

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS: DISCUSSING GEORG LUKACS THEORY OF REIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Georg Lukacs has been a central figure in a discussion of Marxism and since the revolution of Red October there are two different group of intellectual who has a different opinion about the necessity of revolution, one group led by Lenin who saw that it is a must thing to do to topple the regime of aristocrat and other group consist of intellectual like Rosa Luxemburg who saw the revolution is premature and hasty because the people of labor is just became another pawn in another game, Rosa Luxemburg insist that what Marxism should do in the first place is not revolution but to make the worker class people realize about their own situation through dialectic process instead of political praxis. This paper tries to discuss the concept of Georg Lukacs on class consciousness and reification of the relation of people to people shifting to people and object as a result of industrialization and capitalism, the research using literature review to broaden the view of reification to cultural aspects.

ABSTRAK

Georg Lukacs adalah sosok kunci dalam pergulatan pemikiran Marxisme dan semenjak terjadinya revolusi Red October memunculkan dua kelompok pemikiran yang berbeda di kalangan intelektual Marxis, kelompok pertama dengan tokoh sentralnya Lenin melihat bahwa revolusi fisik adalah suatu keharusan untuk menjatuhkan rezim aristocrat sedangkan kelompok yang kedua dengan tokoh-tokohnya seperti Rosa Luxemburg melihat bahwa revolusi sebagai tindakan yang premature dan terburu-buru karena hanya menjadikan dan menggunakan para kaum pekerja sebagai pion-pion dalam perebutan kekuasaan murni, menurut Rosa yang harus dilakukan adalah bukan revolusi tetapi menggugah kesadaran kaum pekerja melalui proses dialektika tentang eksistensi diri bukannya menempuh jalan politik praxis. Tulisan ini berupaya membahas konsep Georg Lukacs tentang kesadaran kelas dan reifikasi dalam hubungan antar individu yang berubah menjadi hubungan antar individu dan benda sebagai akibat dari industrialisasi dan kapitalisme, penelitian menggunakan pendekatan literatur review untuk memperluas pandangan terhadap proses reifikasi yang merambah ke dalam aspek-aspek budaya.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marxism idea is based on Hegelian concept of rational and reality or theory and practices, but according to Marx, the statement of “Theory becomes a material force when it grips the masses” which seems to indicated that theory itself act as “noble” agent to gain authority and create change. Marx stated that the concept or theory and masses should be seen from both side and simultaneous perspective, the concept should be able to provide the practical essences and its relation to objects (Lukacs, 1968), otherwise both side of theory and the mass will be trapped in separated space, the masse will quite unknown to the force that driving them and the masse could end in the different destination, that is why, the basic concept of orthodox Marxism is dialectical materialism.

Using dialectical materialism enable Marxism to operate beyond the glorification of theories or books, which is to focus on method that can be expanded, developed and deepened alongside the consciousness of the mass. The mass or the class as a reality should not be separated from the theory that aimed for them, the class must be able to regain consciousness of self-realization which in a way will be acted as “conscious” reality that moved in simultaneous way toward the theory, and the possibility of material dialectics to be fully applied is only when theory and reality are move to each other synchronically.

In capitalism society, the relation between theory and reality is widely separated by inserting the commodity structure in between, relation between people takes on character of things and creating “phantom objectivity” (Lukacs, 1968), the relation of people to things is what Marx and Lukacs call reification, it erased the relation of people to people, by rationalizing the commodity through commodity fetishism. People are drawn into merely workers to gain commodities as representation of their well-being, individualism is become normal and alienation is become thicker.

Reification is the process of awakening the consciousness of people from the manipulation of capitalistic system, capitalism is not only discussing about the free market and profit but more than that, its integrated itself fully into society in full force globally, which means, every aspect of human life of education, religion, family and also culture has been turn into mass worshiping of objects.

2. CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND REIFICATION

Class consciousness can be divided into (a) interpretation of class structure: the set of beliefs about the bases of social inequality, the distribution of wealth and others advantages; and (b) stances towards the class structure: attitudes to inequality in general, perception of one's own position and feeling about it, ideas about political action (Connell, 1970). the institutions such as company and state regularly coerce its workers and its people to accept their position and rule by inserting the task of responsibility and the job descriptions. For example, Amazon, the second largest private employer after Walmart, is having not ideal environment of work for its workers especially in warehouse, from the big number of accidents to the workers have to relied on food stamp and Medicaid (Vallas and Kronberg, 2023) it happens because of coercing by giving a lot of "benefit" for the workers until the workers give their consent.

The relation of Amazon workers and their employer can be seen from two different perspective. First, class as relation, class inseparable from relationality, the workers and the employers are not emerged separately but they come into existence almost simultaneously like a twin, there is no meaning if they are being separated or they do not have meaning outside their relation to each other. Second, class as struggle, because class relation is the exploitation one class on another, its automatically created struggle, but the class itself is not in struggle to each other, but the existence of class itself is struggle (Mohandesi, 2013). The relation of class and the struggle of the class is the condition where both sides realize of each other and unable to avoid each other, the struggle which come later is a form of conformity of moving to a different comfortable position than before, the realization of opposing class, the uncomfortable that it caused, lead to chain of reactions of take and give, coercing and consent is a way of finding a comfortable position but not for long time before the struggle erupted again.

Colonialization is another example of exploitation, which leave the mark long after colonization period is over (Bradfield, 2024), the truth is given and provide by the colonialist, the colony is being labeled directed toward full production that benefit the colonialist for a long period of time, this process cemented the status "the truth" for colonialist even after their long gone, the colony need hard and deep process to decolonize their consciousness form the colonialist truth, its happen because they could not identify

themselves yet outside their status as the colony, they will need to “create” another class to detached themselves from the “truth” founded by the colonist.

From the modern industry to colonialism, we can see that the class existence is dominant in our daily life, the relation is real and the struggle is mounting, and the pattern still the same, from Amazon employer to the colonist, the existence of objects between people to people is clear and intact, the employer pushes it workers to meet quotas and later on awarding them with “best employee of the month” it pushes the workers to concentrate on objects that created by their employer. The colonialist created classes among the colonist with the attributes of objects such as land given, money payment, awarding social title, which become the truth among the colonist and become their purpose of life, but for the colonialist they could get full access to the natural resources which actually the fundamental reason of colonialism.

Objectified relation between people to people, for Lukacs is what he called “contemplative” position, reification is a social context of “second nature” after the first nature of law that describe by natural science (Feenberg et al, 2011), people switch their attention to the things that they created and be part of its object, people who work in the factory operate the machine all day long, and see themselves as a part of production process and not as a central figure. The three principal bases of modern society, the economy, the technology and the administration are the key factors of reification, people cannot against the law that generate by those three factors only able to struggle for personal or group advantages.

The force of modern society in reification push people to forget their existence in the human origin of a social world (Burriss, 1988), the production industry is nevertheless is producing products that thrown into capitalistic market, which its core principle of free market and fair competition of struggle of the fittest. The battle among the products can only be overcome by the values, so the values is playing an important rule, values have no empirical relations, it is abstract, it is presented in a long time until people agree with the exact value.

The first principle of modern society is economy, economy basically is consumption, with the unlimited choices of product available, how to define one product is better than the other, that is how values come into a play. A good product means good value which mean could add positivity to people who use or consume the product, when people using a product,

they are in contemplative state of understanding and absorbing the value from the product, which actually false and Marx called it fetishism.

The second factor is technology, it is the process of refinery of product values, using empirical data, research and development, enhancing the position of product as more “superior” than human being and could act as a savior, this makes it harder for people to look away from the contestation of products values because it will be seen as a fault to reject using products that organic, greener and earth friendly or rejecting using a car that using sun cell battery or just simply rejecting of using cars, the action of rejecting modern life or modern technology are called off grid, off community, off people. Simply put just an outsider, that will be risk of rejecting the values of product.

And what is the better way of inserting values into society if not for the administration, people have to follow the regulation, it is part of coercing system to ensure people still able to find a comfortable position in their job object related. The administration will ensure the company to give the benefit for its employee, such as annual leaving, insurances and bonuses, cutting work time, work from home, 5 days working in a week, encourage them to take vacation. All of these strategies are to ensure the loyalty of its employee.

3. CONCLUSION

Class consciousness and reification are seen as an outdated idea, voice from the past, no longer suitable with the modern life, but that is the word said by the winner, since capitalism dominated the modern world, they will be decision makers of what is trending and what is outdated, but if we see the concept of reification objectively, we will find ourselves exactly like its predicted, we are no longer live according to ourself but we merely just a commodity creature.

From every aspect of modern life, we witness the culture of consumption, narcissism and fetishism, it is dividing people into groups of where they belong in the commodity hierarchy, people live in total segregation, everyone should belong to their own class, individualism is taken for granted and yet we cannot say that today world is the best we ever had, so by saying that reification is outdated is like saying “you don’t need to be happy you just need to eat”.

When Nietzsche describing the birth of tragedy, he postulates two group of people in the spirit of arts (a) Apollonian, the group that put strict rules and codes on their action

and arts, rational and logic, (b) Dionysian, the group that defy all the rules and codes and decides to act randomly, subjectively, impulsively (Ikhwan, 2020). Maybe Nietzsche is outdated and maybe Lukacs is outdated and what we have now is people who tell us “Don’t worry, keep working, we appreciate you, you are special”. But the question is remained, if what Lukacs said is actually true and based on what happen in the society, can we outdate the truth?

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