences our understanding of human behavior, social structures, and historical events.

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