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### **The Debate of the Political Justice while Operating a Social System in *Snowpiercer***

#### **ABSTRACT**

The story of *Snowpiercer* is illustrating a brand new social system which attempts to set a boundary between classes on train and wait the opportunity to rebuild next human civilization. The intention of the passengers on the train is looking for the place to build the perfect world like Thomas More's Utopia. In the time they conducted the new isolation regulation among the cars leads class struggles. The debate between the front and the tail section seems like the discourse between the concept of Utopia and Dystopia.

This film adopted by French comic book raises several issues for viewers to discuss about humanity. In this article, the concept of utopia literature would be applied in text analysis which includes "the survival of human civilization," "class antagonism," "the necessary evil," "the balance of social system" and "the definition of the absolute justice." The train carries remnant human species here embodies the mission of Noah's Ark in Bible. The setting in movie for serious climate change echoes to the floods in Noah's time and claim the extinction of human is overwhelming the present world. For maintaining the order of society, isolation policy is implemented strictly. Population differentiation, class struggle, and revolution for equilibrium are accompanied with protester's rage. When the rebel army arrives at the sacred engine, some questions related to humanity are haunting. There are "Would you willing to kill one for all?" "Should the definition of justice be rewritten?" "Should we consider the minorities in advance of majorities?" "Should we do the right things instead of making the things right?" For building the "balanced" social system, the necessary evil is allowed or not?

This text reminds the seculars to think "what the absolute justice is" before operating new system. Thinking twice for the boundary of perfect land for preventing one's Utopia from turning into others' dystopia.

Key words: *Snowpiercer*, Noah's Ark, political battle, class struggle, absolute justice

## Believe the Human Civilization will Survive

### The Mission Alike Noah's Ark

The characteristics of utopian writing defined by Glenn Negley and Max Pstrick are fictional, describing a particulate state or community and the political theme of that fictional community. Anti-utopianism is a fictional world which reflects the contrast of the ideal society and the value. This world, usually, full of peace, but behind the beautiful surface they suffer from class struggle, resource shortage and contradiction of the social system. Those problems stop human spirit from freedom. The story of *Snowpiercer* is illustrating a brand new social system which attempt to set a boundary between classes through cars on the train and wait the opportunity to step out the train for rebuilding next human civilization.

It had been claimed The CW7 is the answer to global warming. Today, 79 countries will began dispersing in the upper layers of the atmosphere. According to scientists, the artificial cooling substance CW7 will succeed in bringing average global temperature down to managable level. As a revolutionary solution to mankind's warming of the planet. Soon after dispersing CW7, the world froze. All life became extinct. The precious few who boarded the rattling ark are humanity's last survivors.

The mission of this train is similar with Noah's Ark which floats with the natural catastrophe, floods. The background of launching the train is due to the over interference to the climate change. To cope with serious global warming, scientists have developed technological product with the latest science. As long as the product is launched in the space, the temperature in earth will be cool down. The worst results accompany with the best preparation. The atmosphere turn into the extreme cold and the earth raise no creatures. The only hope remain is the train carries survivors to kept on going into the never end storm. This train, like Noah's Ark, creates their self-sufficiency biological chain; both of them are navigating without destination. This similar setting tells the audiences that launching the product is the challenge to God, and the result is the punishment from the God; people on the train struggle for surviving like those animals on Noah's Ark. Wildford, the leader of the train, dominants the escape plan of new ice age; Noah, the builder of the Ark, offers the sanctuary to animals. The difference between two stories is the member, one is the people, and another one is the animal. The power hierarchy is easy to distinguish in the ark but hard in train. From this aspect, the contradiction among classes on train shows up. The end of the film, the derailment gives a chance to a young girl and a little for stepping out of the siege. A polar bear on the halfway of the mountain reveals the hints from Bible; which is embodiment of peaceful generation, the olive branch.

## **Assign the Fixed Position for Each Individual**

### The political battle in train

In this new world of train, humans are divided into three sections include the front, the middle and the tail. The category defines the residents' destiny and lead in conflict among them. As the pyramid, the lowest part represents labor and the highest part represents power. Wildford, dwells in the first car, is the engineer carries no sentiment but precise insight. All the creatures and events of the train are like components of machine. This is the most critical feature for this role. For him, no matter massacre, war or category of human on train are the procedures for assembling sophisticated machinery. His job is to ensure that these parts can be successfully assembled together and well function fluently.

The boundary between classes is shown by the speech of a minister. After a man from the tail section throws his shoe to her, she stands in front of the passengers in tail section and announces:

Passengers. This is not a shoe. This is disorder. All of us must remain in our allotted station on this train of life. Would you wear a shoe on your head? Of course you wouldn't wear a shoe on your head. A shoe doesn't belong in your head. A shoe belongs on your foot. A hat belongs on your head. I am a hat, you are a shoe. I belong on the head, you belong on the foot. In the beginning, order was prescribed by your ticket. First, economy, and freeloaders like you. Eternal order is prescribed by the Sacred Engine. When the foot seeks the place of the head, a sacred line is crossed. Know your place. Keep your place. Be a shoe.

After claiming the "shoes and hat" theory with supercilious attitude, she mentions that how respectable the Wildford and the sacred engine are. For pursuing the equality, Curtis, a leader of the tail section, revolts and abducts the minister as the hostage. With this hostage, the rebel army gets the chance to push ahead and discover this train. Each car has different function, a school, a restaurant, a water tank and farm. Those sceneries are astonished the rebel army and hint the mocks the ridiculous reality.

### The conflicts among the classes

Train is a miniature of the society; different classes belong to different cars. The tail is filled of working class, the mid-section is residing the middle class, and upper class located the front. Who lives in the first section of the car? It is the government, the authority, and the power. The rebel army intends to march from the end of the front for asking freedom. Under the leading by the minister, the lives on other cars are revealed and the point of view also begins to alter. Farm with mud, classroom with brain washed materials, restaurant with fresh sea food, nightclubs with liquors and garden with ladies etc... Those passengers are dressed too luxury to be the comparison for the slum in the tail. The train set the isolated world on

every car by the martial law; with no interaction, the class differences are hidden.

It is interesting that the situation is similar to ours. In our society, everyone seems to be free to approach everywhere, but the truth is that an invisible boundary stands between us and others. We might feel happy and peace in our comfort zone, but have we thought about what the reality is? Outside of comfort zone, there are farmers whose lands are levied by government forcibly, there are operators whose factories are closed without any notice in advanced, and there are clerks whose bosses ask them accepting the leave without salary. Those stories would be unable to be understood by those people born in upper class, and hard to explain someone is too tiny to survive.

The director of *Snowpiercer* tried to raise the debate in humanism issue through asking a question “do the right things, or do the things right.” In the plentiful world, we don’t have to make a decision from these two options, but in this movie. *Snowpiercer* proves humanity only shows up under the proper population which allows everyone get the resources equality. Out of this presupposition, oppression, slavery, and massacre are turning into the necessary evil. The clues are hidden behind the story. One of the plots, the minister says in the seafood restaurant:

Do any of you feel like Sushi? You people are very lucky. This is only served twice in a year. In January and July. Why? Not enough fish? Enough is not the criteria. Balance. This aquarium is complete ecological system. And the number of individual units must be very closely, precisely controlled in order to maintain the proper sustainable balance.

This is one of the reasons for class struggle. The greedy human nature solves their own shortage of the resources by occupying others’. The war must be starting in order to get the balance.

To run a world, the social system must be highly relied on. Wildford controls the sacred engine. For ensuring his power, he pleases the upper class and middle class by offering various material benefits. The lives show no worries make them believe Wildford is the God in the current generation, so they will stop the unsatisfied working class outside to protect the power of Wildford and enhance the class’s existence forever. Curtis, therefore, comprehends the fact that even the revolution is successful, without destroying the engine and builds another one; the world in the train will not be changed. Taking over the position in the first car is just continuing same political cycle which includes oppression, revolution and massacre. This train shows no solution to break the class struggle.

## **Pursuit the Balance instead of More**

### The necessary of the sacrifice

According to the setting of *Snowpiercer*, the passengers of the tail section have no tickets to board. Due to their illegal residence, the train does not have sufficient foods and

spaces to provide a proper environment for them. One reason why they are not be exiled is the train needs endless production of newborns to provide manpower for the extreme narrow working space. Another reason is they are prior to be removed when population of the train is overloaded.

How about earthquake, hurricane, tsunami and other natural disasters in our world? Is that a similar way to control the population the Earth? As a leader of the train, Wildford endure the gather of rebel army every a pried of time. The conditional revolution aims at giving hopes to the people in the slum, makes them believe rising in rebellion will better their lives, and gives the reasonable opportunity to dispatch troops for controlling the population. The frustrated rebel would stay in silent and wait for next time. Wildford plays the role of God to manipulate wars for balance the number. He says that is his duty to kill for maintains the train's operation and everyone has their place in order to keep the system perfect; this is called destiny.

This text discusses not only class struggle but also the necessary of the sacrifice. The history reveals the tyrants' ruling show no mercy. We take it as the reminder and encourage us to build a new system filled with humanity without making same mistake. However, in the time human almost extinct, is the humanity still in need? Is the tyrant allowed for keeping order? Wildford manages the remnant human in the closed train, stand on the top of power and manipulate live and dead. All the killing is meaningful and echoed with "*An Essay on the Principle of Population.*" *An Essay on the Principle of Population* was written by Thomas Malthus who claims population in geometric growth but food supply in arithmetic growth. Food is the most critical condition for people to survive. Base on the prediction in the level of food and population, population explosion is only limited by natural disaster, war, plague etc. In other words, the theory is not a prophecy but the statement of the interaction between the existence of natural disaster and the variation of population. Now, the question here is "Does the massacre on the train be considered as a nature variation in population?"

The fact is that we are all stuck inside this blasted train. We are prisoners in this hunk of metal. And this train is a close ecosystem. We must always strive for balance. Air, water, food supply, population. It must all be kept in balance. For optimum balance, however there'll have been time when more radical solution would required. When the population needed to be reduced, rather drastically. We don't have time for true natural selection. The next best solution is to have individual units kill off other individual units. From time to time, we've had to stir the pot, so to speak. The Great Curtis Revolution.

The rising plot in this text is on the last scene-the discourse between Curtis and Wildford. Wildford confesses his intention to utilize the revolution as the excuse of killing for controlling the size of population in the past eighteen years in this new era. And he insists the sacrifice of minority is the necessary evil for the continuation of human species.

### **Debate the Truth Between Utopia and Dystopia**

The discourse between Curtis and Wildford in the last scene can be treated as the debate between Utopia and Dystopia, and lead the audience to think about “what the real justice is.”

Beyond the gate, sections after sections percisely where they've always been and where they'll always be. All adding up to what? The train and now the perfectly correct number of human beings. All in their proper places, all adding up to what? Humanity. The train is the world. We the humanity. And now you have the sacred responsibility to lead all humanity. Without you, Curtis, humanity will cease to exist. You've seen what people do without leadership. They devour one another.

#### The existence of the absolute justice

While the train passes through the tunnel, the soldiers put on the night vision devices and kill rebels at dark. The rebel asks the support from the tail section, a firebrand is delivered as an Olympic torch to shine bright their vision. The connotation of the firebrand here is similar with the flame represents endless succession. In the end of this story, the bomb is triggered by a catching fire. The metaphor of fire on the story portrays the ambiguity of the absolute.

The most profound debate in *Snowpiercer* is “what the criteria of justice is.” As the inventor of the train, the knowledge and technology of Wildford empower him a unique identity and be a leader undoubtedly. As a leader, the vision of Wildford must to consider the majority rather than minority. The duration of engine is equal to succession of mankind. Build the bipolar world in the front and the tail section is for long-term consideration in maintaining the social system on train. For him, human does not symbolize the creatures with conscience and morality, instead they are number. Keep a person alive is nonsense; keep entire human species alive is eternal. Wildford supervises everyone staying on the assigned place and removes the unnecessary for prevent the system from disorder. His leadership seems extremely ridiculous, but that is the key of the ecosphere on train in the past 18 years. Would you willing to kill one for all? Should the definition of justice be rewrite? Is it the virtue or hypocrite to keep the innocent one alive? Is it the hero or murder to keep the majority alive?

#### The dilemma and the choice

When we boarded, It was chaos. Wilford's soldiers came and they took everything. It was thousand people in iron box; no food, no water. After a month, we ate the weak. You know what I hate about myself? I know what people taste

like. I know that babies taste best. There was a woman. She was hiding with her baby. Some men with knives came. They killed her and took the baby. Then an old man stepped forward and he said: "Give me the knife." Everyone thought he'd killed the baby himself. But he took the knife, he cut out his own arm and he said: "Eat this, just leave the baby." Then one by one, other people in the tail section started, cutting arms and legs and offering them.

Pass through cars symbolize the class, the gate of the room with engine is opened. Tear down the wrapping paper of the predictable revolution. The absurd journey starts from viewing the reality on each single car and ends with knowing the unchangeable social system. Wildford give Curtis a chance to take over himself. It sounds a choice, but none. Even if Curtis replaces Wildford's position, the world in the train is nothing differs from the previous one. The dilemma is echoed with the hypothesis at the very beginning "maybe there is nothing we can do when we stand aside the sacred engine."

In the , would you willing to kill one for all? Should the definition of justice be rewritten? Should we consider the minorities in advance of majorities? Should we do the right things instead of making the things right? They are debatable. Those questions might too complicate to solve, and that is reason the train made circles on the earth and ran to the unknown for years. Curtis donates his arm to make a change. He sacrifices an arm to save the little boy from the narrow working place. The little boy is alive but others are dead. The survivors perhaps finally have the opportunity to establish a better social system in equilibrium, but this opportunity must to step on the numerous corpses for being achieved. The most exciting part of *Snowpiercer* is raising a lot of contradictory issues for the audience to introspect. No answer, no standard and no absolutely correct. The narrating skill invokes more feedback after the viewers step out the theater.

## Conclusion

If we compare with the civilization of human being, you would find the similarity from history. The fictional world might be the prophetic words for our future. The success of the anti-utopian story might relate to the corruption of the real world. While watching those anti-utopian movies, it reminded me the economic recession at 2008. Involuntary unemployment attacked numerous people and deprived their jobs, happiness and even freedom. Compared to anti-utopian film, it does the indeed apocalypse in the reality. Movie production appears to be a mirror to reflect audience's sentiment and provoke the feedbacks in order to change the world. The expectations of the leading role in anti-utopian film are satisfying our dream of being a hero to subversion this defective world.

The characteristics of utopian writing defined by Glenn Negley and Max Pstrick are fictional, describing a particulate state or community and the political theme of that fictional community. It is convinced when the viewer examine the utopia elements from the context of *Snowpiercer*. The latest product CW7 for solving global warming, the sacred engine for

keeping the train run, and all the technology in every cars are the fancy description of the new world. Although, at the very beginning, the narrative misguides the audience to action film which against the powerful strongman, the last discourse between Wildford and Curtis reminds us the real theme is the political structure of the closed community on the train. A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the Utopia tradition. In this film, the director did not reveal the world on train as wonderful blueprint for viewer. Instead, they accuses how imperfect the system is, renders more recognizable and tries to alter the social system dynamically. Like confessing, the leading role Cuitis through dystopia aspect invoke the seculars to think “what the absolute justice is” before operating new system. Thinking twice for the boundary of perfect land for preventing one’s Utopia from turning into others’ dystopia.

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