

The Conformity to Social Norms as Reflected through Sue Bridehead's Personality in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this article is to analyze and elaborate the conformity to social norms reflected through personality of one of the main characters in Jude the Obscure, one of Thomas Hardy's tragic novels. In analyzing the problem, I apply some theories and approaches, pragmatic and socio-psychology approaches, that can support this analysis. Both approaches are used since I explore my point of view about social value through this analysis. Finally, a conclusion taken after elaborating and evaluating the data is that the conformities reflected by Sue Bridehead are internalization conformity, compliance conformity and defensive conformity to folkways and mores as social norms.

Key Words: conformity, personality, social norms

Introduction

Human is an individual who has body, soul, and mind which totally cannot be separated. Thus, human's feeling appears because of the cooperation of those three elements. Furthermore, as an individual, human deals with his own personality. It is clear that human has special personality based on its characteristics (Gerungan, 2004:25). On the other hand, human is a social creature that needs to interact with others in his society. Therefore, the most part of human's life is among people where there is consciously or unconsciously the social influence which has roles in changing someone's personality because there are some norms in society.

Since social norms, even they are not written and not regarded as law, have power in society's life, they must be obeyed by society's members in order to create the harmony in society. Practically, there is always inharmonic importance between individual and society so that the ability to harmonize the inharmonic importance of society and individual is needed. That ability is called as conformity. Conformity is the degree to which members of a group will change their behavior, views, and attitude to fit the views of the group (Aronson, Wilson and Akert, 2005:1). Considering that conformity to social norms has relation to individual and social aspects of human, I choose *Jude the Obscure* novel to be analyzed since the phenomena that show conformity to social norms exist in that novel.

Broyard (in NY Times, 1982) criticized that *Jude the Obscure* aroused even more debate. The story dramatizes the conflict between carnal and spiritual life. Then *Jude the Obscure* was discovered as a moral work -austere in its treatment of a difficult subject as if the writer had not all the time said in the preface that it was meant to be so. Thus, it can be seen that there are the phenomena of social influences to human in his society in this novel so that an elaboration of the conformity to social norms as reflected through one of the main characters' -Sue Bridehead- personality in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* will be interesting to be analyzed.

Peterson (1992:15) states that personality is something that is a property of individual; psychological in nature; general in its manifestation; characteristic of the individual; enduring over time; integrated with itself and with other aspects of the individual; and related to how the individual functions in the world, or fails to function. Based on the definition, it is inferred that personality can be seen as some aspects. Seeing someone's personality means seeing not only his characters and appearance but also seeing the unique of every person and seeing his life in society.

Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Social Norms

Norms affect all aspects of humans' lives. As a result, humans usually are not aware of them. Based on Thio (1984:49), norms are specific rules dictating how people should act in a particular situation. The norms, which exist in social interaction among individuals in social group, are called social norms. On the other hand, social norm is the result of group social interaction. Sherif in Ahmadi (2002:110) states that social norm is the

same general perception among group members about the ways of behavior which are proper to be done by the members of the group if they face the situation that has correlation with their lives. Social norm consists of variation of group interaction's result. It also includes all social values, social customs, traditions, conventions and so on.

There are some kinds of social norms. Those are:

- a. Folkways, the norms that are followed without further thinking except based on tradition. (Thio,1986:50).
- b. Mores, the norms that are related to religion. (Ahmadi, 2002:111).

The Theory of Conformity

People live in society where they have interaction with others. In the process of interaction, society often influences its members. Hence, people usually conform to their society.

Buskist and Gerbing (1990:617) define that conformity is the act of changing one's thoughts or behavior to be similar to those of a social group. Some subtypes of conformity are:

- a. Compliance Conformity, conforming only publicly, but keeping one's own views in private.
- b. Internalization Conformity, conforming publicly and privately, during and after group membership.
- c. Defensive Conformity, something "somewhat conscious" and "not quite voluntary".

People conform even though they believe that they are wrong, because they simply do not want to appear different.

Method

Pragmatic and Socio-Psychology Approaches

Pragmatic approach is chosen in this analysis since it is the approach to analyze the literary work based on the reader's perception. Horatius in Sarjono (1992:96) states that the measuring rod of literature are utile and dulce, it means useful and pleasure and also expresses the literary approach that focuses on the reader's role and point of view.

Another approach which is chosen is socio-psychology approach. It is the approach which is used to comprehend the background of social-culture, the society's life, and psychological respond or the writer's attitude to his environment when the literary work is created (Aminuddin, 2000:46). This approach is needed for my research has the correlation with the social aspects of the society where *Jude the Obscure* novel is created.

Discussion

Jude the Obscure reflects the encroachment of the modern, developing world on the rural traditions of England in Victorian era and shows the power of social norms that can strongly influence people to conform. The main character who reflects the conformity to social norms is Sue Bridehead. In the story, Sue reflects internalization conformity, compliance conformity, and defensive conformity to folkways and mores in her society.

Internalization Conformity

To Folkways

Sue Bridehead is a sensitive woman who has a unique personality. She has a different way of thinking from other women in her era. She sometimes does action that is not suitable with other women who have conventional thinking. One day, when she has holiday, she goes to the country to have a nice place for finishing her reading. She meets a foreigner who sells statuaries of ancient Greek divinities in that place. Thinking about the contrast of the ancient Greek divinities and the solemnity of her society, Sue feels interested in buying some statuaries. Sue's action can be seen on the narration and the dialogue below.

...Though the figures were many yards away from her the south-west sun brought them out so brilliantly against the green herbage that she could discern their contours with luminous distinctness; and being almost in a line between herself and the church towers of the city they awoke in her an oddly foreign and contrasting set of ideas by comparison. The man rose, and, seeing her, politely took off his cap, and cried "I-i-i-mages!".....

"How much are these two?" she [Sue] said, touching with her finger the Venus and the Apollo – the largest figures on the tray. (Hardy,2003: p 43).

Sue buys two statuaries, Venus and Apollo. It is implied that Sue is an artistic person since she still buys those statuaries even they are the images of ancient Greek divinities, which are not suitable with the society. It

means that Sue is a woman who has free thought. However, the feeling of hesitation appears in her heart and mind so that she wraps her statues in order not to be seen by others. The narration below shows Sue's feeling.

Being of a nervous temperament she trembled at her enterprise..., she wrapped up her burden as well as she could in these, so that what she carried appeared to be an enormous armful of green stuff gathered by a zealous lover of nature...But she was still in trembling state, and seemed almost to wish she had not bought the figures. (Hardy, 2003: page 96-97).

In this case, Sue shows her internalization since she considers the society where she lives. Her trembling, which appears when she wants to bring the two statues that she buys, implies her hesitation. She appears uncertain with her decision in buying them. Those phenomena describes that she has uncomfortable feeling in bringing the ancient Greek divinity statues to her environment whose people are mostly Christian and which its custom cannot accept anything about ancient Greek divinity. It means that Sue conforms to folkways. Furthermore, the dialogues between Sue and her mistress assert her internalization.

"Something you have been buying, Miss Bridehead?" she [the mistress] asked, regarding the enwrapped objects.

"Yes – just something to ornament my room, said Sue.

.....

"Two saints?" [the mistress].

"Yes." [Sue]

"What ones?" [the mistress].

"St. Peter and St. – St. Mary Magdalen." [Sue]. (Hardy, 2003: page 97-98).

The fact that Sue does not tell the truth about the statues which she brings is the phenomenon of the internalization conformity to folkways that makes her directly agree with the mistress of the house's thought.

To Mores

Knowing that her cousin, Jude Fawley lives in Christminster, Sue feels glad and starts having relationship with him. Even they often spend some time together, Sue thinks that she does not love her cousin, Jude. Nonetheless, she always comes to Jude whenever she has problem. She can reveal her feeling easily to Jude. Furthermore, Jude's attention to her makes their relation become closer. Her feeling changes smoothly, but she cannot afford it.

The first reason was that he was married, and it would be wrong. The second was that they were cousins. It was not well for cousins to fall in love even when circumstances seemed to favor the passion.... (Hardy, 2003: p 93).

Even though Sue realizes her feeling to Jude, she cannot let it control her emotion since she has adopted the social value of her society. She realizes and understands clearly her religion does not allow special relation between the same blood then love relation between cousins is forbidden in her religion and that love relation between cousins opposites moral society. Sue then prefers to have relation with Mr. Phillotson than to have relation with Jude even she has realized her feeling to her cousins. She just thinks Jude as her companion, but she still has to avoid society's gossip about her relation with Jude by trying not too close to him so that she decides to be separated from Jude.

"I want to tell you something – two things," he [Jude] said hurriedly as the train came up. "One is a warm one, the other a cold one!"

"Jude," she [Sue] said, "I know one of them. And you mustn't!"

"What?" [Jude].

"You mustn't love me. You are to like me – that's all!" [Sue].

.....

What I really write about, dear Jude, is something I said to you at parting. You had been so very good and kind to me that when you were out of sight I felt what a cruel and ungrateful woman I was to say it, and it has reproached me ever since. If you want to love me, Jude, you may: I don't mind at all; and I'll never say again that you mustn't! Now, I won't write anymore about that. You do forgive your thoughtless friend for her cruelty? And won't make her miserable by saying you don't? – Ever, SUE. (Hardy, 2003: p 155).

After sending the letter which tells her regretful feeling of being cruel to Jude, Sue does not send her letter anymore. She even does not reply Jude's notes. It makes Jude think that something happens to Sue. Then he visits Sue to see her condition. When Jude sees that Sue is sick, he think that her sickness is the reason why she cannot

write him letters. Nonetheless, Sue says that the true reason is because she does not want to write him letters since she has heard gossip about their close relationship. Thus, she blames herself.

“... Perhaps I ought not to have been so intimate with you. It is all my fault. Everything is my fault always!” [Sue].

.....

“... Your attitude to me has become known; and naturally they think we’ve been doing wrong!...” [Sue].

“Yes, Sue,” he [Jude] said simply; ...” (Hardy, 2003: p 157).

Furthermore, Sue decides to marry Phillotson without considering her love to Jude. Besides, she assures Jude that their relationship will not run well for they help to face society’s norm.

...“And then we are cousins, and it is bad for cousins to marry. And I am engaged to somebody else. As to our going on together as we were going, in sort of friendly way, the people round us would have made it unable to continue. ...”

(Hardy, 2003: p 167).

Sue’s choosing Mr. Phillotson is the form of her internalization conformity to mores since she still has the obedience to norm even it unconsciously exists in her. As the result, she has to conquer her feeling to Jude even though she knows that she loves him by heart. She also has to keep away from Jude in order to avoid her guilty feeling because of the norm that she adopts. Those are the phenomena of how Sue changes her feeling because of her internalization to mores.

Compliance Conformity

To Folkways

Sue quits her job from ecclesiastical store because she thinks that the mistress of that store has broken her privacy. Because of Jude’s help, Sue can work as a teacher in Mr. Richard Phillotson’s school. Mr. Richard Phillotson sees that Sue is a clever woman so he suggests Sue to enter the Melchester Normal School. Sue follows his suggestion. As a student, she has to live in school’s dormitory. She seems busy that she cannot care for Jude. In fact, Sue feels lonely and uncomfortable in that school. Moreover, Sue regrets her decision in following Phillotson’s suggestion to be a student of Melchester Normal School because of its strict rule. To reveal her feeling, Sue sends a letter to Jude to tell everything she feels of being Melchester Normal School’s student. Besides, she asks Jude to come to see her.

Suddenly, however, quite a passionate letter arrived from Sue. She was quite lonely and miserable, she told him. She hated the place she was in; it was worse than the ecclesiastical designer’s; worse than anywhere. She felt utterly friendless; could he come immediately? – though when he did come she would only be able to see him at limited times, the rules of establishment she found herself in being strict to a degree. It was Mr. Phillotson who had advised her to come there, and she wished she had never listened to him. (Hardy, 2003: p 131).

Jude visits Sue and they spend some time together. They plan to go to Wardour Castle a few weeks later. When they realize their plan, Sue feels very happy because of the sense of freedom that she feels at the time. They spend the day happily until they are tired and the day becomes very late so that they must stay in the village that they reach. On the day after, Sue and Jude return to Sue’s school. When Sue enters her dormitory, she is given sentence by her matron for going out without permission with a man and for not coming on time to the dormitory.

“She went out with her young man,” said a second-year’s student, who knew about young man. “And Miss Traceley saw her at the station with him. She’ll have it hot when she does come.”

(Hardy 2003: p 140).

When, accordingly, Sue came into the dormitory ...she had been severely reprimanded, and ordered to a solitary room for a week, there to be confined, and take her meals, and do all her reading (Hardy, 2003:p 142).

From the dialogues and narration, it can be seen that Sue has to conform to the school regulation. She follows Phillotson’s suggestion, but she still has her own thinking and feeling about the regulation and the condition of the school. Besides, the regulation makes her live in the situation that she does not like. Phillotson’s suggestion and the strict rules of her school are two factors that make Sue conform, but she still keeps her view about the school and her life in it. Furthermore, when she breaks the rules that have already existed, the regulation makes her punished. Those mean that Sue has experienced compliance since her conformity to the

school's rules is based on the regulation even finally she changes her mind about the school and feels uncomfortable living in it.

Moreover, Sue's feeling toward Phillotson has been clear for her. She is sure that it is wrong to live with Phillotson whom she does not love. She really feels uncomfortable living with him and also afraid of him. She thinks this wrongness is not always as her fault.

He [Phillotson] said: "I've been kind to you, and given you every liberty; and it is monstrous that you should feel in this way!"

"Yes," said she [Sue], weeping. "I know that! It is wrong and wicked of me, I suppose! I am very sorry. But it is not I altogether that am to blame!"

"Who is then? Am I?" [Phillotson].

"No – I don't know! The universe, I suppose – things in general, because they are so horrid and cruel!" [Sue]. (Hardy, 2003: p 219).

From those dialogues, it can be seen that Sue realizes that she has made wrong decision when she decides to marry Phillotson, but she thinks there is another factor outside herself that makes her decide to marry Phillotson. The dialogues imply that Sue has to conform to her social norm, which can influence someone to do something based on its power. Thus, Sue complies with her society's folkways in which it is reasonable to live as suitable as society's view and tradition.

To Mores

Sue decides to marry Phillotson, but after marrying him, she realizes that she is unhappy with him so that she leaves her husband. After leaving her husband, Sue lives with Jude without legal marriage. One day, Jude's ex wife, Arabella comes to them and wants to give her child with Jude to them. Sue and Jude accept the child as their own child, but they still have not legalized their relationship. They start being gossiped by their society and their child starts being mocked by his friends. Those cases cause them to have legalization for their relationship. Thus, they declare that they have legalized their relationship but they still cannot ensure the society about their legal marriage.

... When they came back they let it be understood indirectly, and with total indifference and weariness of mien, that they were legally married at last. Sue, who had previously been called Mrs. Bridehead, now openly adopted the name of Mrs. Fawley...

But the mistake (as it was called) of their going away so secretly to do the business, kept up much of the mystery of their lives; and they found that they made expected to do thereby. A living mystery was not much less interesting than a dead scandal. (Hardy, 2003: p 294).

Sue's family is forced by society for the society cannot accept their marriage, which has not been legalized by law and church. It describes that the society uses its power to push its members, in this case Sue and Jude, to conform to its mores. Since Sue and Jude finally fulfill the society's norm, it means that they have experienced compliance conformity.

Defensive Conformity

To Mores

Sue's matron assumes that Sue has broken the dormitory's rules because she has left school dormitory without permission and goes out with Jude. For those disobediences, Sue's matron makes her stay in isolated room to think and regret what she has done. Since Sue cannot accept a sentence given to her, she then runs away from her dormitory. She does it because she thinks that the school's rule is unjust. She comes to Jude's lodging in bad condition. Jude helps her and asks her to take a rest since she has walked through the river. When Jude wants to borrow clothes from the landlady, Sue does not let him. She does not want anybody knows where she is. So, she wears Jude's clothes. In the middle of her telling story, Sue falls asleep. After sleeping, her conditions become better. When she realizes the time, she begins confuse. She wants accept Jude's suggestion to stay, but she considers other people's thinking about her. Therefore, she thinks that she has to go even her condition has not improved. But she chooses to stay after getting supper.

"... What time is it? Not late surely?" [Sue].

"It is past ten." [Jude].

"Is it really? What shall I do!" she [Sue] said, starting up.

"Stay where you are." [Jude].

"Yes; that's what I want to do. But I don't know what they would say! [Sue] ...

When she had sat upright she breathed plaintively and said, "I do feel rather weak still. I thought I was well; and I ought not to be here, ought I?" But the supper fortified her somewhat, and when she had had some tea and had lain back again she was bright and cheerful. (Hardy, 2003: p 146-147).

From the dialogues and the narration, it can be inferred that Sue is aware that it is a false step staying so late with Jude in his lodging but finally she chooses to stay until early morning. Then, when she has already put on her dress, she decides to go before anybody in that town wakes up from his sleep. Sue now can see the matter clearly. She is afraid that she has made a mistake by running a way from the school and she can think about Phillotson now. These conditions can be inferred from these dialogues.

"Now could I get out without anybody seeing me?" she [Sue] asked. "The town is not yet astir."

"But you have had no breakfast." [Jude].

"Oh, I don't want any! I fear I ought not to have run away from that school! Things seem so different in the cold light of morning, don't they? What Mr. Phillotson will say I don't know! It was quite by his wish that I went there. He is the only man in the world for whom I have any respect or fear. I hope he'll forgive me;..." [Sue]. (Hardy 2003: p 154).

Those describe Sue's attitude and feeling. In one side, she decides to do something that she thinks right but on the other hand, she realizes her mistake. She does not want to be seen by others for she is afraid to be gossiped by them. It means that she still considers about what other say. Besides, her thought about what Phillotson will say implies her sense of inferiority.

Furthermore, when Sue has married with Phillotson, Jude visits Sue at Shaston. They spend some times together in the school where Sue and Phillotson live and teach when Phillotson is going out from the school. Because they have not met for a long time, they are easily to be brought by situation and condition that can make them feel close. Influenced by such air, Sue becomes kind to Jude, but when Jude asks her permission to see her again later, she refuses it and she starts realizing her mistake.

"I can't talk to you any longer, Jude!" she [Sue] said, the tragic contralto note having come back as of old. "It is getting too dark to stay together like this, after playing morbid Good Friday tunes that make one feel what one shouldn't!... We mustn't sit and talk in this way anymore, Yes – you must go away, for you mistake me! I am very much the reverse of what you say so cruelly – Oh, Jude, it was cruel to say that! Yet I can't tell you the truth – I should shock you by letting you know how I give way to my impulses, and how much I feel that I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised! Some woman's love of being loved is insatiable; and so, often, is their love of loving; and in the last case they may find that they can't give it continuously to the chamber-officer appointed by the bishop's licence to receive it. But you are so straight forward, Jude, that you can't understand me! ... Now you must go. I am sorry my husband is not at home."

"Are you?" [Jude].

(Hardy, 2003: p 202-203).

Based on the dialogue, Sue is aware that she has influenced by the situation that makes her forget her status as a married woman. Then she treats Jude warmly as if she is a free woman, but she directly realizes what she has done. Furthermore, it shows that Sue experiences confusion and feels discomfort. She knows her mistake but she still realizes her feeling toward Jude. It causes the changing of her attitude and feeling.

"I have been thinking," she [Sue] continued, still in the tone of one brimful of feeling, "that the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns. I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I'm not really Mrs. Richard Pillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies... Now you mustn't wait longer, or you will lose the coach. Come and see me again. You must come to the house then."

"Yes!" said Jude, "When shall it be?" (Hardy, 2003: p204).

Those are Sue's defensive conformity to mores for Sue conforms to society's moral consciously, but she still uncertain with her own feeling.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, Sue Bridehead as one of the main characters in *Jude the Obscure* novel experiences the conformity to social norms through her personality. The conformities experienced by her are internalization

conformity, compliance conformity and defensive conformity. Meanwhile, social norms conformed by Sue are folkways and mores. Moreover, by seeing Sue Bridehead's conformity to social norms, it can be proved that society and its norms can force an individual to conform.

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