

## THE IDEALISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *OIL!* NOVEL

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**Article history:** accepted: June 26, 2023 revised: July 15, 2023 approved: September 24, 2023

### ABSTRACT

This term paper aims to identify Bunny, the main character's idealism through the social class theory based on the World War background. The objective of this research is to identify, analyze, and describe the development of the main character's idealism and the factor that affect the development. The method that this research used are qualitative and descriptive analysis through the intrinsic elements approach. The result of this research show that Bunny's idealism can develop from the idealism that close to the capitalism class because of his father teaching to the idealism that supporting the proletarian class. This research also found the factor that affect the development of Bunny's idealism such as other character, background, plot and conflict. The fifth section contains the implications of the research represented by one sentence. The fifth part is an optional part, meaning that it may or may not be conveyed.

**Keywords:** Idealism; Proletarian Class; Capitalism Class; Main Character

### I. INTRODUCTION

Idealism was the first term used in Leibniz's philosophy in the early 18th century and, in contrast to Epicurean materialism, applied to Plato's ideas. The term ideology is a philosophical school that considers the spiritual and the ideal as the key to the essence of reality. The term uses widely in clarifying philosophy from the 17th century to the early 20th century. Idealism provides the doctrine that can only understand the nature of the physical world in its dependence on the soul (mind) and spirit (spirit). The term comes from an "idea" that is in the soul. In modern philosophy, this view was first seen in George Barkeley (1685-1753), who stated that the nature of physical objects is an Idea. Leibniz used this term in the early 18th century when referring to Plato's ideas as opposed to Epicurean materialism (Reese: 243). Idealism has its own epistemological debate. Therefore, theists who teach that matter depends on reason are not called idealists because

they do not use the epistemological argument of idealism. They use the statement that physical objects are ultimately God's creations. The ideological debate is that one cannot understand physical objects without thought.

We can understand that idealism as the view that essentially everything is at the level of ideas. Idealism as a principle and guide to life requires a long process of time and experience. In this process, there will be a growing belief in attitudes, ideas, and ways of thinking until the form of behavior gives rise to a romantic perspective. Idealists have traits that tend to pursue ideal things (ideals) (Susanto, 2011). (Herman Horne in Nelson B. Henry, 1942), says that idealism is a view that concludes that nature is an expression of the mind. He also says that this world's substance is from the mind's realm and can explain material things through the soul.

The History of World War I (which occurred in Europe starting in 1914 and ending in 1918) is one factor that affected the development of the main

character's idealism. One of the factors that caused the war in western countries was the industrial and military competition between Germany and Britain. From 1910 to 1914, Germany increased its defence budget by 73 percent. The defence budget was done by Germany because, at that time, there was a threat of military power from other European countries, especially Britain (which controlled a quarter of the world's territory), so Germany prioritized the production of military weapons.

In World War I, petroleum was one of the critical factors for winning the war. The need for petroleum began because of the development of war vehicles such as tanks. Allied forces control nearly 90% of the world's oil—one of the largest oil producers in America is California.

The novel *Oil!* by Upton Sinclair's background was in the era of World War I in California. In addition to the weapons industry described above, this novel tells about the political tensions of the oil businessman who supplied the countries involved in World War I. This political tension indirectly created social classes.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The use of research methods in this study is a qualitative method and descriptive analysis with an intrinsic element approach, namely the exposure of the results of the analysis of the development of idealism and the factors that influence the development of the idealism of the main character in the novel *Oil!*. This descriptive qualitative approach holds that there is nothing in the form of a sign system that it should underestimate, everything is essential, and everything has an influence and is related to others.

## III. DISCUSSION AND FINDING

Through the investigation of the news titles reporting on Syafri Harto's sexual assault case in Riau University, six news titles are taken and presented as follows,

In Indonesia Dictionary (KBBI, 2008) stated that analyzing a book can be started with the main character appearance such as physic, psychology and sociology. In the novel, it is informed that the main character is Bunny, he was thirteen years old at the time, with physiological features of a small body with a cute face, brown skin due to living outside and often driving with his father, wavy brown hair and beautiful light brown eyes.

*Now he was thirteen, and resented the name, but the boys cut it to "Bun" which was to stay with him, and which was satisfactory. He was a pretty boy, still brown, with wavy brown hair, tumbled by the wind, and bright brown eyes, and a good color, because he lived outdoors. (Sinclair, 1926:15).*

Bunny is such a lovely person with a very obedient personality to his father. His father is an oil business man with a capitalism ideology, that only thinking about his own profit above the others. His father tried to teach Bunny about his oil business and also his idealism.

*That all sounded reasonable, bunny listened while dad impressed his favourite lesson: take care of your money! Some day an accident might happen to dad, and then bunny would have the whole thing on his shoulders ; so he could not begin too early to realize that the ogle he met would be trying, by devices more or less subtle, to get a hold of his money. (Sinclair, 1926:54)*

The moments after the adults' meeting started, Bunny went to the back of the valley to meet the kid he

had met outside the kitchen door named Paul. They talk a lot about church and religion. At one point, Bunny likes Paul's story and wants to appreciate it by giving Paul some money. But Paul emphatically refused because he would earn money if he worked hard and made money on his own. As explained (Nurgiantoro, 2009:233) regarding social background, Bunny is likelier to follow his father, who has everything, while Paul comes from a pretty deprived family. But when Bunny offers money, Paul refuses because Paul already has an idealism that tends toward the proletariat about working hard before getting what he wants. From here, Bunny began to admire Paul and followed the idealism that Paul believed was the essence of hard work.

*Bunny held out his hand in the darkness. "you take this" he said. "what is it?" "Some money" "No sir, I don't want no money not till I earn it." "but listen, Paul, my dad's got a lot of money, and he gives me what i ask him for. He's come here to lease this block from your aunt, and he won't miss this little bit."* (Sinclair, 1926:46-47)

After meeting Paul, Bunny began to feel a problem with his morals. Like Stanton (in Nurgiyantoro, 2009) said, Internal conflict is a conflict that occurs inside the character's mind, or it can also be called a dilemma (man against himself conflict). On the one hand, his father taught him to make things easier with money, like business people who embraced idealism, close to capitalism. On the other hand, Paul showed an attitude that did not accept money easily unless he deserved it. Paul's idealism is more inclined toward the proletariat. *This was a moral problem which bunny debated within himself; was paul watkins crazy, because of the way he behaved? If s, there must be a crazy streak in bunny also, for he had been enormously*

*impressed by paul, and could not help thinking about him. (Sinclair 1926:55)*

When Bunny was studying civil at his school, one of the discussions was about the corruption of public officials. During the discussion, Bunny asked about a businessman giving public officials more money for his time and work. His teacher also firmly answered that bribery was a criminal act. Here Bunny's character, who always obeys his father's capitalism indirectly, begins to fade, first because he meets Paul, who upholds his ideals and does not want to accept what is not his right. After that, his teacher said that the act of a businessman who gave more money to public officials for the time and work he did was a bribe. In fact, the businessman was his father, who gave more money to officials in paradise city who built roads for vehicles to enter oil quarries. After Bunny told his father what his teacher at school told him, his father also explained that his teacher had never worked in the field like him. His teacher did not know how to move heavy equipment to dig through a small road on the outskirts of town. A teacher is just someone sitting in a room talking loudly about democracy or the ideal.

*There had been many discussions in class, and among other thing they had mentioned "corruption of public officials". Bunny – of course without any hint that he had ever had personal knowledge of such a thing – had asked the lady teacher about the possibility of a business man's paying a public official extra sums for his time and trouble in public matters; and the lady teacher had been shoced by such a suggestion, and had declared that it would be bribery without question. So now bunny told dad, and the latter explained. It was the difference between a theoretical and a practical view of a question. The lady teacher had never had to drill an oil well, her business didn't depend on moving*

*heavy materials over a sheep-trail; all she did was jist to sit in a room and use high-soundin' words, like 'ideals' and 'democracy' and 'public service'. (Sinclair, 1926:134)*

Paul is disappointed in Bunny. Even though Bunny knows his father works and pays for a federation of oil entrepreneurs who have violated many rules, especially regarding workers' welfare, Bunny still doesn't dare to go against his father. Paul also calls Bunny very weak and cowardly because he always gets what he wants from his father. Bunny has a good heart even though he knows what is right and wrong, yet Bunny can't act because Bunny is afraid of hurting others. Bunny, who is still in school, is too dependent on his father. Bunny respects Paul and his personality, but Bunny still can't follow Paul's way of life, who has been away from his parents since childhood. Even so, Bunny still learns about life from Paul rather than from his father.

*At last Paul went on. "I know how it is, son. You won't do it, you haven't the nerve for it – you're soft." He waited, while those cruel words sank in. "yes, that's the word, soft. You've always had everything you wanted – you've had it handed to you on a silver tray, and it's made you a weakling. You have a good heart, and you know what's right, but you couldn't bear to act, you'd be too afraid of hurting somebody. (Sinclair, 1926:190)*

With Bunny getting older and his idealism is leading to the proletariat, where he upholds justice. Paul's idealism makes Bunny's idealism more potent, and the more he gets from his college education, the less trust he has in his father, who is getting deeper and more involved in his life. The dirtiness of the oil business world that he lived. Bunny was also strict with his father. If his father continued to participate in the

agreement to buy the presidency with his relatives, Bunny would not touch the money his father gave him. Bunny also said that if that happened, Bunny would leave the house and look for work outside instead of continuing his father's business. His father would only need to support his sister, Bertie, and not have to give the money to Bunny anymore.

*"Dad, I will not stand for buying the presidency ; and if you go in with my inheritance, I will not touch a cent of your money from this day on. I'll go out and get myself a job, and you can leave your money to bertie if you want to. (Sinclair, 1926:292)*

Bunny's father wanted Bunny to continue his business after Bunny graduated from college. With the knowledge that Bunny got from his socialist organization and the proletariat ideology that he got from Paul, Bunny wanted to go abroad to study the workers under a new name. Bunny wants to strengthen his idealism about the fairness of the rights of laborers in big companies like his father's oil company. Being a laborer himself, he wants to know why there are many demonstrations in big companies and why Paul joins the rally without thinking about the risk of losing his life during the rally. At the same time, his father insisted that being a laborer was unpleasant because his father had been a laborer before, and it was better for Bunny to continue his father's successful oil business. But with his Idealism, Bunny didn't want that. Even if Bunny took over his father's business, his colleagues and corrupt oil industry officials would not accept an idealist like Bunny.

*"well, i want to go away for a year and take another name and get myself a job as a worker in one of the big industries." "oh my god!" A pause while Dad gazed into his son's troubled eyes. "What does that mean?" (Sinclair, 1926:433)*

After returning to Europe to continue his work, Bunny received a letter from his father's new wife, Mrs. Alyse, about his father's worsening condition of double pneumonia. With the letter, Bunny wants to back to America to visit his father, but he can't. He only monitors his father through a letter from Mrs. Alyse. A few days later, Bunny got another letter from Mrs. Alyse about his father, who had passed away, and his inheritance in the form of his father's oil company. Sometime after Bunny read the letter from Mrs. Alyse, there was also a letter from Bertie. The letter says Bertie was always by his father's side until the end of his life. Their father had forgiven Bertie for all his mistakes. Bertie also apologized to Bunny in his letter if he had wronged Bunny. Even though Bunny hates his father's idealism that adheres to capitalism, he still loves his father as a family and human being.

*"your father's spirit has passed from this world to the next but he will never cease to be with you he spoke of you at the last and promises that if you will communicate with a good medium in Angel City he will guide your life with love and affection as ever Alyse." And then a message from Bertie: "I was with Dad at the end and he forgave me will you forgive me also." When Bunny read that, he had to hurry to his stateroom and lie there and cry like a little child. (Sinclair, 1926:479)*

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the above analysis of the novel *Oil!* By Upton Sinclair, the following conclusion are obtained. Bunny got the idealism of capitalist social class from his father who taught him since he was little. After growing up his idealism changed since he met a boy his age named Paul. When he entered high school, Bunny began to understand

about the capitalist and proletarian social class. Bunny realizes that Paul is a person who adheres to a proletarian ideology that upholds justice, while his father is a strong capitalist. When Bunny goes to college and makes friends in a radical socialist organization called the Reds, his ideals grow stronger in defense of the proletarian social class.

The main factor that affects Bunny's idealism is the character, specifically Paul. Since Bunny was 13 years old, Paul has already been a figure to Bunny with his proletarian idealism. Aside from character, the factors which affect Bunny's idealism are plot, settings, especially background place, and conflict that can be found in the data.

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