

Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific
Research
University of Babylon College of Education
For Human Sciences
Department of English



Morality in Charles Dickens's Hard Times

A paper submitted to the department of English as partial fulfillment of
the requirements for degree of bachelor in English

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2024

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ
{بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ}
صدق الله العلي العظيم

[سورة النحل:97]

In the name of Allah

Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.

[Surah an-Nahl

(97)]

Dedicated

To my family

To Everyone Who Love me and Hope me Happy Live

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere respect and gratitude to my supervisor Asst.Lect. Yashar Kareem Sharad for his help and guidance and I would like also to thank all the staff of English department who taught me with patience and support during the academic years.

Abstract

Dickens' *Hard Times* conveys the detached culture present at the time of England's industrialization, a period was a time of unwavering focus on industry and a neglect of the human soul. The character of Thomas Gradgrind best exemplifies the defining fabric of the time. As an educator involved in molding the minds of the youth, Gradgrind helps to uphold the utilitarian ideas of England.

This study which is titled *Morality in Charles Dickens's Hard Times*. This study consists of four chapters, the first chapter is an introduction about the Study and chapter two is tackled the summary of *Hard Times*. Chapter three is tackled the theme of morality in the novel of *Hard Times* and then the research paper ends with chapter four which is a conclusion that a life built completely on the basis of facts and statistics is limited and unhappy. Gradgrind raises his children, Tom and Louisa, to value only money and to live entirely by practical values. As a result, Tom robs a bank, and Louisa marries the older Bounderby, a man she doesn't love, to gain money and security. She is miserable and nearly runs off with James Harthouse.

Chapter One

Introduction

One of the most famous British authors of all time, Charles Dickens's literary style is so unique and influential it has its own adjective: Dickensian. Learn more about his life and novels. Charles Dickens was a nineteenth-century British author and editor who wrote novels, short stories, comics, and novellas. He produced some of the most famous books of his time, including *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens started his career writing humorous sketches and comics for periodicals, some of which he published himself. He is known for his stark portraits of the underclass in Victorian-era London, highlighting the wealth gap and making his readers more socially aware. His work continues to influence literature and pop culture, with many of his works taught to young readers. (MasterClass, 2022)

1.1 The Life of Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens's legacy lives on in his literature, influencing countless writers, including Margaret Atwood and Salman Rushdie. Stories like *A Christmas Carol* remain popular thanks to numerous TV, film, and theatrical adaptations. Dickens often drew inspiration from his own life. Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, a coastal town in England. When he was 10, the Dickens family moved to Camden Town, a working-class suburb of London. At 12, Dickens dropped out of school to work at a boot-blackening factory when his father, who previously held a

well-paying job at the Navy pay office, went to debtors' prison. Dickens looked back at this time as his "loss of innocence." At 15, Dickens landed a job as an office boy, which led to a freelance court reporting job. Within a few years, he was working for two major London newspapers. Dickens began submitting humorous sketches to local newspapers under the pseudonym Boz. These he compiled into his first book, *Sketches by Boz*, in 1836, shortly after he married his first wife, Catherine Hogarth, with whom he fathered ten children.

Midlife and literary career: Dickens published his first novel, *Oliver Twist*, in 1838. (It first appeared in serialized installments in his self-published periodical *Bentley's Miscellany*.) After *Oliver Twist*, Dickens published fifteen novels and several novellas over the course of his life, a few of which also appeared in monthly or weekly installments. He edited several magazines, including *Household Words*, and founded his own, *All The Year Round*. In 1842, Dickens toured the United States, giving public readings and speaking against slavery. He wrote the travelogue *American Notes* based on this experience. Dickens began a relationship with actress Ellen Ternan in 1857. Dickens died at his country home, Gad's Hill Place near Chatham in Kent, of a stroke in 1870, at the age of 58. His grave is in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. Today, fans of Dickens's work celebrate his legacy at the annual Rochester Dickens Festival. .(MasterClass,2022)

During the long years spent with Catherine (1836-1858), Dickens achieved the status of the greatest living writer of his day. Despite being plagued by ill-health his creative energy was boundless. In addition to 10 major novels and numerous short stories he edited a popular weekly Household Words. (Peter, 1990)

1837-39 Oliver Twist

1838-39 Nicholas Nickleby

1840-41 The Old Curiosity Shop, Baranby Rudge.

1842 Travelled to the United States.

1843-44 Martin Chuzzlewit, A Christmas Carol.

1844-45 Travelled to Italy and France.

1846-48 Dombey and Son.

1849-50 David Copperfield.

1854 Hard Times

1855-57 Little Dorrit

1857 A year before leaving his wife, Dickens fell in love with a mysterious young actress, Ellen Ternan. The couple hid their relationship.

1858 Started giving public readings of his works, despite recurrent bouts of illness. He separated from

his wife. So began a bitter public wrangle between Dickens and his supporters, and Catherine and her

family. Georgina, Catherine's sister, stood by Dickens, and insisted on remaining in the Dickens home,

where for years she had taken Catherine's place as housekeeper and mentor of the children. Rumour

now linked Dickens' name with his sister-in-law as well as Ellen.

1859 A Tale of Two Cities

1864-65 Out Mutual Friend

1867-68 Tour of public reading in the USA. His health deteriorated.

1870 Died at Gad's Hill; He was buried, against his wishes, in Westminster Abbey. He left a fortune of £93,000 -more than half of which came from the proceeds of his public readings. Dickens's inventiveness is prodigious. He can weave plots of huge complexity as to ensure a sense of mystery and uncertainty all along the way. However, his greatest achievement lies in the creation of his characters which are vividly drawn. A third facet is his gift of humour, his comic scenes and witty dialogue. (Peter,1990)

Dickens was once a newspaper reporter. Actually, most of Dickens's greatest novels were first written in monthly or weekly instalments in Journal .His novels are filled with real personalities

and vivid physical descriptions. Dickens is also well-known for his exaggeration. Dickens is famous for packing his novels with social commentaries. He targets the injustices of the nineteenth century, namely, poor houses, boys' boarding schools, the lack of education for women, the Tyrannies of family life, the over reliance on alcohol, and the effects of poverty. Dickens' style and preferred themes earned his work the term "Dickensian," which refers to a depiction of Victorian society with caricatured characters symbolizing wealth extremes. (Bertoa, 2015 :4)

Always a very visual writer, he took delight in describing sights and sounds and the feel of things, detail upon detail. He lived the characters he created. The love and vitality which Dickens bestowed on his characters are echoed by the affection and vividness with which the reader remembers them. Dickens focuses on idiosyncrasies of speech, dress and appearance, and often gives his characters repeated "stock phrases" which virtually sum them up and commit them to memory. Having a very acute ear for turns of phrase, Dickens used such speech patterns as a source of humour in all his works -but he also used them as a vehicle for satire. The serial publication of his novels made for a close relationship with his public, a need to maintain suspense from each instalment to the next and to take his reader's feelings into consideration, which may partly account for his sometimes over-indulgent use of sentimentality and melodrama. (Peter, 1990)

Chapter Two

Hard Times Summary

Thomas Gradgrind, a wealthy, retired merchant in the industrial city of Coketown, England, devotes his life to a philosophy of rationalism, self-interest, and fact. He raises his oldest children, Louisa and Tom, according to this philosophy and never allows them to engage in fanciful or imaginative pursuits. He founds a school and charitably takes in one of the students, the kindly and imaginative Sissy Jupe, after the disappearance of her father, a circus entertainer. As the Gradgrind children grow older, Tom becomes a dissipated, self-interested hedonist, and Louisa struggles with deep inner confusion, feeling as though she is missing something important in her life. Eventually Louisa marries Gradgrind's friend Josiah Bounderby, a wealthy factory owner and banker more than twice her age. Bounderby continually trumpets his role as a self-made man who was abandoned in the gutter by his mother as an infant. Tom is apprenticed at the Bounderby bank, and Sissy remains at the Gradgrind home to care for the younger children. (Faber, 2011:25)

In the meantime, an impoverished "Hand"—Dickens's term for the lowest laborers in Coketown's factories—named Stephen Blackpool struggles with his love for Rachael, another poor factory worker. He is unable to marry her because he is already married to a horrible,

drunken woman who disappears for months and even years at a time. Stephen visits Bounderby to ask about a divorce but learns that only the wealthy can obtain them. Outside Bounderby's home, he meets Mrs. Pegler, a strange old woman with an inexplicable devotion to Bounderby.(Ibid)

James Harthouse, a wealthy young sophisticate from London, arrives in Coketown to begin a political career as a disciple of Gradgrind, who is now a Member of Parliament. He immediately takes an interest in Louisa and decides to try to seduce her. With the unspoken aid of Mrs. Sparsit, a former aristocrat who has fallen on hard times and now works for Bounderby, he sets about trying to corrupt Louisa. The Hands, exhorted by a crooked union spokesman named Slackbridge, try to form a union. Only Stephen refuses to join because he feels that a union strike would only increase tensions between employers and employees. He is cast out by the other Hands and fired by Bounderby when he refuses to spy on them. Louisa, impressed with Stephen's integrity, visits him before he leaves Coketown and helps him with some money. Tom accompanies her and tells Stephen that if he waits outside the bank for several consecutive nights, help will come to him. (Ibid)

Stephen does so, but no help arrives. Eventually he packs up and leaves Coketown, hoping to find agricultural work in the country. Not long after that, the bank is robbed, and the lone suspect is Stephen, the vanished Hand who was seen loitering outside the bank

for several nights just before disappearing from the city.(
Hylland,1996:34)

Mrs. Sparsit witnesses Harthouse declaring his love for Louisa, and Louisa agrees to meet him in Coketown later that night. However, Louisa instead flees to her father's house, where she miserably confides to Gradgrind that her upbringing has left her married to a man she does not love, disconnected from her feelings, deeply unhappy, and possibly in love with Harthouse. She collapses to the floor, and Gradgrind, struck dumb with self-reproach, begins to realize the imperfections in his philosophy of rational self-interest.(
Ibid)

Sissy, who loves Louisa deeply, visits Harthouse and convinces him to leave Coketown forever. Bounderby, furious that his wife has left him, redoubles his efforts to capture Stephen. When Stephen tries to return to clear his good name, he falls into a mining pit called Old Hell Shaft. Rachael and Louisa discover him, but he dies soon after an emotional farewell to Rachael. Gradgrind and Louisa realize that Tom is really responsible for robbing the bank, and they arrange to sneak him out of England with the help of the circus performers with whom Sissy spent her early childhood. They are nearly successful, but are stopped by Bitzer, a young man who went to Gradgrind's school and who embodies all the qualities of the detached rationalism that Gradgrind once espoused, but who now sees its limits. Sleary, the lisping circus proprietor, arranges for Tom

to slip out of Bitzer's grasp, and the young robber escapes from England after all. (Ibid)

Mrs. Sparsit, anxious to help Bounderby find the robbers, drags Mrs. Pegler—a known associate of Stephen Blackpool—in to see Bounderby, thinking Mrs. Pegler is a potential witness. Bounderby recoils, and it is revealed that Mrs. Pegler is really his loving mother, whom he has forbidden to visit him: Bounderby is not a self-made man after all. Angrily, Bounderby fires Mrs. Sparsit and sends her away to her hostile relatives. Five years later, he will die alone in the streets of Coketown. Gradgrind gives up his philosophy of fact and devotes his political power to helping the poor. Tom realizes the error of his ways but dies without ever seeing his family again. While Sissy marries and has a large and loving family, Louisa never again marries and never has children. Nevertheless, Louisa is loved by Sissy's family and learns at last how to feel sympathy for her fellow human beings.(Ibid)

Chapter Three

Morality

Morality is the belief that some behaviour is right and acceptable and that other behaviour is wrong. Morality is the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are distinguished as proper (right) and those that are improper (wrong). Morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion or culture, or it can derive from a standard that a person believes should be universal. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with "goodness" or "rightness".(Long,1987:366)

Moral philosophy includes meta-ethics, which studies abstract issues such as moral ontology and moral epistemology, and normative ethics, which studies more concrete systems of moral decision-making such as deontological ethics and consequentialism. An example of normative ethical philosophy is the Golden Rule, which states: "One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself."(Antony,1974:134)

Immorality is the active opposition to morality (i.e. opposition to that which is good or right), while amorality is variously defined as an unawareness of, indifference toward, or disbelief in any particular set of moral standards and/or principles. Ethics (also known as moral philosophy) is the branch of philosophy which addresses questions of morality. The word "ethics" is "commonly

used interchangeably with 'morality' ... and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group, or individual."Likewise, certain types of ethical theories, especially deontological ethics, sometimes distinguish between ethics and morality.(Antony,1974:134)

Chapter Four

Morality in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*

The major moral lesson *Hard Times* teaches is that living a life of utilitarian material calculation, rather than a life of empathy, feeling, and imagination, leads to misery. The moral of *Hard Times* is that a life built completely on the basis of facts and statistics is limited and unhappy. Gradgrind raises his children, Tom and Louisa, to value only money and to live entirely by practical values. As a result, Tom robs a bank, and Louisa marries the older Bounderby, a man she doesn't love, to gain money and security. She is miserable and nearly runs off with James Harthouse. (Kaplan, 2000:5)

Through Tom and Louisa, Dickens shows the limitations of the philosophy of utilitarianism, which defines happiness as the greatest good for the greatest number. In contrast to the Gradgrinds, Dickens introduces Sissy Jupe, the abandoned daughter of a circus clown, who represents the world of creativity and caring that Gradgrind wants to eradicate as worthless. She is a kind and compassionate person who prevents the elopement of Louisa and Harthouse and helps Tom out of his predicament with the bank theft. Through her, Dickens shows the importance of such "worthless" parts of life as imagination, love, and compassion for individual human beings.)Ibid)

The main moral lesson in *Hard Times* is that industrialization, if unchecked, can turn human beings into machines, into cogs in a vast system of production. Such a process involves the deliberate suppression of human emotions and the imagination. Under such a system, education exists to cram children's heads full of facts; there is no place for imagination or empathy. Mr. Gradgrind isn't concerned with broadening the horizons of his pupils, or encouraging them to think about the world around them. He simply wants to prepare students to be the next generation of industrial automata, robots toiling away for long hours in the factories that are springing up all over the length and breadth of the country.(Ibid)

Utilitarians like Gradgrind have a very impoverished view of human nature, which they see as being readily quantifiable, as something that can be measured, calculated, and controlled. The idea that there are always hidden depths to human nature doesn't occur to him for a moment. As far as he's concerned, if something cannot be measured or quantified then it either doesn't exist, or it's simply not worth wasting one's time over. This one-dimensional view of human nature finds its ultimate expression in the soulless factories of Coketown and many places like them, where human beings, including small children, exist to serve the interests of the industrial capitalist. In doing so, they are stripped of their basic humanity, a process that begins in educational institutions like those approved by Mr. Gradgrind.

The major moral lesson is that a life of hard-hearted calculation leads to misery. Gradgrind raises his two children, Tom and Louisa, to be selfish and to think primarily of financial calculations and material needs, dismissing love and creative endeavors as childish illusions and distractions that pull people away from what is really important in life.(Chesterton,1911:169)

Because she has been raised to believe that money is all important, Louisa marries a wealthy older man who she doesn't love, Josiah Bounderby. She has money, but her life lacks passion and joy. Playing by her father's rules has left her rich but deeply unhappy and unfulfilled--ripe for seduction and disgrace.(Ibid)

Tom, who lacks ambition, is attracted to material things, especially vices. He lacks moral values. He works for Bounderby and steals money from him, then has to flee to avoid prison.Sissy Jupe, the daughter of a circus performer, who spends her early years experiencing the wonder and magic of the circus, turns out better, despite Gradgrind's attempts to indoctrinate her into a world in which money and a utilitarian calculus of pleasure and pain is all that matters. She has feelings and an imagination. This gives her a moral center from which to make decisions.(Ibid)

Dickens worried about a world increasingly fixated on money, practicality and a factory model for living. He felt the world would become a cold, cruel, miserable place if people did not live with empathy and imagination.the major moral lesson that Charles Dickens hopes readers take away from *Hard Times* is that Utilitarian

values are not only impractical, but are also immoral and calloused. Utilitarianism is a philosophy that was especially prominent at the time Dickens wrote the tale, and it is centered on practically and methodically calculating what does the most people the most good, while disregarding the human component of their felicitous calculus. Dickens exaggerates the tenets of Utilitarianism through iconic characters such as Mr. Gradgrind and the loathsome Bounderby. Gradgrind specifically best represents the moral lesson that Utilitarianism is a narrow, restrictive philosophy after he grows to appreciate the human condition. Initially, Gradgrind harps on about facts and statistics, and ignores others' thoughts and emotions. He finds his children's use of imagination to be a sign of weakness and mental deficiency. One striking instance is when his daughter Louisa asks if she should marry Bounderby, another Utilitarian caricature: (Chesterton, 1911:170)

"I would advise you (since you ask me) to consider this question, as you have been accustomed to consider every other question, simply as one of tangible Fact.... You are, we will say in round numbers, twenty years of age; Mr. Bounderby is, we will say in round numbers, fifty.... In considering this question, it is not unimportant to take into account the statistics of marriage, so far as they have yet been obtained in England and Wales. I find, on reference to the figures, that a large proportion of these marriages are contracted between parties of very unequal ages, and that the elder of these contracting parties is, in rather more than three-fourths of these instances, the bridegroom.... The disparity I have mentioned,

therefore, almost ceases to be disparity, and (virtually) all but disappears” (Dickens,1854:77)

Gradgrind emphasizes the facts of the potential relationship, but overlooks how his daughter actually *feels* toward Bounderby. He treats the marriage as a business transaction. The marriage is a bitter affair for Louisa, and she eventually leaves him a broken woman. It is only after Mr. Gradgrind witnesses the depth of his daughter’s agony that he understands that his Utilitarian values have failed. This experience changes his perspective:

“Aged and bent he looked, and quite bowed down; and yet he looked a wiser man, and a better man, than in the days when in this life he wanted nothing but Facts” (Dickens,1854:205).

Thus, through the character of Mr. Gradgrind, Dickens shows the ineffectiveness of Utilitarian values, and provides readers with a blunt moral lesson on treating others as humans rather than numbers or statistics. Dickens also portrays the wealthy in this novel as being morally corrupt. Bounderby has no moral scruples, and, for example, fires Blackpool "for a novelty". He also conducts himself without any shred of decency, frequently losing his temper. He is cynically false about his childhood. Harthouse, a leisured gent, is compared to an "iceberg" who will cause a wreck unwittingly, due to him being "not a moral sort of fellow", as he states himself. Stephen Blackpool, a destitute worker, is equipped with perfect morals, always abiding by his promises, and always thoughtful and considerate of others, as is Sissy Jupe. (House,1993:19)

Dickens is also concerned, throughout *Hard Times*, with the effects of social class on the morality of individuals. Some contrasting characters relating to this theme are Stephen and Rachel, and Tom and Mr. Bounderby. Stephen's honesty and Rachel's caring actions are qualities not shown in people from higher classes, but among hard working individuals who are browbeaten by the uncaring factory owners such as Bounderby. These qualities appear repeatedly, as Stephen works hard every day, until he decides to leave town to save the names of his fellow workers, and Rachel supports Stephen through this, while struggling to provide for herself as well. In contrast to these behaviours, Mr. Bounderby refuses to recognise the difficulties faced by those in lower classes, as seen by him completely casting aside Stephen's request for help. Other aristocratic characters simply carry out blatantly immoral actions, such as Tom throwing away his sister's money, falling into debt, then robbing a bank, and even framing someone else for his actions. Tom is also seen to be deceitful as he is able to keep his guilt hidden until the evidence points only toward him. On the contrary, when the news comes out that Stephen had robbed the bank, Stephen begins to head back to Coketown to face his problems and clear his name. Overall, the stark difference in morality between characters of dissimilar social status suggests Dickens's idea that there is a form of innate natural law that may remain unhampered in those leading less titled lives. Stephen's concept of right and wrong is untainted by the manufactured values of utilitarianism, instilled into Tom and Bounderby.(Ibid)

The creative part is the fairy tale which often involves animals rather than humans. It speaks to our hearts as it entertains us; the ending is the logical, moral conclusion that satisfies our logical brains and seems "right". The problem with all moral fables is that there are often 2 sides to the same story ... things are rarely so black and white in reality ... so there could be more than one ending ... e. g. here are times when speed is necessary over steadiness - of course, there also has to be good judgement. Although it is not appropriate to describe a work of art, which *Hard Times* undoubtedly is, as a moral fable or a morality play, yet the fact remains that there is a strong moral intention behind this novel. *Hard Times* is a satirical attack on some of the evils and vices of Victorian society. Satire has always corrective purpose and is therefore basically moral in its approach to the subjects it deals with. (Study moose ,2017:2)

Dickens is continuing his attack on what may be called the statistical conception of man, on human relations evaluated in terms of arithmetic, on what Thomas Carlyle called the 'cash nexus' that he had launched at the beginning of his career in *Oliver Twist*. There he had traced its consequences in official attitudes towards poverty and in the working of the New Poor Law. In order to give a concrete shape to his moral purpose, Dickens in this novel uses the characters here as symbols. (Study moose ,2017:2)

Almost every character in this novel is an embodiment of a certain idea or concept or principle, good or bad. In fact, there are two groups of symbolic characters: one group symbolizing certain objectionable features of Victorian life, and the other group

symbolizing certain moral qualities, of which we heartily approve. These two groups of characters, symbolizing opposite principle, are confronted with each other and it is this confrontation that constitutes the focus of interest in the novel.(Study moose ,2017:2)

The characters here are therefore like the ‘*dramatis personae*’ in a morality play; there is an allegorical intention behind the character-portrayal. However, this novel is different from a moral fable or morality play in one striking respect. While the characters in amoral fable or a morality play are purely embodiments of certain qualities, good or bad; in this novel the characters, in addition to their function as symbols of certain good or bad qualities, are also individuals in their own right.(Leavis1963:56)

Each character here is made to live as a separate individual, sharply distinguished from the other; yet their symbolic roles cannot be questioned. Coketown itself is treated as a symbol in the novel. This industrial town represents the industrial ugliness, industrial callousness, the mechanical and monotonous life which the workmen or the “hands” are compelled to lead under a system governed by utilitarianism and *laissez faire*. All the passages which describe this town or its people are written in an ironical vein and have an obvious moral purpose.(Leavis1963:56)

In the main, however, the best writing in *Hard Times* is a result of this tour-guide mentality, as his wonder, horror and awe lead to vivid evocations of the landscape. Many critics have made the link

between Coketown and a kind of Dantesque Inferno, and his vision of industrial society is “full of horror, but possessing also a weird beauty”. The key to the weird beauty latent in the horror are the ‘melancholy mad elephants’ of machinery – Dickens was as fascinated by industry as he was repulsed by it.(Leavis1963:56)

The industrial artefacts of Coketown are endowed with all the life drained from its inhabitants, the dehumanized ‘hands’. Like Marx, Dickens could see an “inverted world characterized by the personification of things” and as a result the inanimate objects of Coketown abound with vitality, while the people within it are cogs in a machine, “people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom everyday was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next” .(Welsh,2000:74)

Treating the factory as a living thing leads to mental links being forged between the ever coiling “interminable serpents of smoke” and the smokescreens that people use to hide themselves from the world, or indeed the world from them, most notably Gradgrinds inability to see past his system, and Bounderby’s deliberate hiding of his past.(Welsh,2000:74)

There are also links made between the fire in the “fairy palaces” and the fire of human passion, and aptly it is the mechanical Louisa who notices this, most likely fascinated at how a non-living thing has

more life than she does – “There seems to be nothing but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire bursts out, father! ” [I, xv]. Not only is this reversal of death and life hellish, but these descriptions of zombie workers in a living factory are written in a prophetic style which almost invites one to place an ‘Abandon hope all ye who enter here! sign on the factory gates.(Welsh,2000:74)

All of the images of smoke, ashes, and fire “suggest that death is ever-present in the hell of Coketown”, as does the reference to the black ladder so often in use in the working class quarters [I, x]. Michael Wheeler points to the significance of Biblical imagery in the text, stating that the New Testament is the “yardstick by its modern usurpers are measured and found wanting”, and that this is the ultimate condemnation that Dickens can heap upon it. However, I cannot help but feel that passages proclaiming that “all those subtle essences of humanity which will elude the utmost cunning of algebra until the last trumpet ever to be sounded will blow even algebra to wreck” , while suggesting that Gradgrindery and the interlocking forces of industry are to be judged and condemned, they also make it clear that they will be left well enough alone until the Judgement Day..(Welsh,2000:74)

Coketown is painted as a hell on earth, consuming the lifeblood of its inhabitants, and the fact that it itself will be destroyed in the end is of monumental insignificance for the countless generations who

will have to toil there until then. On the other hand The Circus is represented as a symbol of “Humanity” as Well as Art. The circus is very important as a sybol in the scheme of this moral fable. The circus people symbolize not only art but also humanity: they are embodiments of those simple virtues of sympathy and helpfulness to others for which gradgrind’s philosophy has no use and Bounderby’s hardened heart, no room. There is a remarkable gentleness about these people, a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another. The moral of this novel as a whole is put by dickens in the mouth of Mr. Sleary of the circus. After giving an account of the death of siss’s father to gradgrind, Mr. Sleary comes to the conclusion that there is a kind of love in the world which is not self-interest afterall, but something very different, and that this love has a way of its own of calculating or not calculating..(Welsh,2000:75)

This is the supreme message which the novel has for us. In these few words we find a condemnation of all that Gradgrind, Bounderby, and Mrs. Sparsit symbolize, and an acceptance and approval of what Stephen and Rachel, Sissy, and Mr. Sleary himself, symbolize. There are, thus, strong grounds for calling this novel a Moral fable or a morality play with the characters functioning partly as individuals but chiefly as symbols. Finally, there are passages of direct moralizing which lend to the novel the character of a novel fable or morality play..(Welsh,2000:75)

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Hard Times is a novel that is written by Charles Dickens' that considers the most biting fictional novel about moral principles and their consequences. The moral of *Hard Times* is that a life built completely on the basis of facts and statistics is limited and unhappy. Gradgrind raises his children, Tom and Louisa, to value only money and to live entirely by practical values. As a result, Tom robs a bank, and Louisa marries the older Bounderby, a man she doesn't love, to gain money and security. She is miserable and nearly runs off with James Harthouse.

Through the two characters Tom and Louisa, Dickens shows the limitations of the philosophy of utilitarianism, which defines happiness as the greatest good for the greatest number. In contrast to the Gradgrinds, Dickens introduces Sissy Jupe, the abandoned daughter of a circus clown, who represents the world of creativity and caring that Gradgrind wants to eradicate as worthless. She is a kind and compassionate person who prevents the elopement of Louisa and Harthouse and helps Tom out of his predicament with the bank theft. Through her, Dickens shows the importance of such "worthless" parts of life as imagination, love, and compassion for individual human beings.

Through the character of Mr. Gradgrind, Dickens shows the ineffectiveness of Utilitarian values, and provides readers with a blunt moral lesson on treating others as humans rather than numbers or statistics

Morality, in this novel, is reduced to the calculation of utility and profit, neglecting the emotional and ethical dimensions of human existence. Louisa Gradgrind's marriage to Josiah Bounderby serves as a stark illustration of the moral consequences of utilitarianism. Her forced union, devoid of emotional connection, results in personal suffering and moral dilemmas.

Dickens warns the “commissioners of fact” and the utilitarian economists that if they do not attend to the instincts and emotions of the poor people, reality will take a wolfish turn and make an end of everything. At another point Dickens offers an ironic commentary, with an obvious moral, upon the effects of Gradgrind’s system of education on Bitzer’s outlook. And then, of course, there is a plain and straightforward moralizing in the final chapter when the author comments upon the ultimate fate of each of the characters.

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