

Exploring the Mechanical Life in Literature through Marxist Theory Cristina Guarneri, Ed.D.

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Abstract- *The Victorian Era of writings of works such as Charles Dickens Hard Times, used the social and environmental setting by which the characters live in; it is created by a philosophy that adds fuel to sustain the advancement of industrialization. The philosophy mirrors the mechanical characteristics of industrialization and how they are expressed is of great importance to the mechanical perceptions, such as objective utilitarianism. The mechanization that is found in the lives of the characters has an evil presence to depriving them human dignity by living a mechanical lifestyle. It was the mechanical lifestyle that can be explained through Marxist theory to explain the key characteristics of the Industrial Era and its importance to materialism, as it represented political power. Marxism provides a theory for requiring the working class to concentrate on working in factories in Coketown and the “bourgeois” to separate themselves as competing agents of self-interest. It is a goal of the wealthy social class to maximize utility as a consumer and profit as a producer within the mechanical world.*

Keywords: *Victorian Era; Mechanical Thinking; Marxist Theory*

Victorian Era literature has contributed to works to show that under an almost entirely mechanized society, ideals and environments, as the lower social class is in need to fight for their self-preservation among the perceptions of the upper social class characters and the “quiet hands” or factory hands found within Charles Dickens *Hard Times*. Dickens applies mechanical time perceptions and descriptions through the use of clocks and social and environmental setting in order to express his opinions and disapproval for how mechanical time effects the industrial society. *Hard Times* collected a positive reaction from the socially conscious upper class, who saw the portrayal of the working poor as a call for political reform. This can be found in how Dickens brings attention to the dangers of industrialization through the dominating values and beliefs present in the *Hard Times* are meant to imply an understanding of industrialization. To understand the effects of industrialization, “Hard Times [...] is Dickens’ attack upon the System by which the claims of individual human beings are trampled in a general mêlée.” (Hobsbaum 187) This system is the social and environmental setting by which the characters live in; it is created by a philosophy that adds fuel to sustain the advancement of industrialization. The philosophy mirrors the mechanical characteristics of industrialization and how they are expressed is of great importance to the mechanical perceptions, such as objective utilitarianism. This essay will look at what time means to the characters and how their understanding of time shows through and expresses itself in their behaviors and their reasoning. The mechanization that is found in the lives of the characters in *Hard Times* has an evil presence. This is found especially in the moral thinking of the narrator, as they treat other

characters like objects or animals and depriving them of having human dignity by living a mechanical lifestyle. It was the mechanical lifestyle that can be explained through Marxist theory. Marxist theory during the Industrial Era was a key characteristic to how important materialism was, as it represented political power. Marxism provides a theory for requiring the working class to concentrate on working in factories in Coketown and the “bourgeois” to separate themselves as competing agents of self-interest. It is a goal of the wealthy social class to maximize utility as a consumer and profit as a producer within the mechanical world.

From the beginning of *Hard Times*, the mechanical world can be found in Thomas Gradgrind, who instructs a class in school how they should think and reason. He tells them in front of both the schoolmaster and another person that facts alone are wanted in life, as he “[...] swept with [his] eyes the inclined plane of little vessels, then and there arranged in order [...]” (Dickens 9) When thinking of the children as vessels, it is Mr. Gradgrind who makes them to be seen as objects, as he refers to them as small gearwheels in a greater machinery. He does not see the children as humans, outside of their biology. They are simply empty containers that are ready to have “facts poured into them until they were full to the brim” (Dickens 9). This gives way to the mechanical thinking of life. It can be argued that the characters found in *Hard Times*, share an appreciation for time and for being connected with one another. An example of this argument can be found in Louisa Gradgrind, where we can see the emotional and moral value those in the lower, working class may have experienced, and the emotional

emptiness that often resulted from the wealthy, upper-class society in the Victorian Era.

The terms 'mechanical' and 'natural' is understood through the use of time-measurement. This influences their thoughts about life in a different way than a person who was had a more mechanical understanding of time. There is an importance for being a human being, since it shapes and provides an examination of how the characters' are able to understand time is different when explored in Charles Dickens *Hard Times* provided an example of the mechanical human nature that impacts human life.

MECHANICAL HUMAN NATURE

The Industrial Revolution and its technical developments had considerable impact on life and conduct, along with their awareness and their comprehension of time. Dickens keeps this in mind and includes the industrial 'mechanization' of time when he writes about Mr. Bounderby and the other characters. In the section entitled "*The Study*," the reader is able to look at how mechanization affects their everyday human lives.

The human conception of the world has changed greatly since the 18th century. The general understanding of nature has been altered, along with the attitude towards it. It is the "conceptions of the world contain thoughts about time and space, as well as human labor and fundamental moral principles; in other words, everything that influences our own comprehension of the world and how we put it into order so that we may understand it better." (Gustavsson 16) Since the industrial revolution brought about a more mechanized perception of the world, along with social, economic, and technological changes, society experienced everything to a much greater degree, where everything had its own place when relating it to everything else in the world.

The term 'mechanical' are defined through time. 'Mechanical' is often synonymous with monotone, repetitive and unchangeable. The signification of the term 'mechanical' does not seem to include an understanding of a purpose, because when an object or an activity is referred to as 'mechanical,' it is described and explained by giving it a purpose for being the way that it happens to be to show a purposeful importance.

In Victorian Era literature, mechanical time is contrasted by natural time and these two opposites together makes it possible for the reader to connect to the mood of time in two parts. The environmental mechanization of time is the first part of mechanization and is mainly due to the heavily industrialized setting found in Coketown. Industrialization is a man-made revolution that relates to everyday life. One example would be the traveling circus that visits Coketown. The circus is a man-made company and acts as a counterweight to the dominating industries in the city. The second part of mechanization is seen in the characters. Their natural human characteristics of sympathy, compassion, and helpfulness are there for the

sole purpose of helping others, signal a different way of seeing time and other human beings. The characters understand that human life and time are set up to be impacted with a mechanical industrious mind.

MECHANICAL SETTING

There are several different settings described in the novel that contribute to the reader's understanding of time. Coketown is where the main part of the story is set and bears a name that implies the many factories therein driven by coke, otherwise known as Manchester. Coketown is made up of large-scale industries that have an intense pollution, which turns the town into a very dirty place: "It was a town of red brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it [...]" (Dickens 28), along with "[I]n the hardest part of Coketown; in the innermost fortifications of that ugly citadel, [...] gases were bricked in [...]" (Dickens 68) It seems that Coketown is the worst place to live; it is unhealthy and is heavily industrialized. Dickens describes the town as being a place where "Time went on like its own machinery." (Dickens 93) The monotony is clearly ruling its everyday life and we are repeatedly reminded that smoke pillars constantly rise from the high chimneys of the factories. The air is dense with pollution as well as the river, which is purple with ill-stinking dye. The pollution and one-sidedness of life and work portrayed in Coketown together convey gloomy repetition: It [Coketown] contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next. (Dickens 28)

Coketown runs systematically like a clock. The environment is in other words mechanized, and closely resembles a feeling of sadness and hopelessness. The setting describes Coketown of various houses and locations, such as Stone Lodge, where the Gradgrind Family lives. Its description is given as: "[...] life at Stone Lodge went monotonously round like a piece of machinery which discouraged human interference [...]" (Dickens 61) Even the name Stone Lodge provides a description that the lodge is not much different from a stone-cave of damp mortar and a cold atmosphere. Everything about the Gradgrind home is highly functional and ordered, and around the house there is a "Lawn and garden and an infant avenue, all ruled straight like a botanical account-book." (Dickens 17) The setting found in *Hard Times* is mainly presented with a mood through the description of Coketown. However, when the "Hands" go outside the city, the setting is very different from the dirty and noisy place of Coketown. When the "Hands" leave the town behind with its many smoke pillars and monotonous and lifeless work, another world has opened up for them. Characters such as Louisa and Rachel have wandered straight into a setting made up of fresh green grass, with

birds singing in the air, and at the horizon the glittering light of a faraway sea is visible. The setting completely changes and the mechanical features in Victorian Era literature are no longer present.

The mechanical atmosphere of the Coketown setting is made up of the clocks among the identical red-bricked buildings and repetition of work by the 'Hands' at the factories. Clocks symbolize the mechanical understanding of time, as it is measured by a dull repetition. There is no reflection about life other than what they are given by the factory owners, such as the clock that is owned by Mr. Gradgrind, which can be found in his apartment. This is where he does his work: "[...] a stern room, with a deadly-statistical clock in it, which measured every second with a beat like a rap upon a coffin-lid [...]" (Dickens 99) The clock seems to count the time that will never come again and the time that remains with equal effort, as if it was counting down to zero, until there is no more. Mr. Gradgrinds' clock is emphasized by the fact that we have only a certain amount of time before passing away and it gives emphasis to the thought that this time-length is already measured, and is simply being deducted. From the clocks found in the setting to the places where the characters live and work, each affect the way that time is thought about in *Hard Times*. The "Hands" functioned systematically like a clock. There was a formula and pattern for their lives that was rigid to the lifestyle of what was expected of the working class. For characters such as Mr. Gradgrind who worked under the factual confines of the mechanical clock in his life. The clock was symbolic to setting the time and place for how he would run his family and educate students to think only by facts. There was no gray area to his thinking. He lived according to a black and white philosophy. It is clear that Coketown represents the mechanical thinking of human life, and although the characters are different, they are all connected to an industrial and mechanical environment.

MECHANICAL LIVES OF CHARACTERS

When examining the mechanical environment of the characters, Mr. Bounderby could be seen as similar to what the clocks represent in *Hard Times*, as he is a man who is detached from the world. He experiences time and understands his own life as external to the world that he lives in. However, Mr. Bounderby believed to be someone who is not to be dependent on the goodwill of others, especially their help. He considers self-interest the only engine anyone would ever need to reach success. This is the same way that he achieved success. Mr. Bounderby is described as 'the bully of humility'" (Dickens 21) and a man who is boastful, self-centered, completely devoid of affectionate feelings and understanding for others, and overall a very unpleasant person to be around for most people who live in Coketown.

It is Mr. Bounderby who represents an insensible and mechanical way of thinking in the novel and exemplifies it frequently. One occasion when it is evident

that his self-interest restrains him from feeling empathy for other people in their hardships comes about when he receives Stephen Blackpool, a "Hand" that works in his factory, as he asks for advice concerning an unhappy marriage. Mr. Blackpool is married to a woman who is an alcoholic that does not work. She steals and sells his possessions and would like to be free of his wife and to end the marriage. However, Mr. Bounderby never shows any care for Stephen Blackpool. Instead, he is given the response that his "unfortunate situation and tells him that: [...] the only thing you have got to do, is, to mind your piece-work. You didn't take your wife for fast and loose; but for better and worse. If she has turned out worse – why, all we have got to say is, she might have turned out better." (Dickens 80) Irrespective of the fact that it was an expensive and complicated undertaking to enable a divorce at the time, and that Mr. Blackpool, who is only a poor worker with no prospect of ever saving up the amount of money required, Mr. Bounderby has no interest in helping him. Mr. Bounderby doesn't do anything because he can't see what he would gain out of helping Stephen Blackpool or his wife. There is a mechanical thinking, even in the narration, when understanding the thinking of the characters in *Hard Times*. Some of the characters are mechanical to other characters. Mr. Bounderby is such a character who regards people around him as either resources he may make use of or opportunities he cannot make use of himself, and therefore dismisses. An example of this mechanization of characters by characters is when Mr. Bounderby says to Stephen Blackpool: "You're a steady Hand, and I was not mistaken." (Dickens 75) It is clear that Mr. Blackpool is seen as nothing more than a 'Hand,' and treats him as one. Mr. Bounderby reduces him into a factory tool rather than as a person with feelings. He doesn't recognize or treat him as a human being. This can be found in how Mr. Bounderby speaks to Mr. Blackpool and all his other workers in this manner. They are only numbers in his factory.

Mr. Bounderby is mechanical in his expressions, to the point of being emotionless. This was found in his declaration that: "I'm not going to take him at once; he is to finish his educational cramming before then" (Dickens 50), as he does not intend on employing a young Thomas Gradgrind until his mind is overloaded with facts. Since he understands education to be 'cramming facts' he also judges people's value to himself as a resource according to how much they know. While observing Mrs. Sparsit; "Mr. Bounderby was obliged to get up from table, and stand with his back to the fire, looking at her; she was such an enhancement of his position." (Dickens 51) This example of Mrs. Sparsit is similar to his feelings about Thomas Gradgrind Jr. and his being overloaded with facts and education. The only interest that Mr. Bounderby had in Mrs. Sparsit was connections and relationships with other people, since any of her connections could help provide him with advantages in both social status and financially. Mr. Bounderby does not only think about the amount of money that someone earns or may have, but also the extent

of their knowledge. This is the criteria to grade the value of a person that he spends with while alive. His idea of life is completely mechanized and entirely capitalistic. This is how he is able to reason and to justify why he is selfish.

The character that Dickens created in Mr. Bounderby is of the mechanical system that Coketown is built on. He brags to every one of the unfairness and struggles that he experienced during his childhood and his youth, and because of it, he believes that everyone should be self-made, as long as they are willing to work hard for it. Although, later, he is discovered to be a fraud and a liar when it is revealed that during his childhood he was very much loved, taken care of, and he was never beaten and bullied, as he claimed. Mrs. Pegler, who is brought to confront Mr. Bounderby for suspicion of having something to do with the bank robbery, he tells the gathered listeners that she is in fact Mr. Bounderby's mother, and that "My dear boy knows, and will give you to know, that though he come of humble parents, he come of parents that loved him as dear as the best could [...]" (Dickens 262) Dickens shows that it is mechanical self-interest and a striving for economical profit that Mr. Bounderby states, is not the only requirement to becoming successful or a 'self-made man,' and adds questionability as to the success and beliefs of Josiah Bounderby. Bounderby believed that that success was dependent on the wealthy living according to self-interest. Being generous and compassionate to the "Hands" would be traits that are opposite of human life and the mechanical human nature, since they had grown accustomed to living as an industrial machine that has represented profit and mass production.

MARXIST THEORY AND CAPITALISM

Hard Times portrays an understanding of the factory world of the "Hands" in Coketown, as it illustrates the mechanical dehumanizing conditions of the machination of the Industrial Revolution. Dickens showed the power of the mill owners, the lack of culpability, and the invisibility of the mill working "hands" and the oppression of the lower working class, as many of the characters of *Hard Times* and their plight of desperation towards an individual pursuit of happiness. It is the working "Hands" in this story looks to describe the psychological state of control through machinery. Marxist theory was used to illustrate what Dickens had written in *Hard Times*. Dickens illustrates the inability for "the hands" to change social class, along with the reasons for the children being educated with an overload of facts as a Marxist movement. The Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced ideas about human educability emerged alongside the belief that widespread ignorance merely propped up aristocratic government and could have no place in modern democratic society. This helped to reinforce the idea that children needed to be forced with facts as a means of survival. Educating with facts provided for the elite social class to govern and for "democracy to be a lesser form of government that would

be imposed by the ruling elite than an autonomous process created by individuals associating with one another." (Edwards and Canaan 73) This was one way for exploitation and dominance over society and Coketown.

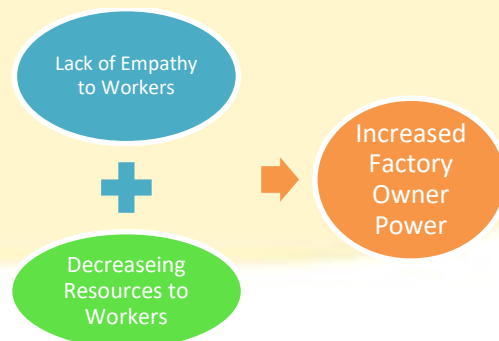
Marxism has been viewed as a theory that "failed to prove that the elites were responsible for the transition from feudalism to capitalism" (Lachmann 398), since they have turned their attention to using their energies by turning away from producing goods that were necessary for survival. There wasn't any modifications in systems of economic production or in the relations between "the hands" and the factory owners. The "Hands" were used as a "free to make their labor-power available to employers engaged in capital accumulation. "A fall in real wages for many workers, was linked to the social consequences of structural changes in the economy." (Neale 592) This is what encouraged the creation/operation of buying/selling produce and labor-power leads in turn to an expansion of the market for capitalism to further develop" (Brass 217) and an increase of mechanical thinking to be used. This increased the demand for mass production with little opportunity for the "Hands" to gain added profit for their work. The ruling class of Mr. Bounderby and the social elite, claimed that economics was too complicated for ordinary people, such as the "Hands" to understand. However, understanding how to stay wealthy and in power through production is important to Marxists, as the "Hands" provided a value to what was being built in the factories. Their labor gave value to capitalist society by selling their labor to power. This is what gave way to the wealthy income and lifestyle of factory owners to become richer and the working class to remain poor. This allowed for an unequal distribution of economic and political power between the factory owners and the "Hands."

Capitalism is unable to be changed. It reflects how Coketown was developed and the social relationships within society. "It is a boundary between what private individuals can and cannot own has evolved considerably over time." (Picketty 739) Many in the lower class looked to own property. However, before 1865, individuals such as the "Hands" were unable to have this right, since owning land was not allowed, since "defending the rights of property meant defining the property" of the wealthy." (Morris 34) Capital ownership and property rights were "historically determined as being the most extreme form of ownership and domination of owners over others." (Picketty 740) The lack of rights among the lower class caused problems between the lower and upper social classes. Capital, the inequality of labor income, and the inequality of capital ownership was due to a rise in the "Hands" would affect the important processes for saving and investing, the functioning of real estate, and the ability to hold power over the wealthy.

Distribution of wealth and power, as seen between the factory owners and the "Hands" was deeply political. It had much to do with how "the rising wealthy class chose to adopt policies that would affect society." (Picketty 738) Communication between factory owners and

the “Hands” caused the structure of inequality, since the interaction between the upper elite and the working class was controlled by keeping the poor to be poorer. The “Hands” were not made up by a union that encouraged wage bargaining. This caused issues in working conditions that directly affected the inability to own land. The issue of public debt was also unable to be addressed since safeties for the “Hands” were not in place. Education of facts also played a role in the inequality of social class, as it was based solely on teaching facts.

The effects of the elite class in Coketown was able to hold power by modifying their relationships with society. This included the relationships of factory owners to the “Hands.” Mr. Bounderby lacked empathy for his workers, as seen in his response to Stephen Blackpool, who was looking for a divorce from his alcoholic wife. The response that was given to Blackpool was one that allowed for Mr. Bounderby to structure class from a ruling to a governing class. This a process that alters movement from one social class to a higher social class. However, it also modifies the amount of power to be given, if any, to the working class.



The lack of resources and empathy impacted the standard of living for the “Hands” and increased wealth and capitalism in Coketown and caused a change in economic expansion and income generation.

The standard of living was “favorable to investment and income generation. This was due to an economic expansion and changes in technology. This hastened the process of industrialization.” (Williams 587) However, the capitalist government in *Hard Times* provided continued wealth opportunities to the upper class. The upper class could not get rid of basic problem of the working class face, exploitation, unemployment, and mass poverty. Coketown, which has been described as a place of machinery and factories rising from the ashes, production was essential to continued wealth and power over the “Hands.” It also was a place of unhappiness for them, as it is described as being a place where: “It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by 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 every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.” (Dickens 28)

The “Hands” or factory workers are described as “melancholy mad elephants” that are in a constant state of “melancholy madness” throughout the story. The monotony depicts the mill-hands as mere cogs in a crushing machine, “among the multitude of Coketown, generically “the Hands,” being “a race who would have found more favor with some people, if Providence had seen fit to make them only hands, or, like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomachs.” (Dickens 66) Characters such as Stephen Blackpool, was viewed as a mere hand whose fate life is dictated by industrial, “worked, to the crashing, smashing, tearing piece of mechanism at which he labored.

Marxism means that if one is in the elite class then their life is one that is filled with leisure, while the lower class lived a life of hardship and poverty. There was a social element that determined a person’s social class, and that was through who controlled the resources needed to produce what Coketown needed to survive.

The elite class owned land and factories in Coketown. Characters such as Mr. Bounderby controlled all the elements of society, including the livelihood of the “Hands.” He controlled under Marxist theory, their hourly wages in the factory. Capitalism kept the “Hands” in the working class and unable to attain a higher social class. Mr. Bounderby was a capitalist, whose goal was to earn a profit. He kept to the system that was unfair to the “Hands,” by keeping them poor and alienated. Alienation leads the “Hands” to become more distanced and isolated from their work, which resulted in a feeling of powerlessness.

Since class in *Hard Times* was concerned with power of the wealthy factory owners, “the history of social class is about the way in which men and women gained power over others was about how they used that power, how they maintained that power, and how those ‘others’ responded.” (Morris 31) Class in *Hard Times* provided how mechanical living was produced by government power, as “social class was about power in relationships, production, and the distribution of goods and services.” (Morris 31) The “Hands” had demanded to have fundamental change in the distribution of power. Instead, through Marxism, they found just the opposite. This is what caused them to have resentment and fear by those who held power. It kept the world of the “Hands” to living in a mechanized society. This helped to promote a consciousness among class. As described years prior to Coketown, British society had an existing issue with increasing class consciousness:

The burdens of trade diminish the profits of capital, and the wages of labor, but bitter debate arises between the manufacturers and those in their employ, concerning the proper division of that fund, from which they are derived. The bargain for the wages of labor develops organized associations of the working classes, for the purpose of carrying on the contest with the

capitalist...a gloomy spirit of discontent is engendered. (Morris 33)

Conflict between people who had power and those with no power continued to create a stronger Coketown that was ruled by the forces that dehumanized the working class. This is the beginning of the mechanical human life that affected the "Hands" and the resentment for the factory owner.

CAUSATION OF CHARACTER UNHAPPINESS THROUGH MARXIST THEORY

The Condition of the Working Class in England, provided a first-hand examination that was the model for the fictional town of Coketown. Adams discusses the horrors of a mechanized society, since it is made of a society that has a loss of the spirit and humanity. The working class are described as people who deserve to be given respect and happiness. However, it isn't seen, but rather there are hundreds of thousands of every social class that crowd past one another. The "Hands" show no qualities of being human beings, with equal powers, and with a shared interest in being happy. Although they aren't, even though they seek happiness through the same means, work. Yet, they still crowd one another as though they have nothing in common with one another. There is a feeling of isolation among the people for their own private interest to find happiness (Adams 37). This feeling of unhappiness can be found in the mechanics of "the Hands," as Stephen Blackpool, a character whose fate is dictated by the mechanics that oppress the citizens of Coketown. Blackpool choose not to participate in an industrial strike in *Hard Times*. His decision is not attributed to ambivalence, but instead his not being able to fight a good fight. Blackpool made the choice not to participate. This could be due to his inability to leave his social class.

Although the strike continues without Stephen Blackpool, it was his decision to run away from Coketown. He had put himself in a situation where he couldn't return to Coketown. Blackpool had done enough damage that couldn't be reversed. The accusations of theft that were created by Tom caused his unhappiness, and ultimately led to his emotional death. Blackpool disappearing caused many to think of him, as the days had turned into weeks, the people of Coketown forgot about Blackpool. He was later seen as being nothing more than a piece of broken and useless machinery, "Even Stephen Blackpool had disappeared, it was a falling into the general way, and becoming as monotonous a wonder as any piece of machinery in Coke town." (Dickens 247) Blackpool considered returning to Coketown to clear his name, but instead, he slips and falls into an unused mine pit known as Old Hell Shaft and is brought to his physical death. This shows how capitalism of Marxist theory dehumanizes man for industry.

Blackpool in Marxist theory, is symbolic to blackness, a blackness that he can't avoid or escape, where there is "no way out." (Dickens 71) He becomes mechanization as being a working condition that leads to his death:

I ha' fell into th' pit my dear, as have cost wi' in the knowledge o' old folk now livin, hundreds and hundreds o' men's lives – fathers, sons, brothers, dear to thousands and thousands, an keepin' em from want and hunger. I ha' fell into a pit that ha' been wi' the' Fire-damp crueller than battle. I ha' read on't in the public petition, as onny one may read, fro' the men that works in pits, in which they ha' pray'n an pray'n the lawmakers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children that they loves as well as gentlefolk loves theirs. When it were in work, it killed wi'out need; when 'tis let alone, it kills wi'out need. See how we die an no need, one way an another – in a muddle – every day! (Dickens 263).

The characters, such as the "Hands" in *Hard Times*, are governed and defined by their day labor. Capitalism overpowers their ability to live with happiness. Instead, they lose their identity of being human and transition to being a part of a mechanical life.

MARXIST THEORY THROUGH UTILITARIANISM

The utilitarian ideals especially the concept of wealth distribution which leaves the poor poorer and the rich more affluent. To Marxists, the acceptable action in class morality is whatever it takes to accomplish the ultimate goal—namely, a classless communist society. In other words, utilitarianism—the end justifies the means. Freedom can be achieved only when all class barriers are erased, and therefore anything that serves that end is judged as moral.

Marxist theory can be explained through the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people lying at the heart of the philosophy. Just from this, one can see key similarities between Marxist and utilitarian thought; they both exist by looking at the majority; they both strive for the well-being of society, and in both philosophies of thought it is upheld through case of class conflict or the 'Trolley Problem,' otherwise known as utilitarianism, in order to achieve the greater good or the Happiness Principle.

Utilitarianism through the Happiness Principle, states that: "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure." However, Marxist theory explains utilitarianism by looking at having more equaling happiness and pleasure. "The labor theory of value of classical economics is indefensible, leaving Marxist theory

without its primary basis for identifying class exploitation.” (Rueschemeyer and Mahoney 1583) Utilitarianism through Marxist theory seeks wealth and power through the existence of pleasure and the absence of pain as the foundation of everything that people desire and their morality. It looks at the economics of society, as found in the characters of *Hard Times*. The moral evaluations of the characters have a decreased moral foundation due to a deterioration of class consciousness, since class is not seen as a perspective of life conditions. Life conditions can be harmful and cause exploitation and conflict between classes. When individuals in society begin to “self-consciously identify themselves as part of a class and carry out political mobilization on that basis” (Rueschemeyer and Mahoney 1588), then individuals will behave in accordance to a living condition that will continue to produce them wealth.

In *Hard Times*, Marxist theory explains utilitarianism through the philosophy of facts, as seen in Thomas Gradgrind, who was an instiller of utilitarianism through his school. Mr. Gradgrind instilled utilitarianism in his two oldest children, Tom and Louisa. However, his attempts had failed through his utilitarian way of teaching. Following a utilitarianism philosophy meant having to lack emotion. Being emotionless was found in Mr. Gradgrind for living within his factual world without the ability to encourage imagination in his children, along with Mr. Bounderby, who was a practitioner of utilitarianism. He believed in the practice of profit and wealth. He kept to his utilitarian views by living with the thinking that nothing else was important besides profit.

Mr. Bounderby had employed many workers and offered them no respect. He called the factory workers the “Hands” for the reason that he didn’t see them as human beings. Mr. Bounderby didn’t have concern for them. His concern was that their hands would produce the most wealth for him throughout each work day. This allowed for Mr. Bounderby to earn more money, while keeping to the Marxist theory view of utilitarianism.

Further examples of utilitarianism was seen in Stephen Blackpool, who arrived at Mr. Bounderby’s house asking for advice about his bad marriage. Rather than helping him, Mr. Bounderby treated him to be lower than him. This kept a fine line between them by social status. Blackpool was advised that a divorce would go against the laws of England and was treated on a level below Mr. Bounderby and his associates because he was a lowly worker who wasn’t as educated as he and his associates. Although Mr. Bounderby could divorce his wife, it shows that wealth determined the ability to find happiness through social class and education. For those who were of the lower social class, they weren’t educated by facts and had no money or wealth. Those who were educated by facts were the wealthy upper social class characters found in *Hard Times*, who were the “Hands” worked for the utilitarian. While characters such as Mr. Bounderby and Mr. Gradgrind were the utilitarian.

Marxist theory through utilitarianism lacked emotion, as Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby were the opposite of the workers in the circus. The circus workers were based on emotion, since their goal was to make people laugh in life. Even though they were one step up from the “Hands,” they were still concerned as part of the lower social class structure, who were disliked by Mr. Gradgrind, Mr. Bounderby, and others who are utilitarian within this story. The circus workers were disliked because they represented everything that was shunned in utilitarianism, love and imagination. The circus workers lived by a thinking that was just the opposite of the mechanical human life that was enforced on the working class in Coketown.

CONCLUSION

Capitalism, industrialism, and mechanical time are important themes to consider when examining Victorian Era literature. The concept of mechanical time is an underlying theme that is found in order to understand the life that is found in the setting of the characters. Dickens creates a mood that is mechanical and applies it in order to show his disapproval of the industrial society. Characters, such as the “Hands” struggle to find their existence as human beings and to be acknowledged as having worth in society. The setting of the traveling circus is the only one that is engulfed as a mechanical system of Coketown. Even though the circus is looked down on by Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, it also becomes a place for young Tom to hide and try to escape being punished for robbing the bank.

The mechanical world that is found in the character Mr. Bounderby, is one that is made up as being one of the dominant and mechanized people in *Hard Times*. His main focus is toward being a negative and destructive influence in Coketown, as he looks to convey an attitude that is mechanical where the only person who would benefit is himself. When looking at Mr. Bounderby and his friend Mr. Gradgrind, there is a difference in their mechanization. Unlike Mr. Bounderby, he does not hold on to the mechanized economic society. Instead, he is a product of the system that makes up the mechanized economic of an industrialized society. Mr. Gradgrind believes that the truth can be found entirely in facts, which are made up of statistics that are based on exact measurements and calculations.

Mr. Gradgrind believed that his children must be brought up by the system. He isn’t consumed with selfishness, as Mr. Bounderby is, but rather in the belief that it is the right way to do things. Both of these characters are mechanized, but with having different intentions. Mr. Bounderby is a mechanization of the mind and Mr. Gradgrind is a mechanization by having things go wrong, even if his intentions were meant to be good. Mr. Bounderby uses his imagination to create a lie that is later shown to be untrue, as he looks to fulfil his own selfish and self-centered life and to becoming an admired “self-

made man.” The view of life and time in the characters of Mr. Bunderby and Mr. Gradgrind are made up of a mechanical aspect of time and life in Coketown.

Through the education and upbringing of the Gradgrind children show how mechanical thinking as seen in Victorian Era literature can be destructive to both time and life. The philosophy of “everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. Gratitude was to be abolished, and the virtues springing from it were not to be. Every inch of existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter” (Dickens 288), as the selfish Mr. Bunderby dies alone. Dickens had a purpose with this ending to show that being emotionless in the mechanical thinking of time and life can be changed into something that human, warm, and emotional to for others.

Living the mechanical world takes away the opportunity for people to see it in its entirety. Victorian Era literature provides meaning by connecting the principles of the dynamics of inequality such as Charles Dickens *Hard Times* between factory owners and the “Hands” showed how interaction between economic forces and the response by those who held power. This was especially true in the area of education, labor, and financial, which allowed for capitalism to treat the “Hands” as mechanical, rather than as human beings. The mechanical world found in Victorian Era literature brought increases in unhappiness to be a dominant force of the working poor in society.

Marxist theory explores the unhappiness and lack of social change found in the struggles of Victorian Era literature. “The ‘traditional’ working class was presumed to have become internally fragmented or diversified, and the boundaries separated and dissolved the ‘middle class’ altogether” (Giddens 346), as the elite ruling class political and economic power over the working class. The struggle to change their social class and to break the boundaries that have kept them as the working poor.

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