

The Creative Launcher

Journal URL: <https://www.thecreativelauncher.com/index.php/tcl>

ISSN: 2455-6580

Issue: Vol. 9 & Issue 1 (February, 2024)

Publisher: Perception Publishing

Published on: 29th February, 2024

Peer Reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access: Yes

Journal DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.53032/issn.2455-6580>

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Article History: Abstract Received on: 5th December 2023 | Full Article Received on: 18th January 2024 | Revision received on: 20th January 2024 | Plagiarism Checked on 28th January 2024 | Peer Review Completed on: 20th February 2024 | Article Accepted on 20th February 2024 | First Published on: 29st February 2024

Research Article



A Utilitarian Study of Binary Oppositions in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*

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 <https://doi.org/10.53032/tcl.2024.9.1.01>

Pages: 1-11

Abstract

This article focuses on the binary oppositions Dickens creates in his novel *Hard Times* to depict the suffering the proletariat goes through due to the harsh working conditions, and low wages policy in the industry-stricken society of the nineteenth century England. To this end, the article will analyse the characters in the novel, mostly through Dickens's description of them, and they will be divided into two groups: those raised through the utilitarian educational system, and those in non-utilitarian environments with more Romantic elements involved. It is argued that despite the teachers' insistence and persistence in raising a whole generation through strict machine-like educational systems that tended more to neoclassical principles free from any emotions, the system failed, and the group with romantic tendencies emerged as the victors. Besides emerging as victors, the non-utilitarians turn the utilitarians to their sides through the end of the novel becoming a role model for them. It is also argued

how Dickens used the created binaries to criticize industrialization, the Laissez-faire policy, and nineteenth-century Liberalism.

Keywords: Industrialization, Laissez-faire, Liberalism, Utilitarianism, Proletariat

1. Introduction

The Nineteenth Century, also known as the cradle of the Industrial Age, was a turbulent period in the history of England, and perhaps the whole of Europe. Numerous social and economic changes at that time laid the foundations of the modern world. The introduction of the steam engine by James Watt (1736-1819) boosted industrial production in England and led to the growth of factories both in the number and variety of manufactured products. This in turn resulted in the pouring of populations from rural areas to the cities in search of prosperous jobs and better living conditions. Business owners mostly recruited them as labourers in different industrial centres. This rural population, mainly consisting of villagers who had come to the cities to follow their dreams, had to be trained and tamed by the factory owners to first adapt themselves to living conditions in cities, second tackle the harsh atmosphere of the factories and finally cope with the low wages and long working hours. The main goal was to reach maximum efficiency with the lowest salaries possible. To achieve this goal a plan was devised for the proletariat to go through a utilization process to receive targeted education which would teach them to adapt to their new living conditions. To materialize this objective and safeguard the business owners against any possible riots and uprisings by the working classes in future, schools were established for the children of the proletariat to train, and educate them both to utilize their capabilities and turn them into humble, silent, and 'never-complaining-type' workers. The schools were established and governed by representatives of the middle-class society consisting of factory owners, business moguls, and bank owners known as the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois also came to control the well-being of the working class. The scheme was materialized through the introduction of several moral, and educational programs including Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism followed an apparent general objective of reaching the total happiness of society by increasing public education. But this seemed a skin-deep aim and the real and ultimate aim of Utilitarianism, to put it in more Marxist terms, was the utilization of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, forcing them to bow their heads to the rules of the rising Leviathan stemming from the dominance of the political economy. As Mrs Sparsit expressed in a conversation with Bitzer "I only know that these people must be conquered and that it's high time it was done, once for all" (*Hard Times* 148). Schools were turned into disciplinary institutions, and as Michel Foucault (1926-1984) pointed out in his book *Discipline and Punish* "The disciplinary institutions secreted a machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct" (*Discipline and Punish* 173). Certainly, this unfortunate phenomenon did not pass unnoticed by the English intellectuals, and the literary circles of the period. That was when Charles Dickens entered the British literary arena through his realistic novels depicting the grim consequences of a society changing from traditional medieval Feudalism to the Nineteenth-century type of Industrialism by creating real-life characters and events in *Hard Times*. As Harold Bloom has stated about Dickens "Dickens's characters are real, they are real because they are not like one another, though sometimes they are a touch more like some of us than like each other" (*Novelists and Novels* 96). The present article would aim first to introduce, and provide an overview of the Utilitarianism and Liberalism emerging in the first half of the 19th century, and second to analyse and compare the binaries created by Dickens to illuminate the different angles of his criticism of social structures governing the society.

2. Review of Literature

The books, and articles that the researcher has found most important and are closest to the subject are *An Old Dog Enters the Fray: or Reading Hard Times as an Industrial Novel* an article which analyses the characters, especially those of Mr. Gradgrind's family, from an industry stricken society viewpoint. *Hard Times: The Disciplinary City* is another article which focuses on Coke Town as a city under Utilitarian rules, and how the heavy atmosphere of the city imposes its desired discipline over the citizens. *Benthamite Utilitarianism and Hard Times* focuses on how Dickens applied Utilitarianism to the atmosphere, and characters of the novel, and how he criticized it by showing that the system failed through the novel's end.

On Goods, Virtues, and Hard Times is an article that focuses on the opposite sides' cherished values. It argues while the Utilitarian side considered objectivity, selflessness, individualism and complete obedience as virtues, they believed on the contrary. For them, subjectivity, spontaneity, and collective and emotional life were of great value. *European Liberalism in the 19th Century* traces the roots of Liberalism in European history. Europeans had long dreamt of freedom. This dream manifested itself in The French Revolution in 1789, and it ended with the principles based on individualism in nineteenth-century Liberalism. *Prison-Bound: Dickens and Foucault* study the symbolic application of Bentham's introduced Panopticon observation system in The Hard Times.

Discipline and Punish is a book that focuses on the role of disciplinary systems and disciplinary rules to bring people under control. It also emphasizes the role of constant observation to achieve the same goal. *Bleak Liberalism* is a book which focuses on the roots of Liberalism, and how Liberalism was cherished in the nineteenth century as a new method of bringing discipline to the masses. It also analyses Jeremy Bentham's views on Society, order, and how to control it. *Liberalism – A Very Short Introduction* provides an introduction to the roots of Liberalism, its development through centuries, its present status, and a criticism of its possible shortcomings. *Culture and Anarchy* is yet another book which argues about the uncontrollability of the masses, and the possibility of rebellion against the ruling classes, and the only method to control this revolt, Arnold suggests, would be to educate the masses to accept their status in society through culture.

3. Methodology

Based on the purpose of this study the main chosen method would be an analytical one. In the first part of the study, the principles of Liberalism and Utilitarianism will be analysed. The study would also focus on the historical backgrounds of these schools of thought. The main source for this part would be the reference books and analytical studies of other experts on the aforesaid issues.

The second part would focus on the analysis of the setting of the novel, an analysis of the characters, their thoughts and uttered words. Finally, an analysis will be made between the principles presented by Industrialism and Utilitarianism and the way Dickens presented them throughout the novel to study Dickens's critical approach to these theories.

4. Discussion

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) wrote *Hard Times* in 1854 at the height of the industrialization of England. His main purpose as he stated himself was to "shake some people in a terrible mistake of these days" in a letter he wrote to Thomas Carlyle announcing the dedication of the work to him. (*The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. Walter Dexter; Nonesuch Edition Bloomsburg: Nonesuch, 1938, ii.567). The "terrible mistake" Dickens mentions in the letter is probably a reference to both the Utilitarian educational system which aims at the apparent betterment of the society as a whole, and the rise of Liberalism at the outset of the 19th century with its promise of equal opportunities, and free trade for everyone. But for Dickens, the real purpose of both schools of thought was the exploitation of the proletariat with long working hours, low wages, and child labour along with the harsh realities of cities

growing into 'smoking monsters', described in *Hard Times*, and his other novels including *Oliver Twist* (1837)¹, and *Great Expectations* (1861)². Dickens sets his goal at criticizing this system which aims at implementing Liberalism as the promised mirage, and the Utilitarian educational system as the means of materializing the promises made by Liberalism through creating several contradictory and opposite characters of both master and servant classes in the form of binaries in the novel.

4.1. Historical Background

The appearance of the Renaissance on the horizon of humanity in Europe became synonymous with freedom of thought, and speech, and the return of the dignity of mankind taken from him through the Middle Ages. England was no exception to the rule, and the calls for free speech, free trade, and the movement toward the freedom of choice and lifestyle began rising in Seventeenth-century England. The chain of events happening both in England and Europe culminated in the French Revolution, which became known as the symbol of liberty and the libertarian movement for many. But it turned into disappointment when the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) was established by Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794) immediately following the Revolution, the crowing of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) as Emperor in 1799, and the Napoleonic wars.

When Louis the XVIII (1755-1824) replaced Napoleon in 1814 he realized the impossibility of attaining the position of the traditional despotic King anymore, therefore he promised the French people to establish a liberal constitution. This was the realization of all the promised, and cherished dreams of liberty and equality that had prompted the Revolution to come down on paper and be presented to the people as a constitution promising personal freedom, freedom of the press, religious freedom, Guaranteeing the safety of property, and a just and independent judiciary system. The dethroning of a supposedly divinely chosen King with infinite authority meant more power was to be passed to the electoral institutions like the parliament which represented the middle class more than any other classes in society. Parliaments were established to safeguard the freedom stated in the constitutions, and freedom of trade and businesses was one of them which was much welcomed and supported by the bourgeoisie. England was no exception to this phenomenon, and after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, laws were passed in the House of Commons to implement the principles heralding liberty in all aspects of life especially freedom in conducting business.

4.2. Liberalism

Liberalism was the materialization of human hopes for freedom and democracy which followed the French Revolution (1789) having its main goal to protect human freedom in all aspects of life. The infant which was born through the end of the eighteenth century was growing up when parliaments started passing laws to serve its main objectives. Liberalism turned from infancy to adolescence during the first half of the nineteenth century, and during this period it was trying to devise comprehensive laws in its favour and cover as much social sphere as possible. Michael Freedon places this expansionist, and exploitative type of liberalism in the second phase or layer of liberalism:

The second liberal layer held that unbounded economic and commercial activity of entrepreneurial initiative-takers, manufacturers, and financiers would direct the toil and labour of the newly industrialized working class. (Freedon 67)

The process strengthened the position of the bourgeoisie in the pyramid of social status and power. But one may ask about the role of the government in this kind of Liberalism. Members of Parliament who passed the 'Liberalism friendly' laws in Parliament gave the government the duty of protecting their desired exploitative freedom. So the role of the government in a Liberal society was based on a non-interference policy in the activities of private enterprises, and protecting their rights against any possible threats at all times. Thus, Freedon describes the role of the state in society as, "liberal neutrality: a liberal

state and its government should steer clear of offering an opinion on individual choices and lifestyles, let alone direct them, as long as the latter were not harmful to others” (Freeden 68).

The promises made by Liberalism of inviolability of individual property, liberty of individual enterprises, and freedom in business activities were supposed to direct human life towards ultimate bliss, and prosperity. They were rich with promises of establishing a Utopia as long as they were in their theoretical phase but went astray when they were put into practice. In other words, the promised liberty was for the privileged and became an oppression tool for the exploitation of the working classes resulting in long working hours, low wages, and living in the most miserable conditions for the proletariat. There was always a fear in the ruling class that too much pressure and excessive exploitation of the working class would implant the seeds of rebellion, and riot in them which might result in a revolution of the proletariat against the rights taken from them by the bourgeoisie. Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* describes the working class ‘masses’, “...Our masses are quite as raw and uncultivated as the French; and, so far from their having the idea of public duty and of discipline, superior to the individuals’ self-will, brought to their mind” (Arnold 56).

Arnold’s offered solution is providing an educational system based on reason and facts, “The very principle of the authority which we are seeking as a defence against anarchy is right reason, ideas, light” (Arnold 63).

So a system was needed to harness these “masses”, bring them under constant control and supervision, and indoctrinate them into accepting their social status as a kind of unchangeable destiny. This is where Jeremy Bentham entered the scene and came up with a solution named Utilitarianism.

4.3. Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham (1747-1832) was an English philosopher and is known as the founder of Utilitarianism. In his words, Utilitarianism is “the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” (Bentham 393). The notion it conveys of a society floating in happiness is very pleasant and utopian-like, but the methods he proposed for reaching this happiness raised the eyebrows of his critics. His proposed method included strict educational programs aimed at indoctrinating, directing and conditioning humans to perform the duties imposed on them by the educational institutes. This ideology raised the alarms for critics in the nineteenth century, as it sharply contrasted with the liberal values of individualism, freedom, and human dignity. Bentham believed security should proceed with liberty, and without security, liberty was not achievable. He was not very fond of liberty:

Liberty.... not being more fit than other words in some of the instances in which it has been used, and not fit in others, the less the use that is made of it the better. I would no more use the word liberty in conversation when I could get another that would answer the purpose, then I would brandy in my diet, if my physician did not order me: both cloud the understanding and inflame the passions. (Jeremy Bentham, “*Panopticon*”, Dublin, 1787, letter 21)

So liberty should be sacrificed for security if a society is to prosper and to implement this much desired security general behavioural patterns for each social class must be defined. In Bentham’s view, individual liberty would shatter the dreams of collective social happiness unless harnessed by certain laws and regulations. This approach inaugurated by Bentham has been described as totalitarian, and even fascistic. It is not an exaggeration if we assume twentieth-century Fascism to be the offspring of Bentham’s Utilitarianism.

Some philosophers, however, do not agree with the general belief that Benthamism does restrict freedom. They argue that his interventionistic method would provide guidelines for individual happiness, which will result in the total happiness of society, so both individual and social happiness will be secured. Bentham believed in this type of freedom. He wrote in a letter to a friend, “The definition of liberty is one

of the cornerstones of my system: and one that I know not how to do without” (The Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham, Vol.1: 1752-1776, ed. By T.L.S. Sprigge. Athlone Press, London, 1968).

The irony lies in the fact that Bentham envisioned freedom in a “system” where everything is determined by the Legislator. In Bentham’s view to achieve the ultimate goal of training an appropriate population for his happy society, the Legislator needed to apply a strict educational system with a constant observation of the behavioural habits, and educational progress without allowing any opportunity for the slightest deviation from the system. To do that he introduced the Panopticon prison observation system in the educational process with strict supervision, and implementation of discipline at all times. Foucault describes Panopticon as:

The diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optional system: it is, in fact, a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use. Is polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct school children, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. (Foucault 205)

When faced with objections to his kind of robot-like training of humans Bentham showed his indifference to such criticism, “Call them soldiers, call them monks, call them machines, so they were but happy ones, I shall not care” (Dinwiddy, “*The Classical Economist 21, and Jeremy Bentham, Panopticon: or, The inspection House*” (1791), in works, Vol, P.64).

One thing which should be considered here is the fact that as the legislator is a member of the ruling social class, his devised rules are designed to control the poor and the deprived. The poor and the deprived are the ones who need to be indoctrinated and directed in the desired direction wished by the ruling class, and never to be left to their own devices. Dickens criticised this mental trend in *Hard Times* by imagining a city named Coketown governed by the Utilitarian and Panopticon observational laws ruled by Benthamite principles.

4.4. Coketown

Coketown, as the cacophony of its name suggests, is a place that would remind one of coke, and Dickens purposefully chose the name “Coketown” for this fictional town to depict the mental and physical filth scattered all over the city. Coke was also the main source of energy for running factories during that period. Dickens describes Coketown with the following words:

It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never get uncoiled... the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. (Dickens 28)

The weird description he makes of the town devoured by the smoke coming out of factories with an unfulfilling appetite for Coke is a vivid depiction of the atmosphere prevailing in the foggy and soot-covered cities devoured by industry in the 19th century. We also feel the heavy shadow of the Utilitarian ideology, its omnipotent presence, and the imposed restrictions on the citizens denying the humanity they deserve in the city:

Fact, fact, fact everywhere in the material of town; fact, fact, fact everywhere in the immaterial. The M’choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and the realities between master and men were all fact, and everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn’t state in figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, would without end, Amen. (Dickens 85)

Mr Harthouse is a young healthy gentleman who has come to Coketown from London to push forward some political ends. When he first arrives in the city he goes to Mr Bounderby's Bank where he is greeted by Mr Bounderby's assistant Mrs Sparsit. "Exceedingly odd place, will you allow me to ask if it's always as black as this"? Mr. Harthouse asked Mrs. Sparsit. Mrs Sparsit comes with this reply "In general much blacker" (Dickens 159).

The factories in Coketown were populated with people who were as melancholic as the "elephants' heads in the factories", and as tedious as the streets of Coketown described by Dickens:

It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like another, all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sounds upon same pavements, to the same work, and to whom every day was the same yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. (Dickens 28)

Streets which follow each other like Alfred J. Prufrock's town as 'a tedious argument' and people who occupied them were as tedious as the streets, all alike, without a soul, and all going for a 'hideous intent'. A description of a social class who did the same things on working days, the same things on the weekends and the same things on holidays. The criteria and the boundaries of "the same things" they were to do every weekday were dictated by the ruling class representatives namely the Gradgrind-Bounderby coalition as their representative in this Novel. Wainwright clarifies it as:

What the citizens of Coke town lack are various life goods that can satisfy basic human needs and confer dignity and self-respect. Certain of these goods belong to the social or political sphere, where principle regulates the relations that connect people from different walks of life people possessing an unequal share of power like Bounderby and Blackpool. (Wainwright 173)

Dickens certainly was aware of tolerance, freedom in its various capacities, open-mindedness, and other similar values promised and promoted by Liberalism. He took it as his goal to criticize both Liberalism and the social institutions that promoted it. He was also aware that those values were totally bright at a surface level, but what lay beneath this pleasant surface was totally different. In fact, the proletariat was being administrated in a direction to guarantee the benefits of the ruling classes rather than its own. The result was a society subordinated to the bourgeoisie and alienated from itself. The citizens of Coketown had no feeling of belonging to anything or anyone. A smashed population who had neither the spirit to live nor the courage to die. But that was not all Coketown had to offer as it had also a Circus beside those serpent-like chimneys.

4.4.1. The Circus

The Coketown Circus also called the Sleary's Circus after its owner Mr. Sleary was the realization of everything that Coke town lacked in essence. It came with horses, clowns, and acrobats, very lively, full of colours, and full of life. It was a land capable of intriguing fancy and imagination. The circus was inhabited by people who worked together, laughed and cried together, were there for each other, and were the epitome of all-for-one and one for all doctrine. It was a Romantic town of individualism, spontaneity, and creativity. The alienation which prevailed in Coketown had no place in the circus, as the Libertarian values of individuality, and the everyone-for-himself policy had no place there. The altruism the circus had to offer under the leadership of its spiritual mentor Mr. Sleary was just on the opposite side of the cynicism heralded by Mr. Gradgrind the exemplary propagator of Utilitarianism.

4.5. Gradgrind and Other Coketown Residents

"Now, what I want is, Facts" This is what Mr Gradgrind, the central figure in Coketown's educational system, is lashing his students' minds within his classroom. His false idealistic approach to life in excluding any type of fancy, imagination, and passion from his pupil's ideological horizon is as harsh as the cacophony of his name suggests "Gradgrind" as if grinding the brains of his students into

scattered pieces of fact incapable of doing any unified thinking. He is described as “A man of realities, a man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over” (Dickens 3). For Gradgrind Fancy meant nonsense “By nonsense he meant fancy” (Dickens 23). Unlike the Romanticism hovering in the Circus, this ideology was rather Neoclassical.

Gradgrind had five children, and the two eldest ones his daughter Louisa, and his son Tom were being educated at his school under his despotic supervision. One day Mr Gradgrind notices his children after all those lectures and teachings on the importance of facts hammered into their heads, are peeping in from a loophole into the fancy world of Mr Sleary’s circus. They were looking into a world they had been deprived of all their lives as children, a world of colours and wonders. They were peeping into a much broader world that had to be discovered but was outside their cognitive horizon limited by Gradgrindian teachings. When they confessed their crime of watching the circus Mr Gradgrind replied “Dear me... How can you, Louisa, Thomas! I wonder at you” He goes on so far as to say that “I declare you’re enough to make one regret ever having a family at all” (Dickens 22).

Mr Sleary the owner of the circus was an uneducated simple man with shabby ordinary clothes who spoke broken English. The daughter of one of his circus members, Mr Jupe, called “Sissy” was studying at Gradgrind’s school. Sissy Jupe was the same age as Louisa. Her real name was Sylvia, and for Gradgrind to call Sylvia Sissy was unacceptable as it was against the “fact” that her official given name was Sylvia. Her circus background had planted the roots of fancy and imagination so deeply within her that even when Mr Gradgrind took it upon himself to raise and educate her at his own house called ‘Stone Lodge’, he was unable to turn her completely to his propagated unimaginative way of life based on facts.

Stone Lodge as its name suggests was inhabited by people with hearts as cold as its walls. That was where Gradgrind’s school was located. Most of his students were orphaned children, like Sissy, who both studied and stayed at the house while ‘helping’ Mrs Gradgrind in their spare time. Mrs Gradgrind was a lady who had an equal admiration for facts’ ideology as Mr Gradgrind himself if not more than him. After lodging at the Gradgrinds, it becomes apparent that the emotional Sissy stood on the opposite side of cold-hearted Louisa. Mr Gradgrind takes over the grim job of erasing her memory and introducing her to the world of facts and figures. He names her “girl number twenty” a Panopticon-like move to undermine her identity and dignity and at the same time degrade her to mere digits. But unlike the Libertarian teachings dominant in Mr Gradgrind’s household, Sissy had learned from the circus mutual dependence, shared family life, and readiness to sacrifice oneself for others. She finds it impossible to unlearn those circus values and join the legion of walking unemotional, egotistic robots of Gradgrind’s household.

Gradgrind intended to have Louisa as a role model for Sissy, but as the story goes on it comes evident that in the binary war between Louisa and Sissy, not only Sissy is the victor but also idolized by Louisa contrary to Gradgrind’s expectations. “First, do you know what I am? I am so proud and so hardened, so confused and troubled, so resentful and unjust to everyone and to myself, that everything is stormy, dark, and wicked to me” (Dickens 300). Louisa confesses to Sissy. Although Gradgrind never got his claws on Sissy, Louisa could never free herself from them “I curse the hour I was born to such a destiny” Louisa says (Dickens 164). In reality, the grim job of saving Gradgrind’s children from falling into the unknown abyss of personal delusions, and strong disappointments fall on the tiny shoulder of Sissy.

4.5.1. Josiah Bounderby

Josiah Bounderby is the industrialist and owner of a Bank and businesses in Coketown. Unlike Gradgrind, who is a believer in his facts-based ideology and finds it the only way to the happiness and well-being of mankind, Bounderby is a braggart and an opportunist who uses Gradgrind’s ideals to his ends. While Bounderby is doing all he can to silence any opposing voices rising from the worker’s union,

Stephen Blackpool, on the other hand, leads the opposition voice against the 'Bounderbian' tyranny to claim the stolen rights of the Workers. While Stephen was fighting against the monopoly of Bounderby bare-handed, Bounderby by bribing the union members and Accusing Stephen of the Bank robbery sent him into a forced exile. The trade union practised severe conditioning and control over its members, never allowing them to have any differences of thought and outlook against the advocated Liberal principles. This was a part of the "indoctrination" process, and here Dickens shows his opposition to trade unions as they functioned as the protector of the rights of the ruling classes rather than the working classes.

4.5.2. Louisa-Harthouse & Stephen-Rachel

Other notable residents of Coketown are Louisa and Harthouse, and Stephen and Rachael and their relationships with each other. While Louisa is married to Bounderby only out of her compassion for her brother, and her mechanical obedience to her father the passion between Stephen and Rachael is so genuine, and true that Rachael even takes care of Stephen's drunkard wife while he is away. Rachael, like Sissy, was very emotional and filled with the gift of loving others and a capacity to sacrifice her benefits for others which were totally against the individualistic upbringing of the Coketown population. Louisa falls easy prey to Harthouse's advances because she had not been exposed to any feelings, and emotions in her upbringing, and Harthouse, who symbolizes a libertine character pursuing his individualistic ends, on the other hand, was quite aware of the weak points in Louisa, found her an easy target, and hit those points directly.

After Stephen was fired by Bounderby Louisa visited Stephen's lodgings. The scene is described as: for the first time in her life, Louisa had come into one of the dwellings of the Coketown Hands: for the first time in her life, she was face to face with anything like individuality in connexion with them. She knew of their existence by hundreds and by thousands. She knew them as crowds passing to and from nests, like ants and beetles. But she knew by her reading infinitely more of the ways of toiling insects than of these toiling men and women. (Dickens 118)

Through these words, Dickens aims his sharp spear of criticism toward the elite society's educational system, which saw common people as masses and denied them any individuality and human values. In the Utilitarian teachings of Gradgrind, the working class had no place in the bourgeois thought more than exploitable masses, and the fact that Louisa knew more about beetles than her fellow citizens is ample proof of it.

4.5.3. Tom and Bitzer

Through the end of the novel, Bitzer comes to the circus to arrest Tom Gradgrind on the charges of robbery from Bounderby's Bank. His conduct and thinking come in sharp opposition to that of the redeemed Gradgrind. Bitzer is one of the finest productions of Gradgrind's educational system. He is what Foucault would classify as a "disciplinary product" (*Discipline and Punish* 138). Bitzer is not an 'individual' in a common and traditional sense, but a mechanical creation of a certain discipline, and with no major feelings to worry about: "I don't have recreation, I never did, and I never shall" (Dickens 90). But he cannot be labelled as a villain, as his reactions are a natural outcome of his upbringing method.

One of the basic tenets of Liberalism is guaranteeing the free pursuit of one's ends as long as it does not interfere with the personal pursuits of others and does not harm anyone. It is the necessary basis for personal freedom, and the individuality promised by Liberalism. No one is to apologize for his desirousness and feeling of adventure to anyone, and in fact, one has to insist upon achieving those ends as a part of his 'natural rights'. That was the way Bitzer was educated, and it was how he behaved when he encountered Gradgrind while Gradgrind was trying to flee Tom from England as he was being pursued

by the police on the accusations of the robbery of Bounderby's Bank. Ironically, Gradgrind plans to send Tom to the United States with the help of the same circus which he always forbade his children from watching with Tom attired as a clown to be hidden from the police in case they would come to apprehend him.

When face to face with Bitzer Gradgrind asked him "Have you not a heart". Gradgrind was looking for something in Bitzer that he had taught him not to possess. Gradgrind's teachings based on facts left no room for Bitzer to possess any heart which symbolizes emotions here. Bitzer replies to a Gradgrind who is down on his knees: "But I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest. (Dickens 383). This 'self-interest' is deeply rooted in Bitzer's character, and it is this self-interest that motivates Bitzer, as it had motivated many other individualists in the Nineteenth century, to pursue his Machiavellian ends with no regard for the interests of the others around him.

Bitzer expresses his motive in arresting Tom as "I wish to have his situation sir, for it will be a rise to me, and will do me good" (Dickens 303). Bitzer here refers to the position of Tom in Bounderby's Bank and the fact that by eliminating Tom he can have Tom's position in the Bank which completely complies with the Libertarian principles. This egoistic approach of Bitzer toward life not only represents Liberalistic teachings but also is the personification of individualism in a Liberal society which Dickens ventures to criticize in *Hard Times*. In this particular instance, we have Gradgrind versus Gradgrind, rather than Gradgrind versus Bitzer as all his Utilitarian teachings are backfiring against him.

5. Conclusion

The binary oppositions represented by Dickens in the form of Coketown versus the Circus, Sissy against Luisa and others all aim at demonstrating the monstrous outcome of putting into practice the Utilitarian and Liberal principles in a society. Dickens was not attempting to demonstrate an apocalyptic picture of the future of a society that would put those theories into practice but was demonstrating what was taking place at the time when the novel was written in 1854.

Dickens also emphasizes the importance, and significance of fancy and imagination in an educational curriculum to have a better moral education. To demonstrate this Dickens creates a binary opposition between the altruism of the circus people against the cynicism of the Stone Lodge inhabitants. This can be seen through the behaviour of characters who had not received any Utilitarian teachings of facts and figures and were more successful in their emotional relations with themselves, and other members of their inner circles and society in general.

Dickens criticized the inadequacy of the Utilitarian educational system advocated under the Gradgrind-Bounderby system of facts and statistics and indirectly suggested the establishment of an educational system based on a more flexible curriculum involving arts, feelings, and emotions besides the study of mere scientific and mathematical facts. Perhaps Dickens was trying to convey the notion that a fruitful educational, and training system should be an adequate mixture of both approaches to education where students cultivate the emotional side of their personality and their social skills besides studying different sciences.

Endnotes

- 1- Dickens describes Oliver Twist's status after being kidnapped as "Darkness had set in; it was a low neighbourhood; no help was near; resistance was useless. In another moment he was dragged into a labyrinth of dark, narrow courts, and forced along them at a pace which rendered the few cries he dared to give utterance to, wholly unintelligible". (Chapter XV)
- 2- Pip in *Great Expectations* sarcastically describes London: "We Britons had at that time particularly settled that it was treasonable to doubt our having and our being the best of

everything: otherwise, while I was scared by the immensity of London, I think I might have had some faint doubts whether it was not rather ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty". (Chapter XX)

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