

VICTORIAN MORALITY AND HYPOCRISY IN THE WORKS OF CHARLES DICKENS

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Annotation

This article examines the concept of Victorian morality and hypocrisy as represented in the major works of Charles Dickens. Although Victorian society emphasized respectability, discipline, and moral responsibility, Dickens consistently exposed the gap between declared ethical ideals and social reality. Focusing on *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, and *Bleak House*, the article demonstrates how Dickens critiques charitable institutions, utilitarian education, and the legal system for masking injustice behind moral rhetoric. The study argues that Dickens promotes a humanistic moral framework based on empathy, accountability, and institutional reform [1, p. 42].

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается проблема викторианской морали и лицемерия в произведениях Чарльза Диккенса. Несмотря на публичное утверждение нравственных ценностей, викторианское общество нередко демонстрировало противоречие между моральной риторикой и социальной практикой. На материале романов «Оливер Твист», «Тяжёлые времена» и «Холодный дом» раскрывается критика благотворительных, образовательных и правовых институтов, скрывающих социальную несправедливость за языком добродетели [2, p. 97].

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada Charlz Dikkens asarlarida viktorian davr axloqi va ikkiyuzlamachilik masalasi tahlil qilinadi. Viktorian jamiyatida e'lon qilingan axloqiy qadriyatlar bilan real ijtimoiy hayot o'rtasidagi tafovut *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times* va *Bleak House* romanlari misolida yoritiladi. Muallif Dikkensning axloqiy yondashuvi gumanizm, hamdardlik va ijtimoiy mas'uliyatga asoslanganini asoslab beradi [3, p. 74].

Key words

Victorian morality; hypocrisy; Charles Dickens; social criticism; utilitarianism; workhouse; law; empathy; reform; satire.

Ключевые слова

викторианская мораль; лицемерие; Чарльз Диккенс; социальная критика; утилитаризм; право; гуманизм; благотворительность; реформы; сатира.

Kalit so'zlar

viktorian axloqi; ikkiyuzlamachilik; Charlz Dikkens; ijtimoiy tanqid; gumanizm; utilitarizm; huquq; xayriya; islohotlar; satira.

Victorian England positioned itself as a morally disciplined society grounded in respectability, duty, and religious virtue. These ideals were reinforced through public discourse, education, and state institutions, creating an image of ethical stability. However, social realities such as poverty, child labor, and bureaucratic injustice revealed deep contradictions beneath this moral façade. Charles Dickens emerged as one of the most

influential critics of this disparity, using fiction as a means to expose the hypocrisy embedded in Victorian moral discourse [4, p. 110].

Dickens's moral criticism does not reject ethical principles themselves; rather, it challenges the institutional misuse of morality. He distinguishes between genuine moral responsibility and moral formalism, in which rules and appearances replace empathy and justice. This distinction is central to Dickens's portrayal of social institutions that claim moral authority while perpetuating suffering. By foregrounding human consequences, Dickens invites readers to reassess the ethical foundations of their society [5, p. 52].

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens focuses on the Poor Law and the workhouse system, exposing the moral hypocrisy underlying charitable institutions. Officially designed to encourage self-reliance and moral reform, workhouses often functioned as sites of deprivation and humiliation. Dickens demonstrates how administrators equated suffering with virtue, believing hardship to be a moral corrective. Through satire and emotional realism, the novel condemns a system that treats poverty as a moral failing rather than a social condition [1, p. 88].

The character of Mr. Bumble exemplifies institutional hypocrisy. As a representative of moral authority, acting under the guise of duty, he exploits his position for personal benefit. Dickens uses caricature to ridicule such figures, revealing how moral language can mask ambition and indifference. The suffering of Oliver and other children thus becomes a moral indictment of a society that prioritizes regulation over compassion [6, p. 134].

Hard Times extends Dickens's critique to utilitarian philosophy, particularly its influence on education and industrial life. Through the character of Thomas Gradgrind, Dickens satirizes a system that values factual knowledge above imagination and emotion. This reduction of human experience to calculation reflects a moral framework that equates goodness with utility. Dickens challenges this view by illustrating its destructive effects on personal and social relationships [2, p. 61].

In *Bleak House*, Dickens presents a comprehensive critique of legal morality through the depiction of the Court of Chancery. The interminable Jarndyce and Jarndyce case symbolizes a legal system that claims to deliver justice while producing delay and despair. Legal procedures become detached from moral purpose, transforming justice into an abstract concept rather than a lived reality. Dickens exposes how bureaucratic complexity serves institutional interests at the expense of human lives [3, p. 141].

Across these novels, Dickens employs satire, irony, and emotional appeal to expose the gap between moral ideals and social practice. His narrative voice encourages empathy for marginalized characters and skepticism toward authoritative rhetoric. By making hypocrisy visible, Dickens transforms literature into an instrument of ethical reflection and social critique. His works ultimately advocate a moral vision grounded in human sympathy, accountability, and institutional reform [7, p. 305].

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