

CHARLES DICKENS' VIEW OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AS REFLECTED IN *HARD TIMES*

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Abstrak

Karya sastra merupakan pandangan seorang pengarang terhadap hidup ini atau ide-ide tertentu tentang kehidupan. Dengan kata lain, penulis adalah bagian dari karyanya. Banyak penulis menganggap lingkungan sangat mungkin untuk dijadikan suatu bahan penulisan karya sastra. Tentu saja, penulis menyertakan pandangan terhadap fenomena sosial yang terjadi di dalam karyanya. Revolusi Industri merupakan salah satu fenomena besar yang terjadi di Inggris yang membawa perubahan besar bagi masyarakatnya. Peristiwa besejarah digambarkan dengan sangat apik oleh Charles Dickens, seorang penulis novel yang juga pemerhati reformasi sosial melalui novelnya yang berjudul *Hard Times*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pandangan Charles Dickens tentang revolusi Industri melalui pendekatan strukturalisme genetik.

Key words: Keywords: Society, View, Phenomena

INTRODUCTION

Novel as one of literary forms is an expression of the writer. Moreover it is used to deliver certain values or phenomena that happened in society. As Henry Guntur Tarigan says "*Karya sastra merupakan pandangan seorang pengarang terhadap hidup ini atau ide-ide tertentu tentang kehidupan*" (*Prinsip-Prinsip Dasar Sastra*,1984:120). Thus the readers catch one happening in author's point of view. In other words, reading a literary work is one way to know the author's thought, ideology or even the author's criticism of certain social condition.

One of the big phenomena that occurs in society, brings great changes for human life and invites a contradictory action is The Industrial Revolution. In one hand The Industrial Revolution brought a great development, especially in technology and socio-economic one. On the other hand, there is another consequence of the Industrial Revolution, it caused "a hard time" for human life. It caused chaos and social problems among society.

Charles Dickens as one of the greatest English novelists who concerned with social reformation often used The Industrial Revolution as the setting of his works. Moreover most of his works highlight The Industrial Revolution as the caused of suffering and misery.

Hard Times as one of Dickens' novels, uses The Industrial Revolution as the setting of the story. It describes a society with its problems of life during the machine era. The complexity of the social problems shows that Dickens concerned with the other consequences of The Industrial Revolution.

METHODOLOGY

This study is viewed as a literary criticism. Literary criticism is an academic activity that express the reader's sense to analyze, interpret and even evaluate the texts within a literary work. While the literary approach which is used in this study is genetic structuralism proposed by Lucien Goldmann.

Review of Related Literature

Genetic Structuralism is a study of human sciences. Moreover Goldmann states in *The Sociology of Literature* "the first general observation on which genetic structuralist thought is based that all reflection on human sciences is made not from without but from within"(Lucien Goldmann in Peter Davison,1978:169). Goldmann puts the writer, the works and the society as one unity. In genetic structuralism, it studies both, the internal factors and the external one. The internal factors means the literary work itself while the external factors concern on social background and the life of the author. As Goldmann says "All positive research in the human sciences must necessarily conducted on two different levels, that of the object studied and that of immediately surrounding structure".

To support his theory, Goldmann builds five categories that relevant to each other. They are human realities, collective subject, world view, structure of literary works and the last is dialectics of comprehension and explanation.

Human Realities

- "The basic idea: human facts are the responses of an individual or collective subject, constituting an attempt to modify a given situation in a sense favorable to the aspiration of that subject. This implies that all behavior and consequently every human fact have a significant character". (*Sociology of Literature*, 1978:170)
- It consists of all activities or action, whether verbal or physical.

Collective Subject

- Collective subject is a subject of social fact. Social revolution, political, economy are social facts. This subject becomes the subject of a great literary works. According to Lucien Goldmann “a great literary works speaks of the world, the universe, its laws and problems which occur and grow in it”.
- A work of art is not an individual activity but it is a collective one. Furthermore Goldmann puts a literary work as a voice of representative of the writer’s social group.

Worldview

- Goldmann believes that there is a relation between the structure of the works and the structure of the society, because both of them come from the same structurization activities. However the relation cannot be seen directly. It needs a bridge, which is called world view.
- Worldview is a suitable term to reveal the whole ideas, aspiration and feelings, which connect certain social group and contrast it with the other groups.

Structure of Literary Works

- Literary works is the result of structurization of collective subject; it has a structure which is coherent and holistic.
- Goldmann concerned with the internal factors which are combined to create a coherent structure. Moreover, a structure should reveal the theme that focuses on the relation between the characters and their surrounding and also among the characters itself.

Dialectics of Comprehension and explanation

- Comprehension is the problem of the internal coherence of the text, which presupposes that the text, the whole of the text and nothing but the text is taken literary and that, within it, one seeks on overall significant structure. While explanation is a problem of seeking the individual or collective subject in relation to which the mental structure which govern the works has a functional character and for that very reason, a significant character (Sociology of Literature,1978:74)

Basically, genetic structuralism is a theory of literature which views a literary work by referring back to the life of the author and the life outside or society as well, besides still gives attention to the structural elements of the works itself. That is to say, the genetic structural

approach was born as a bridge of the extreme tendency between the two former approaches which stand oppositely; the structural approach and the sociological approach.

This kind of theory can be applied at Charles Dickens in creating literary works as follows. Start from the great event “the Industrial Revolution” which occurs in England 19th century with its effect on human life, it invites many reactions from people around the world. It caused a great development in human race.

However, it also caused “a hard time” or suffering for the lower society, including the young Dickens. Dickens had a hard life since he was a boy. He becomes close to poverty, misery, pain and things that goes to the pauper society. With his bitter experience, Dickens becomes the subject collective of a social class; lower class.

Moreover, his observation and his experience bring him to a consciousness about his society. Dickens has a big desire to change his society to be a better one. It leads him to create a literary work and put his worldview in it, as the result of his consciousness of his surrounding. It can be said that creating a literary work is his effort to speak the social justice for the lower class. Based on this understanding, genetic structuralism is the most suitable approach in analyzing the novel.

ANALYSIS

To Find out Charles Dickens’ view on the Industrial Revolution, this study will compare the social phenomena in the story with the reality during the Industrial Revolution. There are three social phenomena in the *Hard Times*, they are:

The application of Utilitarianism

During “the great event” there was a value, which controlled society, namely Utilitarianism. Basically utilitarianism or The Greatest Happiness principle holds that “action are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness and wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness”(The 19th Century Philosophers, 1956:146). Unfortunately “it held not only the good is happiness in general but also that each individual always pursues what he believes to be his own happiness”(A History of Western Philosophy,1945:775).

Over time, there was a practically deviation in utilitarianism. The rhythm of industry life made a changing in the value. In industrial society, utilitarianism belonged to the bourgeois class or the capitalist. It means that everything had to support the productivity of industry. People had to throw away anything that had no use for human needs. That is why

they only believed on fact or reality. They believed that only strict to the fact or reality can help them survive in their life. This value influences the education. The children were prepared to be a person who concerns only on materials. It is hoped that children grow up become great men, under 'the fact only philosophy'.

In *Hard Times*, Dickens portrays this social phenomenon through the characters of Mr. Thomas Gradgrind, Louisa Gradgrind, Tom Gradgrind and Cecilia Jupe. Dickens portrays the value in a negative way. It caused a misery for the followers. It can be seen through the life of Mr. Thomas and his children. In the end of the story, Mr. Thomas described as a strict follower of Utilitarianism, finally has a great regret on what he had believed. Louisa as the daughter of Mr. Thomas cannot overcome her problems and has to lose her marriage. While Tom as the son of Mr. Thomas, has to pay on what he has done with his life. It seems that Dickens wants to emphasize the impact of it in life especially for the children. It makes the children suppressed and failed in facing the life's problems. On the contrary, Cecilia Jupe who stands against the value has a happy life.

Facts are something definite. Reality is something that happens in our life. It is something real. It can be seen and felt. On the contrary, imagination is something abstract. It cannot be seen. Therefore the Utilitarianism followers do not allow their children to have imagination. It is something forbidden. "In idle imagination, a very bad thing for anybody" (*Hard Times*, p.5). Moreover, a community with imagination is described as "degraded position" (*Hard Times*, p.12). These two quite different values are coloring the life of the characters in *Hard Times*. By contradicting the life between them, Dickens criticizes the existing of Utilitarianism during Industrial Revolution.

By creating *Hard Times*, Dickens gives a consciousness dealing with the values. In human life there are two important things, which controlled human attitude; the head and the heart. The head represents the logic things. It is something realistic or in this case is the fact. The heart represents the human's feeling. It is something abstract such as love, will, passion, even imagination. There must be a balance between them. Both of them are needful to reach human happiness in human life.

The life of the working class

The life of the working class during Industrial Revolution was miserable. "For the poor who worked in factories, life was bitter and hard. Moreover they were faced with the wearisome and endless repetition of a simple process, haunted by the fear of unemployment

and starvation. Diseases, poverty, fear, malnutrition, this was common lot of our ancestors, and all the restless energies of the 'improvers' could not save them from it"(*England in the Eighteen Century*,1950:89).

The exploitation of workers had become something usual in industrial life. The working hour was very long and their life protection was regarded as something unimportant. "Workers labored long hours for miserable wages and lived in ugly unsanitary tenements. The working day was 13 hours or longer. The workers seldom saw daylight, for gas illumination enabled them to work from before daybreak until after dark. Above all the workers were unsecured"(*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1768:214)

In *Hard Times*, the working class is called 'The Hands'. Since the worth thing from the working class according to the bourgeois class is their hands, in other words, their power. The working society is described as 'the subject of a nameless, horrible dread, a mortal fear of one particular shape with everything took. Whatsoever he looked at, grew into that form sooner or later. The object of his miserable existence was to prevent its recognition by any one among the various people he encountered. Hopeless labour"(*Hard Times*,p.81)

In *Hard Times*, the working class is represented by Stephen Blackpool. He has to face the unfair treatment from the owner of the factory. He has been accused as a bank robber without any strong evidences. Furthermore, in his effort clearing his name, he dies. The Blackpool's death symbolizes the hard life which has to be faced by the working class.

The life of the working society during Industrial Revolution was very hard. If they wanted to survive during 'the machine era', they had to be a machine. Working and producing without any complaining is another word for machine. Even though they had to accept the misery, they did not have any choices. The life of the working class which is full of pain becomes the other social issues that Dickens wants to emphasize

The way Dickens describes the working class, seems that he wants to portray the misery of the working society during The Industrial Revolution. The working society becomes the one who owned the 'other sequences of the great event'.

The physical appearance of the industrial city

The other impact of Industrial Revolution which can be seen easily is the physical appearance of the industrial city and surrounding. According to Gustav "every great city has one or more slums, where the working class is crowded together. These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns of England, the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns, The streets are generally unpaved, rough and dirty filled with vegetables and

animal refuse”(Gustav Dore in Jerome Blum, 1966:566). Smoke, ashes, dust and waste are everywhere. Hence, Pollution becomes something that cannot be avoided.

This horrible condition can be found in *Hard Times*. Coketown as the industrial city in *Hard Times*, is described as a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye”(*Hard Times*, p.20) Dickens portrayed Coketown as painted savage. It means that Coketown is full with cruelty, primitive and not civilized society.

Moreover, Coketown is portrayed as follows “a blur of soot and smoke, now confusedly tending this way, now that way, now aspiring to the vault of heaven, now murkily creeping along the earth, as the wind rose and fell, or changed its quarter: a dense formless jumble, with sheets of cross light in it, that showed nothing but masses of darkness”(*Hard Times*, p:105) Actually Dickens has already gave the first impression through the name of Coketown itself. Coke means coal. Coal is a thing that cannot be separated from the factory.

Charles Dickens’ view of the Industrial Revolution as reflected in *Hard Times*

Hard Times, Which is written by Dickens in 1854, explores his understanding on The Industrial Revolution. In revealing Dickens’ understanding of ‘the great event’, it cannot be separated from his own life. His bitter life during his childhood, which closed to poverty and misery, created his sensitivity on social problems. As Edmund A. Brown said “Dickens suffered poverty and hardship in his childhood, later he was to describe many scenes and incidents from his own early life in such novel as *David Copperfield*, *Dombey and Son*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorit*”.(*The Cultural Library*, 1959:261)

Hard Times highlight three social issues as the impact of Industrial Revolution. They are the application of Utilitarianism, the life of the working class and the bad environment of the industry city. Dickens portrays those three social phenomena in negative way. It shows his disagreement on it. By presenting the pain of the working class, the horrible condition of the industry city and the failure of Utilitarianism, Dickens criticizes the Industrial Revolution which caused social chaos for England Society. In criticizing the social issues, Dickens did it in direct and forceful.

Through his writing, Dickens not only rolls out the social chaos but also gives new consciousness to the readers. He proclaims to the society to maintain the social justice

anywhere and to everyone without concerning to their race or their social status. It belongs to everyone. Justice has to be implemented. Moreover every human being is equal and none has right to press the others because of any reason.

Based on three social problems in *Hard Times*, It can be concluded that the general issue in Charles Dickens' literary works, *Hard Times* is the hard life which had to be faced by the society of the industrial city as the bad impact of The Industrial Revolution. The three social phenomena show the complexity of the social chaos during the machine era.

CONCLUSION

Charles John Huffman Dickens is one of the great 19th century writers who subjugate his life to give his voice on social justice, especially for the pauper society. In *Hard Times*, Dickens with his total vision, his deep and whole experience, draws his idea and his view toward the life during Industrial Revolution. *Hard Times* is a social criticism novel. Through the symbol of Coketown and the society with its characterization inside, Dickens obviously criticizes the social injustice, which occurs in English at the 19th century.

Dickens, in *Hard Times*, draws his understanding of the Industrial Revolution. He feels very negative on 'the great event', since it caused many miseries for England society, especially the pauper society. By *Hard Times*, Dickens serves another way in seeing the machine era. The Industrial Revolution in 19th century which brought great development, especially in technology, also caused a hard time, a misery for the society. It is the other consequences of 'the great event' that had to be faced by society.

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