

**THE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM
AND MORAL TEACHING
IN ESSAY *CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE*
BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU**

TERM PAPER

Submitted in part-fulfilling for obtaining Strata One (S-1) Degree



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I hereby declare that the term-paper is the result of my own work, and all the sources quoted or referenced have been stated correctly.

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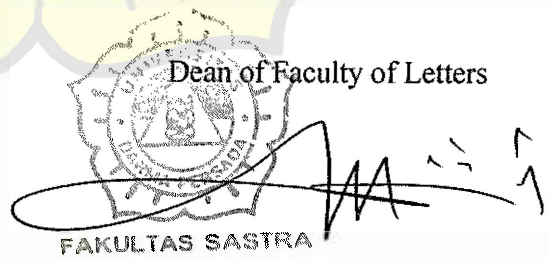
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PREFACE

All praise is due to Allah, The Compassionate and the Merciful. Through His grace finally I can complete this term-paper entitled *The Analysis of Historical Criticism and Moral Teaching in Essay 'Civil Disobedience' by Henry David Thoreau*. This term-paper is submitted in part fulfilling for obtaining Strata One (S-1) degree in English Department, University of Darma Persada.

In finishing this term-paper, I owe many invaluable helps and supports from extraordinary people who I love and respect to. I really give my regards and thanks for them. My heartfelt thanks indeed to:

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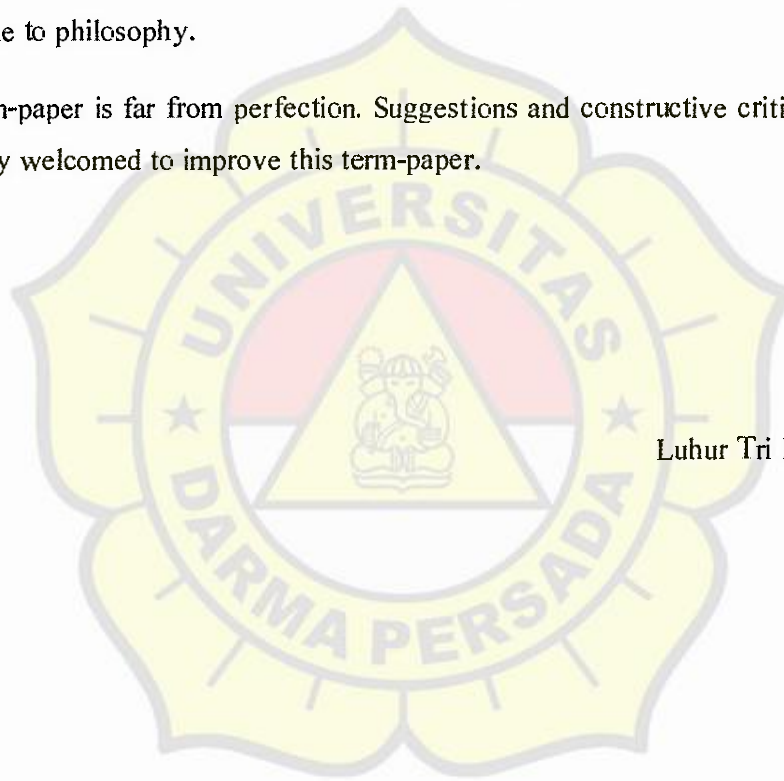
9. Library of Freedom Institute, Library of University of Indonesia, and Library of University of Darma Persada for lending me the collection of books related to my research.
10. Last but not least, my wise conscientious friends in Erasmus Student Club who has rejected to be called as senior or junior. Thanks for introducing me to philosophy.

This term-paper is far from perfection. Suggestions and constructive criticism are pleasantly welcomed to improve this term-paper.

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Writer

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ABSTRAK

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Judul : THE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND
MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN ESSAY CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Skripsi ini mendiskusikan kritisisme sejarah dan ajaran moral yang disampaikan Thoreau di dalam esei Civil Disobedience. Objek penelitian ini adalah kutipan di dalam esei yang memuat kritik Thoreau terhadap perbudakan dan perang Meksiko, dan gagasannya tentang suara hati, individualisme dan demokrasi. Analisis dilakukan dengan melakukan pendekatan intrinsik dan ekstrinsik terhadap esei ini. Pendekatan instrinsik menggunakan teori stilistika untuk menganalisis metafor, ironi dan simbol. Pendekatan ekstrinsik menggunakan kritisisme sejarah dan filsafat moral. Analisis ini menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mendukung analisis melalui beberapa kepustakaan yang terkait dengan teori, konsep dan definisi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa (1) esei ini berisi kritik Thoreau terhadap pemerintah Amerika yang mendukung perbudakan dan menjalankan perang dengan Meksiko dan (2) kritik tersebut disampaikan melalui pandangannya tentang suara hati yang sekaligus mengangkat sebuah gagasan tentang individualisme dan demokrasi.

Kata Kunci: perbudakan, perang Meksiko, suara hati, individualisme, demokrasi.

ABSTRACT

Name : Luhur Tri Pambudi

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Title : THE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND
MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN ESSAY CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU

This term-paper discusses historical criticism and moral teaching delivered by Thoreau in essay *Civil Disobedience*. Object of this research is the quotation in this essay containing of Thoreau's criticism on slavery and Mexican war, and his idea on conscience, individualism and democracy. This research is conducted by approaching intrinsic and extrinsic toward this essay. Intrinsic approach uses stylistic theory to analyze metaphor, irony and symbol. Extrinsic approach uses historical criticism and moral philosophy. This research uses qualitative method to support analysis with literatures related to theory, concept and definition. The result of this research indicates that (1) this essay contains of Thoreau's criticism on the U.S. government that supports slavery and commits the war with Mexico and (2) those criticisms are delivered through his idea on conscience that at once raises an idea on individualism and democracy.

Key words: slavery, Mexican war, conscience, individualism, democracy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

Civil Disobedience (CD) was written by a great loner scholar, Henry David Thoreau and published in 1849. According to Peter High,¹ *CD* has its background in Thoreau's opposition to the Mexican War (1846-1848), specifically in his one-night imprisonment for refusing to pay his poll tax. In 1846, Thoreau was arrested and put in jail for one night because he had refused to pay the tax. This refusal was a form of protest against the U.S. government's acceptance of slavery in the Southern State and its war with Mexico. Furthermore, the term of civil disobedience would be used as a movement of non-violent and conscientious breach of law undertaken with the aim of bringing about a change in laws or government policies.

Throughout history, acts of civil disobedience have already helped to force a reassessment of society's moral parameters. For example The Boston Tea Party, the suffragette movement, the resistance to British rule in India led by Gandhi, the US civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and others, the resistance to apartheid in South Africa, student sit-ins against the Vietnam War, they are all instances where civil disobedience proved to be an important mechanism for social change. The mastermind behind all this was Thoreau as first person who coined the term "civil disobedience".

According to Rick Furtak,² Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts in 1817 and died there in 1862, at the age of forty-four. He grew up became a great American philosopher, poet, and environmental scientist. His intellectual career unfolded in a close and polemical relation to the town in which

¹ High, Peter B. *An Outline of American Literature*. (New York: 1986), pp. 41-47.

² Furtak, Rick Anthony. "Henry David Thoreau", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2009 Edition). Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/thoreau/>.

he spent most of his life. His name is always related with his town fellow and mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, for their leading role in American transcendentalism and also for their relationship. Thoreau was familiar with Emerson's work *Nature*. However, after graduating from Harvard in 1837, he struck up a friendship with fellow Emerson and he had first encountered *Nature* in early that year. Although the two American thinkers had a turbulent relationship due to serious philosophical and personal differences, they had a profound and lasting effect upon one another. Besides *CD*, Thoreau's major work is *Walden* (1858) which written when he lived in seclusion in the pond side hut. *Walden* draws upon each of these identities in meditating on the concrete problems of living in the world as a human being. He sought to revive a conception of philosophy as a way of life, not only a mode of reflection thought and discourse.

There are three points that represent the reason why I choose essay *CD* as the subject of research. *Firstly*, this essay is well-known as the one of most important essays that were ever born in America. However, the motive popularity is too shallow if I take it as the primary reason. In addition, it is important to consider the popularity to see the implication of this essay toward the era when it was published. *Secondly*, this essay has a lot of contains of historical events in America. It is an incisive analysis from Thoreau about the social and political environment during his life. It becomes so interesting because this essay serves a different point of view about America. *Thirdly*, this essay talks about a topic which has never been discussed throughout the history of America. It was a practical form of disobedience toward the State and this form becomes so interesting when disobedience is assumed as moral action that it is important to be acted to monitor the Government's authority. Moreover, this essay is not only a critical thought of Thoreau but also his practical action and he has really done what he has said although it made him get into prison. It will rise up so many questions about how important civil disobedience for Thoreau, especially for his attempt to heal his social and political environment life.

I hope this research will give an important contribution to develop the literature science in Indonesia, especially which focuses on English literature.

Perhaps, in many conflicts that happened when *CD* spread over, we can take it as value or critical thinking stuff to give a correction to our own life.

B. Identification of the Problem

Based on background of the problem, I identify the problem of the research into three points:

1. What is the historical event which criticized through this essay?
2. What is the moral teaching in this essay?
3. What is the theme of this essay and its relevance to our lives today?

Therefore, the title of this research is *"The Analysis of Historical Criticism and Moral Teaching in Essay 'Civil Disobedience' by Henry David Thoreau."*

C. Limitation of the Problem

Based on identification of the problem, I limit the problem in analyzing theme in this essay. The theories and concepts used are intrinsic approach of stylistic such as metaphor, irony and symbol, and extrinsic approach such as historical criticism and moral philosophy approach.

D. Formulation of the Problem

Based on limitation of the problem, the formulation of the problem is built by analyzing this essay through its historical and moral contents. Therefore, I build the theme of this research as *"The Analysis of Historical Criticism and Moral Teaching in Essay 'Civil Disobedience' by Henry David Thoreau."* To support this attempt, there are some steps that I take:

1. Can the concept of stylistic be used to analyze the content of this essay?

2. Can the concept of historical criticism and moral philosophy be used to study this essay?
3. Can both approaches be used to reinforce the theme of this essay?

E. Objective of the Research

Based on formulation of the research, the objective of this research is to prove whether historical criticism and moral philosophy can be used to analyze the theme of this essay. This research is entitled "*Analysis of Historical Criticism and Moral Teaching in Essay 'Civil Disobedience' by Henry David Thoreau*". To fulfill this purpose, I have to take some steps:

1. To analyze stylistic of the essay through metaphor, irony and symbol.
2. To analyze historical criticism through criticism on slavery and Mexican War, and moral philosophy through analysis on the ideas of conscience, individualism and democracy.
3. To analyze theme by combining the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches.

F. Framework of Theories

Based on objective of the research, I use the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic approaches in the analysis of this research. In the part of intrinsic approach, I use theory stylistic. Meanwhile, in the extrinsic approach, I use historical criticism and moral philosophy.

1. Intrinsic approach

a. Stylistic

Language is the fundamental part in literature work. Literature works will never exist if there is no language. But literature, language usage is very typical.

The usage is different with the usage that happens in daily life such as usual communication or conversation that human always does. Literature work has its typical language usage. Moreover, different author will use different style. Author has his own style. Because of that reason, I use this approach to analyze the style in this essay.

Stylistic is a literature approach which used to analyze texts in literature work from a linguistic perspective. Stylistic can be realized as a method that focuses in the literature text. It includes the language usage, style of language, systematic of meaning, typical style in certain period, etc.

Stylistic, defined in a most rudimentary way, is not the study of the words or grammar an author uses, but the study of the way the author uses words and grammar – as well as other elements – both within sentence (where some would see it) and within the text as a whole... Stylistic is study of the particular choices an author makes from the available materials, choices that largely culture oriented and situation bound.³

In order to conserve this research, I use stylistic approach which focuses on style of language and author period that affect the language usage. By using this approach, I would like to pay attention to style of language (stylistic device) in this essay. There are several styles that are used:

1) Metaphor

According to Zainuddin Fananie (*Telaah Sastra*, 2001:38), metaphor is a language style containing form of comparison that used to give the descriptive meaning to a phrase. In metaphor, two terms are compared directly, usually in a sort form. Therefore, metaphor does not use the words 'like' or 'as' to give that comparison. Metaphors are generally not meant literally, and it may have connotative similarity to the concepts that are meant to describe. Example: "*It is raining men*". Men do not literally pour from the sky; there are simply an abundance of male suitors around at the time.

³ Gurrien, Wilfred, et al., ed. *A Handbook of Critical Approach to Literature* (New York: 1979), p. 276

2) Irony

According to Crishtoper Russell Reaske,⁴ Irony is result from the contrast between the actual meaning of a word or statement and the suggestion of another meaning. The intended implications are often actually a mockery of what literally being stated. Sarcasm is a heavier-handed irony, usually harsh of biting, while irony can be light, comic, and playful. In other explanations, Irony is usually paralleled with paradox. Paradox, in literally terminology, is an apparent contradiction that is nevertheless somehow true. Example: *'If you are playing blackjack chances are you will be up (making money) for awhile, and then just when you thought things were going good, you lose it all.'*

3) Symbol

*A symbol may be an object, a person, a situation, an action, a word, or an idea that has literal meaning in the story as well as an alternative identity that represents something else. It is used as an expressive way to depict an idea. The symbol generally conveys an emotional response far beyond what the word, idea, or image itself dictates.*⁵ Example: "A sunrise portraying new hope" symbolically means all their fears melted in the face of the newly risen sun.

2. Extrinsic approach

a. Historical Criticism

Historical criticism is literary a criticism in the light of historical evidence or based on the context in which a work was written, including facts about the author's life and the historical and social circumstances of the time. This is in contrast to other types of criticism, such as textual and formal, in which emphasis is placed on examining the text itself while outside influences on the text are

⁴ Reaske, Chistopher Russell. *How to Analyze Poetry*. (New York: 1966), p. 35

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stylistic_device (Friday, 10 May 2013)

disregarded.⁶ Paul Hamilton, from his book *Historicism*, complements this concept that also called Historicism (or 'Historism' in translation of Curtius' *Historismus*) which is *a critical movement insisting on the prime importance of historical context to the interpretation of texts of all kinds*.⁷

Historical criticism is used because a good reader essentially believes that literature works concern themselves with social themes. Through literature work, which is essay in this context, reader can see even give a judge toward the event or phenomenon which stands inside the work or at the time when that work is written. But, in this case, the way of understanding history through literature work is different with understanding it through historical writing because in literature it is liable subjective and containing the load of thought from the writer.

By using this concept, I would like to analyze the historical background of this essay. This analysis would focus on what events in American history that are criticized through *CD*.

b. Moral Philosophy

Moral-philosophical approach has the longest history. It is as old as classical Greek and Roman critics. The basic point of such critic is that larger function of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues. They would interpret a context of the philosophical thought of a period or a group. Not just its way of saying, but it is also what it says.

This approach concentrates on the moral dimension of literature and often judge literary works by their ethical teaching and by their effects on readers. Matthew Arnold, the Victorian critic, says that a great literary work must possess *"high seriousness."* *In each instance critics working from a moral bent are not unaware of form, figurative language, and other purely aesthetic consideration, but they consider them to be secondary. The important thing is the moral or philosophical teaching. On its highest plane this is not superficially didactic,*

⁶ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/267358/historical-criticism> (Tuesday, 21 May 2013)

⁷ Hamilton, Paul. *Historicism* (New York: 1966), p.2

*though it may at first seem so. In the larger sense, all great literature teaches. The critic who employs the moral philosophical approach insists on ascertaining and stating what is taught. If the work is in any degree significant or intelligible, this meaning will be there.*⁸

In this research, this theory is not used as approach that measure moral load based on viewpoint of any critics. But it is solely used to take moral philosophy in this essay.

Moral related with ethic which in philosophy that term refers to value that is considered as a good value to be applied into action in the certain political and cultural context. According to K. Bertens,⁹ Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. The term comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means: "character". In plural form *ta etha*, it means: custom. In that etymology, it has become the background of term *ethic* which is used in Greek Philosophy by Aristotle (384-322 B.C). Therefore, ethic as study can be understood as a study of what can do or study of custom. K. Bertens also explains that ethic can be define as values and norms of moral which stand as principle for someone or group to control their behavior. In other word, ethics is a study of the right and the wrong.

G. Method of the Research

Based on framework of the theories, I use method of research with variety of qualitative; type of research literature, the research tendency is interpretative or analyzing by method of data collection from literary texts.

⁸ Gurrien, Wilfred, et al., ed. *A Handbook of Critical Approach to Literature* (NewYork: 1979), p. 25-27

⁹ Bertens, K. *Etika*. (Jakarta: 2011), pp 3-7

H. Benefits of the Research

Based on method of the research, the benefits of this research are *firstly* it can be beneficial for students or researches who want to explore more deeply about *CD* by Henry David Thoreau, and *secondly*, this research can be beneficial because it has been done through the new perspective by applying the concepts of historical criticism and moral philosophy.

I. Systematic Organization of the Research

Related with the title of this research, the systematic presentation is written as follows:

1. CHAPTER ONE (INTRODUCTION).

It consists of: Background of the Problem,
Identification of the Problem,
Limitation of the Problem,
Formulation of the Problem,
Objectives of the Research,
Framework of the Theories,
Method of the Research,
Benefits of the Research,
Systematic Organizational of the Research.

2. CHAPTER TWO (ESSAY *CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE* THROUGH INTRINSIC APPROACH).

It consists of: The Analysis of Stylistic: (The Application of Metaphor, Irony, and Symbol).

3. CHAPTER THREE

(HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND MORAL TEACHING IN ESSAY *CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE* BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU).

It consists of: The Understanding of: the Concept of Historical Criticism
and Moral Philosophy,

The Reflection of Thoreau's Criticism on Slavery and
Mexican War,

The Reflection of Thoreau's Moral Philosophy of
Conscience, Individualism and Democracy.

4. CHAPTER FOUR

(CONCLUSION).

It consists of: Conclusion of the Analysis.

Summary of the Term-Paper.

