

REVEALING THE DECONSTRUCTION OF MODERN PEOPLE'S TIME CONCEPT IN MITCH ALBOM'S THE TIME KEEPER

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Abstract

This research aims in revealing the logocentrism of modern people's time concept which is exposed in *The Time Keeper* and to examine the methods used by the author to deconstruct the logocentrism. To answer the objectives of the research, the researcher used deconstruction literary criticism since the research is aimed to analyze a deconstruction of a logocentric idea which is planted in people's mind. This study employed qualitative research. It used content analysis as the technique to analyze the object of the research. The source of this research is a novel entitled *The Time Keeper* by Mitch Albom. The data of the research were expressions which contain modern people's logocentric ideas in conceptualizing time and the deconstruction of the logocentrism. The main instrument of the research was the researcher herself and the second instruments were the data sheets. In collecting the data, the researcher used reading and note-taking technique. Then, the researcher analyzed the data through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing process. In order to achieve trustworthiness, the researcher conducted a triangulation technique. The researcher finds two results related to the objectives of the research after analyzing the data. First, there are four logocentric ideas which are believed by modern people to be the truest ways to value time. Those are by being out of the present moment, by measuring time, by controlling time, and by having an endless time. Second, there are two methods used by the author to deconstruct the four logocentric ideas. They are by exposing irony and by the preaching of the mythical characters of the story. Both methods deconstruct each of the logocentrism by showing that those four rigid ideas which are believed to be the rightest way to make the time valuable leave them valueless instead. The new ideas are presented to enable people to have a balance way of thought especially in conceptualizing time since there is no single truth exists.

Keywords: deconstruction, logocentrism, modern people's time concept, *The Time Keeper*

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INTRODUCTION

Time has become a really close topic in people's life. In a very long time ago, there was no exact measurement of time. People were going with the flow until their life changed when the time measurement was found. Second, minute, hour, month, year, and so on are the examples of time measurement which people have today. Soon after the finding of time measurement, people start to be obsessed to measure and control time.

Time is then worshiped by most of modern people especially the metropolitan ones. They will never let every second of their time wasted without producing some work. So they rush and they hurry because they are afraid if the time is running out. It happens because metropolitan society is closely related to capitalism in which time should be used as effectively as possible to gain profit (Atkinson and Gottlieb, 2001).

When people start to worship time, they will gradually get negative impacts to

themselves. They will get stressed and depressed with their strict monotonous routines. They may also turn to be individualistic since they only focus on their own carrier. The more ironical condition happens when they realize how they need to enjoy their life with all of their surroundings but they have no chance anymore. All that remains is only a regret.

Modern people's time concept is then chosen to be the most suitable expression for this research because the way modern people conceptualize time becomes the most probable object to strike by the deconstruction. The case is significant to be studied because most of modern people now are in the position. They become the slaves of time. They think they control time but actually they are controlled.

In conceptualizing time, modern people have gotten two opposing concepts. The condition is in line with the basic principle of language that meaning which can only be obtained through difference will impact on the existence of two opposing concepts (Ratna, 2004: 161). The first concept held by modern people is the ideas of what can make their time valuable or in short called valuable time concept and the second is the ideas of what can make their time or called valueless time concept. People then glorify the valuable time concept to be the rightest way to value time and the opposing concept is believed to be avoided for they are considered to be the wrong way to value time. The valuable time concept is defined to be the center of truth.

The existence of the logocentrism above creates a vivid boundary between what is true

and what is not and what is ideal and what is not. The idea which is believed to be true is then regarded to be universal truth in which everyone should rely upon. Yet, truth is relative. Derrida (in Bressler, 1998: 129) says that people are shaped by different discourses so there will be various perspectives of truth exist. Hence, if there is an idea which is believed to be universal truth should be challenged with a strategic method called deconstruction.

Eagleton (1983: 148) explains that Deconstruction is a method of reading which aims to dismantle every idea which tries to centralize people in only one universal truth. The previous structuralized belief does not accept any difference which exists in every person's thought. It only allows sameness above the possibility of varieties that people have. The varied cultures in different places have resulted on the number of differences in people's character. In consequence, there will be numerous kinds of interpretation in viewing particular object for each person has different background. Deconstruction allows many possibilities of interpretation which appear after reading a text. The people's different discourses has triggered to the existence of variously creative perspective.

Basically, Ratna (2004: 238) says that people are not acquired to obtain a final meaning through deconstructive reading. People are only demanded to do an endless deconstructing act to the fixed ideas in life. There are numbers of ideology which are still covered and marginalized from people's knowledge. Therefore, deconstruction comes

to dismantle the covered ideas without being bounded by the world's structuralized rules in order to give people new fair insights.

Since Albom does not believe in universal truth. He then presents his deconstruction toward modern people's rigid way of thought in conceptualizing time through his novel. He expects people can be more aware of their logocentric way of thinking toward time. His deconstruction then becomes the focus of this research. The focus of this study is divided into two main topics. The first is the logocentrism of modern people's time concept exposed in *The Time Keeper*, and the second is how Albom deconstructs the logocentrism.

The deconstruction revelation is significant to be done because the recent people are still unaware of the deconstruction inside the novel. The researcher used deconstruction methods suggested by Charless E. Bressler (1998: 130). Those are finding binary opposition, reversing the old binary opposition hierarchy, dismantling the old held views, and accepting meaning as undecidable. Through the methods of deconstruction constructed by Charless E. Bressler, the researcher presents this research to help people to understand the time concept wiser.

RESEARCH METHOD

The Kind of the Research

This research is a qualitative research which employs content analysis technique.

The Time and Place of the Research

This research is conducted since July 2014 to June 2017 in Yogyakarta.

The object of the Research

The main source of this research is a novel entitled *The Time Keeper* by Mitch Albom.

The Data Analysis Technique

The researcher did six steps in analyzing this research. The steps are presented as follows.

1. First, the researcher collected the data and organized them based on the needs related to the research focus.
2. Second, the complete data were read and re-read several times before being divided into two main topics based on the objectives of the research.
3. Third, the divided data were classified into more detailed to categories and sub categories related to the previous main topics.
4. The forth step, the data were sorted and reduced to collect only the relevant data and exclude the irrelevant ones.
5. Fifth, the researcher correlated the data description with the theory used to guide the research so that the data remained on the right track.
6. The final step is interpreting the findings under theoretical frame work used in this research in order to present a credible result of study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses in the discussion of wo points: 1) the logocentrism of modern people's time concept exposed in *The Time Keeper*, and 2) the methods used to deconstruct the logocentrism of modern people's time concept in *The Time Keeper*.

1. **The logocentrism of modern people's time concept exposed in *The Time Keeper***

Modern people have conceptualized a belief about time which successfully becomes a mainstream belief among wide people. In conceptualizing time, modern people have the idea of valuable and valueless time concept. Valuable time concept refers the deeds which can make the time valuable while valueless time concept is the reverse. Inside the two concepts, people tend to privilege one concept to be the center of thought. It is in line with Bressler's statement (1998: 130) that people tend to create a hierarchy inside a binary opposition where they privilege one element of it to be the center of thought because they need a center to be their life guidance. To value time, they have to do the actions which have been agreed to be the truest ways to make the time valuable and avoid doing the opposed actions of the privileged ideas.

To gain in depth analysis, the researcher divides the valuable time concept category into four subcategories. Each subcategory presents a logocentric thought which will be deconstructed by the author.

a. Being out of the present moment

Modern people are always obsessed to be more productive than yesterday. The obsession has driven them to be out of the present moment. They tend to focus their energy only on the important agenda, not to the regular things happen on the every passing moment. This tendency does not only happen in the economical life but also in the social life. They believe that to make their valuable, they have

to busy their mind with important agendas not the mundane ones.

Sarah checks her purple watch, which still runs: it is 6:59 p.m.

Eight-thirty, eight-thirty!

She closes the drawer and yells, "Focus!"(Albom, 2012: 14)

Sarah's excitement to meet Ethan, her crush, at eight thirty has made her mind only full of the eight thirty appointment. The time that passed is only used to think about how to look perfect and how to make the meeting great. By doing so, she has unconsciously ignored the precious moments happen in her life. She believes that in order to make the lifetime valuable, she has to focus her mind on the important appointment because the regular ones are considered insignificant to her life.

Sarah does not construct that mindset by her own, she rather follows the already existed idea about valuable time concept. The condition is the same with what is portrayed by Bressler (1998: 114) that people are just following the already existed system in living their life, not by structuring their own reality. The rigid existed system has unconsciously ruled people's mind in conceptualizing particular idea. The circumstance has made people think that they cannot create their own way of thought like what is happened to Sarah.

b. Measuring Time

The invention of time measurement has created a big change on people's life. It has eased people in organizing their life activities

but on the other hand, it makes them stuck on the number of the measurement. When the moment of people's life can be organized through the number of time measurement, they begin to focus on the number not the moment. They believe that calculating the time of their activities precisely will make the time valuable. People then value the calculation of their time more than the quality and the meaning of every moment.

“What Grace wants to ask,” Victor said, “is how much time do I have left?”

“Optimistically,”

the doctor answered, “a couple of months.” (Albom, 2012: 55)

When the doctor claims that Victor's condition is getting worse. Victor feels pushed to ask the doctor about the time that may left for him to live. His question implies that the length of time is really mattered for him. His curiosity emphasizes its significance to his life. Since modern people's orientation is located on the quantitative achievements, so the length of a life time is important to be a measurement of a valuable life.

Victor's condition portrays how the idea of measuring time has been planted in people's mind strongly to be the basis of truth which is used to be the life principal. It is strengthened by Bressler's idea (1998: 124) that people tend to posit one idea of a certain opposing concepts to be the center of thought which can be used to the guidance of the life practices.

c. Controlling Time

Modern people's ambition in life is to gain as much as achievements. The ambition has made them hungry for time. They crave for having a lot of time to actualize their ambition. Therefore, they become obsessed with owning time and the only way to make it realized is by taking control over time. When they feel like they have a power to control time, they believe that they can also control their own fate. Therefore, they will control their own fate to be in line with their expectation.

But death would never touch Victor.

He would duck it. And jump a boat to the future. (Albom, 2012: 142)

The quotation shows Victor's arrogance to believe that he has a power to control his own lifetime. Since he is not willing to die, he chooses Cryonics treatment to help him to be immortal. Through the sophisticated medical invention, he intends to control the time of his life. This mindset becomes another idea which has been believed to be the center of truth that should be applied in a daily life.

d. Having an Endless Time

Humans' ambition has no limit. Their time of life is expected to be limitless too. They always long for more time to achieve more achievements. They assume that the less achievements they get, the less valuable their life is. Hence, they will value time when it has no limit so it can always realize their desires

He felt almost obligated to stay alive. Cancer was a stumble. **But the real hurdle was human mortality.**

How could he crack *that*?

He finally found his opening when a researcher from his West Coast offices, responding to his request on “immortality,” faxed a stack of material on cryonics.(Albom, 2012: 60)

Being immortal becomes Victor’s ultimate goal in life. He believes that having an endless time will give him a valuable life. The more time people have, the more achievements they gain. Thus, time is regarded as valuable when it has no end point because through the endless time people will lose nothing but obtaining everything.

To have an endless time has been agreed by modern people to be the truest signification of valuable life. People feel obligated to apply the such mindset to their life because wide people have already approved it as truth. The idea is believed to present a solid truth like what is stated by Castle (2007: 154) that there is an element which is believed to have a “full presence” power which can serve a solid truth to be the foundation of the life practices.

2. The methods used to deconstruct the the logocentrism of modern people’s time concept in *The Time Keeper*

Mitch Albom uses two methods in deconstructing the modern people’s time concept through his novel. The first is by exposing an irony, the second is through the preaching of the mythical characters. Through the deconstruction, he aims to present people a new perspective in conceptualizing time by exposing the disregarded values. What

modern people think to be valuable is not always precious and what they think to be valueless is not always meaningless. For that reason, Mitch Albom intends to present the alternative idea to enable people having a balance way of thought.

a. Exposing Irony

Albom uses irony as his first method to break the modern people’s logocentrism since irony is one of the language devices which can effectively be used to deliver certain message through a story (Hourihan, 1997:208). Irony comes to present a reality which contradicts with what people wish to happen. It will break people’s expectation toward particular situation. By exposing irony, Mitch Albom aims to awaken people’s consciousness that what modern people hold to be the truest ways to make the time valuable can instead leave them valueless.

But he was only the first to weep. As mankind grew obsessed with its hours, the sorrow of lost time became a permanent hole in the human heart. People fretted over missed chances, over inefficient days; they worried constantly about how long they live, because counting life’s moments had led, inevitably, to counting them down. (Albom, 2012: 61)

People start to be obsessed with counting time after the invention of time measurement. Unfortunately, their obsession instead drives them into suffering. Time measurement has driven people to start estimating the possible length of time they may have in life to determine their life’s worth. Their attention on

the time measurement has made them suffered and empty. Their life can turn to be ironical because counting moments is the same with counting their life down.

b. Through the preaching of the mythical characters

Since the novel is a fable fiction, the mythical characters in the story are playing important role to the plot of the story. There are two main mythical characters in the story, The old man as the God's servant and Dor as the father of time. Both of the mythical characters are coming to teach and enlighten the people who are suffered from time with their deeper knowledge. To ease understanding the preaching of the mythical characters, the researcher divides it into four sub categories based on the logocentrism.

1) Preaching for Breaking the Logocentric Idea of Being Out of the Present Moment

This sub category will present the mythical characters' preaching which deconstructs the first modern people's logocentric idea to make the time valuable that is being out of the present time. Through the preaching, the author aims to show that being out of the present moment is not always able to make the time valuable, it instead can make the time valueless.

"You marked the minutes," the old man said. "But did you use them wisely? To be still? To cherish? To be grateful? To lift and be lifted?"

Dor looked down. He knew the answer was no. (Albom, 2012: 79)

The satire can be concluded that time is supposed to be used wisely. They have to learn the life values presented through every moment that passes. The only way to understand the essence of time is by being into the present time. They should put themselves to be fully in the present time, not in the past nor the future. When they ignore the regular activities that happen to focus only on the important agenda in the future, they are not enjoying and sensing the every moment presented to them. Thus, they will never be able to be grateful to the things they already have.

This new perspective is presented by Albom to crack the logocentric idea of being out of the present moment which has been believed universally to be the truest way to value time. It is supported by Terry Eagleton (1983: 133) which states that truth is relative so that there should be no idea which can role as the universal truth.

2) Preaching for Breaking the Logocentric Idea of Measuring Time

This sub category will expose the preaching which is aimed to strike the logocentric idea of measuring time. Through the mythical character's preaching, the author inserts deconstructive thoughts to break the modern people's rigid belief which sees measuring time as the right way to make the time valuable. He wants to show that measuring time is on the other side can make their time valueless instead of valuable.

“Everything man does today to be efficient, to fill the hour?”

Dor said. “It does not satisfy. It only makes him hungry to do more. Man wants to own his existence. But no one owns time.

He lowered his hand from Victor’s eyes. “When you are measuring life, you are not living it.” (Albom, 2012: 208)

Dor explains that people’s obsession to fill their hours to be more productive is only making them hungry for time. When people start to measure their life by counting its length and its ideal accomplishments, they will lose the naturalness and the essence of life presented through every moment. When they treat time only to be measured, they are not indeed living it since their focus is only on the quantity, not the quality. Thus, people are suggested to focus on the quality of each moment to make them truly alive.

This new perspective is delivered to show people that measuring time is not the rightest way to value time. As people’s mindset is shaped by different discourses, there will be numerous kinds of perspective may exist in this life. Hence, people are welcomed to shape their own perspective. There is no single perspective which can be approved to be the truest perspective universally. It is strengthened by Bressler’s idea (1998: 119) that there will not be any single truth in life since meaning is evolving toward every person’s discourses.

3) Preaching for Breaking the Logocentric Idea of Controlling Time

This part will presents the author’s deconstruction toward the logocentric idea of controlling time. He intends to awaken the readers about the fact that controlling time is not supposed to be done by humans to make their time valuable because they have no authority over it.

His voice choked in a whisper. **“Please, let me die. I have no wish to go on.”**

The old man rose. **“The length of your days does not belong to you. You will learn as well.”**(Albom, 2012: 47)

The old man’s saying to Dor signifies that humans have no authority to control the time of their life. The old man assures him that he has no control over his own fate. Humans do not have any authority to control the length of their life in this world. They cannot chose to die sooner or to live longer. God has his own precise plan for people to surrender. Dor will understand the lesson after he finishes his punishment in the cave.

The deconstruction toward the logocentric belief above becomes albom’s effort to escape people from the chain which has bounded their way of thinking. Logocentrism is an ultimate chain which can bound people’s mindset to only believe in one single truth. Bressler (1998: 131) emphasizes that deconstruction is aimed to free people from a rigid belief to let them constructing their own way of thought.

4) Preaching for Breaking the Logocentric Idea of Having an Endless Time instable

The last sub category will show the preaching spoken by the mythical characters to deconstruct the last logocentric belief that is having an endless time. Modern people believe that endless lifetime signifies a valuable life. However, the author believe that through an endless time, nothing is going to be valuable. Therefore, through the mythical characters created in the story, Albom aims to break the rigid belief.

“Do you understand now?” he asked.
 “With endless time, nothing is special. With no loss or sacrifice, we can’t appreciate what we have.” (Albom, 2012: 205)

Dor’s saying to Victor implies that by having an endless time, people will never find things special. They will get all they want because their chance in life has no limit. For that reason, they will never experience the feeling of loss. So they will never learn how to sacrifice. When they never lose anything, they will never be able to be grateful for what they have.

Through the new perspective, Albom does not only expect people to understand about the absence of an absolute truth but he also expect people to be more tolerance to others. Since people are constructed by different backgrounds, all that they have to do is tolerating, appreciating, and learning new lessons from the other perspectives (Bressler, 1998: 132).

CONCLUSION

There are four logocentric concepts which are believed by modern people to be the truest ways to make their time valuable. Those are being out of the present moment, measuring time, controlling time, and having an endless time. Albom deconstructs the logocentric ideas through two methods. The first is by exposing irony and the second is through the preaching of the mythical characters.

The new perspectives presented by Albom in conceptualizing time is expected to be able to escape people from the old rigid logocentric thought. He hopes that people can see and value time in a deeper and wiser way to create an essentially valuable life.

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