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1. However, we still take this opportunity to ask: how successfully does Dickens follow through, develop and complete his declared political campaigns, in *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*? (94)

2. If we sit back, having finished the novel, and ask ourselves whether such a reading tells us enough about *Hard Times*, we are likely answer no, for two reasons. First that there is another group of concerns that are strongly represented in the text, that often seem to obscure Utilitarianism, and to push it out of the consciousness of the reader (and perhaps of the writer as well). These concerns are about the evils of an industrial town and its society. What do we remember most vividly about Coketown? Is it the argument between mathematics and imagination? Or, is it not rather the 'melancholy mad elephants' constantly dipping their heads, and the dust, oil, filth and hellish fires among which the Coketowners live and work? According to this argument, Dickens's chosen theme is a matter for philosophical argument and political demonstration, while the theme of industrial society appeals to us on a direct naturalistic level, as well as enlisting our outrage and our pity because it is a theme involving humanity and injustice. Consequently, while we read with our intellect about the fact fiction, we are engaged and moved on a more personal level, when we read of the Coketown mills, and an industrial society. (117)

3. In Chapter 5, then, the evils of Coketown are a consequence of Utilitarianism, an error shared by politicians, the owning and genteel classes of Coketown, and the misguided Thomas Gradgrind. In Chapter 17, by contrast, the evils proceed from villainously dishonest and greedy individuals, who abuse their power and exploit workers without mercy. In Chapter 17, the bosses' cover story is self-pity and scaremongering: there is no mention of the Utilitarian faction. It is difficult to reconcile these two very different analyses of an industrial system; and it is possible to argue that Dickens had forgotten, or was recasting, his polemic from Chapter 5, when, nearly two months later, he came to write the opening overview for Chapter 17 (105).

4. It can be argued that the adult career of Tom Gradgrind is also an outcome of his upbringing in the 'fact' philosophy. This argument would rest upon the Utilitarian concept of self-interest: the belief that all activities are part of a deal, or a contract, and that people only do things in order to benefit themselves. This idea is represented and verbally argued by Bitzer and countered by Sleary (see *HT*, 269), and there is no doubt that Tom Gradgrind is overwhelmingly selfish and self-interested. On the other hand, we are not struck by Tom as a product of the Gradgrind School: that distinction belongs much more to Bitzer. Tom is rather presented simply as a grumpy and selfish lout or 'whelp', ill-mannered and with a criminal tendency. Indeed, Tom's financial improvidence is the opposite of the 'fact' faction's emphasis on arithmetic. We can conclude that any contribution to the fact theme made by the characterization of Tom is limited and somewhat tenuous. He was educated with only facts and he grows up to be a selfish thief. That is about as much as can be said (114).

5. If we remember his forehead as a wall, above two eyes that are the 'cellarage'; and we still have a vivid picture of Stone Lodge, that cold, square building – how can this man, the very champion of 'facts', suddenly become gentle, regretful and ready to concede the error of his whole life? (113)

6. It can be argued that *Bleak House* represents a similar problem, because the later stages of Richard's decline happen at the same time as the story of Lady Deadlock's scandal is building up towards its climax. The crisis occurs, and Esther and Bucket embark upon the pursuit that ends when Esther recognises her mother's dead body. In *Bleak House*, the most complicated, mysterious and exciting part of the plot begins when Lady Dedlock recognises Captain Hawdon's handwriting (*BH*, 23). From that moment on, the scandal of Lady's secret becomes more and more complicated and draws in a variety of characters including Tulkinghorn, Sangsby, the law-writer, Guppy, Tony Jobling, the Smallweeds, George, Jo, Hortense, Bucket and Esther of course: in short, almost everyone. This is the main plot that drives events and motivates the characters. (121)

Of course we feel increasing sympathy for Richard and Ada as his decline becomes more pronounced, but Richard's story cannot compete with the high drama of a society scandal, including a murder and a detective, a secret hidden long ago, and the flight and pursuit of a beautiful lady who is found dead from despair. The point about Lady's secret, which is undeniably the main plot of *Bleak House*, is that it is not

in any way at all connected to the Court of Chancery (122).

7. The main serious reform Dickens proposes is education for all, and that education should encourage the imagination. Otherwise, we hear a voice raised in outrage against the conditions in which the workers live, and an insistence that things must improve, but we are not given guidance into how such improvements can come about. Dickens is critical of both the social institutions that might undertake such a task: the Union on the other hand, and government and the politicians on the other. There is no doubt that *Hard Times* arouses our sympathy and anger. That it does not do is to propose a solution.

There is a shadowy suggestion, which amounts to the idea that nature itself, under the influence of God, will return in the end because the 'laws of the Creation' (*HT*, 28) will eventually prevail. Also, we studied Rachael in Chapter 3, commenting on the angelic virtues of self-sacrifice, mercy and endurance that make her life a pattern for others. Such virtues, however, do not pretend to alter the social reality: even at the end, Rachael is praised for 'working, ever working, but content to do it, and preferring to do it as her natural lot' (*HT*, 273) , a phrase that even aligns nature on the side of the status quo. (122-23)

8. He clearly believes that English society should pay for the education of destitute children, and that money should be available to train them for an occupation. This solution is seen in action in the novel, for the bailiff's three children are taken in hand by Mr. Jarndyce's charity: Charley becomes Esther's maid, Tom is sent to school and later apprenticed to a miller, and on Charley's marriage, little Emma becomes Esther's maid. It is a charming story, but of limited use to the thousands of destitute or near-destitute people whose hopeless and brutal lives Dickens describes in the persons of Jo, the Coavinses and the brick-masters. (124)

9. The Court and its lawyers are accused of creating delay and confusion, bleeding their clients dry, sustaining cases by creating mountains of papers and never reaching a judgement, and being a laughing stock to all reasonable people. Our anger and frustration are aroused, and our sympathy is enlisted on behalf of the Court's victims, and in particular Richard. On the other hand, Dickens's prescription for reform is similar to the improvements he proposes for Coketown. The Court should be faster at dealing with cases, less confusing, clients should have some money left, there should be fewer papers: in short, the whole institution should be speeded up and radically improved. In very short: there should be less 'wglomeration'. That is Dickens's agenda. (124-25)

10. What Dickens does, perhaps better than any other writer, is to arouse out anger, indignation and outrage at suffering, injustice and idiocy in high places. What he does not do is to analyse and assign causes and solutions. Dickens works on the level of the emotions, appealing to the sense of fairness we may be said to feel in our 'gut'. If we are looking for a programme to address the ills of Victorian society, however, or a penetrating intellectual analysis of what was wrong, we will do better to read, for example, Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), or *North and South* (1854-55), or Karl Marx's *Capital* (Vol.1,1867). What Dickens will do is to rouse us up into a crowd, all ready to confront the authorities, and shout and stamp, insisting that things have to be better, in a civilised society. (125)

11. The categories for the girls of Urania Cottage were: Truthfulness, Industry, Temper, Propriety of Conduct and Conversation, Temperance (meaning moderation, patience), Order, Punctuality, Economy, Cleanliness. Janes, Pamela. *Shepherd's Bush .. The Dickens Connection*. London: Malden, 1992. (35)

12. In essence *Hard Times* is thus a morality drama, piercing with prophetic denunciation to the very core of the laissez-faire view of human existence. Johnson, Edgar. Ed. *Letters from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts 1841-1865*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1953. (259).

13. 'I think he has less fixed purpose and energy than I could have supposed possible in my son. He is not aspiring, or imaginative in his own behalf.' 'I remember too, that the Eton system is a particularly bad one for such a character, and that a year is not a long time in which to improve upon it.' Dickens, Charles. *The Letters of Charles Dickens*. 12 vols. Ed. Madeline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson. Oxford: Clarendon, 1965-2002. Print. (*Letters* 7: 244-46)