

ETHICAL PHILOSOPHICAL VALUES IN THE SHORT STORY "GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS" BY LEO TOLSTOY



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Article History:

Submission: March 27, 2023
Revised: May 24, 2023
Accepted: June 19, 2023
Published: June 30, 2023

Keyword: Ethics,
Philosophical Values,
Short Story, Leo Tolstoy
Literature

Kata Kunci: Etika, Nilai
Filosofis, Cerita Pendek,
Leo Tolstoy, Sastra

Abstract

Every literary work must have value in it. An in-depth analysis is required to capture and understand the value. This article analyzes the ethical philosophy matters in the short story "God Sees the Truth, but Waits" by Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)—a writer and philosopher from Russia. This article departs from a qualitative study using interpretation and analysis methods. This study finds that the short story's philosophical message relates to God's plan for His creation; God knows the truth about what would happen to His creation but waits for the best time to show His wisdom. The ethical philosophy values Aksionov owns include submission, truth, justice, and forgiveness. These four values lived on in Aksionov after his wound. He understands that wounds are God's way of getting him closer to Him and making him a better human being.

Abstrak

Setiap karya sastra pasti memiliki nilai di dalamnya. Namun demikian, diperlukan analisis mendalam untuk sampai pada penemuan nilai tersebut. Artikel ini menyajikan analisis nilai filosofis etis dalam karya sastra cerpen, "God Sees the Truth, but Waits," karya Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) yang merupakan sastrawan sekaligus filosof asal Rusia. Artikel ini berangkat dari studi kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode interpretasi dan analisis atas cerpen tersebut. Studi ini menemukan bahwa pesan filosofis dari cerpen ini berkaitan dengan rencana Tuhan terhadap ciptaan-Nya; bahwa Tuhan mengetahui kebenaran perihal apa yang akan terjadi pada ciptaan-Nya, namun Ia menunggu waktu terbaik untuk menunjukkan kebijaksanaan tersebut kepada ciptaan-Nya. Adapun nilai filosofis etis yang dimiliki Aksionov di antaranya: nilai kepasrahan, kebenaran, keadilan, dan memaafkan. Keempat nilai tersebut hidup dalam diri Aksionov setelah luka yang dialaminya. Ia memahami bahwa luka merupakan cara Tuhan untuk ia lebih dekat dengan-Nya dan menjadikannya manusia yang lebih baik lagi.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a creative work of art whose object can be humans and their lives by using language as the medium. Literary works can be used as a reflection of life. However, it is based on imagination. Human life, which is reflected in literature can be a transformation of factual life (Saragih et al., 2021). Literature as an object cannot be defined singly—but has a variety of meanings; etymologically, it means to direct, teach, or instructions (Yusanta & Wati, 2020). From this definition, literary works can be said to be media that can be used to spread positive information or profound messages.

A literary work cannot be separated from the author's mindset, ideas, and principles. Literary works are always under the influence of the existence of the author. In addition to expressing and presenting life's problems, the author also invites readers to think about solving life's problems. Literary work is a person's inner expression through language through depiction. This depiction can reference to the author's life reality and insight into the reality of life. It can also be the author's pure imagination unrelated to the reality of life or the author's intuitive desire. It can also be a mixture of both (Nasution, 2016).



Literary works are not just ordinary texts without meaning. In it, there is a philosophical message to be conveyed by the author. The author is inseparable from the history of literature and its socio-cultural background, which is reflected in literary works. However, literary works will only have meaning, with readers giving sense to them (Pradopo, 1989). Therefore, it is important to study literature, especially in terms of ethical and philosophical values, to understand the values to be conveyed.

Among the interesting literary works to study—in which there is an ethical philosophy ethical value is the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*. A short story by Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)—an important Russian writer of his time whose name is still known today (Rachmawati, 2014). This short story tells about anything that humans do in the material world is part of the scenario. Whatever human beings desire, God already knows, and as created, humans only need to wait because God also waits for the best time to give it to His servants (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 179–181).

An overview of similar research can be seen from the following studies; Uktamovna's research (2022) entitled "The Role of the East in the Life and Creative Activity of Leo Tolstoy" analyzes the role of Eastern philosophy in Leo Tolstoy's work. The research departs from Leo Tolstoy's philosophical treatise, which contains religious and ethical messages (Uktamovna, 2022). Larasati and Irmawati's research (2022), "A Sociological Approach of Literature in Leo N. Tolstoy's Short Story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*," examines the elements of literary sociology in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*—which technically looks about the relationship between literature and sociology. Then, Sianipar and Jasmaya's research (2019), "the Unfulfilled Love and Belonging Needsfound By the Main Character in "Anna Karenina" By Leo Tolstoy: Psychological Approach" examines Tolstoy's work "Anna Karenina" using a psychological approach, specifically Abraham H. Maslow's theory (1970) Hierarchy of Needs theory.

Research on short stories is full of study on its values, and people carry out scattered research. As for research on Leo Tolstoy as a character, many have also researched him as a philosopher and writer. Focused on his short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*, some have also examined it, but no research target ethical philosophy in the short story—which is a distinguishing feature of the article being studied. Based on the description above, this article will analyze the ethical philosophy values contained in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* by Leo Tolstoy, with 2 main questions: What philosophical message is included in the short story? What ethical philosophy values do the characters in the story have?

This article is a qualitative study and focuses on finding ethical philosophy values. The methods used in this article are interpretation and analysis methods. Interpretation is used to fully understand the story in the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*, especially those closely related to philosophical values. The analysis is carried out as a method for finding and detailing the philosophical values in the short story so that it can lead to the discovery of the results to be sought. The steps of the research carried out were collecting various literature related to the research, then sorting between primary and secondary literature. Furthermore, the existing literature is descriptive – explorative manner and then analyzed using this method.

ETHICS AS AXIOLOGY IN PHILOSOPHY

Values from a philosophical perspective are studied in axiology. Etymologically, the word axiology comes from the Greek, from the word "axios", which means value, and

"logos", which means science (Abadi, 2016). Etymologically, axiology is the science of values. As for the terminology, axiology is a study related to the theory of value or the study of everything that can be of value or provide benefits. Axiology tries to find the nature and advantages of something that is studied. Does something under study have value or not—value—bound or value—free (Rokhmah, 2021). Value means price—meaning something attached to the object and not outside the object. Although some argue that they are outside things (Praja, 2020). Value does not exist in space and time, but value is a phenomenon. Also, values are logical essences and can be understood through reason (Rosnawati et al., 2021).

Ethics as part of values (axiology) is understood as values regarding good and bad that are adhered to by a group or society/set of principles or matters relating to human behavior. Ethics as part of philosophy is also defined as something that investigates what is good and what is bad by paying attention to deeds as far as the mind can know (Dusar & Zain, 2000). Ethics or philosophy of behavior or philosophy of ethics focuses on 'action' and 'good and bad'. Is the action that someone does good or bad? Ethical philosophy is used to find the same concept regarding good and bad judgments for all human beings in a certain space and time (Susanto, 2019).

Ethics requires a person to think rationally against all norms, which ultimately helps humans become autonomous. Human autonomy does not lie in freedom from all norms and is not the same as authority, but is achieved in the freedom to recognize the norms that he believes himself to be an obligation (Praja, 2020). Aristotle, the Greek philosopher of the classical century, understood ethics as a branch of political and social science that struggles with goodness for human life. Aristotle said that human nature is the ability to reason, the fulfillment of human potential precisely so that *eudaimonia* (happiness) appears, which consists of the active manifestation of soul abilities that are commensurate with moral virtues (Sandur, 2020, pp. xiii – xiv).

Talking about ethical and literary values between the two has a correlation that literary works are representations of real life—in literary works there are various depictions of issues in human life. Literature often highlights the moral problems faced by humans so that it awakens the imagination for new possibilities that occur and allows readers to understand ethical life in new and creative ways (Sugiarti & Andalas, 2018). Thus, it can be said that literature is a medium used by authors to show good and bad ethical values in human life.

INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

Leo Tolstoy was a writer, novelist, and philosopher from Russia who was born in 1828 in Yasnaya Polyana. His real name was Nikolayev Tolstoy. He died in 1910 in Astapovo, Ryazan Province (Kurnia, 2021). During his lifetime, he often generated controversial and unorthodox ideas, thus making him regarded as an anarchist by puritan groups (Romadhon & Riskiyah, 2022). As an author, Tolstoy was influenced by Western European literature (Subekti & Khoeruman, 2017). Tolstoy's works are realistic and religious with a strong sense of morality and philosophy (Romadhon & Riskiyah, 2022, p. 59). In addition, he also composes themes related to women. For example, his work *Family Happiness* is about a young woman who marries an older man (Subekti & Khoeruman, 2017). Then, the one that was so popular was *Anna Karanina*, with the theme of the affair of a married woman with a charming man.

Tolstoy and his works have influenced many people and influential figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Fyodor Dostoevsky (Rachmawati, 2014).

Reporting from the *Idn Times*, the life history of Tolstoy, namely spending his life partly in rural areas, a person who liked regular routines, was able to speak many languages: Spanish, Latin, Greek, Italian, Ukrainian, Turkish, and Bulgarian, and became a vegetarian in the second half his life (Pradana, 2021a). Tolstoy was noted to have been a nominee for the Nobel Prize in Literature from 1902 to 1906 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901, 1902 and 1910 (Pradana, 2021b). Even though he never won the award, in the hearts of lovers of his work, of course, Tolstoy is a winner who deserves to be remembered throughout history.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE "GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS"

Short stories can be read in a very short time, which is about 30 minutes to 2 hours. Short stories only have one value, crisis, and effect for the readers. The short story writer presents the story shortly and simply so the reader can easily understand it. Even though it has a straightforward storyline, a short story fulfills complete story elements, such as characters, actions and environment (Larasati & Irmawati, 2022). Short stories are one of the efforts to describe various kinds of social polemics. Short stories, as a series of stories, are a small part of circumstances, events, psychology and human life. Reading short stories is about wanting to know the storyline and, more than that, to understand humans (Libon & Sadwika, 2019).

The short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* by Tolstoy is a short story that uses a past background (Larasati & Irmawati, 2022). This short story was originally written for children and is an expanded version of the fable associated with Platon Karataev on the closing pages of *War and Peace* (McLean, 2008). This short story was written in 1872 when thoughts of death, religion and the meaning of life had taken possession of Tolstoy. However, the short story has a more significant meaning for the reader (Archer, 1985). Generally, this short story tells about the search and discovery of the meaning of life. Archer (1985) mentions that to find the answer (1) Tolstoy tries to show the importance of the storyline advantageously, both in the story itself and the circumstances of the story. (2) There is no single answer to the meaning of life—Tolstoy's answer can be used, and any other answer is possible. (3) Tolstoy's answer is not only possible but adequate as an answer (Archer, 1985).

God Sees the Truth, But Waits tells of a merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov, who was accused of robbery and murder, for which he was sentenced to years in prison in Siberia. Then by chance, he meets the real killer who confesses to what he had done so that the accused merchant is acquitted (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 179–181). The story begins with Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov, a merchant going to the Nizhny Fair. When he had walked halfway, he met a merchant he knew and decided to stay at the same inn that night. They rested in adjoining rooms. Before dawn, Aksionov awoke and prepared for another journey with his coachman. When he had traveled approximately 40 km, he rested for a while and fed the horses (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 179–181).

Then, suddenly an official came and asked him about who he was and where he came from. Aksionov answered everything. Officials kept asking him again and again. Then the official called two police officers and explained that the dealer who was with Aksionov last night had been found dead and they needed to search for pieces of evidence, and they found a bloody knife in Aksionov's bag. Aksionov tried to laugh, but the police did not believe him and tied Aksionov up and put him in a cart. Then, he was in prison in Siberia. The next day his wife and children visited him in prison. She was unconscious for a long time when she saw her husband dressed in prison clothes,

chained, and locked up with thieves and criminals. When she awoke, she and her children sat close to him and asked, "Dear husband, didn't you do it? " Aksionov replied, "Do you also suspect me?" Aksionov became sad and cried. The prison warden came and asked his wife to leave (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 181 – 184).

Saddened and weeping, Aksionov thought that his wife suspected him too and said to himself, "It seems that only God can know the truth, it is to Him alone that we must cry, and it is from Him alone to hope for mercy." Then Aksionov was busy only praying to God. Aksionov was flogged and sent to the mines. He was transferred to a Siberian prison with other inmates when the wound healed. During his 26 years in prison, Aksionov's hair had turned white as snow, and his beard had grown long. He walked slowly, spoke little, never laughed, and only prayed a lot. In Siberia, Aksionov accidentally meets someone new to prison who turns out to be a suspected murderer who ran before, which made him a suspect. Aksionov was very angry with what happened, but he forgave him graciously. Until it came to a court decision, Aksionov was acquitted. However, before Aksionov was released, death had already approached him (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 184 – 192).

ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY VALUES IN THE "GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS"

Several ethical philosophy values in the short story *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* are as follows:

Table 1. Ethical Philosophy Values in th Short Story

No	Ethical Philosophy	Data	Types of Ethics	Meaning
1.	Resignation	...and when he remembered that his wife also suspected him, he said, "seems only God can know the truth; it is to him alone that we must cry out and it is from him alone to hope for mercy."	Ethics towards God	Acceptance the conditions experienced and ask God for the best.
2.	Truth	If they wanted to request anything from the prison officials, they always made Aksionov the spokesperson, ...	Ethics towards society	Think and say based on actual circumstances or under facts.
3	Justice	...and when there was a dispute between the inmates, they came to him to set things right and adjudicate the matter.	Ethics towards society	Act by upholding the values of balance, impartiality, and equality in problem – solving.
4.	Forgive	When Aksionov heard him sobbing, he too began to cry. "God will spare you!" he said.	Ethics towards others	If God is Forgiving, then as a servant, it is appropriate to be able to forgive those who have done wrong.

First, resignation. The value of resignation in the short story *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* can be seen in the following data snippet:

"When they had gone, Aksionov recalled what had been said, and when he remembered that his wife also suspected him, he said to himself, "it seems only God can know the truth; it is to him alone that we must cry out and it is from him alone to hope for mercy." Aksionov wrote no more letters of appeal; gave up all hope, and only prayed to God." (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 183 – 184).

Resignation here means acceptance of the conditions experienced and asking God for the best. When there is nothing else that Aksionov can do when accused of murder, even his wife doubts him. Aksionov can only resign and believe that God knows the real truth. He prayed and hoped for God's mercy for what happened to him. The value of submission in the sense of a servant's submission to God Almighty (Admin, 2021). Resignation to God is not a form of giving up on circumstances, but an attitude of continuing to try and pray—as a sign of faith in God (Bastian et al., 2020). The data in the short story shows that Aksionov, to defend himself, kept trying to write a letter of appeal to the Tsar. However, there was no response until finally, as a form of submission, all he could do was pray. As the following data:

"Aksionov wrote no more petitions—abandoned all hope, and only prayed to God..... In prison Aksionov learned to make boots, and raised a little money, which he used to buy the book *Lives of Saints*. He reads this book when there is enough light in the prison, and on Sundays in the prison church he reads passages from the Bible and sings in the choir—and his voice is still good." (Tolstoy, 2020, p. 184)

Second and third, truth and justice. The value of truth and justice in the short story *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* can be seen in the following data snippet:

"Prison officials liked Aksionov for his submissive demeanor, and fellow inmates respected him—they called him 'grandfather' and 'saint'. If they want to make a complaint to the prison officials about anything, they always make Aksionov their mouthpiece, and when there is a dispute between the prisoners, they go to him to set things right, and try the matter." (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 184–185).

The value of truth in Aksionov is illustrated in the quote that people in prison always use him as a spokesperson to convey various requests submitted by people in prison. According to Kompas, someone who wants to become a spokesperson must have the following characteristics; (1) have passion and enthusiasm so that the audience can listen to what is conveyed. (2) Have the skills to remain calm even under pressure. (3) Can answer various questions. (4) Can convey messages in their language (5) Have good knowledge and understanding of what is being conveyed. Aksionov was appointed by the people in prison, of course, because he had that character, so they entrusted him as a spokesperson.

Meanwhile, for the value of justice, it can be seen in the data that when there is a dispute between prisoners, Aksionov is always the person who resolves and adjudicates the dispute. The value of justice seems to be strong in Aksionov, so he becomes the judge of disputes between prisoners that occur. Justice here means acting by upholding the values of balance and impartiality and equality in solving problems. As Plato said, justice can be understood as an attitude of "giving each man his due". Adil is also interpreted by Plato as "the self-disciplined man whose passions are controlled by reason" (Nurhayati et al., 2023).

Fourth, forgive. The value of forgiveness in the short story *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* can be seen in the following data snippet:

"When Aksionov heard him sobbing he began to cry too. "God will spare you!" he said. "Perhaps I am a hundred times worse than you," and as he said this his heart became light, and the longing to return left him. He no longer has any desire to leave prison, but only hopes for his final hour to come." (Tolstoy, 2020, pp. 191–192).

The value of forgiveness here is imitating the characteristics of the All-Forgiving God by forgiving the mistakes that others have made. Aksionov tries to understand the person who made him languish in prison for decades—while seeing himself who might be far worse than the person who has kept him in prison. This attitude of understanding made by Aksionov made him feel calm and peaceful. Forgiveness can be understood as

a deliberate process of changing negative and vengeful responses into positive ones. Forgiveness is a method that allows a person to distract himself from unpleasant life experiences and leads a person to grow, develop and live a meaningful and quality life (Mustary, 2021).

Overall, Aksionov's ethical philosophy is an attitude that exists because he entirely resigned his life to God when he was named a murder suspect. He only believes that God knows he is innocent and teach him a valuable lesson from what happened to him. He understands that God knows what he is experiencing but is waiting for the right time to show him the truth. For 26 years, Aksionov waited in prison. Finally, God showed him what happened, and at that moment, he no longer saw the old and long wounds he had experienced—he only hoped that God would accept him, who was full of sin. Thus, the philosophical message that can be taken from the short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* is that God always plans the best for humans, even though he initially cannot understand it. However, it's always a good ending when humans understand what happened and see the positive side.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the ethical philosophical values in the short story *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* include; (1) the value of surrender, namely acceptance of the conditions experienced and asking God for the best; (2) the value of truth, namely human character which is based on rationality; (3) the value of justice, namely taking sides based on the reality that happened; and (4) the value of forgiveness, namely the awareness to understand that every human being has mistaken. These four values live on in Aksionov, the short story's main character—after the long wound he experienced. He understands that these wounds are God's way of making him have closeness to Him and become a better human being. The philosophical message that can be learned from the short story *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* is that God knows the truth that happens to humans but waits for the best time to show him the truth. In that waiting period, God shows people good things to him.

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