

**MISTAKEN NOTIONS: PROFESSIONALISM AND DIGNITY IN  
THE REMAINS OF THE DAY BY KAZUO ISHIGURO**

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**Merve ELİKOĞLU**

**Supervisor  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şeyda SİVRİOĞLU**

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Signature:

Name, Last Name: Merve ELİKOĞLU

To Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who once said “Women are the pillars of the society and wellspring of the nation. They must bring up, and educate strong new generations.”

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**ABSTRACT****MISTAKEN NOTIONS: PROFESSIONALISM AND DIGNITY IN THE  
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*The Remains of The Day* as a postmodern novel tells the sorrowful story of Mr. Stevens who tragically spent his life following his misguided idealism with making several compromises which he deeply regrets. The present study is concerned with the argument about why ethics should be postmodern through the analysis of the protagonist's experiences in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* in which ethics are represented through the mistaken notions of professionalism and dignity. It is argued that the perception of ethics and moral values should be postmodern rather than traditional since they are not in accordance with contemporary age and contemporary individual, and they remain incapable compared to people's incurably ambivalent lives. Therefore, morality is unfeasible to be universalized. The postmodern solution to this issue is globalization of moral values rather than universalizing them under the command of authorities. Postmodern ethics suggest the rational idea of regulation of dogmatic moral values to be impulsive and self-regulated. Furthermore, even though such values intend to avail, being adhered to them unconditionally causes self-suppression of human nature and thus self-deprivation which is the problematic case of the protagonist in *The Remains of The Day*. In conclusion, based on the references, this study gathers theoretical and generic information and discussions about Ishiguro's novel with the studies of several other academic sources which are about postmodernism, idealism, ethics and morality that are brought together in order to support the main argument of the study.

**Key Words:** Postmodernism, Postmodern Ethics, Kazuo Ishiguro, The Remains of The Day, Ethics

## ÖZET

### KAZUO ISHIGURO'NUN GÜNDEM KALANLAR ROMANINDA HATALI KAVRAMLAR: PROFESYONELLİK VE HAYSİYET

Elikoğlu, Merve  
Yüksek Lisans Tezi  
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı  
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı  
Danışman: Doçent. Dr. Şeyda SİVRİOĞLU

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Postmodern bir roman olarak *Günden Kalanlar*, hayatını yanlış yönlendirilmiş idealizminin peşinden, derin pişmanlık duyduğu birkaç tavizde bulunarak trajik bir şekilde sürdüren Mr. Stevens'in hüznü hikayesini anlatır. Bu çalışma, etiğin hatalı olan profesyonellik ve haysiyet kavramlarıyla temsil edildiği Kazuo Ishiguro'nun *Günden Kalanlar* adlı romanındaki baş kahramanın deneyimlerinin analiz edilmesi yoluyla etiğin neden postmodern olması gerektiğine dair argümanla ilgilendirilmiştir. Etik ve ahlaki değer algılarının çağdaş çağa ve çağdaş bireye uygun olmaması ve insanların çaresi olmayan bir şekilde çelişkili olan yaşamları karşısında aciz kalmaları dolayısıyla geleneksel değil postmodern olması gerektiği savunulmaktadır. Bu nedenle, ahlakın evrenselleştirilmesi mümkün değildir. Bu sorunun postmodern çözümü, ahlaki değerlerin evrenselleştirilmesinden ziyade otoritelerin emrinde küreselleştirilmesidir. Postmodern etik, dogmatik ahlaki değerlerin rasyonel bir şekilde düzenlenmesi fikrinin dürtüsel ve öz-regüle olmasını önerir. Ayrıca, bu değerler fayda sağlama amaçlı olsa da bunlara koşulsuz bağlı kalmak, *Günden Kalanlar* romanındaki kahramanın da problemleri olan insanın kendisini baskı altına almasına ve dolayısıyla kendini yoksun bırakmasına neden olur. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, referanslara dayalı olarak, Ishiguro'nun romanı hakkında teorik ve genel bilgileri ve tartışmaları, çalışmanın ana argümanını desteklemek adına postmodernizm, idealizm, etik ve ahlak hakkında diğer birçok akademik kaynaklarla bir araya getirir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Postmodernizm, Postmodern Etik, Kazuo Ishiguro, Günden Kalanlar, Etik

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

**PMC**            *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*

**RMD**            *The Remains of The Day*



## INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism, as a term, was first casually used by a British painter John Watkins Chapman in 1870s. However, the term was coined by Arnold Joseph Toynbee during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of defining postmodernism, most of the definitions made stay vague since it cannot be placed in a sharply defined category. The instability of the term caused many debates throughout the recent decades. In the most general sense, it is a broad movement that is applied to architecture, anthropology, art, criticism, philosophy, literature et cetera. Though there is no certain definition of the term, it is possible to define several features of Postmodernism. Since the present dissertation focuses on questioning the concepts of morality and ethics from a postmodern perspective, the provided theory of Postmodernism is narrowed down to a certain extend rather than providing a full discussion on every aspect of postmodernism.

First and foremost, postmodernism displays a highly sceptical behaviour towards generalised claims that are reflected as valid and applicable for all groups disregarding the cultures, traditions, or races they belong to, or they feel close to. Instead, Postmodernism defends the idea that the truth is fallible and relative for each person and such fixed systems of beliefs are and must be bendable since these concepts, when they are embraced fully, lead to a sense of claustrophobic effect which causes suffering. Therefore, many absolute judgments defined throughout the history become flexible within the Postmodernist attitude. It is not possible for an objective validation to exist, but a critical appraisal of it can be provided. The sceptical manner lays in the very essence of every definition made about the movement. What is signified as a fact today can be false tomorrow. For this reason, in postmodern perspective opinions predominate facts. In many postmodern works, it can easily be seen that such concepts as reality, truth, existence are played with or shown in contradiction to their representation in real life. It can be said that irony can easily become radical in postmodernist texts. A significant reason for this irony is that in postmodernism the past can only exist with its faults and therefore it cannot be trusted. In order to clarify, postmodernism does not aim at rejecting or neglecting the presence of history, reality, or

truth. They are only seen and approached as problematized. As one of the most influential names contributed to postmodern philosophy Jean-François Lyotard, in his work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, writes “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv). By metanarrative, Lyotard refers to any text, including itself, as constructed. It self reflexively regards any kind of human knowledge (science, history, literature etc.) as produced and therefore constructed. Postmodernism is seen as a contemporary representation of Socratic Philosophy. In ancient times, Socrates believed and supported the idea that practical solutions or alternatives can be provided in philosophy for society’s well-being. He rejected accepting the theoretical doctrine entirely and instead he chose to establish a system of ethics based on human reason.

As a crucial matter for the present study, ethics is simply defined as “Ethics, also called moral philosophy, the discipline concerned with what is morally good and bad and morally right and wrong. The term is also applied to any system or theory of moral values or principles” (Singer, 2021). What evolves the necessity of the existence of such principles is the society and its requirement for some regulation.

...such rules as may guide our conduct toward each other — ours towards others and, simultaneously, others’ towards us — so that we may feel secure in each other’s presence, help one another, co-operate peacefully and derive from each other’s presence a pleasure untainted by fear and suspicion (Bauman, 1993: 16).

People live in a community in which they connect with one another. These connections might not be observed slightly obvious. However, it does not disprove the fact that these connections exist. On the other hand, it is almost impossible for every person to know how to behave, what she/he ought to do or can do, whose life or experiences depend on her/his actions, what is going to happen with the influence of her/his actions etc. As Bauman states, these questions are not completely understandable, and they are unfeasible to presume or presage. People can hardly measure the outcomes of their actions. Since we live in a world with other people, a responsibility should be built to a

certain degree in order to preserve the peace. Therefore, ethics are necessary in order to provide and ensure the social order.

In modern times, the world in company with the self, started to lose its unity and coherence and therefore the meaning it contains. Both the self and the world are decentred hence the real is eroded. However, human beings have the urge and will to believe something since they are seeking a meaning which will provide a sense of presence for themselves. Therefore, human beings chose to believe the simulated reality which is constructed. They might not feel the necessity to question these problematized concepts since they already legitimized their actions either consciously or unconsciously. With the legitimation and totalisation simulated reality and reason, it is naturally possible for them to end up in ignorance or blind obedience to the so-called reality they chose to believe which is also the case for the protagonist of the novel *The Remains of The Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro.

*The Remains of The Day*, as the main work in this present study, tells the life-story of a butler, Mr. Stevens, who devoted himself to serve his master Lord Darlington. The setting of the novel is in England. Mr. Stevens has a very fixed and idealized belief in terms of professionalism and dignity. In a sense, he struggles not to drown in the flow of his misguided life goals. Yet, he gets disturbed by the emotions prompted by his past. During his short trip to the West Country in the summer of 1956, Mr. Stevens starts to think about his reminiscences of his past times specifically with Mrs. Kenton, his former colleague during the years he served in Lord Darlington Hall. He recollects his memories and narrates them in a, to a certain degree, deflected way since he is having hard times facing the truth that he has lived throughout his life by the wrong values that he committed himself fully. Mr. Stevens makes some small attempts to reach a cathartic relief, yet his attempts get him nowhere. The novel is written in a first-person narrator in which the credibility of the narrator, Mr. Stevens, is compromised. Mr. Stevens is seen as an unreliable narrator since he is having difficulty admitting his faults. Thus, he is in self-denial. Furthermore, he very well notices the fact that he can do nothing to change the past. Under such circumstances, he still does not let his armour break or even crack. "...but, Stevens's declared enlightenment is a false one and promises nothing in the way

of a spiritual consolation” (Wong, 2005:52). In the end, he is in his own with a life which is crucially flawed and damaged, as Ishiguro puts it in his discussion hosted by CBC's Eleanor Wachtel (Ishiguro, KAZUO ISHIGURO on *The Remains of the Day* | Books on Film | TIFF 2017, 2017).

The present dissertation aims at critically analysing *The Remains of The Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro with a postmodern approach towards ethical and moral principles, specifically the notions of “professionalism and dignity” in this case, defending the opinion that exaggerated ideals cause harm in people’s lives and it can even lead to serious problems. Additionally, this study aims at questioning the reliability of these ethical and moral values and to some extent defending and proving these notions as mistaken. As a figure, the character analysed here is the protagonist of the aforementioned novel; Mr. Stevens, the butler of the Lord Darlington Hall, through his recollections of the past.

As starting point of the present study, the introduction part consisting partial background information about postmodernism, postmodern ethics, reliability of the fixed systems of belief, the life and literary career of Kazuo Ishiguro is provided along with the aim and the plan of the present study. The detailed information about the theories is provided in the theoretical framework part which is placed in Chapter I. Main theories provided are *Postmodern Ethics* by Zygmunt Bauman and *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* by Jean-François Lyotard along with the secondary crucial theories. With the help of the provided theories, the reliance of traditional codes of ethics and morals are being discussed.

In Chapter II, detailed textual analysis of *The Remains of The Day* from the postmodern point of view, focusing specifically on the notions of professionalism and dignity as moral values, is provided. In this part of the present study, characteristics, relationships, behaviours, actions, and outcomes of the protagonist are scrutinized and discussed. Theories provided in previous chapter are applied to the text in order to demonstrate the argument.

The conclusion part is placed in the end. In this part, it is concluded that idealized and fixed systems of beliefs such as professionalism and dignity are, as a matter of fact, flexible, variable, relative, arbitrary, alterable, not universally applicable, and not compulsorily necessary notions. To clarify, the present dissertation neither has any intention to deny the existence or utility of the moral values nor to defend the concept of living completely without them. Moreover, it does not allege to decide upon what is moral or immoral. Instead, it highlights the idea that such notions cannot be simply accepted or rejected and aims at proving they are socially constructed rather than being totally false though they are falsified at a certain extent in *The Remains of The Day* by Mr. Stevens, the butler.



## CHAPTER I

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSTMODERNISM AND POSTMODERN ETHICS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework within which the whole remainder of this study will be contextualized. Accurate exploration of Ishiguro's *The Remains of The Day* oriented present study from postmodern perspective requires an introduction of the theories of Postmodernism and Postmodern Ethics as philosophical movements. Therefore, this chapter of the present study includes theories of Postmodernism explained by Jean-François Lyotard and Postmodern Ethics by Zygmunt Bauman and the connection of the theories with the novel *The Remains of the Day*. Ishiguro's novel is mentioned with the abbreviation *RMD*.

#### 1.1. Ethics vs Morality

Even though Ethics and Morality are the terms are used interchangeably in general terms, they differ in certain factors. As Bernard Williams states the original difference between these two terms was about linguistic matters. "By origin, the difference between the two terms is that between Latin and Greek, each relating to a word meaning *disposition* or *custom* (Williams, 1985: 6). Marcus Tullius Cicero, as a Greek philosopher, coined the term 'moralis' as the Latin translation of the Greek word 'ethikos' meaning ethics in his book *On Fate* (Cicero, (45 BC), 1878). *Ethikos* was originated from the Greek word *ethos* which means character while *Moralis* was originated from the Latin word *mos* which means custom. Each is governed by different set of factors. Ethics are ruled by professional rules and legal and written principles. Therefore, ethical rules are accepted and applied within the frame of certain space and time such as professional ethics (medicine, law etc.). On the other hand, morality is accepted and applied by the rules that are determined by culture. Therefore, it is more variable by the region compared to ethics. While ethics depend on the ideals of a certain community, morality is a concept which has a more individual perspective. Since ethics belong to a certain space and time,

it is rather normal for the rules to be different and more flexible. However, the change in morality is concerned with the changes in the belief of the individual. In his *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale explains Russian dolls (matryoshka) as iterative forms (McHale, 1987: 112). Matryoshka is translated as “little matron” (OED Online, 2011) which metaphorically represents the transition through generations. This transition of Russian dolls would be a perfect example for morality’s passage through time and generations. The reason for following ethics is connected with the society’s decisions in terms of the right actions. Morality’s background stems from the right course of action according to the individual. As another point that needs to be highlighted, a person who is committed to ethical rules does not necessarily have to have moral values as a person who has moral values does not need to have ethical code. Ethics are mostly correlated with the fields of business, medicine or law. There are certain set of rules that determine the right thing to do. It is not associated with religion. However, for morality the situation is vice versa. Therefore, morality has a religious background that it stems from. For instance, it is considered as highly moral for Muslim people to slaughter a sheep, a goat or a cow in order to make a sacrificial action for God during the certain time of every year. Since this action is done repeatedly, it can be said that morality has a ritualistic background as well. However, discussion of such rituals in terms of ethics of animal sacrifice is a problematic subject. On the other hand, since morality is changed within different cultures, this action might be considered as immoral in certain contexts associated with different cultures and religions. For instance, while marriage with collateral-relatives is a common behaviour in certain cultures, it is considered as incest in others. In other words, each culture has various moral obligations related to the acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and action. This is the main reason which makes morality a socially constructed concept. Since there is no existing certain standard that shows which society has the *right* values and which has not, a certain and universalized morality rules cannot be determined and therefore cannot exist. This is what makes morality a vague concept. However, in the present study, morality is limited with the notions of professionalism and dignity concerning the argument of the thesis.

Concerning the analysis of the behaviour of the protagonist of the *RMD*, some of Mr. Stevens’ behaviours are immoral though they are considered ethical since they are done according to the ethical code concerning his profession and his professional ideals.

Since morality is a concept which is emotional and personal contrary to ethics, moral subjectivity becomes a common practice. The reason for people to change their ideas towards moral subjectivity is that Cultural Relativism has lost its credibility. Since cultural relativism led people to behave under the ideology of following the 'good' which, in this matter, meant 'socially approved'. In certain cases, moral freedom became restricted since it forced individuals to accept society's values. For instance, in some communities such contradictions have aroused as an action is not actually good, yet it is considered good because it is socially approved. When individual finds himself/herself facing such contradictions the questioning phase starts and it triggers sceptical thinking towards morality which results in the uncertainty of moral values. This proves the process of inheritance of morality. As individual grows up, she/he can subjectively make decisions about her/his moral actions. However, Mr. Stevens inherited the moral values of the culture he belongs to and embraced them as only truth. Therefore, his story resulted in a sorrowful way when he ignored the chance to be subjective.

On the other hand, it is rather normal for one to remain with unresolvable questions about morality. Harry J. Gensler, professor of philosophy, clarifies three most common arguments in his book *Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction*. "Since morality is a product of culture, there can't be objective moral truths" (Gensler, 2011: 12). Gensler states a product of culture can express objective truths. He gives books as a product of culture and yet they can express an objective truth. Therefore, he claims a moral code can both be a product of culture and express objective truth about how people are ought to live. As the second argument Gensler gives: "Since cultures disagree widely about morality, there can't be objective moral truths" (Gensler, 2011: 12). He explains his solution as following:

But the mere fact of disagreement doesn't show that there's no truth of the matter, that neither side is right or wrong. Cultures disagree widely about anthropology or religion or even physics. Yet there may still be a truth of the matter about these subjects. So a wide disagreement on moral issues wouldn't show that there's no truth of the matter on moral issues (Gensler, 2011: 12).

He suggests following the golden rule of treating as you want to be treated and states that this rule is almost universally accepted across the world. “Since there’s no clear way to resolve moral differences, there can’t be objective moral truths” (Gensler, 2011: 13). For this third argument that is fallen apart by Gensler, it is suggested that it is possible to resolve several moral differences. Gensler believes that “Only a small percentage of all truths are knowable. So there could be objective moral truths, even if we had no solid way to know them” (Gensler, 2011: 13). This is what the present study suggests as the postmodern solution of globalizing morality in a certain frame of rules and also leaving responsibility for the individual.

## 1.2. Postmodern Ethics

Zygmunt Bauman, born on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1925, was and still is one of the most highly appreciated critics, philosophers, and sociologists throughout Europe. He is a writer specialized in the field of post-modernity and consumerism and liquid modernity. Bauman published *Postmodern Ethics* in 1993. This book, overall, reveals a postmodern view on morality and moral actions which makes it a perfect primary source for textual analysis of the *RMD* since the protagonist of the novel is living his life fully based on moral values. He also scrutinizes the historical context of postmodern ethics and followingly criticizes the nature of traditional ethics due to its flawed nature of implementation. The book specifically moves from the developments of the ethics in the Age of Enlightenment to the alteration of ethics with the shift to a new background in postmodern period. After finishing his analysis on this context, he moves to explanation of the reasons and effects which helped establishing and shaping the postmodern ethics. Bauman shows his admiration to Emmanuel Levinas with uttering his name several times in his book. Levinas’ concept of ethics indicates a postmodern point of view rather than a traditional one. His concept of ethics opposes Kant’s concept of ethics and in the *RMD* the main character chooses to follow Kant’s ideals on ethics which is the traditional one. This is the reason which makes Chapter 1.2.1 necessary to take its place as a significant theoretical explanation for the present study in terms of analysing the key character in the *RMD* which represents Kantian ethics. Yet the study defends the idea that ethics should

be approached with a postmodern point of view and thus should be performed in the light of postmodernist characteristics.

### 1.2.1. Traditional Ethics vs. Postmodern Ethics

Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995) is a French philosopher who made a great contribution to the postmodern ethics with his valuable thoughts. Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl had a great influence on Levinas since he had the chance to meet and study with them. With the simplest words, Levinas' philosophy of ethics defends the idea that people's relationship and connection with each other is the main factor that evokes ethics (Perpich, 2008). According to Levinas, when someone establishes affection to someone, there are some emotional reactions that emerges naturally. These emotions evoke a response of care and concern and connectedly this response evokes ethics. Therefore, ethics are evoked by inner urges due to the existence of the second party. Thus, the emergence of ethics for the individual is more candid which saves the individual from making concessions about the issues that matter for the individual as it is a common situation in traditional ethics. The *RMD* tells the tragic and sorrowful story of a butler who wasted his life in order to fully commit himself to strict pre-determined moral values that are established by taking society's good into consideration rather than individuals'. The butler in the novel suppresses his emotions in order to preserve his devotion to the rules that have been taught as authoritative principles. Therefore, it can be said that the butler in the *RMD* does not follow ethics they way Levinas sees it. Levinas' argument might not be attributed fully on rationality. However, Levinas has no intention of being utterly rational. This situation reminds the controversy between the arguments of Levinas and Immanuel Kant on ethics.

Kant believed that ethics are based solely on reason. He states that the right action is the action which is done according to the principles and rules and these principles and rules clearly indicate what is obligatory and what is forbidden. Therefore, the action should be justified, and this makes the principles universalized. He expresses this as "categorical imperative". Kant does not consider the outcome of the action as the

determining figure; he is concerned with the action itself and that is called the “deontological theory” (Kant, 2019). According to this theory, a person should perform an action just because it is right, not because it is going to result in a good outcome. For this reason, Kant states that the only thing which is good no matter the condition is “good will”. He argues the things we consider as good might not always be good such as wealth, intelligence, health, and courage. They can be used for ill purposes in a particular context. According to Kant’s theory of ethics, every situation is treated equally without any exception. It must be applied to everyone without respecting anybody’s authority or integrity differently. In these terms, Kant’s theory is more absolute, rational, reasonable, and stricter comparing to Levinas’. The butler in the *RMD* has spent his life trying to do everything by the rules which identifies with Kantian ethics. Since reason is the passions enemy, through the end of the novel he stands alone with the regrets he has about his past mistakes that he has made while trying to do the right(!) action as it is defined by Kant. Even though the outcome of his actions would not cause any trouble for anyone, he decided to choose focusing on the action itself rather than its outcome. On the contrary, the outcome of his actions would make himself and the second party happy in several cases which are explained in detail in Chapter II. However, he cared about the other parties and their principles. He has done what is right according to the book and this costed him a considerable amount of happiness that has been taken away from his hand by himself. This, like other multiple examples given in both chapters, supports the idea of the present study about why ethics should be postmodern.

Bauman divides ethics to two different periods: Modern ethics and Postmodern ethics which is a significantly related part for the textual analysis of the *RMD* since the butler represents and individual following the modern ethics. Bauman criticizes modern ethics as being intolerant towards allowing the moral self to embrace the ambivalent and ambiguous side of both life and ethics itself. It resists to the fact that a moral person, no matter how hard she/he tries, has no way of beating the ambivalence. The only way is to learn how to live with it. Modern ethics were used as a tactic in order to maintain the social domination.

Ethics — a moral code, wishing to be the moral code, the one and only set of mutually coherent precepts that ought to be

obeyed by any moral person — views the plurality of human ways and ideals as a challenge, and the ambivalence of moral judgements as a morbid state of affairs yearning to be rectified (Bauman, 1993: 21).

In the given part, Bauman states that throughout the modern period, especially the Enlightenment philosophers were trying to reduce, even ignore, the plurality and they were not welcoming the moral ambivalence. However, the modern life for modern men and women was a perfect fit for the moral ambivalence and plurality. It was challenging and unnecessary trying to universalize all the ethical rules which reject multiple interpretation in different circumstances and Bauman highly criticises the strict universalisation of ethical rules for this reason.

Essentially, ethical rules are necessary in order to fulfil the desire of doing good. According to Bauman, the concept of the desire of doing good has its roots dating back to the early times of human existence. The reason to desire doing good comes from rationality, because Bauman claims that doing good to others will do good for the individual; it will bring ‘interest’ and ‘self-love’. Therefore, doing good is considered as rational since it brings rewards along. Bauman prefers to promote his idea with citing Voltaire’s, one of the most significant French writers, quote: “Ainsi tout homme raisonnable conclura qu’il est visiblement de son intérêt d’être connote homme” (Bauman, 1993: 27) which simply means any reasonable man is conscious of the fact that it is obviously in his best interest to be an honest man. There is another fact, which must be widely accepted, that Bauman states and that is the fact that doing good, compared to doing evil, is a better action.

Despite all the efforts in modern era, ethical rules universalists had to face with the truth that it is impossible to make every individual evenly morally responsible and they failed to do so. There are multiple reasons preventing it from happening. Firstly, the uneven stratification in the society causes the unavailability of the individual autonomy and the heteronomy for everyone. It is slightly absurd to pursue universal morality when there is no universal human condition exist in modern society. There is a distinct separation between modern people in terms of freedom and dependency. Therefore, this

has a great impact of freedom of decision. Moral standards do not consider the individual as trustworthy. Therefore, it is considered that the individual freedom will only bring good if the individual is committed to the predetermined moral standards so that the good consequences of the actions can be assured. However, there is a certain degree of a chance of autonomy provided differently to every individual. The moral autonomy cannot be distributed to everyone evenly since it cannot be assured for all the people to trust the wise even though they confidently believe the wise to be true in terms of doing good.

### 1.2.2. The Vagueness of Ethics

Bauman explains the reason of existence of the commonly agreed ethical rules.

...such rules as may guide our conduct toward each other — ours towards others and, simultaneously, others' towards us — so that we may feel secure in each other's presence, help one another, co-operate peacefully and derive from each other's presence a pleasure untainted by fear and suspicion (Bauman, 1993: 16).

People live in a community in which each person have connections with others even though these connections might not be observed slightly obvious. On the other hand, it is almost impossible for every person to know what she/he ought to do or can do, whose life depend on her/his actions, what is going to happen with the influence of her/his actions etc. As Bauman states, these questions are not completely understandable, and they are unfeasible to presume or presage. People can hardly measure the outcomes of their actions. Since we live in a world with other people a responsibility is built to a certain degree. Therefore, ethics are necessary in order to provide and ensure the social order.

How commonly ethical rules were established? What are their effects in people's lives? To what extend they can be applied to our lives on a daily basis? Bauman starts to investigate such questions and many others from the beginning of his book. Bauman mentions a concept of 'moral uncertainty' (Bauman, 1993: 17). This concept indicates that no matter how good the intentions are, people's actions might bring 'side effects' and

‘unanticipated consequences’ and the result can bring disasters that nobody wished for. They may harm each other without wishing ill. The ethical rules are trustworthy rules that are inherited from the past that are taught people to obey. They help us to have the knowledge of what is good and what is bad. Obviously, ethics suggest that what ought to be done is the concept of *right* and therefore it must be taken, emphasis mine. For the concept of ‘wrong’ the situation is vice versa. This choice of doing right or avoiding wrong is established by depending on the prediction of their effects on people. This is a simple way to explain how traditional ethics work. However, there are some crises deriving from ethical rules being traditional. “Our ethical tools — the code of moral behaviour, the assembly of the rules of thumb we follow — have not been, simply, made to the measure of our present powers” (Bauman, 1993: 18). In modern times, many things have been changed and it goes on changing day by day. Therefore, it is becoming challenging to apply the already-set rules to modern conditions. Since unnumberable changes took place in modern period, many new responsibilities appeared such as the increasing number of floating responsibilities that came with the division of labour. No one can claim or considered to be recharged of the ‘authorship’ since the main task is divided to many divisions that involves many people. Rather than having the authority of the overall action, people are having responsibility of a small parts of the overall task. Bauman defends the idea that since the authorities are too big and people are just a part of the responsibility, they cannot have the control over, and this results in failing to do self-scrutiny for modern people. This causes the ‘vanity of human efforts’ (Bauman, 1993). Bauman touches upon the significance of individuality here. As it is the situation in the *RMD*, the intentions being good does not always ensure the outcomes of the action to be good as well. The butler in the novel takes actions with totally good intentions in order to preserve his ideals of professionalism and dignity. However, as moral uncertainty suggests, things do not result as good as the intentions are. On the contrary, it leaves several regrets for the butler that he is uncomfortable about accepting and that are unable to be corrected anymore. Regardless of the good purposes traditional ethics have, they somehow fall short in terms of estimating, measuring and evaluating the specific situations in human life due to the unstoppable ongoing change in many areas that are related to human life.

Bauman indicates that modern people's lives are split between the life-work cycle and therefore people have many different roles in each cycle (Bauman, 1993: 19). This is the reason that modern people cannot have their whole-selves. Each role in each setting brings different dos, when and how, and don'ts with it. Bauman argues that each person is irreplaceable though as players their role for the task is easily replaceable. He highlights the fact that the responsibility belongs to "the *role*, not to the *person* who performs it" (Bauman, 1993: 19). Therefore, Bauman believes, the performance of the role should not change the real-self. For people to be able to responsible for their own deeds, they must perform as their real-selves first, not as a performer of a role that is required in a certain setting of a life. "We can make our choices freely, guided solely by what we consider worthy of pursuing" (Bauman, 1993: 19-20). However, it is not that simple since people are prone to rely on the rules as it became a habit. Without rules to follow people feel desperate. It is a kind of dilemma that people have. When they have it, it feels hard to carry it; when they do not have it, the responsibility is missed. The lack of the authority figure which was resented before is now feels as needed. As Erich Fromm, the German psychologist, states "in our effort to escape from aloneness and powerlessness, we are ready to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns" (Fromm, 1960: 116). Since leaving the domination of authority feels powerless, people get away from their individual self in order to avoid the feeling of aloneness and powerlessness. The butler in the novel the *RMD* experiences and identical situation in terms of having great difficulty in being able to separate his real-self and his role as a professional butler. Since he becomes integrated with his butler-self, he gets lost in his private life in terms of making decisions. He makes his decisions as his profession requires him to even though the matter is not related to his profession. Therefore, he gives up on himself as an individual and outside of his comfortable zone – which is the professional area – he experiences several challenges that discomforts him which are explained in detail in Chapter II.

Even though people have the opportunity to choose what to do is in their hands, they feel that they have been forced to follow the rules so that they would be in the right way. The rules people choose might not feel comfortable all the time. On the other hand,

there are too many rules that they might contradict each other. One defends the concept that the other censures.

After all, it is each one of us on his or her own who has to decide which of the conflicting rules to obey and which to disregard. The choice is not between following the rules and breaking them, as there is no one set of rules to be obeyed or breached. The choice is, rather, between different sets of rules and different authorities preaching them (Bauman, 1993: 20).

Therefore, a person cannot be a unmitigatedly conformist. Bauman explains that a person who is performing the requirements of a certain set of rules is violating and disobeying to the other certain set of rules, and it is not properly certain that which disobedience is 'lesser evil'. This is another point of moral uncertainty. Bauman states that these multiple uncertainties are dragging us to the *ambivalence*. "Ours are the times of strongly felt moral ambiguity" (Bauman, 1993: 21). The freedom that the modern times provide for people brings an agonizing uncertainty with it. The conclusion that these uncertainties bring people to a feeling of insecurity and as Bauman writes "In the end, we trust no authority, at least, we trust none fully, and none for long: we cannot help being suspicious about any claim to infallibility" (Bauman, 1993: 21). The butler in *RMD* stands in the same condition through the very end of the novel and he starts to question if it was worthy spending his whole life by the values he cared most since he starts to acknowledge the fact that he has failed to adjust the principles to the specific events in his life that required an individual insight rather than the requirements of generalized rules. This is what is called 'postmodern moral crisis' in literature. Since it is impossible to eliminate all the uncertainties from human life, it is remarkably necessary to embrace the ambivalence as postmodernism suggests.

### **1.2.3. Postmodern Morality**

Modernity and postmodernity are controverse concept in terms of the perspective of looking and the way of thinking. Modernity is obsessed with the purposiveness,

beneficence, certainty, set principles, singularity, regulation etc. Contrary to modernity, postmodernity can be defined as more broadminded and variegated. Prof. Doc. Alan Wolfe, as a political scientist and a sociologist, stated in his book *Whose Keeper* that morality is “...moral obligation as a socially constructed practice negotiated between learning agents capable of growth on the one hand and a culture capable of change on the other” (Wolfe, 1989: 19). Wolfe makes it clear that morality is not a solid and unchangeable state. It is a practice in order people to guarantee their survival in better conditions. The assumption here is not about rejecting the moral principles. They are of course intentionally good practices to be applied to certain areas of life. However, human life is not that simple, especially now in postmodern period. There are variety of factors that are affecting the solution of a situation, whether they are big or small. For this reason, it is considerably natural to assume that predetermined morality principles would not or might not give the expected efficiency. Postmodernity accepted and embraced obscurity, ambiguity, ambivalence, arbitrariness, and more concepts alike while modernity rejected them. Therefore, people learnt to live with inexplicable events and at the same time they learnt to respect actions that have no purpose at all or a reasonable purpose. People do not need all their actions to be justified. On the other hand, human emotions are regarded now in postmodern world. Especially, emotions are quite challenging to explain since they are fluid. Therefore, the actions which are taken with the emotional drives become inexplicable in terms of rationality as well.

Having first defamed and disgraced human acts that have only ‘passions’ and spontaneous inclinations for their cause, the modern mind is appalled by the prospect of ‘deregulation’ of human conduct, of living without a strict and comprehensive ethical code, of making a wager on human moral intuition and ability to negotiate the art and the usages of living together — rather than seeking support of the law-like, depersonalized rules aided by coercive powers (Bauman, 1993: 33).

As a solution, Bauman offers to re-personalize the morality, not to abandon it. He defines and explains re-personalizing as letting the morality leave its stiff armour behind which is the armour of preternaturally built ethical codes. Let leaving the armour aside, Bauman thinks that even abandoning the habit of the effort to stay inside the armour would make a great progress in terms of re-personalizing morality. He thinks that personal

morality will do good on several counts. It will first, make the ethical negotiation and consensus possible (Bauman, 1993: 34). In addition to this, Bauman makes it clear that the success cannot be guaranteed. Yet, he claims there is a chance that personal morality might make the negotiations more challenging as well. To be able to re-personalize morality, he suggests that moral responsibility must be taken back to the beginning of the ethical process. It must be taken to its roots so that it can be seen by humanity.

People find it hard to trust and follow such socially sanctioned rules. "...all socially constructed replacements — like functional or procedural responsibilities — are but effete, untrustworthy, and morally doubtful (even if instrumentally efficient) substitutes" (Bauman, 1993: 35). To be able to make people confident about ethical codes, the first aim should be setting the ethical process free from every one of its bonds. Bauman uses Harold Garfinkel's metaphor and suggests that people will see clearly what supports the ceiling if they get rid of the walls. By making the morality personal, it is turned into an 'inside job' -as Michael S. Pritchard puts it- not an outside demand as it has been constructed to be since the beginning. Only if morality evades the habits of being completely autotelic, purposeful and utilitarian, it can get the chance to show itself as it is. Therefore, morality would not have to demonstrate itself since it has a more secure standpoint now and it is at peace with its non-rationality and non-rationality will be its own reason. Non-rationality of morality might seem like a problem at first glance. However, Bauman thinks that non-rationality of morality is okay since all the moral impulses are doomed to succumb.

#### **1.2.4. The Question of Universalized Morality**

Bauman argues that the old-fashioned style good and evil that is told is no more trusted now. The reason Bauman chose to discuss good, and evil is that they are the images that set off the moral preachers' thoughts in the very beginning and he wanted to discuss to what extent this good and evil are credible and applicable. He agrees to the idea of Robert Musil, Austrian philosophical writer, that good and evil are functional values rather than being constants. Good and evil started to take place in people's lives hundreds

of years ago. It had a great impact on our actions, whether in daily decisions or in most traumatic moments' decisions. The line between good and evil was not the same for everyone living in different places, different times and circumstances. This is the main reason they are not and cannot be constants. The images about the concept might be shared widely or narrowly. However, it is not possible to have a hundred percent overlap in any case. In terms of deciding on something whether it is good or evil, every case is unique. Generally, a misconception of understanding is applied on the decision. Bauman claims that there are two factors considered as determinant units: 'people like us' and 'those unlike us'. If an individual is involved in a performance that 'people like us' also do, she/he sleeps with a mind at peace while 'those unlike us' would disapprove the action. "The fact that the images of good and evil do differ from one place to another and one epoch to another, and that there is little one can do about it, has not been a secret..." (Bauman, 1993: 38). If, as the essence of moral reasoning, good and evil differ naturally based on the circumstances, moral precepts possibly and naturally may differ as well. This difference invalidates the idea of the universality for moral rules. Bauman states that this idea of building a connecting link between moral rules and their universality mainly belonged to the philosophers' concern. On the other hand, time had a hierarchical role in terms of defining the universalized phenomena as outlived to be able to live and adapt to present time. "...and their carriers as in actual fact already dead, zombies that ought to be buried as soon as possible for their own and everybody else's sake" (Bauman, 1993: 38). Phenomena has to change since the world changes and progresses as well. Everyday there are innovations in terms of knowledge, there are many different cultures, improvements etc. Therefore, according to Johannes Fabian, phenomena might be designated as 'allochronic' which is defined as "occurring in different segments of geologic time: not contemporaneous" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) They can be named as relics and these relics are destined to expire with the hierarchy effect of time.

Bauman carries his discussion towards the universalism and its discontents. Universalism works in such a way that there is a single, postulated, and centralized management institution or organization, as a unified hegemony, that assigns people of its community with the laws and it aspects people to behave on its behalf. There were and still are some nations that consider resisting against these laws as a crime and the punishment even goes up to death in some cases. Therefore, this centralized management

way of ruling is a threat on the freedom of an individual from that society. According to Alasdair McIntyre, a Scottish philosopher who made great contributions to the moral and political philosophy, a universal man in its human essence is defined as an ‘unencumbered self’. He explains unencumbered self as below:

...not necessarily unaffected by the communally inspired particularisms, yet capable of cutting himself loose from the communal roots and loyalties; of lifting himself, so to speak, onto a higher plane and taking from there a long, detached and critical view of communal demands and pressures (McIntyre, 1981: 241).

Thereby, the unencumbered self denies accepting the assigned laws of the state as one and only right. She/he does not define himself as a citizen who is shaped by the state. On the other hand, McIntyre defines the opposite of unencumbered self as the ‘situated self’. Since universalized standards do not let people to be their unencumbered selves, it becomes menace for the human nature since, even though the main aim is to unite people, it suppresses and grants no quarter to the human nature. In terms of moral values, connected with this subject, Bauman states that if the moral values are being universalized it means that there is a neglect of the temporality of the bound and also a disowning of the territorially bound. The group supporting the ‘situated self’ are known as “communitarians”. Oppression and severity against human freedom is used as means of the universalizing acts of communitarians. Contrary to this idea, it is thought that the genuine morality can only be found or ensconced in the qualifications and capabilities of an individual. In philosophy this individual is named as a ‘human person’ which is defined as “...physical being, as knower, as responsible agent, as a person in relation to other persons, to society, to God, and to the end, or purpose, of human life” (Loyola University of Chicago, 2021). There is no such thing that appears to be truly universal. In the end, it is established by a denominator rather than being established naturally from its roots.

Since practising moral universality is challenging, in the postmodern world the universalization becomes more of a globalization. Basically, postmodernism is not rejecting the universalism completely, but it is trying to smooth it out. The main aim is to build an international influence on some matters and an international scale of them.

However, this globalization does not cover or include monopolizing the moral authorities. Cultural authorities' being impossible to monopolize in the whole world is a great impact which makes it impossible to monopolize the moral values. Bauman makes it clear that universal morality is challenging to be established and even if it is established, it is impossible to survive. In the end, with several valid explanations and solid arguments, Bauman supports his idea of that morality is non-universalizable since its rules are not applied equally to every individual.

Bauman states morality can be nothing but heteronomous. "There could be no morality without moral principles – as no act could be moral unless it meant acting *on a principle*" (Bauman, 1993: 65). An individual who obtained the moral perspective should obey the rules which are applied equally to every single individual, not the only ones which are meant for herself/himself. In other words, obligations and requirements must be universal. Therefore, these rules would be the heteronomous rules which are enforced by an ulterior authority that allegedly speaks for everyone. On the other hand, moral philosophy is detached from beliefs and traditions as well. This results in the mistrust of the autonomous moral judgement for the reason that people generally prefer to avoid their own interests and they follow the interests of the majority. With this way, even though the 'I' is 'unheteronomous', it is enforced to follow the heteronomous concept of morality. In this heteronomous world of morality, the reason is guided by the rules and the rules are dictated by the reason. It is popularly assumed that in such a world affections and feelings are not morally significant. This is a similar subject to Kant's definition on virtue. According to Kant, virtue is the strength of standing up to obstacles that can withhold the individual from fulfilling her/his moral requirements (Johnson & Cureton, 2021). Reason and emotions are opposite concepts. Therefore, they cannot be put to the same box together. Reason is unemotional and emotions are unreasonable. For this reason, the protagonist in the *RMD* fails to separate his moral-self from his emotional-self and he ends up suppressing his emotions for a major part of his life.

Additionally, Bauman reviews ethics from the ontological point of view. He mentions the fact that people are better in togetherness rather than being alone. However, in order to provide peace in this togetherness, there must be some protection for the

bridges built between people. There must be either *Law* or *Ethics* which will actually be a morality that apes the law behind its mask. However, ontologically morality can only be a cunning that cannot be fully legitimate ever. It is a field that is not welcomed in the ontological territory, and it is questionable from many perspectives. That is based on the fact that the starting point for values is not stemming from actual facts. Facts are neutral and they must stay neutral. Therefore, in order to build a more trustful appearance, ethics had only one chance and that was to be law-like.

Morality becomes desperate in terms of having solid foundations. Thus, it stays frail. The only foundation, Bauman suggests, that morality can have is taking the responsibilities as if they are already there for the individual. Therefore, from the ontological point of view morality cannot be considered valid since it is not determined and not inevitable. From this standpoint, morality becomes postmodern itself as it was already uncertain, ambiguous, and fragile. Bauman states, “There is nothing necessary in being moral. Being moral is a chance which may be taken up; yet it may be also, and as easily, forfeited” (Bauman, 1993: 77).

The ‘I’ becomes somehow rebel towards the ethics since it makes the individual feel like as it is an unconditional command. However, it also surrenders to ethics as social norms since they promise a peaceful mind in return to renouncing of the individual consent. The moral self does not seemingly have a well-organized and orderly way of processing. Not because it is irrational but because the self only becomes truly moral if the moral performance is set off by the urge to do. In other words, morality should come from within so that it can be pure, and purity requires the absence of consciousness to be able to be possessed. Since morality is an urge, as Knud Ejler Løgstrup (Danish philosopher) mentions in his work *The Ethical Demand*, the individual cannot possibly be sure if she/he followed the pattern of right manner (Løgstrup, 1997: 114). The foundation of uncertainty is seemingly all morality can have in terms of foundations. For this reason, self-assurance is quite challenging to obtain in the context of morality.

### 1.2.5. Alteration of the Individualistic Characters by Ethical Code

In addition to abovementioned subject of universality, Bauman thinks that the world would be left uncontrolled as long as the things remained tacit. However, while making the rules clear, it is important to avoid ‘depersonalization’ of the individual. If the ethical norms stay as a priori, Bauman explains that the moral ‘I’ will become a serving role for the ethical ‘we’ which is the main matter in the *RMD*. The protagonist in the novel sacrifices his ‘I’ in order to include himself to the group of ethical ‘we’ that he feels obliged to do by taking his ideals and lifestyle into consideration. On the other hand, in order to have a salt collective ‘we’, all the individuals must be identical ‘I’s which is not possible given the nonresemblance of each living individual. Moreover, from the moral standpoint, there is the existing relationship of ‘I’ and the ‘other’. This relationship has to be an asymmetrical relationship according to both Bauman and Levinas. The reason for that is this relationship between the I and the other evolves into the ‘I for the other’ relationship. It is the labouring of the I since it does not necessarily matter if the ‘Other is for the I’. Whether Other is for the I or not, I stays committed to the Other. Therefore, this becomes an asymmetrical, irreversible and unhealthy relationship. Therewithal, it is also not possible to exchange the I and the Other in a moral relationship. The each cannot be combined. In other words, a ‘we’ cannot be constituted out of it. This is because, in this relationship it is solely the I that carries out the rules and the duties that she/he has been assigned to. All the responsibilities are laid as a burden on the I’s shoulders and all the Other does is expecting is blind obedience, sacrifice and respect. Other expects all these from ever I as an individual. However, what Bauman suggests is that the pure morality that carries good is when this responsibility is naturally wanted internally. It should not be performed just to make the actions identical with the other I’s who has to act this way as well. According to Bauman, it should be done as if the individual is the only one who is obliged to perform this way. When it becomes a responsibility forced by an external authority, it becomes a tool for the guilty conscience. From the other perspective, the individual also should not demand any others to perform in like manner. Moral responsibility of an individual should be matched to the individuals own moral impulse so that she/he can have a freer decision. Taking into account all these factors in the relationship between ‘I’ and the ‘Other’, it can be said that the protagonist in the *RMD* is unable to maintain his life on the grounds that he represents ‘I for the Other’

relationship between himself and morality. It evolves into an unhealthy relationship exactly as Bauman suggests and it results in ‘Depersonalization’ of the individual. How the butler goes through the depersonalization process is provided in detail in the textual analysis part of the present study which is placed in Chapter II.

Responsibility does not have ‘purpose’ or ‘reason’. (it is not an effect of ‘will’ or ‘decision’; not something that can be, at will, assumed or not, and non-existent if not assumed; it is rather the *impossibility* of not being responsible for this Other here and now that constitutes my moral capacity) (Bauman, 1993: 52-53).

In addition to that, there is the ambiguity of possibility of any event and since anything might happen, there cannot be a word said by the authority figures about what is going to happen. To some extent, these factors build distrust in terms of morality. However, morality still has a chance to become more genuine if it is redirected to good use by different establishments which are more trustworthy and reliable than their original owners.

### **1.3. Postmodernism**

French philosopher, sociologist, and literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) made great contributions to the field of Postmodernism. His best-known and widely acclaimed work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* helped him to become one of the pioneering notable personages for postmodernism. This work of his is connected with the main argument of the thesis which defends the idea of applying the characteristics of postmodernity to ethics will do good and it is necessary since the pre-established morals of yesterday cannot be applied to today’s world anymore. The main aim of adding Lyotard to the discussion of the present study is to connect Lyotard’s concept of ideas to the morality itself. His mentioned work is taken as a reference thereby the main argument of the thesis is strengthened. To clarify, some parts of the *Postmodern Condition* will be provided below rather than giving it as a whole discussion and the given parts will be the parts which are chosen deliberately in order

to be connected with the main argument of the present dissertation. They are used as pro-arguments rather than being the main scope of the present study.

### 1.3.1. Ethics as Metanarratives

Lyotard, in his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, mentions the 20<sup>th</sup> century crisis of *metanarratives* which are also named grand narratives. Postmodern condition is, at its simplest, the philosophy that people no longer believe the big stories about humanity. These big stories, which are named as metanarratives by Lyotard, might be anything that is set up as an absolute system of belief for every occasion without paying attention to the culture, tradition, age etc (Lyotard, 1984). This system of belief is constructed by an individual or a group of thinkers that work for a common goal and that common goal of this concept is to unite people around one knowledge. Reason, truth, freedom, progress, Christianity, Islam and all other religions, liberalism, Marxism etc. are only a few examples for metanarratives. The Dutch academic writer Hans Bertens prefers to put metanarratives in this way: “Supposedly transcendent and universal truths that underpin western civilization” (Bertens, 1995: 124).

According to Lyotard, metanarratives are purported definite absolutes which are inhibitory, persistent, majorly elusive, and non-existent concepts. He calls them as “fallacious truisms” (Lyotard, 1984: 7). In modern era, society tries to create one absolute self-regulating system which has its own truths and limits. In other words, our society is built with metanarratives. In Western world, as it appears to be now, there is a link between the truth and politics and ethics as Lyotard indicates. One of the impacts that appears as a resultant of the interlinkage between the two is that science’s possibility of getting into conflicts with local narratives. Lyotard raises this claim of the conflict between science and local narratives and brings the reader to the question of who decides what knowledge is and who decides which knowledge is acceptable: “For it appears in its most complete form, that of reversion, revealing that knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?” (Lyotard, 1984: 9). In other words, he asks who has the power since

he believes knowledge and power are the two sides of the same coin. With this question Lyotard finishes the second chapter of *PMC* which is titled as “The Problem: Legitimation”.

However, in postmodern era, Lyotard states that modern metanarratives have lost their legitimation. Lyotard depicts postmodern as “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv). In postmodern science, people no longer believe in metanarratives. They no longer view the world as a totalized value. They are more sceptical towards many things in life. The reason caused the disbelief of people towards metanarratives is that the society started to change with the progression in science, and the established knowledge is now turned into a material. People need new information. People need to move to something else; something can never be assimilated into one absolute system. By the reason of the fact that there is no longer a metanarrative or variety of metanarratives, people do not have something to look forward to and therefore they left isolated. Because people obtain knowledge as a way to freedom. Lyotard claims that the operating system of society must be understood in order to understand the nature of the knowledge in modern times. Metaphorically, metanarratives are used as building blocks in society. People’s interactions are based on metanarratives. In case there are no metanarratives to follow, people no longer know in what way to build the blocks for society. In such circumstances, here is what Lyotard suggest; he passes a remark on the matter that there is no longer need for an institution that controls all. Instead, what is wrong or what is right should be worked by the “consensus”. As Lyotard explains, science is not the only knowledge people have. Among science, people have several types of knowledge. A person needs to be educated and trained for a certain type of knowledge to be built. When the knowledge is built, a person who behaves according to the set of rules that is considered as acceptable by the group of people who are in the same cycle. In other words, people need to be trained for a certain type of narrative so that she/he can get accepted by the culture. In the end, institutions are no longer necessary for setting the rules as a governing figure. Rather than that, the system can work within itself by the consensus.

The transmission of knowledge can be established by the social link. Therefore, Lyotard defends the idea that people do not need history anymore to know what is true since all the knowledge is provided by the social link. People no longer need to expect salvation from these inconsistencies (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv). Thus, societies are becoming postmodern since they no longer choose to believe in or follow metanarratives. However, something should fulfil the lack of knowledge which is caused by the disbelief towards metanarratives. To clarify, even though people lost faith in these metanarratives, it does not mean that they completely disregard the existence of the mentioned knowledge. Rather than that, the metanarratives are being approached by a more sceptical view. However, it is certain that their supremacy is declined.

Postmodern belief relies on variety, reflexivity, instability, and multiplicity of truth. As Portoghesi states “[e]very day, we witness the collapse and changes of the great central systems with which we deluded ourselves that everything could be explained” (Portoghesi, 1993: 314). In postmodern world, the knowledge is not universally established. Instead, it is determined locally. Similarly, Lyotard believes that metanarratives should give its place to little or micro, local narratives (originally *petits récits* in French). Little narratives should take place for people’s search for knowledge. Little narratives, on the contrary to metanarratives, do not claim authority over other narratives. They do not require control by modern institutions or legitimation. Being in contrast to metanarratives does not prove little narratives as being irregular. As Lyotard puts it; “It is not without rules (there are classes of catastrophes), but it is always locally determined” (Lyotard, 1984: 61). However, it is a fact that little narratives do not bring a solution solitarily to the overall problem. Lyotard strongly defends the idea that little narratives are possible to work as anti-narratives for metanarratives. As a result of the usage of little narratives, the problematic consequences of universalization of narratives will be minimized since they are non-hegemonic, non-universalizing and non-limited unlike metanarratives. Monika Kilian prefers to explain it in a quite explanatory way:

“Grand (or meta-) narratives” and “micronarratives” distinguish between modern and postmodern strategies: grand narratives are overarching, totalizing discourses that modern thought uses to justify and achieve its ideal of

universal validity, while micronarratives are the individual language games that can be subsumed under grand narratives (Kilian, 1998: 8).

The status of the knowledge changes and therefore Lyotard thinks these totalizing concepts must leave its place to newly produced values and discourses as well. The American philosopher Steven Best and American critic and academic Douglas Kellner come together to write about postmodern theory and in their work, it is stated that “The postmodern [in the sense of Lyotard’s definition] is associated with the need for experimentation and producing new discourses and values” (Best & Kellner, 1991: 164). Lyotard claims that transformation is in the nature of knowledge. In contrast to the modern knowledge, postmodern knowledge is no longer a tool for the authorities; “Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable” (Lyotard, 1984: xxv).

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms, the consensus of a taste which would make it possible to share collectively the nostalgia for the unattainable; that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable (Lyotard, 1984: 81).

Through the end of his work, as it seen in the quotation just above, Lyotard clarifies the purpose of postmodern philosophy as non-arbitrary. On the contrary, it is a necessity that concludes people cannot go with the same predetermined totalizations since the nature of both knowledge and human is progressive and transmissive. The two are co-dependent. Therefore, Lyotard claims that a text which is written by a postmodern author neither can be governed by preestablished rules nor can be judged according to a fixed judgment. It will not be necessary anyway since “it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented” (Lyotard, 1984: 81). As a conclusion, Lyotard writes his last lines which are quite self-explanatory: “... Let us

wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences...” (Lyotard, 1984: 82).

#### **1.4. Postmodern Ethics and Society**

Bauman suggests that in postmodernity the beforementioned Other is being readmitted as a neighbour, not as an ulterior motive. With postmodernity, the significance of the moral autonomy, which was ignored in modern ethics, is restored. Thus, rather than protesting about the Other, the postmodern individual embraces it and realizes the fact that it is an essential character for moral self to come to the realization of itself. Unlike before, inter-subjectivity appears in postmodern ethics as well. Responsibility is not forced on the individual by a priori in postmodernism, it now becomes a priori. It is necessary again to underline the fact that postmodernism does not follow or defend the opinion of full freedom. On the contrary, it is aware of what can full freedom cause. Besides, no freedom can be absolute. As one of the most appreciated French philosophers Émile Durkheim claims, full freedom is precisely the slavery of any other thing (Durkheim, 1938). Therefore, responsibility necessarily exists. In moral context, morality should maintain not as an oppressive responsibility but as care. The thin line between the two must be well-preserved. Bauman explains morality as a caress hand: “The caressing hand, characteristically, remains open, never tightening into a grip,..., it touches without pressing...” (Bauman, 1993: 92). For each relationship the attitude is reformed, and the relationships can get more vulnerable depending on their intimacy level. Speaking of which, it is crucial to mention the connecting points of morality and love. In particular, the two share a similar nature. If it is assumed as a duty, love gets dragged towards death. Therefore, it should be an inner urge in order to perform purity and truth. The case is identical for morality as it also should be frank and candid. In addition to duty, love requires no labour as it is a healthier performance for the moral self as well. In both cases strict fixations are causing negative effects. In the end, ambivalence and insecurity becomes no longer disturbing for both cases, because it is never possible to have the full knowledge of the matter neither for love nor for the morality.

Bauman defines the society as ‘all, some, many, and their companions’. Since each of these have unique lives, the natural right to define their lives partially depending on their own standards. It should be partially, otherwise it would be impossible to control the order. As mentioned before, society needs order. However, it is impossible to establish a fully ordered society as it is impossible to have a rule or a regulation for every unique situation. Every society has voids or limbos, and this is normalized though it is not welcomed or brought into view by the authorities for the reason that social control is the primary principle for the heteronomy of the behaviour. Society is structured. The void might not be brought into everyone’s view, but it does not necessarily mean that every relation, condition or situation can be codified or standardized. On the contrary, autonomous moral behaviour tries to escape every form of codification since it only serves itself not to any other purpose. It still stays an authority, an authority without the pressure of being forced and constrained. An authority that welcomes the differences rather than discriminating or otherizing them. An authority without norms. Bauman suggests “Norms differentiate; normlessness dissolves the differences. In the crowd, we are all alike” (Bauman, 1993: 132). In postmodern times, unlike the modern times, there are sociality dominance over socialization, structure dominance over counter-structure, spontaneity dominance over norms, passion dominance over reason. Moral deed does not have to be rational anymore. It can be both irrational and moral, rational, and moral, irrational and immoral, and rational and immoral. To build a healthier society, what is necessary to understand that discipline does not mean to enslave or humiliate or oppress the individual. It solely maintains the order for a well-organized process.

Bauman divides the spacing into three different sections which are social spacing, aesthetic spacing, moral spacing. All three spaces have different aims and requirements. It is not necessary to explain what moral space aims since it has been explained in detail in the previous paragraphs of the present study. In terms of love relationships Bauman mentions the subject of togetherness as a playground. He chooses to use ‘play’ as a right word for the occasion just for its nature. He refers to the tastes, emotions, pleasures, delights etc. as plays. Not in the way that they are not serious things to be considered important but in the way that these things do not have and must have a fully sensible purpose. They do not need obligation as no play necessitates command. They are gratuitous actions, and they are true and free only if they are done fully gratuitously done.

Everything is possible for the plays. With all the possible probabilities, every play has rules of itself. However, rather than being established as obligations, these rules are exposed as 'conventions'. Principles might seem like the enemies of amusement. However, as Bauman suggests "...The enemies may, however, live occasionally in peace, or even co-operate, assist and reinvigorate each other" (Bauman, 1993: 180-181). As one can see, love belongs to the aesthetic space while morality belongs to the moral space. Even though these spaces are completely different and contrast concepts, they may meet at one point, or they can be combinative. Bauman defends the idea that two beforementioned conflicts (principles and amusement) can be added up together in a relationship. As a matter of fact, according to Bauman, only when the two come together people can maintain the value of the partnership, both in the context of moral and aesthetic space. This is what he calls 'successful love'. This subject of togetherness and love will take place in the third chapter of the present dissertation which provides the textual analysis of the novel *The Remains of The Day* and it will have more accuracy when it is applied to the events that the protagonist of the novel, Mr. Stevens, gets through in his love life.

In the light of all the beforementioned information and explanations, a conclusion can be expressed in short. Throughout the years, people were made the object of choices rather than being choosers themselves. Especially in modern times. With postmodernity it became harder than usual to keep the control since people are now more conscious of the incurable ambivalence of human life. Making autonomous decisions became a priority for individuals instead of becoming dominated objects. It became acceptable not to attribute every single subject to reason. Therefore, structured norms turned into a burden for individuals to be able to maintain the social control by the authorities. In postmodern era, people got the chance of sensible objection of pre-established norms to a certain extent. In terms of morality, it came to conclusion by postmodern ethicists that morality is in need of a modernization since it is in the phase of falling short with its current and unchanged form to be able to adapt to a postmodern individual's life. The intention is to stretch the rules because postmodern individuals' lives are much more complicated than the individuals which are taken into consideration while establishing the moral rules. With the changes in many areas of life, it was unexpected for human lives to stay the same as they were before. The focus, in certain cases, has to change from the goodness

of the action to the good outcome of the action. Morality definitely needs renovations to be able to preserve its power and value. Postmodern people are becoming distant towards morality since they are in the state of 'being for themselves' rather than the state of 'being for other'. In addition to that, progress and perfection fell behind the 'urge'. It still stays as a common idea that it is impossible to make every moral rule certain for any situation. However, autonomous moral responsibility is thought to be the best fit for the case. If the pure inner urge of individual is well-established, it is highly possible to be able to work out well for most of the occasions. Otherwise, there is no possible way of making things certain in this ocean of ambivalence and uncertainty of the present state of the world and human life. One can highly stay as a moral person without the oppressing rules which are pre-established by the dominant authorities whose primary aim is to preserve the supreme principle of the social control. It is not necessarily required for an individual to leave the realm of ulterior rule-based form of morality in order to establish her/his own autonomous moral responsibility. The reason for that is in postmodernity an individual does not necessarily have to be excluded from on realm just because she/he does not perform the requirements perfectly. In postmodernity, liquidity, ambivalence, uncertainty, occasional adaptations, irrationality, being unreasonable, individuality etc. are more than welcome concepts. According to Bauman, these re-adaptation of morality for the current postmodern world is not fully guaranteed. As he states: "It is a general feature of social change that while it puts right or attenuates the wrongs of yesterday, it also ushers in new wrongs bound to become a target of curative efforts tomorrow" (Bauman, 1993: 223). He defends the idea that a clear-cut and obvious result cannot be foreseen. However, he strictly stands by his word about these modernizations and re-adaptations will surely do good since people will become peacefully moral rather than suffering from their functionless and purposeless aims which are followed just for the sake of the feeling of being forced to do so. "Yesterday's pain - ... - has been proven to be purposeless and vain..." (Bauman, 1993: 225). Therefore, it seems perfectly fine and utterly necessary to open and follow a new path. Another reason why it is impossible to preserve yesterday's rules is that the co-ordination or the separation between aesthetic, cognitive and moral space is not stable and clear in postmodern world as it is used to be before. Option has to be superior to obligatory in certain cases. Ambivalence is not necessary to be fought against anymore, it must be embraced and accepted. To be able to maintain all these conditions together might not seem easy. However, there is no easy in the given circumstances of the current state of the world. It is now time to see that the universal

values forced upon people offer reasonable solutions and they might be seen as drugs in a sense. However, it is always good to keep in mind that when drugs are taken regularly and overdose, they turn into poison. Autonomy of the real self is a more trustable companion. The postmodern individual does not need all the total and ultimate priori of life which comes without ambiguity, error, danger, and risk. She/he is perfectly conscious about the fact that it is impossible to have it other way round. As Bauman perfectly puts it: "... the messiness of the human predicament is here to stay" (Bauman, 1993:245). The issues can be solved locally and on its own as well. Bauman names this as 'mini-order' which works in itself. This might not guarantee the resolution of all the moral problems of yesterday. However, the aim is not to resolve it. As it has been said, the aim is to adjust it to the new world order and new human life. Why exclude morality while it can be readjusted?

The concepts and ideas that are mentioned and explained as theories under each title of this chapter will be applied on specific events provided from the novel *The Remains of The Day* and they will be discussed furtherly in detail in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### TEXTUAL ANALYSIS REGARDING *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY* BY KAZUO ISHIGURO

In this chapter of the present study several sub-chapters are provided regarding the textual analysis of the *RMD*. As an introduction, a short chapter of the overview of the novel is provided in order to provide a prologue. Followingly, a wide entry is provided related to the main argument of the present study which has the purpose of discussing idealized concepts of professionalism and dignity as moral values are flawed and uncontemporary for post-modern world. This is the reason why professionalism and dignity are depicted as mistaken notions specifically uttered concerning the novel *RMD*. As Bauman suggests, people do not have their whole-selves since they have many different roles in different areas of life. Therefore, in order to prove the point accurately, the subject matter is divided and analysed under three different titles including respectively; the protagonist's relationship with Miss Kenton whom Mr. Stevens is involved with, his relationship with his former and current employees namely Lord Darlington and Mr. Farraday, and lastly his relationship with his father, William Stevens. All three relationships are clearly problematic at the hand of Mr. Stevens and the reasons for the problematizing of the issues are provided and scrutinized with the help of exact quotes taken from the first source, the novel *RMD*. In addition to these, to prove the argument accurately toward the oriented point, the help of the theories provided in the theoretical framework of the present study are received.

#### 2.1. *The Remains of The Day* and The Mistaken Notions

“The flaw lies in the suppression of the personal  
beneath the professional” (Atkinson, 1995: 212-213).

*The Remains of The Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro is a 1989 published novel which was nominated for the Booker Prize. The most acclaimed novel of the author addresses several issues from different standpoints. However, the focused subject in the present study is on the distorted idealism of the protagonist concerning dignity and professionalism as the acts of morality. The narrative takes place in the novel as it is told by the narrator (which is the protagonist) in the form of retelling his past. However, the narration is self-destructive and as a narrative strategy the narrator is reconstructing his past and his memories. The protagonist of the novel Mr. Stevens is a butler in majestic Darlington Hall which is located somewhere near Oxford, England. The mansion is named after Lord Darlington who is an English gentleman having an important political identity in terms of international relations. On the other hand, Lord Darlington has made decisions which are for the benefits of Nazi Germany which made him a Nazi sympathizer in 1950s England. Mr. Stevens had been brought up by a father who had also spent his life working as a butler and trying to be a great one. Mr. Stevens takes his father as a role-model, and he makes sure that he follows his principles of being a great butler. According to Mr. Stevens' father, a great butler should have dignity and he should act professional evermore in work sphere at any cost. There are long discussions taking place in several different chapters of the novel about the subject of how to be a great butler. The author ensures that the subject of being a great butler is highlighted in the novel for the reader. However, the concept of being a professional butler with dignity drags Mr. Stevens to abandon his humanely characteristics in several matters which will be discussed in the following pages in detail with necessary explanations and quotations from the novel provided. Through the late years of his life, Mr. Stevens ends up realizing the mistakes he has done and makes one last attempt in order to make up for one of his several mistakes which is about Miss Kenton who is now the former head housekeeper of Darlington Hall. However, it cannot possibly be ignored the fact that now it is too late. Therefore, the least he could do is to justify his actions in order to relieve his conscience and he does so in denial.

...The story I just finished was about an English Butler who realizes too late in his life that he has lived his life by the wrong values, that he's given his best years to serving a Nazi sympathizer, that by failing to take moral and political responsibility for his life. He has in some profound sense wasted that life and more that in his bid to become the perfect servant he

has forbidden himself to love or be loved by the one woman he cares for (Ishiguro, 2017).

In his Nobel lecture, Ishiguro summarizes *RMD* with a couple of sentences given above. Evidently these sentences are remarkably vital for the main argument of the present study. Mr. Stevens distortedly dedicates his life to his moral principles which are not even acquired himself after a rational process of thinking and coming to terms. These ideals were inherited from his father and picked up blindly, without questioning. Thus, it is a shame that a life has been wasted by the sacrifices which have been made in order not to deviate from principles which do not always result in as it is expected. This situation represents the probability of loss which might be caused by following Kantian ideals on ethics. Choosing the reason itself does not always result in good even though it seems rational to do so. It might seem right to follow the principles and do whatever is obligatory and avoid what is forbidden. However, there is no guarantee in terms of the outcome of the action. Simply, doing the right thing does not always bring the good outcome and the chance of appearance of an unobliging outcome followed by doing the right action is not very low, especially in postmodern era considering people's complex relationships with each other compared to the traditional relationships. As an exemplary figure, Mr. Stevens follows the steps of Kant's deontological theory which prioritizes the doing of the action rather than the outcome. If he would do otherwise, there was no possible harm for any parties included. However, Mr. Stevens is extremely caught up in his ideals and refuses to move away from them. He is not concerned with the outcome of the action. On the contrary, the only way that would make him feel peaceful is following the principles that are made clear about what is obligatory and what is forbidden by the authorities. However, with a postmodern view, Levinas' philosophy of ethics would work considerably better than Kant's philosophy of ethics. The actions made by Mr. Stevens would be more candid and more beneficial in many ways both for him and for people around him. He could do many things differently if he could follow the response that has automatically been evoked by the care and concern that he feels for others rather than following universalized rules of ethics that does not show regard to specific situations that are perfectly natural to appear when it comes to human relationships. Mr. Stevens' late life would most probably be more comfortable if he could consider individuals' good over society's good in some cases. Not only his life, but also the case would be the same for the people around him.

Ishiguro gives the reader a chance to scrutinize the protagonist, the butler of the Darlington Hall, Mr. Stevens throughout the novel. He has devoted his life following the aim of being a great butler. Through this path, Mr. Stevens has made several sacrifices, which were actually done unduly. Unfortunately, these sacrifices caused him a great deal of loss in terms of several matters. He has lost his chance to be himself and live his life as himself, not solely as a butler. Mr. Stevens seems to be recognizing his past faults while he is mentioning the past events. However, he has ignored his inner feelings too much that he is having troubles accepting his faults. Therefore, he is in denial for most of the time while he is retelling his past or speaking of the current date in the novel.

On the other hand, he has made a habit of not talking about his emotions, even to himself. For this reason, whenever he speaks about a matter related to his emotions, he always finds a way to fabricate different evidence that covers the real emotional reason for the action. In addition to these, he stirs the feeling of distrust in the reader about the accuracy of his memories since he still has the chance to alter details or to stay silent about them. Thus, there is a possibility of self-destructive narration or reconstructed narrative strategy which are both unreliable. However, it is not precisely certain and there is not a present opportunity of listening the events from different perspectives of the other sides. He has concealed himself from everyone around him, his family, colleagues, employers and most painfully from himself as well. The reason for Mr. Stevens to reconstruct his past is his regrets. “The novel depicts the role that memories can play in reconstructing the past events so that the present can be meaningful in some way from a postmodern standpoint” (Khalaf, 2017: 1). In most cases, reason is at variance with emotions. As Kant suggests about his theory of ethics, every situation must be treated equally without any exceptions. However, emotions make it difficult not to take exceptions into consideration. The reason for that is every relationship is unique and each of them have different dynamics. When emotions are included, the reason is not the only beneficial concept to be included in the relationships. Since emotions would make things unclear for Mr. Stevens, he decides to ignore them as much as he can. He avoids the world that he is not used to live in. Followingly this causes many losses from different points for Mr. Stevens. Thus, this supports the argument of why ethics should be postmodern as

Levinas suggests which is an idea that is based mostly on individual. Rather than trusting solely upon reason, postmodern ethics value the circumstances back and edge.

Qua characteristics, Mr. Stevens is a man who is most likely to be described as decent by consensus. Primarily, he is a great butler. He takes his job extremely seriously that he makes a comparison about his pantry. “The butler's pantry, as far as I am concerned, is a crucial office, the heart of the house's operations; not unlike a general's headquarters during a battle...” (Ishiguro, 1989: 119). During his years of service, he has done everything he can to serve to his masters in the possibly best manner. He displays exemplary behaviour in terms of the requirements of his job. He has a perfectionist ideology of professionalism which, according to him, must be carried out with dignity. What makes a great butler? What is ‘dignity’ for Mr. Stevens? What does it require? Hayes Society is a society which accepts only very first rank elite butler members in 1920s and 1930s. Mr. Stevens is not a member of society. However, he pays utmost attention to their pronouncements. To be able to become a member of Hayes Society “...the applicant be attached to a distinguished household” (Ishiguro, 1989: 84). Furthermore, “...the most crucial criterion is that the applicant be possessed of a dignity in keeping with his position” (Ishiguro, 1989: 25). Relating to the main argument of the thesis, it can be said that in a sense Hayes Society represents the code of moral behaviour which is universalized and in the benefit of society rather than the individual. It can clearly be seen that Hayes Society specifies the rules of ethics in a traditional way as it is in the traditional ethics. In its essence, it establishes a socially constructed conduct of being a great butler and it is taken into consideration by most of the butlers of the time. However, it is quite challenging to establish moral conducts as such since its aim is to practice universality and thus blocking individuality. Such conducts do not take emotional matters into consideration which is not rational regarding the fact that emotions are what make people unique creatures. Therefore, it becomes impossible for such universalized values to survive. Other than taking no account of individuality, such conducts make general statements which ignores an important detail. As mentioned in the theoretical framework of the present study, once again “Our ethical tools — the code of moral behaviour, the assembly of the rules of thumb we follow — have not been, simply, made to the measure of our present powers” (Bauman, 1993: 18). Such conducts try to make certain statements in order to preserve its clearance. However, they are far from being

clear since they do not take many crucial factors into consideration such as changes. These changes do not only cover individual changes in each of their private life. The world is changing every minute. There is a great number of innovations, alterations, variations that are appearing so rapidly that they are impossible to keep track of. On the other hand, it is also not possible to review all the rules every day and make changes considering the innovations. Postmodernism once again proves its point by defending the concept of impossibility of socially constructed conducts. Even though such changes are made they would be impossible to keep track of by the people. For all these reasons, already-set moral code stays uncertain and non-universalizable. This matter supports and suggests individual capacity for controlling individual fate. In certain cases, individual must be in charge of the managements. In the frame of certain rules, postmodern ethics suggest personal judgment which makes more sense comparing to doing what is morally good without thinking individual welfare, interest, and salvation. With being a part of a bigger responsibility, each individual can self-evaluate the situation with measuring the outcomes of their actions in the frame of certain ethical rules. It is essential to consider not only the action but also outcome of it and the people who would be affected by them in what possible ways. Needless to say, that it would not be possible to measure and estimate accurately the outcome of an action and who would be affected by it in which ways. However, following the flawed action just because of the good will does not seem like a better option comparing to self-judgment.

In addition to Hayes Society's pronouncements, Mr. Stevens makes his own definition of a great butler as:

If one looks at these persons we agree are 'great' butlers, if one looks at, say, Mr Marshall or Mr Lane, it does seem to me that the factor which distinguishes them from those butlers who are merely extremely competent is most closely captured by this word 'dignity' (Ishiguro, 1989: 25).

Dignity is of capital importance for Mr. Stevens. However, it becomes of a disquieting and flawed notion in his case in consequence of his conception. It is flawed since it neglects and disowns the territorially and temporal bond. What is dignity composed of

according to Mr. Stevens? "...my father was indeed the embodiment of 'dignity'" (Ishiguro, 1989: 26). His fundamentally flawed professional values including dignity being in the first place comes from a paternal figure. He thinks his father is one of the 'distinguished' great butlers and what makes him distinguished is the dignity he carries. Mr. Stevens seems to be ignoring the fact that his fathers' generation and his generation cannot possibly be the same which is called contemporary differentiation and proves that values belong to different time and for them to survive into following times without being altered causes false pretences (Bauman, 1993: 38). Nonetheless, he insists on following his father's ideals and he is proud by doing so. He evaluates the situations by the criteria of what his father would do and whatever he does concerning professional issues is unquestionably right. There are numbers of examples given in the novel by the narrator about in what manners his father acted when he faced difficult situations during his career, and he is amazed by every single of the behaviour that his father displayed. The novel sets a perfect example with Mr. Stevens by showing that same traditional ethical rules are not possible to be applied the same for different generations as it is not possible to apply them to every situation as there are not different factors that will affect the course of events and their outcome. Mr. Stevens fails to understand the differences about both time and environment. Therefore, his actions drag him to several failures.

To be brief, being a great butler with dignity, both for the father and Mr. Stevens, requires carrying on professional duties whatever the circumstances are. In any situation, duty always comes first in Mr. Stevens life. However, as ethical code of behaviour has not been made by measuring the present factors, Mr. Stevens' father's definition of dignity does not accurately apply to every one of Mr. Stevens' life events. Furthermore, accepting and devoting oneself to such law-like ethics means the disownment of the self for people.

The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing. They wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably

be when he is entirely alone. It is, as I say, a matter of 'dignity' (Ishiguro, 1989: 32).

The given quotation is perfectly summarizing how a butler must maintain his life as far as Mr Stevens is concerned. However, his conception of dignity is deeply ingrained and estranged from humanely characteristics. In other words, he chooses to count on the metanarrative of morality which is a heteronomous behaviour that does not allow people to choose. Moreover, Mr. Stevens considers doing all these would not be enough to attain dignity and it is the crucial responsibility of every butler to think further and thoroughly about these matters thus they can endeavour in order to get closer attaining dignity for themselves. Postmodernity believes in the idea that each modern individual has split lives. Everyone has different personalities requiring different responsibilities in each cycle such as family-cycle, work-cycle et cetera (Bauman, 1993: 19). People do not have their whole-selves. This makes it hard to live a life with only committing the self to a single cycle. Mr. Stevens tries to carry out his life as he has one whole-self and that is him in his work-cycle. He lets his butler role to change and suppress his real-self. He fails to understand that his responsibility of being a decent butler belongs to “the *role*, not to the *person* who performs it” (Bauman, 1993: 19). As a consequence, he finds himself with regrets about his losses and there is nothing he can do about it anymore. In a way, it becomes hard to judge Mr. Stevens since rules become a habit as Bauman argues as well. However, there are so many rules that in certain circumstances they contradict with each other which causes uncertainty. This uncertainty is followed by the thesis statement that it is impossible to universalize socially constructed conducts -which is moral values in present case- as postmodernism suggests.

As a butler, Mr. Stevens pays attention to many details concerning domestic responsibilities and staff plan that perchance no one ever could think of. For instance, it surprises the reader at first glance that he remembers almost every guest that has ever been in Darlington Hall, even if they are visitors from years ago or decades ago. As an additional example, he never calls his masters, neither Lord Darlington nor Mr. Farraday, by their names or with a third-person pronoun even when he is alone in his thoughts. The reason for that is another irrational and oppressive pronunciation published by Hayes Society: “as the Hayes Society once put it, should never allow himself to be 'off duty'”

(Ishiguro, 1989: 122). Therefore, he either refers to them with their titled names or phrases such as ‘my employer’ or ‘his lordship’. Mr. Stevens embraces his work so thoroughly that it becomes inevitable to keep his professional life away from his private life. Moreover, he is scared of showing his humanely side to others - by the word humanely the main emphasis is on emotions – as it is proved when he was reading a romance novel and Miss Kenton recognizes it, he tries to prove that he is reading it since it is one of the most efficient ways of developing the command of the English language and a butler must have a good command of it. He feels embarrassed and tries to hide the novel to his drawer since he got caught in his very private place in which he does not completely locks himself inside his protecting shell. Later on, he recognizes his own mistake while he is retelling of his past.

Having said that, however, I do not mind confessing today - and I see nothing to be ashamed of in this - that I did at times gain a sort of incidental enjoyment from these stories. I did not perhaps acknowledge this to myself at the time, but as I say, what shame is there in it? Why should one not enjoy in a light-hearted sort of way stories of ladies and gentlemen who fall in love and express their feelings for each other, often 'in the most elegant phrases? (Ishiguro, 1989: 121).

Mr. Stevens’ commitment to moral values makes the reader question whether he is doing the right thing or not. This is a matter of moral ambivalence. From different perspectives, it is natural to come up with different thoughts considering Mr. Stevens’ way of life. One cannot claim that he is doing completely right or completely right. According to Bauman, a person who follows the requirements of one set of norms is breaching and disobeying the requirements of another set of laws, and it is not always clear which disobedience is the lesser evil (Bauman, 1993: 21). This is another area of moral ambiguity. Such uncertainties come together and compose moral ambivalence. Since it is impossible to eradicate all uncertainties from human life, postmodernism asserts the idea that embracing ambiguity is essential. However, Mr. Stevens wanted and believed everything to be clear. He trusted the authority of ethics fully and for a long time. He never doubted the ideals he has. He begins to wonder if it was worthwhile to spend his entire life adhering to the values that mattered most to him, as he recognizes that he has failed to

adapt the principles to the specific circumstances in his life that demanded individual insight rather than the constraints of generalized norms.

On the other hand, Mr. Stevens defines people's goodness by their dignity or their decency which excludes a great deal of good features that a person can have. Thinking of the reasons why Mr. Stevens committed his life fully to his profession, Mr. Stevens' case can be explained as Erich Fromm, the German psychologist, states "in our effort to escape from aloneness and powerlessness, we are ready to get rid of our individual self either by submission to new forms of authority or by a compulsive conforming to accepted patterns" (Fromm, 1960: 116). In addition to that, as it is evidently known, Mr. Stevens gives an utmost importance to moral values. Contrary to his belief, as revealed by the many events given in the novel he lies many times, both to himself and others. "*The Remains of the Day* and *An Artist of a Floating World* both seem to be about men who have an extraordinary capacity to lie to themselves, while at the same time presenting themselves as very precise and cautious truth-tellers" (Vorda, Herzinger, & Ishiguro, 1991: 150). He constantly lies in order to hide what he is feeling. In the following chapters of the present study, Mr. Stevens' characteristics is shown and scrutinized by being divided into three different sections by giving correspondingly quotations both from the novel and related academic sources. These three relationships are specifically chosen since they have the most significance related to Mr. Stevens' life and personality.

### **2.1.1. Mr. Stevens' Relationship with Miss Kenton**

"Miss Kenton: Why, Mr. Stevens, why, why,  
why do you always have to pretend?  
Mr. Stevens: Really, Miss Kenton. I'm not sure I know what you mean.  
Pretend? Why, really..." (Ishiguro, 1989: 110).

A major part of Mr. Stevens' recollections is occupied with his painful memories about his friendship with the former housekeeper of Darlington Hall, Miss Kenton. Ishiguro prefers to name it as "A sad and humorous love story" (Ishiguro, 1989: 2). He appreciates Miss Kenton and cherishes most of the time that they spend together. Mr.

Stevens' greatest regret about Miss Kenton is that he was never able to acknowledge his emotions for Miss Kenton. Preferably he defines their relationship as an excellent professional relationship. What holds him back from admitting what he feels was his obsession with his ideals. He follows Kant's concept, and he also thinks emotions should be stood up to since morality is identical to unfeeling of emotions for the reason that ethics are based solely on reason. Mr. Stevens always finds involving emotions to work life as unprofessional, thus, disreputable. Therefore, for him refusing feelings means virtue in a sense. As mentioned above, Mr. Stevens never lets himself off duty. Therefore, he refuses to experience his emotions and make actions considering his emotions in his private life when he is off-duty in real terms. However, he gets a small chance of making things right after several years. Yet, things do not go as he planned, and he is once more alone together with his regrets. In its essence, Mr. Stevens intends to do good as ethical rules desire for people to do. Doing good brings interest and self-love. However, for Mr. Stevens things do not work as it is expected and rather than interest and self-love Mr. Stevens obtains several losses. The only reason for that is the idealization and obsession that Mr. Stevens has about the moral values. Despite his good intentions he does not always experience good outcomes with Miss Kenton which once more shows the uncertainty of the ethical code of behaviour. These uncertainties which is followed by ambivalence causes the impossibility of universalization of ethics as postmodernism also suggests. Such rules are far from interpretation of the special events. However, ethical rules try to reduce the plurality as much as possible. Therefore, there is no choice left other than embracing the ambivalence. Bauman clearly suggests as:

Ethics — a moral code, wishing to be the moral code, the one and only set of mutually coherent precepts that ought to be obeyed by any moral person — views the plurality of human ways and ideals as a challenge, and the ambivalence of moral judgements as a morbid state of affairs yearning to be rectified (Bauman, 1993: 21).

As mentioned in Chapter I, Bauman divides ethics into two sections and names them as Modern and Postmodern Ethics. Modern ethics, according to Bauman, is intolerant of allowing the moral self to embrace the equivocal and ambiguous aspects of both life and ethics. To retain social dominance, modern ethics were adopted as a strategy. In this

matter, Mr. Stevens chooses to follow Modern ethics and he takes everything many steps further and he idolizes these moral values. Since modern ethics represent the traditional understanding and adoption of ethics, postmodern ethicists -including Bauman- highly criticize it for many reasons. It can be said that modern ethics are similar to Kantian ethics which also does not value individual which is the case in Mr. Stevens life. In terms of his love relationship, Mr. Stevens once again fails both parties included since he fails to approach this relationship as a playground which do not need obligation as no play necessitates command. Existing principles are contrary concepts to such feelings of amusement. Mr. Stevens tries to include both morality and love into a same space which is not likely to work out since they belong to different spaces. In order to have a successful love relationship without problems they should be combined. However, Mr. Stevens thinks that it is a fatal mistake to include love relationships into the moral space.

The prologue of the novel is opened by Mr. Stevens' excitement sentences about the journey that he is going to take towards the West Country England which he can hardly hide his joy about. The new owner of the Darlington Hall Mr. Farraday, an American gentleman, suggests Mr. Stevens to take five or six days off while he was away. All these years that Mr. Stevens have worked in Darlington Hall; he has never taken even a small trip to see around the country. He replies to Mr Farraday as he empathizes with him about being locked up in big mansions throughout the years, "It has been my privilege to see the best of England over the years, sir, within these very walls" (Ishiguro, 1989: 6). It is sorrowful to see such a person that dedicated his life only to his profession and never left the working sphere. He lost his own essence to be approved by the rules. The main reason that excites Mr. Stevens about the journey, even though he partially reveals it later on, is his chance to see Miss Kenton, the former housekeeper of Darlington Hall. Recent arrival of her letter after seven years and the current situation of Miss Kenton's widowhood gave Mr. Stevens hope for the chance of making things right in terms of his relationship with her. It was more than a simple work companionship or a plain friendship. Mr. Stevens' affection for Miss Kenton was not only limited to the exemplariness of her professionalism and Miss Kenton had an interest not only for serving as a head housekeeper in Darlington Hall. However, Mr. Stevens tried his best in order to avoid any emotional interaction while they were working together since he thinks relationships containing emotional bonds in working sphere are not professional at all and

they are definitely harmful for one's own dignity which he gives of his best in order to preserve. He once comments on the decision of two members of the staff to get married as:

... but what I find a major irritation are those persons - and housekeepers are particularly guilty here - who have no genuine commitment to their profession and who are essentially going from post to post looking for romance. This sort of person is a blight on good professionalism (Ishiguro, 1989: 37).

In the given quotation Mr. Stevens clearly states that he is irritated from people who are looking for or chasing romance since he finds it utterly unprofessional even though there is not an evident reason that the romance between the two members of the staff was causing setbacks for their daily professional duties. He once more shows that he follows the steps of traditional -modern as Bauman puts it- ethics. Purposiveness, beneficence, certainty, established principles, singularity, regulation, and so forth are all obsessions of modern ethics. Postmodern ethics, in contrast to modernism, can be regarded as more open-minded and diverse. For this reason, Mr. Stevens never accepts the fact that he has sincere emotions for Miss Kenton during the time they are working together. As a defence mechanism, Mr. Stevens keeps denying the real reasons of his actions and he always tries to find a different rational and professional reason of which he can hide behind. Bauman's idea of relying on the rules becoming a habit can be properly applied to Mr. Stevens' situation.

Since Mr. Stevens has devoted his life in order to live as a butler with dignity, for his journey to visit Miss Kenton in west he repeatedly states that the reason for visiting her is has relevance to only professional matters without any further questions which represents the psychological state of Mr. Stevens clearly. He is so caught up in his ethical values that he does not even admit to himself while he is alone with his thoughts. No matter the circumstances and the consequences, he chooses to deny his emotions since he considers morality as a solid and an unchangeable state.

... - indeed, that the notion of a trip to the West Country took an ever increasing hold on my thoughts – is no doubt substantially attributable to – and why should I hide it? – the arrival of Miss Kenton’s letter, her first in almost seven years if one discounts the Christmas cards. But let me make it immediately clear – what I mean by this; what I mean to say is that Miss Kenton’s letter set off a certain chain of ideas to do with professional matters here at Darlington Hall, and I would underline that it was a preoccupation with these very same professional matters that led me to consider anew my employer’s kindly meant suggestion. But let me explain further... (Ishiguro, 1989: 6).

After a long explanation, Mr. Stevens seems dissatisfied and still continues to explain and fulfil his action with half-truths for several pages more because reason must overrule passions since emotions does not have a significance in the world of morality. However, there are several undeniable contrary actions that he takes such as trying to decide which of his finest suits to wear many days before the trip or even considering buying a new one. Though, he continues to underline the reason of his visit as to correct the faulty staff plan by bringing Miss Kenton back every moment that the subject is brought up. He is explicitly neglecting himself emotionally in the direction of his both individually and collectively constructed moral analysis which are flawed and insisted upon. After long days of thinking and making arrangements Mr. Stevens decides to inform Miss Kenton and he puts his thought into words in a very surprising way: “... I would of course have to write to Miss Kenton to tell her I might be passing by...” (Ishiguro, 1989: 17). The phrase of ‘passing by’ must be underlined here. Mr. Stevens keeps following his ideals of his father as it is expected to be, because showing emotions is not considered to be professional at all. The crucial question here is what would happen if Mr. Stevens would accept he is emotionally attached to Miss Kenton? Which choice would make him a ‘good’ person with dignity? Mr. Stevens is characterized as a responsible individual throughout the novel. He seems like a perfect fit for a person to have moral autonomy. He could easily adapt moral values to his life with self-regulating them to certain situations as postmodernism suggests. However, he chooses to do otherwise with his relationship with Miss Kenton which causes him pain and regrets about his actions and the sacrifices he made.

He once gives an example about a similar experience his father had during his working years and states that at the end of the event he praises his father for the reason that “Yet so well did my father hide his feelings, so professionally did he carry out his duties” (Ishiguro, 1989: 31-32). One can find hiding feelings during the hours of attendance tolerable to a degree. However, this example of his father is concerning a particular matter. The subject his father conceals his emotions is about serving a guest of the house that he serves as a butler years ago. The guest is a General who serves military for years. The General is very fond of bragging about his achievements during his service years. After serving four days for this – as Mr. Stevens’ father depicts – rude, disrespectful, inconsiderate, ill-mannered gentleman, the moment he hears about the military memory mentioning how Mr. Stevens’ brother died, his father decides to hide his feeling and continue to his duty. In terms of ethics, it stays as a disputable subject. However, it is certain that the idea of hiding feelings at any cost in order to be professional is flawed and far from the nature of human beings indeed. As many other cases, Mr. Stevens fails to act postmodern in terms of his ethical code and he counts on the institution that controls everything – which is pre-established moral rules in this case - rather than choosing to self-regulate and to adjust the rules. He chooses to follow Kantian ethics over Levinas’ concept of ethics. Reason overweighs the insight for Mr. Stevens which caused him to spend and inhumanely life. As opposed to Kant’s idea of every situation should be treated equally without any exception, Mr. Stevens could self-regulate his actions about what is wrong or what is right to do concerning his very specific emotional matter with Miss Kenton without harming anyone. Eventually, as stated in the theoretical framework, the reason of existence of ethical values is to conduct relationships peacefully as Bauman indicates (Bauman, 1993: 16). However, in Mr. Stevens’ case it clearly discomforts both parties of the relationship. Unfortunately, it can clearly be seen that reason by itself is not enough to bring all the problems to the solution because of the messiness of the human world. This is another aspect that proves why ethics should be postmodern. Even though Mr. Stevens intends good will, his relationship with Miss Kenton shows that he is not brave enough to embrace the ambivalence which is a part of human life. He wants everything to be clear within the certain lines. Since postmodernity accepts and embraces obscurity, ambiguity, ambivalence, arbitrariness, and more concepts alike while modernity rejects them, in certain situations it is better to adjust the rules. Once again, self-regulation of the ethical rules does not mean the rejection of them. Mr. Stevens

proves the fact that it is not possible to live such a life with the regrets he has through the end of his life about the sacrifices he made wantonly.

As another serious matter that causes discomfort for Mr. Stevens is leaving the Darlington Hall. The feeling of leaving Darlington Hall behind vexes him and shortly after leaving he experiences a moment of crisis.

The feeling swept over me that I had truly left Darlington Hall behind, and I must confess I did feel a slight sense of alarm - a sense aggravated by the feeling that I was perhaps not on the correct road at all, but speeding off in totally the wrong direction into a wilderness. It was only the feelings of a moment, but it caused me to slow down. And even when I had assured myself I was on the right road, I felt compelled to stop the car a moment to take stock, as it were (Ishiguro, 1989: 18-19).

Leaving his professional duties for one week seems to stress Mr. Stevens highly even though he reassures himself that everything is arranged by paying strict attention to every single detail. There is an undisguisable fact that living his life by these mistaken notions caused Mr. Stevens psychological problems. He makes all the arrangements by thinking thoroughly for them to work out perfectly while he is gone for a short period. However, this does not reassure him about the safety of the Darlington Hall. The reason for that is Mr. Stevens leaving his comfort zone. His life comes into existence by work and without work he feels stressed. Having no butler responsibilities for a week makes him feel like he is running into 'wilderness' as he states. The idea and the real experience of life outside work makes him feel at an extreme unease traumatically. Leaving his comfort zone for the first time in his life was totally a new experience. The main reason behind Mr. Stevens' discomfort is actually about his emotional attachment to Miss Kenton. Per chance, he does not ready to confront his emotional side pushing to emerge since he is not ready to face it. However, in postmodern world human emotions are regarded because they allow people to be humane. "Naturalist Charles Darwin believed that emotions are adaptations that allow both humans and animals to survive and reproduce" (Cherry, 2020). Since they are an important part of people's live, they cannot be ignored. On the other hand, it is hard to explain and make attributions to emotions in terms of rationality.

However, once more inexplicable nature of emotions is welcome in postmodernism. Rather than law-like depersonalized rationality, embracing ambiguity and learning to live it is a better option.

To what extent is Mr. Stevens good or evil? This question might seem devious. Indeed, it raises several questions from many different perspectives. Some, who are traditional ethicists in this case, would approve Mr. Stevens' actions as they should have been taken and he did the right thing all along and therefore he is a morally good person. The others would disagree based on how many chances Mr. Stevens' have lost and the consequences were sorrowful for both parties of his relationships. On the other hand, does the situation of him not taking the chances make him an evil person? This is another matter of discussion. As it can be seen, when a person is included in a matter it is not easy to have solid and unchangeable answers or judgments which is a natural and unavoidable fact. This is what postmodern thinking tries to explain in the first place. Good and evil are not constants. Quite the contrary, they are functional values. Therefore, every case should be treated uniquely. Bauman suggests the idea that as determining units, there are two aspects to consider: people like us and those unlike us. In Mr. Stevens' case, people like him -who are traditional ethicists- would definitely approve what actions he took in order to preserve his dignity. On the other hand, from the postmodern ethicist point of view, Mr. Stevens is criticized. There is also a chance that some modern ethicists might think that he has gone too far, and some postmodern ethicist might comment on certain situations that he did the right thing. As Bauman perfectly explains, "The fact that the images of good and evil do differ from one place to another and one epoch to another, and that there is little one can do about it, has not been a secret..." (Bauman, 1993: 38). Another factor which has an effect on the present discussion is the hierarchy of time. Phenomena of the time can easily expire since phenomena are allochronic.

On the other hand, Mr. Stevens makes himself believe that Miss Kenton wishes to turn back to Darlington Hall. Yet, her wishes are the opposite. She only mentions her longing for the former years of working in the Darlington Hall, nothing more. As Mr. Stevens ignores many facts, he ignores this, and he conveniently misunderstands the situation. Moreover, he assures himself Miss Kenton would be back and thus makes plans

about the future concerning the professional matters in Darlington Hall. The years they worked together; Mr. Stevens gets several chances of having a life with Miss Kenton. Yet he does not attempt to take any of it since he thinks emotional related matters are trivial. “In his relationship with Miss Kenton, Stevens prevented his professional relationship from deviating from the proper basis and therefore ruled out the possibility of romance between them” (Foniokova, 2006: 95). He does not let himself experience his own feelings. As he represses his own feelings, he does not let Miss Kenton to express hers. Once Miss Kenton brings flowers to Mr. Stevens’ office just to brighten the room. Unlike expected as a natural response, Mr. Stevens both depreciates and rejects the flowers and rudely he informs Miss Kenton about his room not being a place for entertainment. In addition to that, he states that he experiences a deep feeling of triumph in “dignity in keeping his position” that his “father might have been proud of” (Ishiguro, 1989: 166). However, what is good and what is evil are not constants but functional values as Bauman suggests (Bauman, 1993: 36). In this case, Mr. Stevens might think that he has done the good thing according to the traditional code of moral values. However, one can hardly ignore the fact that the credibility and applicability of good and evil is recognized to a certain point. What is good for one might be bad for another. In this case, Mr. Stevens chooses to do the good thing that is approved by the ethical authority. Yet it does not change the fact that he has done bad for both himself and Miss Kenton. It can be observed that Mr. Stevens is trying to relieve his pain by approving his behaviour since several actions he takes proves the opposite. Only through the very end of the novel, he stops resisting and acknowledges his feelings when Miss Kenton admits that she sometimes wonders how her life would be with him. “...why should I not admit it? - at that moment, my heart was breaking” (Ishiguro, 1989: 173). However, it is “too late to turn back the clock” (Ishiguro, 1989:173). Mr. Stevens’ words prove he comes to senses about the fact that he regrets he has wasted his chance and he feels heart-broken for a moment. “I can’t even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself- what dignity is there in that?” (Ishiguro, 1989: 176). This sentence of Mr. Stevens is synoptic in terms of the main argument of the present study. Once more, it is proved in the novel that absolute correctness of morality is impossible as this case exemplifies and such rules are established as they are meant for everybody, thus they disregard individuals. Rather than abandoning morality, it appears that what matters is self-regulation as Lyotard suggests in *PMC* and as Bauman suggests moral responsibility of the self is healthier than universalized moral conducts. Universalized ethical rules do not allow to interpret every

situation as unique in itself. Therefore, it is likely to result in loss or damage as it does in Mr. Stevens' situation. If ethics would be postmodern, as Bauman suggests, like a caressing hand and not too tightening rather than being a principle consisting strict rules, Mr. Stevens would actually be happier without all the emotional repressing caused by his inability to speak his mind freely and thus the severe stress caused by it (Bauman, 1993: 92). For Mr. Stevens, situation is the same. He could do many things differently if he could understand the fact that morality can be re-personalized. He could let the morality leave its stiff armour behind which is the armour of preternaturally built ethical codes. He did not have to abandon morality in order to make things easier both for himself and Miss Kenton. On the other hand, it would be healthier for Mr. Stevens' mental state to abandon some of his habits of trying to be a person with dignity which he applies to every second of his life which was done unduly. Based on Mr. Stevens' experiences trying to be a traditional moral person, it can be said that personal morality, as Bauman believes, will be beneficial in various ways. It will, first and foremost, enable ethical negotiation and consensus (Bauman, 1993: 34). It cannot be guaranteed that if this method is applied the success will be granted. However, in order to have an easier life, especially in postmodern world, it is certain that some traditions should be abandoned or softened. In addition to this, with this way personal morality will be purer since it is an urge to do good rather than being a social constraint. If the walls are removed, individuals will be able to see what supports the ceiling plainly. Rather than being utilitarian, autotelic, and purposeful, morality can get the chance to show itself as it is. Even though this might seem to rational people like an unstable theory that is far from rationality, it should be okay since neither reason is in the centre in postmodern world anymore nor all the moral impulses are invincible and completely trust-worthy.

### **2.1.2. Mr. Stevens' Relationship with His Employees**

In addition to emotional neglect, Mr. Stevens' perfectionist ideals make concessions concerning his characteristics since he absurdly insisted on pursuing the universal morality ignoring the fact that there is no universal human condition existed and therefore denying to re-personalize morality. As people have several different roles in different spheres of life, his role as a butler demanded requirements. However, as Bauman

puts it, the responsibility belongs to “the role, not to the person who performs it” (Bauman, 1993: 19). Therefore, Bauman believes, the performance of the role should not change the real-self. It can be deduced from the novel that Mr. Stevens let his real-self change in many cases. The main fault of Mr. Stevens to let him make compromises on his character is his belief, in his own words: “I think it fair to say, professional prestige lay most significantly in the moral worth of one's employer” (Ishiguro, 1989: 85). Since the employer's moral value affects employee's moral value Mr. Stevens feels obliged to rationalize his masters' wrong manners and by doing so he made compromises that he never stops talking about. “Stevens is somebody who desperately wants to contribute to something larger, but he thinks he is just a butler and the only way he can do this is to work for a great man” (Vorda, Herzinger, & Ishiguro, 1991: 152). Furthermore, in order to be his real-self, Mr. Stevens has to reject the superior authority in some cases such as this. Though he is very conscious of the events happening are morally wrong, he chooses to deny the reality and believe falsified reasons he produces. A matter at Darlington Hall about two Jewish staff members proves the point clearly. Mr. Stevens was once called by Lord Darlington to his study room. He was surprised to hear Lord Darlington's words: “We cannot have Jews on the staff here at Darlington Hall. - ... you'll have to let them go” (Ishiguro, 1989: 105). One naturally might not expect a butler to maintain a stance against his master or talk back to him. However, the main matter is consisting of the further actions and thoughts of Mr. Stevens. In private, he clearly states his thoughts are opposing to Lord Darlington.

...you will appreciate I was not unperturbed at the prospect of telling Miss Kenton I was about to dismiss two of her maids. Indeed, the maids had been perfectly satisfactory employees and - I may as well say this since the Jewish issue has become so sensitive of late - my every instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal. Nevertheless, my duty in this instance was quite clear, and as I saw it, there was nothing to be gained at all in irresponsibly displaying such personal doubts. It was a difficult task, but as such, one that demanded to be carried out with dignity (Ishiguro, 1989: 106).

Mr. Stevens contradicts himself, especially while trying to manage an immoral matter with dignity. One might think that there is nothing Mr. Stevens can do under the current circumstances of being a butler and having the obligation to follow his master's order.

However, Mr. Stevens plays a completely different role than he thinks while discussing with Miss Kenton and when he is alone with his thoughts since he toxically believes whatever his master does has to have a rational reason and therefore he is right by doing so. He feels the must to reappraise his employers views and motives because of the misguided idealism of morality and dignity.

As a moral man with dignity, one naturally expects Mr Stevens to exhibit same type of behaviour in any case at any circumstance based on his character and his ideals. Since traditional ethics are universalized the person who applies them to his/her life should be a universal person as well. However, as Alasdair McIntyre states a universal man in its human essence is defined as an 'unencumbered self'. For the definition of unencumbered self, see page 19. The universalized standards as centralized management way of ruling is a threat on the freedom of an individual from that society. Therefore, Mr. Stevens becomes the situated self who lets himself to be an individual who is shaped by the state and accepts the assigned laws of the state as one and only right. For this reason, some of his altered behaviours -especially the ones concerning matters with his employees- show that his morality is not ensconced and genuine. Once more, it is deduced that morality cannot be universalized, and such law-like rules are doomed to succumb.

Mr. Stevens takes reappraising his employee a big step further and he insists on defending him against the ideas about Lord Darlington being a Nazi sympathizer which is a fact approved by Ishiguro himself in one of his speeches about the *RMD* (Ishiguro, 2017). Lord Darlington made several decisions that benefits for Nazi Germany. Therefore, the news spread to the whole country. However, Mr. Stevens defines this news as nonsense. Yet, he knows that this was the bitter truth. Whatever action Lord Darlington takes, Mr. Stevens names it as moral duty. "I can declare that he was a truly good man at heart, a gentleman through and through, and one I am today proud to have given my best years of service to" (Ishiguro, 1989: 45). It is a question of dignity to defend a betrayer of a country. Mr. Stevens is indirectly trying to protect his dignity over Lord Darlington's. However, in his conversations with the third party taken in the absence of Lord Darlington, Mr. Stevens denies he knows him, or he worked for him. Yet, he admits proudly that had the privilege of working for such a gentleman. "But tell me, Stevens,

what was this Lord Darlington like? Presumably, you must have worked for him." "I didn't, madam, no" (Ishiguro, 1989: 91). The reason for Mr. Stevens to take whatever action his employer takes as unquestionable is his lack of moral autonomy which is disregarded in modern ethics contrary to postmodern ethics. Modern ethics do not let the individual free by trusting his/her capacity to choose what is wrong or right for necessary occasions by his/her consensus created withing a certain frame of necessities to follow. If Mr. Stevens would be able to take his actions towards his employees within the frame of postmodern ethics, it does not mean that he would get full freedom which would allow himself to act freely. On the contrary, he would acknowledge his responsibilities and think broadly with evaluating the factors in order to take stock of a situation. Oppression of strict moral values drags Mr. Stevens to fail himself since it feels as a duty rather than a candid inner urge to follow good.

Autonomous moral behaviour attempts to avoid all forms of codification because it exists for no other reason than to satisfy itself. It retains its authority, but without the constraints of being coerced and confined. As another example of Mr. Stevens failing to take autonomous moral behaviour, shortly after his lie to the guest of his second employee, American gentleman Mr. Farraday, his lie has been exposed. Mr. Stevens' excuse for his lie is "... it is not customary in England for an employee to discuss his past employees" (Ishiguro, 1989: 93). Unexpectedly, Mr. Stevens tries to make a fool of his American employee about English customs which is not respectful at all, and he elaborates on his fake story. He is extremely corrupted and lost in his flawed ideals that he has the urge to justify what he has done. Otherwise, he would intentionally harm his own dignity that is not allowed for anyone to speak ill about it, even himself. He defines what he has done as "... not entirely devoid of truth ..." (Ishiguro, 1989: 93) and furthermore he shares his thoughts with himself about the matter lengthily.

The great majority of what one hears said about his lordship today is, in any case, utter nonsense, based on an almost complete ignorance of the facts. Indeed, it seems to me that my odd conduct can be very plausibly explained in terms of my wish to avoid any possibility of hearing any further such nonsense concerning his lordship; that is to say, I have chosen to tell white lies in both instances as the simplest means of avoiding unpleasantness. This does seem a very plausible explanation the

more I think about it; for it is true, nothing vexes me more these days than to hear this sort of nonsense being repeated. Let me say that Lord Darlington was a gentleman of great moral stature... (Ishiguro, 1989: 93).

Admitting himself that Lord Darlington was a traitor to the country by being a stooge to the Nazi Germany would be the same as facing the bitter truth that Mr. Stevens served thirty-five years of his life to a man who left his moral values. In fact, the matter of Jewish staff members leaving was related to this subject. Lord Darlington was trying to avoid any misunderstandings(!) while his guests from Germany was in Darlington Hall during the congress. Even though Mr. Stevens prefers to believe otherwise, racism and dignity are concepts that are miles apart from each other. As Lord Darlington metaphorically represents -emphasis mine- universalized law-like ethical rules, he causes the depersonalization of Mr. Stevens who represents any individual. As it is explained by Bauman (see page 20) the moral 'I' who is Mr. Stevens became a serving role for the ethical 'we'. The relationship between Mr. Stevens and his employees evolve into a 'I for the Other' relationship. For this reason, it can clearly be seen in the novel that Mr. Stevens gets depersonalized. The asymmetrical type of relationship is doomed to fail since the Other is not for the I, because as it shows it is only the labouring of the I. The other does not responsibly involve itself in the relationship. For this reason, this relationship turns into an unhealthy relationship that there is no possibility of constituting a 'we' out of it. For Mr. Stevens to have a healthy relationship with moral values, he should be able to see that not only he is good for morality but also morality is good for him. Morality should not act as an external authority that lays all the burden on the individual. They should somehow come together in order to form a type of association so that morality could emerge naturally and internally rather than obligingly. Since Mr. Stevens is obliged by the external authority as it is represented by Lord Darlington, we observe his process of depersonalization and thus his loss of freedom to be himself.

The only person who responds to the situation with dignity is Miss Kenton with her frank words. "Does it not occur to you, Mr Stevens, that to dismiss Ruth and Sarah on these grounds would be simply - *wrong*? I will not stand for such things. I will not work in a house in which such things can occur" (Ishiguro, 1989: 107). However, it is unfortunate that Mr. Stevens finds Miss Kenton's words as unfitting to her position.

A butler of any quality must be seen to inhabit his role, utterly and fully; he cannot be seen casting it aside one moment simply to don it again the next as though it were nothing more than a pantomime costume. There is one situation and one situation only in which a butler who cares about his dignity may feel free to unburden himself of his role; that is to say, when he is entirely alone (Ishiguro, 1989: 122).

It is obvious that Mr. Stevens is unable to unburden himself of his role even when he is alone. He makes himself believe the falsified reasons he produces excessively that he starts to live them as they were real. Therefore, when he is alone, in order to relieve the burden of his regrets, he pretends constantly. It is quite challenging for himself to establish a conversation on a personal matter, does not matter with someone or with himself. He does not let himself experience his own feelings which turns his whole life into a fabricated lie which means he no longer has a character to perform. He just lives his life by other people's or authorities' standards which are in this case his father's ideals and moral ideals that are already pre-established. He does not actually live a life, but he pretends one. People are commonly prone to get influenced by ideals of others. However, the ideals become abusing when they get further into a neglecting stage since they are no longer able to decide for themselves. Thinking the good of society is a crucial necessity indeed. However, people have to think what is beneficial for themselves as well. Otherwise, the consequences might be painful. *RMD* is, as a scholar puts it, "...an invitation to liberate ourselves from the social, cultural or ideological barriers that might hinder us from leading a life of our own and not a life for others" (Khalaf, 2017: 10). Therefore, in order to be a free individual, it should be accepted that morality should appear internally rather than obligingly. Mr. Stevens sees morality as necessary and even compulsory. He fails to understand the idea that "There is nothing necessary in being moral. Being moral is a chance which may be taken up; yet it may be also, and as easily, forfeited" (Bauman, 1993: 77).

### 2.1.3. Mr. Stevens' Relationship with His Father

The relationship between Mr. Stevens and William Stevens is not like a common natural relationship of father and son. For the aim of the present study, this relationship represents the idea that how people lose their freedom in order to be committed to law-like ethical rules without questioning since they do what they are taught. William Stevens represents strict traditional ethical rules and Mr. Stevens represents the subject that these rules are forced upon. As revealed by his sentences, Mr. Stevens sees his father as a great butler rather than a parent. Indistinguishably from Mr. Stevens, his father is repressing his emotions as well. "They have suppressed their emotions with the aim of becoming great butlers. They have lost their ability to pursue human conversation" (Foniokova, 2006: 93). Sometimes, it is seen in the novel that Mr. Stevens mentions his father during his past recollections with the letter capital F which shows he is addressing him formally unlike the way of a child addressing his/her parent. One specific event shows the absolute reality of the toxic misguidedness of Mr. Stevens and that is related to his father's death. After the two staff members' leave, one housekeeper and an under-butler, there were open positions in the household. Mr. Stevens decides that his father would be a perfect fit for it and hired his father after consulting Lord Darlington. However, there was an age problem concerning his father since he was seventy-two at the time. Even though he was a perfect butler that Mr. Stevens admired, the disadvantages that would be caused by his late age could not be ignored or overlooked. Mr. Stevens knows it very well as well. "Although he was still, of course, a professional of the highest class, he was now in his seventies and much ravaged by arthritis and other ailments" (Ishiguro, 1989: 37). No matter the consequences, he decides Darlington Hall deserves a distinction which will be provided by his father's professional experience. The trouble starts with William Stevens' leaving the dust-pan in one of the most frequent destinations of Darlington Hall. When Mr. Stevens finds it, he describes the error as "trivial, but irritating" (Ishiguro, 1989: 41). He gets defensive when someone points out William Stevens' errors since he followed all his ideals throughout his life, and he sees him as the embodiment of dignity and a great butler. He blames the household for doing their jobs. Specifically, with Miss. Kenton. He comments on Miss Kenton's kindly reminding him that the dust-pan was left in the middle of the stairs as "...my irritation soon turned to Miss Kenton for attempting to create such unwarranted fuss over the incident" (Ishiguro, 1989: 41). Mr. Stevens had a problem of

idolizing both his father and his employee. As he ignores his employee's faults, he ignores his father's as well. After couple of warrants that is given by Miss Kenton to Mr. Stevens concerning his father, he gets unnecessarily aggressive and the arguments between the two gets tense and long. Unlike his comprehension, Miss Kenton only to help and she naturally thinks William Stevens must be relieved of from some duties due to his age. Therefore, her intentions are concerning both her profession and William Stevens' health. When Miss Kenton brings up the subject about her concerns for the matter, an unexpected insult comes from Mr. Stevens.

-Whatever your father was once, Mr Stevens, his powers are now greatly diminished. This is what these 'trivial errors' as you call them really signify and if you do not heed them, it will not be long before your father commits an error of major proportions.

-Miss Kenton, you are merely making yourself look foolish (Ishiguro, 1989: 43).

In regular circumstances, Mr. Stevens would appreciate some advice from his colleague whom he finds successfully professional, and he would follow what has to be done rationally right away. His insistency of considering his father capable of any work related to his profession flawlessly led many other troubles at Darlington Hall and these troubles are the kinds that Mr. Stevens would highly dislike as per normal since work-related details have utmost significance for him. After ignoring or correcting several of his father's errors, one last event becomes a turning point for Mr. Stevens. "By that time, the situation as regards my father had changed significantly following his fall" (Ishiguro, 1989: 44). After his fall while carrying a tea tray to serve Lord Darlington and his two important guests in the summerhouse, Lord Darlington asks Mr. Stevens to reconsider his father's duties urgently since he is expecting delegates from across the world soon and his lordship wants everything to run smoothly during the visit of his important guests. Lord Darlington makes it clear that there should not be anything to jeopardize the success of the forthcoming conference. When Mr. Stevens talks about his recollections of his past concerning this memory of his father's fall, he depicts this error as a great embarrassment. An embarrassment such is a very significant matter in Mr. Stevens' professional life.

As several events in the novel clearly shows, Mr. Stevens follows and respects his father unquestionably and idolizes him at the greatest degree. For the purpose of the present dissertation, William Stevens implicitly serves as a metaphorical representation of ethical rules as metanarratives. It is William Stevens who taught him how to be professional and how to have dignity. He carries the characteristics of metanarratives as he teaches his ideals of moral values to his son as purported definite absolutes. These absolutes are created in order to construct a single absolute self-regulating system with its own truths and boundaries so that the decision-makers could control the society between the boundaries they constructed. William Stevens has the role of a legislator who represents an authority figure that is able to decide what is acceptable and what is not. Even though metanarratives lost their legitimation in postmodern times, they still had credibility in modern period. William Stevens teaches his son the totalized values that he attaches an utmost importance to.

There is one certain event that tragically shows how far Mr. Stevens gone blindly about being professional in order to follow the modern metanarratives. The matter concerns his father's death, whom he only has as a family. The events followed by each other takes place during the congress which is the most crucial incident happening over the years in Darlington Hall. It started "...when the first footman had come hurrying down the staircase in some distress to inform me that my father had been taken ill upstairs" (Ishiguro, 1989: 69). Mr. Stevens was caught in a challenging dilemma between his profession and his family. After finding a chance of limited time to see his father, Mr. Stevens states "I did not really have a moment more to spare" (Ishiguro, 1989: 70) albeit he arranged every single detail several weeks ago and he has a multitude of staff members that could run things without a problem for a while. Metanarratives are represented as metaphorical building blocks in society. Metanarratives are what people's interactions are based on. People are unsure how to establish the foundations of society if there are no metanarratives to follow. Therefore, Mr. Stevens choses to follow modern metanarratives since it is the way taught to him. Since there is no consensus allowed the time, Mr. Stevens cannot decide which action is right or which action is wrong. There is only a single absolute system which defends the existence of one allegedly supremacist truth and it

does not respect or regard individual freedom of choice. Metanarratives are inhibitory, persistent, and majorly elusive concepts. For this reason, in postmodern belief metanarratives are no longer trusted. However, Mr. Stevens fails to obtain the postmodern belief and continues to attach his life fully to modern moral values. William Stevens' illness is defined as serious by the doctor and due to his age his illness is signalling the truth that these are the last moments that Mr. Stevens can have with him before he passes away.

"I'm glad Father is feeling so much better," I said again eventually. "Now really, I'd best be getting back. As I say, the situation is rather volatile." He went on looking at his hands for a moment. Then he said slowly: "I hope I've been a good father to you." ... "I'm proud of you. A good son. I hope I've been a good father to you. I suppose I haven't." "I'm afraid we're extremely busy now, but we can talk again in the morning." ... "I'm so glad you're feeling better now," I said again and took my leave .. (Ishiguro, 1989: 73).

As Mr. Stevens gets his first and last chance with his father to have an intimate conversation presumedly for the first and the last time throughout his life, he prefers to attach the priority to work. The work being prioritised is not the only reason. Since Mr. Stevens turned himself into an emotionless work-dedicated butler, he is still not ready to give up on his flawed habits even in his fathers deathbed. This is followed by a stroke that his father has. Running hastily to see his father in upstairs, the only comment Mr. Stevens does is "This is most distressing. Nevertheless, I must now return downstairs" (Ishiguro, 1989: 78). The toxic commitment to his profession was not doing any good to him at all. The gentlemen downstairs waiting to be serviced at, which in this case could easily be done by the other staff members, are more significant for Mr. Stevens than his father. Shortly after the stroke, Mr. Stevens gets the bad news from Miss Kenton, who actually spend more effort for William Stevens than his own son in his last hours.

"Mr Stevens, I'm very sorry. Your father passed away about four minutes ago." ... "Will you come up and see him?" "I'm very busy just now, Miss Kenton. In a little while perhaps." "In that case, Mr Stevens, will you permit me to close his eyes?" "I would be most grateful if you would, Miss Kenton." (Ishiguro, 1989: 79-80).

This is maybe the most tragic sacrifice Mr. Stevens wasted in order to keep his professionalism and dignity. In addition to these, not surprisingly at all, he justifies his actions with an excuse related to work.

"Miss Kenton, please don't think me unduly improper in not ascending to see my father in his deceased condition just at this moment. You see, I know my father would have wished me to carry on just now." ... "To do otherwise, I feel, would be to let him down." (Ishiguro, 1989: 80).

Mr. Stevens' comprehension of professionalism is flawed and furthermore perverted indeed. It is rightful to call it with such a harsh depiction as perverted since Mr. Stevens thinks that his performance at the night his father passed away is a triumph(!) since he thinks he performed the dignity that his father deserves as a great butler. "For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph" (Ishiguro, 1989: 83). It is quite challenging for a person to find a moral value in the whole situation. All of Mr. Stevens' performance, does not carry an urge to perform truth or purity. They are forced and misguided behaviours that only costed him a beautiful life. "All Stevens's memories add up to a sort of *apologia pro vita sua*, biased self-justification aimed to emphasize how right and admirable he has been all along" (Furst, 2007: 549).

## CONCLUSION

The present study has analysed Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of The Day* from the perspective of Postmodern Ethics. It is argued that the perception of ethics and moral values should be postmodern rather than traditional since they are not in accordance with contemporary age and contemporary individual, and they remain incapable compared to people's incurably ambivalent lives. Therefore, morality is unfeasible to be universalized. The postmodern solution to this issue is globalization of moral values rather than universalizing them under the command of authorities. Postmodern ethics suggest the rational idea of regulation of dogmatic moral values to be impulsive and self-regulated. Furthermore, even though such values intend to avail, being adhered to them unconditionally causes self-suppression of human nature and thus self-deprivation which is the problematic case of the protagonist in *The Remains of The Day*.

Postmodernism values people and accepts people as social beings that are in need of an adaptation to all sorts of situations with all sorts of opportunities available since the world is changing continuously. With the rapidness of ongoing alteration, predictivity and certainty becomes less and less possible to apply. For this reason, uncertainty and ambivalence play parts in people's lives as key figures in the contemporary age. Thus, postmodern belief embraces such terms as uncertainty, ambivalence, changeability, flexibility etc. Therefore, it opposes the concept of an existing absolute truth for the reason that reality is no more fixed. On the contrary, reality is now fluid, dynamic and fallible by means of rapid changes occurred on a daily basis in the contemporary world. On the other hand, reality emphasizes plurality and relativity as well. However, it is necessary to state that postmodernism does not actually 'deny' reality, it defends the opinion of reality being impossible to completely and accurately described. Thus, the reality from postmodern perspective neither can be absolute nor can be rejected. Due to these reasons, postmodernism conflicts with certain belief systems and absolute values. In consequence of its characteristics, postmodernism approaches traditionally inherited values and rules as outdated concepts that has been established without considering and measuring people's current powers and opportunities. Unlike the traditional fixated values, postmodernism is not authoritative. French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard

names these absolute systems of beliefs as ‘metanarratives’ in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and he defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv). Thus, ethics is a constructed metanarrative itself.

*The Remains of The Day* as a postmodern novel tells the sorrowful story of Mr. Stevens who tragically spent his life following his misguided idealism with making several compromises which he deeply regrets. This study has demonstrated the reasons of why ethics should be postmodern while showing the envisaged possible outcomes of being blindly adhered to ethics through a character and his life events from the novel *The Remains of The Day*. In order to prove its arguments, in Chapter I the present study has provided a theoretical background which mainly consists of *The Postmodern Ethics* (1993) by Zygmunt Bauman of which self-explanatory title shows the purposes of and *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* by Jean-François Lyotard for the purpose of explaining Postmodernism. Followingly in Chapter II, in the light of theoretical information provided in the previous chapter, the textual analysis of the novel *The Remains of The Day* has been provided, evaluated and demonstrated in order to prove the argument of the thesis accurately. Textual analysis part of the present study has been divided into three parts after priorly providing an overview of the novel as introductory. These three parts are consisting of the protagonist’s relationships with three different people, namely Miss Kenton, William Stevens and his employees Lord Darlington and Mr. Farraday, who have the most significance in his life. After providing the necessary number of theories quoted from a number of sources - including primary and secondary sources of theory books, the novel, related articles, interviews, written dissertations, and speeches- and textual analysis, the argument of the present thesis has been demonstrated in the conclusion part.

To conclude, reading Ishiguro’s *The Remains of The Day* from the perspective of Postmodern Ethics mainly in the light of Zygmunt Bauman’s work among the other authors’ enables one to understand the ethical values inherited from the past that are taught people to obey belong to a socially constructed belief system that claims authority over people’s behaviour without considering the individual’s welfare and interests. Since

they promote universal standards in certain frame of rules, they cause suppression of human nature. Moreover, practising moral universality in the world that consists of plurality of beliefs, traditions etc. is not possible to survive. Therefore, postmodernism sees moral values as socially constructed conduct that is impossible to universalize by reason of contemporary differentiation. Thus, postmodernism suggests deregulation and re-personalization of ethics. In this way, the control would be left to the individual capacity for the individual fate. Rather than doing what is morally good and approved by the society that is adhered to ethical norms, the individual should also take her/his own interest and welfare. Re-structured morality allows individual to evaluate the outcome of her/his actions and to what extent herself/himself or if any people related to the matter are happy about it. For all these reasons, ethics should exist to keep the bridge stable on the condition that ethics being able to allow the individual to have the self-responsibility of her/his own action and its possible outcome.

The contribution of the present study is mainly to have a compact source of an examination about *The Remains of The Day* from the perspective of Postmodern Ethics reconfiguring related parts of Postmodernism on the grounds of the events taken from the novel. Furthermore, this study gathers theoretical and generic information and discussions about Ishiguro's novel with the studies of several other academic sources which are about postmodernism, idealism, ethics and morality that brought together in order to support the main argument of the study.

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