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The Paradox of Utilitarianism in Hard Times: A Critical Approach[*]

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Abstract:

The Victorian Age is Paradoxical in England. On the one hand, it is the age of skepticism and pessimism. On the other hand, it is the period of prosperity and optimism. The philosophy of utilitarianism makes a good manifestation of this paradox. And Charles Dickens is pessimistic about utilitarianism, for he believes it is abused in the Victorian England.

To see how Dickens illustrates abused utilitarianism, this article examines Hard Times (1989), a novel that is, as Ronald Carter and John Mcrae (2004) assert, "in many fields the most accessible critique of the society he [Dickens] lived in (253). It will discuss the educational, social, and economic aspects of utilitarianism as exemplified in the novel. For each aspect it will deliver some manifestations. Regarding the educational system, the focus is on the ideas that Dickens' society is deeply negligent of the logic of the heart, and that the people are denied individuality. Regarding the social aspect the focus is on the ideas of law corruption and individual alienation. And regarding the economic aspect, the ideas of widespread poverty and irresponsibility of the rich to the poor are highlighted.

***Key Words**: The Victorian Age; the philosophy of utilitarianism; educational utilitarianism; social utilitarianism; economic utilitarianism.*

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1. Introduction

1.1. Preliminary Argument

The novels of Charles Dickens are convenient materials for scholars of the English literature. His novels collectively, and Hard Times particularly, mingle irony with humor so masterfully that they give the reader a lot of pleasure plus understanding. His characters typify the universal man, and his themes are the questions of no particular time and place. Whenever and wherever man is, Dickens' people share his fears, hopes, expectations, and limitations. So, it is not accidental that Ronald Carter and John Mcrae (2004) say, "Hard Times…is in many fields the most accessible critique of the society he [Dickens] lived in" (253).

The nineteenth century is the time of paradox in England. On the one hand, Pessimism, as a reality in the reign of Queen Victoria, is taking root from two unrelated sources: The first is the Crimean war that is already a threat to the Victorian success. The second is the publication of Charles Darwin's On the Origins of Species that, as Carter and Mcrae (2001) assert, "undermined the higher values of religion and morality" (255). On the other hand, optimism is greatly epidemic in the England of Queen Victoria. For the philosophical and scientific foundations of material development are already established, and the country is in the process of rapid philosophical, scientific, and technological expansion.

1.2. The Backgrounds of Utilitarianism

The Victorian English man, feeling alienated from God and trying to establish for himself a paradise in this side of grave instead, is finding good justifications for his struggles to develop, by any

means, his material life in this world. The economical theories of Adam Smith, elaborated by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham and further developed by the English economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill, have made the English man quite utilitarian.

Utilitarianism, the soul of which is, as John Burgess Wilson (1958) says, "the greatest happiness for the greatest number," (234) is genuine and humane in identity. Yet, under the influence of Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin, Charles Dickens thinks utilitarianism is quite abused, and as Carter and Mcrae (2001) say, his *Hard Times* "calls into question Jeremy Bentham's theory of utilitarianism" (253).

The tripartite structure of the novel is in equilibrium with its tripartite theme and perhaps with the three aspects of the abused utilitarianism that Dickens attacks in it. Book the first, entitled "Sowing," implies that a ranch hand is to open a cultivation in which he is to scatter the seeds of life in the England of Queen Victoria. "Reaping", suggests that the ranch hand is to harvest what he has already cultivated. And in the last book of "Garnering", the ranch hand accumulates his recently harvested products to bring them home.

The subject of Hard Times is abused utilitarianism. This article will discuss utilitarianism as abused in its different aspects. Firstly, the focus is on the novel as a criticism on the English educational system. A criticism of the Victorian social system, as traceable in the novel, will come next. In the end, the focus is on the novel as an attack on the English economic system. But Hard Times is more than a book on education, sociology, or economics. It is literary art. In it the form is indispensable to the meaning ; the vehicle is indivisible to the tenor. So, this essay discusses how Hard Times mingles form with meaning.

2. Discussion

2.1. Educational Utilitarianism

The utilitarian educational system in Coketown has made huge corruptions, and, because of some reasons, Dickens attacks it most severely. In this part of the essay, we will discuss why and how the novelist devaluates the educational system of the society of which he is a member. The first reason is that Dickens thinks this system is overemphasizing the logic of the mind at the expense of the logic of the heart. The first chapter opens with a large plain whitewashed schoolroom in which three men stand in front of a class of young students, and the speaker, unidentified, is meticulous to make the students realize they should "stick to Facts," because "facts alone are wanted in life" (Hard Times, 1, 1989). The educators should implant in the minds of their students nothing other than facts. They should root out everything else. They should educate the students exclusively on facts for anything else is quite futile to their salvation. The absolutist characterization of the speaker lays a lot of emphasis on the one-sidedness of his utilitarian educational philosophy:

> The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of forehead, which had eyebrows for its base, … The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, ... The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders,---nay his very neck cloth,

> trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was,---all helped the emphasis (Ibid., 1).

Thomas Gradgrind, whose students are, like little pitchers, "to be filled so full of facts" (3) believes in the functionality of no sensical educational approach. For him, only factual sciences, the products of the human intellect, are worthy enough to teach to the students. Only the results of the human brain such as logical inductions and self-evident truths are formative and reliable enough to make the learners capable to achieve salvation. Whatever results from the heart of man, unreasonable and untruthful as it is, should be, on the contrary, eliminated from the school's curriculum, for it is totally useless, even destructive to the students. The students should forget everything about arts. For the outcomes of the human imagination, as arts really are, are destructive to their personality and make them helpless to prosper in life.

Mr. M'choakumchild, the school teacher, who is to "teach these boys and girls nothing but facts" (1), is the tool with which Gradgrind will make chock-fulls of children with facts and principles. And a good tool he makes. Soon Mr. M'cchoakumchild will fill his little pitchers with nothing but dictates of reason, and soon will his pupils, choked with facts and truths, be metamorphosed to preys and 'whelp's.

Bitzer, the star student of Gradgrind who defines a horse only scientifically, is contemptuous both in action and in character. Gradgrind's schooling system will make him quite impotent of humanity. The exclusively sensical definition he makes for a horse signifies that M'choakumchild has stuffed his head only with the outcomes of induction, and that Bitzer is, therefore, quite devoid of any human affection and imagination. The position in the schoolroom he occupies suggests that he is incapable to absorb the warmth of love and affection.

> But whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired, that she seemed to receive deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed (5).

To show his contempt of the excessively abused utilitarianism, from the beginning of the novel Dickens makes Bitzer the object of our hate. "The sandy freckles on his forehead and face" and his skin that is "unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would white" (5), make Bitzer a good enough butt for our indignation. And nowhere in the book Bitzer shows to be a lovely man. The untruthful tales he tells Mrs. Sparsit at the back of Bounderby and Louisa about their love affair and the ingratitude he does to Mr. Gradgrind, when Gradgrind wants him to let Tom, the thief, free make him quite deserving our indignation. But Dickens justly punishes Bitzer by making Mr. Sleary snap Tom of him and send Tom abroad. At the end of the novel the reader can realize Biter as quite frustrated in the body and brain.

In sharp contrast with Bitzer is Sissy Jupe whom Dickens creates and makes a symbol of wisdom, poor honesty, and devotion. It is ironical that Thomas Gradgrind brings Sissy home to financially protect her. For Sissy, instead, makes life more bearable for the Gradgrinds when their mother, sick and impartial to them as she is, is approaching death. And Sissy is sincere enough to resist all difficulties the nineteenth-century civilization imposes on her. And she comes to salvation. Another occasion for Sissy to demonstrate her human love is when James Harthouse, who" was touched in the cavity where his heart should have been" (309), unsuccessfully endeavors to

seduce Louisa, and Sissy brings word from Louisa to him that Louisa will never see him again as long as he lives. Harthouse has done wrong and harm, and Sissy supposes if he is to compensate the damage he has done, he only has to leave Coketown. Sissy is rather a heroine because she successfully performs the heroic actions she is expected to perform. She is an incarnation of the balance of intelligence and emotion, of the equilibrium between the logic of the mind and that of the heart. Therefore, she achieves true happiness. What she does authenticates, as Wilbur L Cross says, "a faith in the final outcome of human endeavor and a belief in immortality" (187). Later on we will see how the characters in whom the essentials of the heart are disregarded and the desires of the brain are, instead, paid extra attention to, go, in different ways, into frustration.

In chapter three of the first book Thomas Gradgrind sees "a phenomenon almost incredible."

> He beholds his own metallurgical Louisa peeping with all her might through a hole in a deal board, and his own mathematical Thomas abasing himself on the ground to catch but a half of the graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower-act! (15)

This is a central scene in the book, because it annihilates the authority of intellect by the elixir of wonder and imagination. Gradgrind speaks to them so passionately that the reader thinks they could have done a killing sin. But although Tom gives himself up to be taken home like a machine (15), Louisa is bold enough to justify her action. She tells her father she has come there because she wants to know what the circus looks like. Here there is more than mere childish naughtiness. In this situation Dickens the humanitarian novelist is employing Louisa and Tom to dramatize the requirements

of human conscience to achieve true happiness. Because of the scientific and technological innovations, the Victorian man, proud of himself, supposes his intellect suffices him for paving his way to salvation. He believes anything fanciful, fantastic, or sentimental is futile and makes man worse. But Charles Dickens thinks this is only one-sidedness of the Victorian conscience, as here he creates Tom and Louisa to dramatize this inadequacy.

The inattentiveness of the Victorian age to the logic of the heart, as opposed to the logic of the mind, is more severe than the aforementioned scene shows. In chapter fifteenth of the second book Gradgrind epitomizes this inattentiveness when he informs his daughter of the marriage proposal Bounderby has offered her but Gradgrind has no answer to the numerous questions that Louisa asks him about the identity of love and marriage.

> "Father," said Louisa, "do you think I love Mr. Bounderby?
>
> Mr. Gradgrind was extremely discomfited by this unexpected question.
>
> "Well, my child," he returned, "I_really_cannot take upon myself to say."
>
> "Father," pursued Louisa in exactly the same voice as before, "do you ask me to love Mr. Bounderby?"
>
> "My dear Louisa, no. No. I ask nothing."
>
> "Father, " she still pursued, "does Mr. Bounerby ask me to love him?"
>
> "Really, my dear," said Mr. Gradgrind, "it is difficult to answer your
>
> question_(129).

Is Louisa the conscience of the Victorian man that is really misunderstood or forsaken? Her numerous connections with fire suggest the youthful passion within her which has seriously been suppressed. In chapter eight of the first book we read

> young Thomas expressed these sentiments sitting astride of the chair
> before the fire, with his arms on the back, and his sulky face on his
> arms. His sister sat in the darker corner by the fireside, now looking at him, now looking at the bright sparks as they dropped upon the hearth (66).

Louisa is meditating why wonderings of different kind—"a pleasure or a relief" of their minds—are forbidden to them. When Louisa was a child she was full of passion, but as she grows older her aspirations metamorphosed into ashes. To dramatize the repressed associations within Louisa Dickens makes her repeatedly identify herself with fire. When she looks at the fire she wonders about Tom and herself, grown up. Although to Tom fire looks "stupid and blank as everything else looks," to Louisa it is replete with implications.

> Have you gone to sleep, Loo?
> No, Tom. I am looking at the fire (69).

Again:

> That's well, said Mr. Gradgrind. So he kissed her and went away: and Louisa returned to the serene apartment of the hair-cutting character, and leaning her elbow on her hand, looked again at the short-lived sparks that so soon subsided into ashes (124).

Later on, fire becomes a motif.

> "Are you consulting the chimneys of the Coketown works, Louisa?"
>
> "There seems to be nothing there but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire bursts out, father!" She answered , turning quickly(132).

And the last paragraph of the novel reads:

> dear reader! It rests with you and me, whither, in our two fields
>
> of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be! We shall sit
>
> with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires run
>
> grey and cold (398).

In Hard Times the form is integral to meaning. At the end of chapter fourteen of the first book the novel becomes extendedly metaphorical. Is the time, "that greatest and longest-established Spinner of all" (126), kind enough to Louisa to weave her into a proper woof? The work of the factory of time is noiseless and his Hands are mute; and the reader guesses the answer to the question above be in negation. The patterns that time the Spinner weaves into Louisa do not become of her accord. A manifestation of this asymmetry is her imposed marriage to a fellow who is "a man made out of a course material" (18). Louisa, delicate in the body and spirit, is a guy of fancy and imagination, while Mr. Bounderby is a fellow of Facts alone. A second example of the inappropriate patterns that are

carved onto Louisa is the fact that her father, "a man of realities, a man of facts and calculations" (3), is so obsessed with facts and statistics that into whose head you might hope to get no insensical belief. A further example of the undue patterns that time the Spinner weaves into Louisa is her brother Tom who is 'a hypocrite', 'incapable at least of governing himself', and 'a monster,' and he is an easy target for James Harthouse, the idle seducer, to egg on him about Louisa.

Perhaps a better description of Louisa's desolate position comes in chapter two of the third book when Harthouse speaks about "taking any advantage of her [Louisa's] father's being a machine, or of her brother's being a whelp, or of her husband's being a bear" (309). A machine, a whelp, and a bear are similar in lacking human logic. They can approve of no personal characteristic for Louisa, and they deny her any individuality.

The second reason why Dickens devaluates the educational system of his own society is that, as Dickens supposes, to fulfill the requirements of the Industrial life, the educational system of the Victorian England is applying a single set of rules on all the students, and, in this way, is denying them of any individuality. Dickens supposes such a training robs of the children all their private aspirations, hopes, expectations, and innovations. As grownups, the graduates will be only incapable human beings who are unable to control even themselves.

The tragedy of Hard Times is the denial of the individuality of the English Victorian man. It is the tragedy of a man between whose soul and body there is no counterbalance. The people about and for whom Dickens wrote are stooped as not higher than cargo that could be measured and decided about only via numbers and statistics. They are people whose material needs are extravagantly endeared to the expense of the essentials of their soul.

In the process of denying individuality of Louisa, James Harthouse can perhaps be considered of as much promise as her father

and her husband. With his "tolerable management of the assumed honesty in dishonesty" (220), Herthouse has much in purse against Louisa. But "what was there in her soul for James Harthouse to destroy"? (220) Louisa, whose psyche is a cauldron of doubts and resentments, and whose nature, long accustomed to self suppression, is torn and divided, becomes, in the course of time, inclined to believe in a wider and nobler humanity than that of her father or her husband. As a result, via his philosophy, a philosophy of hypocrisy indeed, Harthouse can fill in the gap available in her psychology. To absorb her confidence he pretends he is interested in helping her gambler brother Tom who has recently fallen into trouble and has wanted Louisa a sum of money beyond her to give him. To delve more deep into the heart of Louisa Harthouse finds her while sitting in an opening in the dark wood at the nearabouts of Cocktown. She is "watching the fallen leaves of last year, as she had watched the falling ashes at home"(225). But although he pretends to be the antitoxin Mrs. Bounderby is in need of, he is not more than a toxin to her, for he is only an incarnation of hypocrisy and selfishness. As a matter of fact, he has no interest in Tom's well-being, he may even encourage Tom to spend beyond his means. Perhaps to sew the seeds of impartiality or enmity in Louisa to Tom, and, in this way, to make Louisa rely on himself more widely, Harthouse rumors that Tom is inconsiderate to her.

The spinner of the Victorian time has still more ugly patterns to weave into Mrs. Bounderby. Since her marriage she has seldom been to her father's home, but when, in chapter nine of the second book, Bitzer informs her that her mother is laying very ill and Louisa rumbles to Cocktown, at home nobody welcomes her.

> Yet, her remembrances of home and childhood were remembrances of the drying up of every spring

> and fountain in her young heart as it gushed out. The golden waters were not there. They were flowing for the fertilization of the land where grapes are gathered from thorns, and figs from thistles. (263).

Upon Louisa there is "a heavy, hardened kind of sorrow," (263) to which time the spinner will add new ones. When Louisa understands that Sissy, who is caring for her mother and her sister Jane, is an "equal" in the household, and that her sister is closer to Sissy than to her, she becomes additionally discomforted.

Mrs. Gradgrind has "long left off saying anything" (266), but at her death bed she is speaking enough to tell Louisa she and Tom have learned "ologies of all kinds" (266). She supposes her children, miniatures of the whole Victorian men and women, have been denied of no education. Yet she believes "there is something--not an ology at all—that your father has missed or forgotten"(266). Although Mrs. Gradgrind is not conscious about the identity of the missed or forgotten thing, but Dickens is "restless" enough to employ his character to write a letter in which to ask Mr. Gradgrind the Victorian patriarch the nature and function of it. Is Mr. Gradgrind, to whom the letter will be addressed, representing the whole Victorian conscience? Or he is symbolizing the educational system of England in the Victorian era?

The Victorian society has filled to the brim the brain of Louisa with rules and figures, but of her heart it has robbed the immaterial part of her life. Such a strife, because of which she has crushed her better angel into a demon, Louisa equates with death. She asks her father,

> How could you give me a life, and take from me all the inappreciable things That raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the

> sentiments of my heart? What have done, O father, have you done with the garden that should have bloomed once, in this great wilderness here? (287)

To show how the philosophy of utilitarianism is a soft spot in the educational system of the Victorian England, Dickens employs Mrs. Sparsit to spy on Louisa as James Harthuose repeatedly urges her to elope with him. Because of the ill-education she has received as a daughter she cannot resist his invitations and almost elopes with him. To embody Gradgrind's absolutist education as inapplicable the novelist makes Mrs. Sparsit erect "in her mind a mighty Staircase, with a dark pit of shame and ruin at the bottom; and down those stairs, from day to day and hour to hour, she saw Louisa coming" (169). The extended metaphor of the staircase, the omniscient narrator in whom the reader believes as she speaks through the mouth of Mrs. Sparsit when she soliloquizes about Louisa's downfall, and the conversation the novelist puts in the mouths of Louisa and Harthouse in that climactic situation let the reader believe that the present educational regime in England is really inadequate to produce happy and self-sufficient human beings. Yet, to maintain poetic justice, Dickens makes Sparsit the meddler loose her bait when Louisa goes to take refuge in her father's house from the ill-behaviors of Harthose. Louisa into whose secrets of soul a knife has been struck is down. She goes to her father and confesses to him the fact that she could have released herself from the presence of Harthouse, 'the idle seducer', only by coming to her father's home, and wants him to "save me by some other means"(291), because his previous means will not save her.

The utilitarian system of education of the Victorian England is widespread enough to suffocate Tom the son as well. In book one chapter two Thomas Gradgrind, the school proprietor and the curriculum designer, tells his pupils, "you are not to see anywhere,

what you don't see in fact; you are not to have anywhere, what you don't have in fact"(7-8). He believes everything fanciful or imaginary should be excluded from the curriculum for they are futile, even baneful, to the students. In the school, a miniature of the Victorian schools, only "facts and figures" are to be taught to the students, and no sentiment or romance should be exposed to them. His school is the factory of which the raw material is nothing more than facts and figures, and the product is the educated man or woman who is yet quite devoid of any creativity or individuality, for the excessively strong machinery of utilitarianism has grinded his/her individual aspirations, and has metamorphosed them into self-centeredness, pessimism, disobedience, etc.

What becomes of Tom the junior gives an approval to this claim. In book two chapter six, where Tom plans for breaking into Bounderby's bank, to cast the suspicion of theft on Stephen Blackpool, the mill laborer, he wants him to "just hang about the Bank an hour or so" (214). With a false key Tom robs the bank "of not more than a hundred and fifty pounds." But, as Bounderby puts it, "it's not the sum; it's the fact of the Bank being robbed, that's the important circumstance"(240). But as Tom has planned, Bounderby believes it is Blackpool, not Tom, who is the chief suspect.

To illustrate how Gradgrind's utilitarian educational regime has grinded any grand of Tom into cinder, and how it has metamorphosed him not only into a thief but also into a hypocrite, after Tom robs Bounderby's bank, Dickens sets up a conversation between him and Louisa. Louisa, deeply concerned about her brother, repeatedly asks Tom if there is something he has to tell her, but each time Tom says there is nothing. He hides his misdeed even from his sister. When the conversation closes and Louisa goes to sleep, Dickens philosophizes Tom is, as well, a spurner to "all the good in the world." And as Harthouse says in book two chapter three Tom is less of a brother to Louisa and more of a 'whelp' to her would-be seducer. Because

although Tom has been "the subject of all the little tenderness" of Louisa's life, he never behaves honestly to her, and in the hands of James Harthouse who keeps egging Tom on about his sister, he is 'an easy target.' when Stephen Blackpool, now on the verge of death, leaves it to Gradgrind to "clear me an'mak my name good wi'aw men" (364), and Tom the son immediately disappears, it becomes manifest that it is Tom, not Blackpool, who is the thief.

Now it is Gradgrind's turn to arrange for Tom the traitor to be found and "to be saved from justice" (368). Now Gradgrind is not as deeply absolutist as he was at the opening of the novel, for he has recently discovered that his utilitarian educational principles have been to the benefit of neither Tom nor Louisa. Therefore, soon he will arrange for Mr. Sleary, the circus owner, to help Tom escape from Bitzer, Bounderby's exemplary, whom he has sent to arrest Tom. Although by so doing Dickens manifests the English Victorian law as antihumanitarian, and, as the result, open to disobedience, law corruption makes another negative aspect of the English Victorian utilitarianism which will be discussed in the second part of this article.

2.2. Social Utilitarianism

The second aspect of utilitarianism on which Dickens focuses in Hard Times is social and political. The mistrust to the English Victorian legislation, the individual alienation and his struggle to fend himself in a mad world, and a severe class conflict are among the subjects that are traceable in Hard Times. Charles Dickens believes that the English Victorian legislation, as it is only to the benefit of the rich and excessively heedless to the needs of the poor, cannot provide peace and exercise the cause of humanity. It is again through the mouth of Stephen Blackpool that Charles Dickens exposes his

mistrust and hatred of the law. Let's listen to him as he talks to his employer.

> 'Deed we are in a muddle, Sir. Look round town--so rich as 'tis--
>
> and see the numbers o' people as has been broughten into bein heer,
>
> fur to weave, an' to card, an' to piece out a livin' ... Look how we live,
>
> an' wheer we live, an' what numbers, an' by what chances, and wi'
>
> what sameness; ... Look how you considers of us, and writes of us,
>
> and talks of us, ... , and how yo are awlus right, and how we are awlus
>
> wrong, ... Look how this ha' growen and growen, Sir, bigger an' bigger, broader an' broader, harder an' harder, fro year to year, fro generation unto generation. Who can look on it, Sir, and fairly tell a man 'tis not a muddle (198)?

The social unrest is manifested in different forms. One form is the threat of crime. With the growth of population and the expansion of the models of life, it is becoming more and more difficult for the government to prevent crimes of different kinds. Tom the junior, whom Harthouse names the 'whelp', is a criminal for whom the English law never makes an obstacle, and when, towards the end of the novel it becomes clear that it is he who is the real culprit, the Victorian law is not fast enough in reaction to arrest him. The other threatening danger to the Victorian social system on which Dickens focuses in Hard Times is the threat of sexual desire. Harthouse, the political aspirant whom Gradgrind wants to collect some information

about Coketown, is a cad who always flirts with Louisa who is Bounderby's legal wife and who symbolizes womanly chastity. After some time he arranges for Louisa to elope with him and it is only after Louisa does not dare to elope with Harthouse and goes to her father's house instead, that Sissy Jupe, through love and sympathy, brings word from Louisa to Harthouse that Louisa will never see him again. Harthouse has done wrong, yet the Victorian society does not show to have something against him. The third danger of the Victorian social unrest is the alienation of the individual from the society in which he lives. The story of Blackpool's alienation is the story of all the honest working-class laborers who turn their guns to the misdeeds of employers and union managers and who get alienated from their homeland, because they are ostracized and excluded from their jobs. In the end they have to learn to fend for themselves in exile. Another damage of the Victorian social unrest on which the present paper concentrates is the inability of the individual to know who he is and how he is related to others.

The people of Coketown are sharply divided into two groups of the rich and the poor. The rich are usually the bourgeois who are factory owners, bankers, and holders of high governmental posts. The poor make the lower classes of the society who are under the influence of the rich and whose destination is determined by them. They are factory workers, circus personnel, housewives, etc.

A manifestation of the mid-19th century social unrest is the fact that divorce laws are almost always the privilege to the rich. Hard Times shows as misfortunate the marriage of Josia Bounderby with Louisa Gradrind on the one hand, and that of Stephen Blackpool with his legal wife on the other. But it is only Bounderby, the prosperous manufacturer and banker, who can take benefit of the divorce laws of England. When Stephen Blackpool, the weaver at Bounderby's textile mill who has had a hard life and has known "a peck of troubles" (84),

goes to his employer to ask his advice about how he is "to be ridded" of his morally 'bad' wife, Bounderby tells him," You had better have been satisfied as you were, and not have got married. However, it's too late to say that" (96). When Blackpool asks Bounderby if there are laws to punish him if he does any hurt to his wife, or if he flees from her, or if he marries to another woman, each time Bounderby replies "Of course there is", but when Blackpool asks Bounderby, "now, a' God's name!, show me the law to help me", Bounderby answers him, " there is such a law, but it's not for you at all" (99). Although the Victorian divorce laws open no way for Stephen Blackpool to come out of the problematic life he is passing with his bad wife, Josia Bounderby knows that those laws will support him in divorcing his wife. For, in chapter four book three we read, "at five minutes past twelve o'clock next day, he directed Mrs. Bounderby's property to be carefully packed up and sent to Tom Gradgrind's; advertised his country retreat for sale by private contract; and resumed a bachelor life" (326). And Dickens the reformist is frank enough to say, through the mouth of Stephen Blackpool who symbolizes innocent intelligence, that such a divorce law is only 'a muddle.'

The social injustice Charles Dickens attacks in Hard Times covers something more than the divorce laws. The Victorian political parties and trade unions pretend they want to "crumble into dust the oppressors that too long have battened upon ... the God-created glorious rights of Humanity" (182). But, as Dickens supposes, this is not the case. For in fact they provide another tool for institutionalizing the superiority of the rich over the poor. For here again Dickens the reformer is philanthropist enough to, through the mouth of Blackpool the naive intelligent, inform the laborers "I conna coom in wi' 'em. My friends, I doubt their doin' yo onny good. Licker they'll do yo hurt" (186).

The novel shows the masses of Coketown, exemplified by Stephen Blackpool, entangled between two devilish forces: On the one

hand, there is the snobbish management, represented by Josia Bounderby, an up comer of the present time and a waif of the past times. On the other hand, there is the trade union, represented by Slackbridge, who is not more than a demagogue, and who is only in search of his private benefit. The result is the banishment of Blackpool of his hometown, his being denied of his love to Rachel, his being falsely charged of robbery, and ultimately, his alienated death. And it is clear that Dickens hates both the management of Coketown as well as its trade unions. In this way in Hard Times Dickens directs his attention, as Andrew Sanders (1996) says, "to a questioning of social priorities and inequalities, to a distrust of institutions, particularly defunct or malfunctioning ones, and to a pressing appeal of action and earnestness" (404).

The techniques Dickens uses in the book to illustrate such a situation are numerous. One of them is the symbol of the black ladder along which Blackpool slides down after Rachel, his would-be-wife, bids him farewell in chapter ten book one. As the image foreshadows, the future will become really problematic for Stephen Blackpool. Wherever he is, problems entangle him: in his family life he has problem, with his employment he has problem, as well as with his co-workers. And whenever a problem emerges for him, he is the looser: His morally bad wife, from whom the Victorian divorce laws do not allow him to escape, is a tease to him; his employer misunderstands and fires him when he wants his advice about how to get rid of his bad wife; the president of the trade union makes him the butt of his ridicules and calls him a 'traitor' when he does not join the union for a private reason; Tom the son exploits him to rob the bank of Bounderby, and after that, posits the charge of bank robbery on him. As a consequence, it is Blackpool who departs from Coketown to earn his life somewhere else. But when, in chapter six, book three, we find him down a pit and understand that he is hurt very bad, we realize that

Stephen Blackpool will soon be a martyr to the great cause of humanity: "It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his redeemer's rest" (365).

Here the technique of name symbolism is also well functional. Although Slackbridge, the president of the trade union, is needed for the cause of making a 'bridge' between the management and the mass laborers, the 'slack' in him makes him quite unreliable and, as a result, quite dangerous for the cause.

As well, the novelist uses some techniques of prose style here. The passionate lecture Slackbridge gives to the mass laborers in the hall of the factory is quite ciceronian. The repeated phrases in his lecture, the parallel structures in it, the bombastic tone of his speech, and the abstract themes of 'freedom' and 'right' make the lecture powerful enough to numb the reason of the naive laborers to join the union. Among them only Stephen Blackpool, through whom Dickens presents his own associations to the reader, is intelligent enough not to be fooled. But it is ironical that the social system of the Victorian England sends him into crumbles.

2.3. Economic Utilitarianism

Economic utilitarianism is the third aspect which Dickens attacks in Hard Times and the last focus of the present paper. Lionel Stevenson (1960) perhaps means the relations between laborers and capitalists are extremely utilitarian when he says the characters in Hard Times "are neatly arranged in symmetrical groups, either to represent labor vs. capital or to contrast the repressed children of a practical school with the fun-loving denizens of a circus" (311-12). To discuss the economic life situation of Coketown as totally utilitarian we will mainly concentrate on two problems that are traceable in the novel. The first problem is the fact that the rich and the authority feel

no responsibility toward the people. The second problem is that poverty is a real epidemic in the Victorian England.

The time of Dickens is the time of rapid developments in agriculture, industry, and trade. The products of the magic power of steam have radically changed the life situation in many fields: the agricultural machinery, the industrial loom, the rail way train, and the ocean-navigating ship. The postal service, the printing press, and the telecommunication have made the United Kingdom smaller. But, as Andrew Sanders (2001) says, Hard Times is "a bitter satire on the effects of the industrial Revolution in Northern England" (407). Dickens understands that beneath this widespread expansion, in the body of the Victorian society there is a severe handicap of economic unrest in which a minority of the people rapidly grows economically and a majority is badly retarded.

Josia Bounderby, the presently great manufacturer and a prosperous banker, is only an upstart, because in the past times he was not more than a "vagabond, errand-boy, vagabond, laborer, porter" (19). He speaks to Louisa about his childhood in this way:

> I hadn't a shoe to my foot. As to a socking, I didn't know such a thing by name. I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty. that's the way I spent my tenth birthday. Not that a ditch was new to me, for I was born in a ditch (Ibid).

But the present Bounderby is at the peak socially and financially: he is a factory owner and a banker who has obtained, through bank foreclosure, a luxurious house in the country outside Coketown that affords him "supreme satisfaction to install himself in this snug little state, ... He delighted to live, barrack-fashion, among the elegant furniture, and he bullied the very pictures with his origin" (223).

As Walter Allen (1968) says, in Hard Times Dickens is "attacking a whole social system in all its complexity whatever it seems to him to impede or prevent the flow of impulse between man and man, the exercise of the natural kindliness and trust" (188). And in chapter thirteen of the first book, Dickens shows how the impulse between man and man can flow. Stephen's alcoholic wife has come back to Stephen's house and Rachel, whose heart is a deep store of love and affection, is already there to help the unfortunate creature. Rachel tells Stephen she has come "to do what little I could, Stephen; first for that she worked with me when we were girls both, and for that you courted her and married her when I was her friend----" (110). But Rachel, who symbolizes pure love and womanly perseverance, makes 'an uncomfortable double' or a foil of Bounderby, for he is radically impartial, even hostile, to the poor. Yet it is ironical that the love between Rachel and Stephen is never fulfilled. And perhaps to the end of her life she will remain the humble woman that she is.

In Josia bounderby Dickens shows the English Victorian capitalist who has been, because of the recent social anarchy, lucky enough to come up and to stand at the peak. Not having a good enough education to comprehend the glassy situation of the society and feeling excessively self-centered, these up comers share nothing to the health, the wealth, and the education of the masses. And there is no influential law to make them contribute to the well-being of the society. Because a great deal of fermentation is taking place in the English society and it is almost impossible to outline, in advance, the main principles of the future society. Among the results of such confusion are the widespread poverty and moral corruption.

But in chapter six of the first book of Hard Times, where Dickens the reformer arranges for the representatives of the two opposing classes of the English society to make a conversation, he is artful enough to mingle comedy with irony to successfully make the upper class representatives considerably condescend. Gradgrind and

Bounderby have gone to the circus where Sissy Jupe's father is a performer to ask him why his daughter has misguided Gradgrind's children to become interested in the circus that is, as Gradgrind says, baneful to them. Whatever they tell Mr. Childers and Mr. Kiddermister, the circus clowns, they make the subject of their jokes and sarcasms:

> "Nine oils, Merrylegs, missing tips, garters, banners, and Ponging, eh!" ejaculated Bounderby, with his laugh of laughs. "Queer sort of company, too, for a man who has raised himself."
>
> "Lower yourself, then, " retorted Cupid. "oh, Lord! If you've raised yourself so high as all that comes to, let yourself down a bit." ...
>
> "Perhaps so," replied Mr. Bounderby, rattling his money and laughing. "Then give it mouth in your own building, will you, If you please? "said Chiders. "Because this isn't a strong building, and too much of you might bring it down" (40-42).

The question is weather Hard Times shows the Victorian English society immune to the abused educational and economic utilitarianisms of Gradgrind and Bounderby, or if it will go gangrenous morally or whatever. Although Dickens is never unaware of the effect of love and good in man, he does not seem optimistic about the possibility of making the transitional society quite invulnerable against the damages of utilitarianism. For as Amrollah Abjadian (1381/2002) correctly asserts about *Oliver Twist,* in Hard Times, too, "Dickens is more convinced of the reality of evil than that of good" (393). The reality of good characters like Stephen Blackpool

and Rachel seems 'remote' or not influential, but the reality of Bounderby or Harthouse can never be doubted.

What will become of Louisa after her husband abandons her, or of Harthouse after he is made to leave Coketown, or of Mrs. Blackpool after Rachel wrenches the bottle of poisonous medication from her grasp, or of Mrs. Sparsit after "her snooping gets her fired" (http://www.gradesaver.com/classicnotes) from Bounderby's house, or of Cicilia Jupe in Bounderby's factory, or of Signor Jupe after he deserts his daughter and goes to his own destination, or of Mrs. Pegler, Bounderby's self-sacrificing mother from whom he intentionally takes distance, or of Bitzer, a duplicate of Bunderby, after he fails to apprehend Tom as a thief, or of Tom after he is banished from his homeland, or of Jane and Adam Smith Gradgrind after Cicilia leaves them, is the question in reply to which the Victorian English society has perhaps nothing to say.

At the one side there is one prosperous bragging capitalist, at the other side there is a crowd of failures. At the focus of the reader's attention there is the never-ending tension between the rich and the poor of the English society. The reader is not proud of Bounderby but he feels pity for the crowd of failures and he sympathizes for them. By the time the reader has given a finish to the reading of the novel he has got a lot of pleasure plus understanding. And he becomes fairly optimistic when he listens to Thomas Gradgrind, who is, as they say, the main character:

> "Some persons hold," he perused, still hesitating, "that there is a wisdom of the Head, and that there is a wisdom of the Heart, I have not supposed so; but, as I have said, I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient (297).

3. Conclusion

As Arnold Kettle (1963) states, "the greatest novels of the nineteenth century are all, in their differing ways, novels of revolt" (88). Hard Times is no exception to this statement. In it, as Martin Stephen (2000) says, Dickens "moves from the criticism of individuals to the criticism of the whole societies (239).

The subject of Hard Times is abused utilitarianism of which the novel illustrates three aspects in the English Victorian society. The first aspect is educational. Educational utilitarianism has three manifestations. The first is the overemphasis the society puts on the logic of the brain at the expense of the logic of the heart. Thomas Gradgrind, the absolutist school proprietor, advises his school teacher to "teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else" (1). He supposes only the products of the brain, such as facts, numbers, and statistics are worthwhile to be taught to the students because only these products make the students more qualified for their material life. Gradgrind guesses and verdicts that fancy, imagination, taste, and sentiments, that are the products of the heart should be, instead, totally excluded from the school curriculums, for they are basically futile, even baneful, to the well-being of the students. The second manifestation of educational utilitarianism in the novel is the total evaporation of benevolence from Dickens' society. To illustrate the damages of utilitarianism in education Dickens creates characters that are failures in different ways. The most tragic flaw is perhaps what comes to Louisa Gradgrind. The one-dimensional training she receives from her father makes her radically devoid of love. In consequence, "she little thought how she was going down, down, down, Mrs. Sparsit's staircase (273). Is Mrs. Sparsit's staircase a symbol of womanly chastity? Because if she were daring enough, she

would elope with James Harthouse, who is a cad. The absolutely based-on-facts education Tom the son gets from his father makes him another failure. Insincere to anyone and incapable to control even himself, Tom comes to be a thief who has to go into banishment from his homeland because of his crime. The third manifestation is the denial of individuality from the people. The Victorian educational system, totally utilitarian as it is, applies a single set of rules to train all the students. It disregards the characteristics, aspirations, and expectations of the individual students, and behaves toward them as if they are nonhuman creatures. His machine, to which he has to come to compromise, has alienated him from his self, and has metamorphosed him into some 'Hands.'

The second aspect of utilitarianism is social that has three manifestations. The first is the widespread mistrust to the Victorian legislation. Dickens does not believe in the applicability of the law to make something systematic out of the Victorian society that is radically chaotic. Both Bounderby and Blackpool have come into troubles in their married life, but it is only Bounderby to whom the divorce law is a privilege. For, to Blackpool not only it is not a privilege, but also it is a threat. If Dickens believes in something to design a more humane and just society with which, it is the elixir of love and the good in man. The second manifestation of social utilitarianism is the threat of the individual in a mad society in which he has, intentionally or vice versa, forgotten his past heritage. Tom the junior is an embodiment of this statement. In addition to the fact that he is a scapegoat to the absolutely factual training regime of his father, he is a victim to the Victorian society that is overwhelmingly conflicted and that is faithful to no stable system for being controlled. In private and in society, the novel portraits him as unhappy. The third form of social utilitarianism is class conflict. Dickens' people in this novel are either rich or poor. There is almost no character that stands somewhere in between. The rich are superior to the poor socially and

otherwise. And the political parties or trade unions only pave the way for the ruling class to apply their superiority over the poor more conveniently.

The last aspect of utilitarianism is economic that has two manifestations. The first is that the masses of Coketown are really poor. Face to face with Bounderby who is economically prosperous, there stand a crowd of poor men and women whom the Victorian society has left bleak. By the time the reader has read the whole novel, he has repeatedly come across with Bitzer and Sicilia Jupe and Signor Jupe and Mrs. Pegler who have been in search of a redeemer to take refuge of. The second manifestation is that the rich and the authority feel no responsibility toward the people. In Josia Bounderby Dickens makes, among other things, a grotesque distortion from humanity. In stead of the material development he gets, he is left devoid of whatever is humane. What remains of him is only an incarnation of greed, self-centeredness, and mammonism. The reader has felt hatred of him as he has been, throughout, irresponsible toward the society to which he belongs.

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