

Discursive Prose

DEENG521

Edited by:
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LOVELY
PROFESSIONAL
UNIVERSITY



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Unit 01: Francis Bacon: Of Studies

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Know about Francis Bacon's works and his life.
- Understand his essay *Of Studies*.
- Study essay as a genre.
- Understand Practical aspects of study or knowledge in human life.
- Know the influence of learning on different people.

Introduction

In this unit we shall try to know about Sir Francis Bacon's life and works and try to understand Francis Bacon's essay *Of Studies*. We shall also study essay as a genre. In addition to it, practical aspects of study or knowledge in human life will be understood. The influence of learning on different people will also be studied.

To have in-depth understanding of the essay *Of Studies*, it is very important to have a glimpse of Bacon's life and the society in which he lived. Bacon, as a man of the Renaissance, was concerned more with physical life than ethereal life. In his literary works he laid emphasis on utility and worldly values rather than on certain abstract ideals. The utilitarian attitude in Bacon's works is the expression of the Renaissance spirit. He represents in his works, particularly in his essays, the spirit of the Renaissance. The love for knowledge and scientific and rational inquiry is well-sounded in Bacon's essays. His essays throw light on different aspects of human life and behaviour. Bacon's life was devoted to the development of knowledge and learning.

This unit will also throw light on studying essay as a genre. The essay is a flexible form of writing that can be used to express a wide range of ideas and perspectives. The essay is a versatile genre that can be used for a variety of purposes, including: persuasion, analysis, description, and narration.

Apart from this the unit will also enlighten the readers about the practical aspects of knowledge and learning on human life as it helps in career advancement, problem solving, critical thinking, and, personal and social growth.. This unit will also discuss the influence of learning on different people. Bacon in his essay gives stress on the importance of balance in one's studies, warning against overdoing it and becoming too absorbed in one's studies to the point of neglecting other important aspects of life. He argues that excessive studies can lead to dullness and impair the memory. He advises that one should not spend too much time on any one subject, but rather to diversify one's studies and to take breaks from time to time to refresh the mind.

1.1 Life and Works of Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the father of the English essay, was also one of the pioneers of modern philosophy and modern science. Born into an affluent family, Bacon studied law and took it up as his profession, making rapid progress in it. When twenty-three, he turned his thoughts to Parliament and entered it in 1584. Knighted in 1603, Bacon held many prominent offices in his public career. He became Solicitor-General in 1607, Attorney-General in 1613, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in 1617, and, finally, Lord Chancellor of England in 1618. Within six months, he was elevated to nobility as Baron Verulam, and was made Viscount St. Albans in 1621. However, Bacon's career as Lord Chancellor came under a cloud with charges of bribery and corruption against him, leading to his removal from the post. Bacon died in 1626, five years after his disgrace and retirement from public life. Despite facing reverses in his public career, Bacon's literary career remained splendid and uninterrupted. His best known works on science and philosophy are: *Advancement of Learning* (1605), *Novum Organum* (1620), and *De Augmentis* (1623). He is also known for his *History of Henry VII* (1621) and *New Atlantis* (1627), the latter being a kind of imaginary dreamland akin to Thomas More's *Utopia*. Bacon's fame, however, rests primarily on his work *Essays or Counsels Civil and Moral*.

Bacon had a very poor opinion of the English language and was convinced that it would 'play the bankrupt with books'. He, therefore, took care to write all his serious works in Latin 'for greater permanence' as he put it. He used English for writing his essays because he considered them as being insignificant. In fact, Bacon referred to his essays as 'certain brief notes' or 'repositories of dispersed meditation' and 'receptacles for detached thoughts'. Their genesis lay in his jotting down, at random, any brilliant or suggestive thing he heard or any illuminating thought that came into his mind, and then putting these together into a book, constantly augmenting the stock. Ironically, it is the essays Bacon wrote in English that have brought him lasting fame, while his Latin works are no more than historical curiosities today. Although equipped with great intellect and wisdom, Bacon sadly lacked moral principles. He did not hesitate to adopt unscrupulous means to rise in life or to betray the friends who helped him to rise. Perhaps Alexander Pope was right in calling Bacon "the wisest, the brightest and the meanest of mankind".

Bacon, like the men of the Renaissance, was concerned more with this life and this world than the world and life beyond death. Like the men of the Renaissance he laid emphasis on utility and worldly values rather than on certain abstract ideals. The utilitarian attitude in Bacon's works is the expression of the Renaissance spirit. He represents in his works, particularly in his essays, the spirit of the Renaissance. He represents the Renaissance spirit in its amplitude and variety. The love for learning and scientific and rational inquiry is well-sounded in Bacon's essays. His essays throw light on different aspects of human life and behaviour. Bacon's life was devoted to the development of knowledge and learning.

He was an English philosopher, statesman, and essayist who played a key role in the development of modern scientific method. He is best known for his influential works on the advancement of knowledge through empirical observation and experimentation, which laid the foundation for the scientific revolution of the 17th century.

Bacon's most famous work, "*Novum Organum*" (1620), proposed a new method for the acquisition of knowledge, which he called the "scientific method." He argued that knowledge should be based on observation and experimentation, rather than on traditional authority or intuition. He believed that the scientific method would lead to a greater understanding of the natural world and would allow for the development of new technologies and innovations. Bacon also wrote extensively on politics and government, and his ideas had a significant influence on the development of modern political thought. In his work "*The New Atlantis*" (1624), he proposed a Utopian society in which science and technology would be used for the betterment of humanity.

In addition to his philosophical and political writings, Bacon also made significant contributions to the field of legal reform. He served as Lord Chancellor of England from 1618 to 1621, during which time he implemented a number of legal reforms aimed at making the legal system more efficient and fair.

Despite his many contributions, Bacon's legacy is somewhat controversial. Some critics have accused him of promoting a view of science and technology as a means to dominate nature and control society. However, many of his ideas and methods continue to be influential in the fields of science. In summary, Francis Bacon was an influential philosopher, statesman, and essayist of the 17th century. He is best known for his influential works on the advancement of knowledge through empirical observation and experimentation, which laid the foundation for the scientific revolution of the 17th century. He also wrote extensively on politics and government, and his ideas had a significant influence on the development of modern political thought. He served as Lord Chancellor of England from 1618 to 1621, during which time he implemented a number of legal reforms aimed at making the legal system more efficient and fair. Bacon's most important works include:

"*Novum Organum*" (1620), in which he proposed a new method of scientific inquiry based on observation, experimentation, and induction. This work laid the foundation for the modern scientific method.

"*The New Atlantis*" (1627), in which Bacon describes a utopian society in which scientific research is conducted in a systematic and organized manner.

"*The Advancement of Learning*" (1605), in which Bacon presents his ideas on the nature of knowledge and the importance of scientific inquiry for the betterment of mankind.

Francis Bacon died of pneumonia on April 9, 1626, at Highgate, England. The pneumonia was brought on by an experiment he had conducted in which he stuffed a chicken with snow to see if it would preserve the meat. He caught a cold while conducting the experiment, which developed into pneumonia. He was buried in St Michael's church in St Albans. At the news of his death, over 30 great minds collected together their eulogies of him, which were then later published in Latin.

1.2 Francis Bacon's Essay Of Studies

Francis Bacon is often referred to as the "father of the English essay." He is credited with popularizing the form in the early 17th century with his collection of essays, "*Essays, or Counsels, Civil and Moral*" (first published in 1597). In these essays, Bacon wrote on a wide range of topics, from the nature of truth and the duties of a judge, to the virtues and vices of different types of people. He is often seen as the first writer to use the essay as a means of exploring and expressing his own thoughts and ideas, rather than simply providing information.

In his *Essay Of Studies*, Francis Bacon presents his thoughts on the value and purpose of studying various subjects. Bacon argues that studies serve several purposes, including providing delight, ornament, and ability. Bacon begins the essay by stating that studies serve for delight, meaning that they can provide intellectual pleasure and enjoyment. He goes on to argue that studies can also serve as an ornament, or a way to improve one's social standing and reputation. Additionally, Bacon states that studies serve for ability, or as a means to improve one's knowledge and skills.

Bacon then discusses how studies can be used to improve one's judgment. He argues that through the study of history, one can gain a better understanding of human nature and the actions of individuals and nations. He also suggests that the study of logic and rhetoric can help improve one's ability to argue and persuade others.

In the essay, Bacon also discusses the importance of studying new things and expanding one's knowledge. He notes that the study of mathematics, natural philosophy, and other sciences can lead to the discovery of new things and a greater understanding of the world. He also states that the study of different languages can open up new perspectives and ways of thinking.

Bacon also emphasizes the importance of using studies to improve one's memory. He suggests that the repetition and practice of memorization techniques can help to improve one's ability to recall information.

Finally, Bacon concludes the essay by stating that studies should be balanced with practical experience and should be directed towards improving one's ability to serve others. He argues that

the ultimate goal of studies should be to improve one's ability to be of service to others and to make positive contributions to society.

Overall, in his *Essay Of Studies*, Francis Bacon presents a comprehensive view of the value and purpose of studies. He argues that studies can serve multiple purposes, including providing delight, ornament, and ability, as well as improving one's judgment, discovering new things, and increasing one's knowledge and understanding of the world. He also emphasizes the importance of balance between studies and practical experience and the ultimate goal of improving one's ability to serve others.

1.3 Studying Essay as a Genre

Essay

The word 'essay' comes from the French word *essai* (first used by the French writer Michel de Montaigne for his *Essays*, published in 1580), which means 'to attempt' or 'to try out'. This suggests that an essay is an individual's attempt to look at his/her subject in a personal way.

An essay is a genre of written work that typically presents a writer's personal perspective on a particular subject. The word "essay" comes from the French word "essayer," which means "to try" or "to attempt." The essay is a flexible form of writing that can be used to express a wide range of ideas and perspectives.

An essay typically consists of an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The introduction presents the subject of the essay and provides some background information. The body paragraphs then expand on the main idea and provide evidence and examples to support it. The conclusion sums up the main points and provides a final perspective on the subject.

The essay is a versatile genre that can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- **Persuasion:** An essay can be used to persuade the reader to adopt a particular point of view or to take a specific action.
- **Analysis:** An essay can analyze a particular subject, such as a piece of literature, a historical event, or a scientific phenomenon.
- **Description:** An essay can describe a person, place, or thing in detail.
- **Narrative:** An essay can be used to tell a story, either real or fictional, and to convey the writer's personal experiences or insights.

There are many different types of essays, each with its own unique characteristics. Some examples include:

- **Persuasive essays:** These essays are used to convince the reader to adopt a particular point of view.
- **Argumentative essays:** These essays present an argument and provide evidence to support it.
- **Descriptive essays:** These essays provide a detailed description of a person, place, or thing.
- **Narrative essays:** These essays tell a story and convey the writer's personal experiences or insights.
- **Expository essays:** These essays explain a subject or concept in a clear and concise manner.

Compare and contrast essays: These essays compare and contrast two or more subjects. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) called an essay "a loose sally of the mind.. . not a regular and orderly performance". The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines it as 'a composition more or less elaborates in style, though limited in range'. Both definitions differ from each other. What is loose, irregular and disorderly for Johnson, is minutely worked out and highly developed for the OED. The latter definition, moreover, gives us some idea about the length of an essay but Johnson's definition does not. The essay is usually short and compact but it can, occasionally, also be of book length, like "Essay on the Human Understanding" written by John Locke (1632-1794). Essays are prose compositions. However, some have also been written in verse like "Essay on Criticism" (1711) and "Essay on Man" (1732-4), written by the English poet Alexander Pope (1688- 1744).

The essay is, thus, difficult to define as it is one of the most flexible and adaptable of literary genres. It can loosely be described as a composition, usually in prose, that attempts to discuss a subject. A further dimension was added by the nineteenth century English writer, Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), who said that an essayist humanizes knowledge, i.e; presents it in familiar terms, divesting it of all that is harsh, uncouth, abstract, exclusive, etc., so that it is of common interest, and is written in a style that appeals to us. Hence, we can conclude that an essay, as a literary form, is a short prose composition, treating a subject in a general manner, so that it can be of interest to many readers.

Essays can be written in formal as well as in informal style, depending on the purpose they are meant to achieve. A formal essay tends to be serious in tone, objective in presentation, more expository in nature, giving the reader new perspectives on the subject, and even persuading reader to a particular point of view. The informal essay, on the other hand, is written in a lighter vein, reading more like a conversation, affording pleasure in its reading, or at times, amusing the reader if the tone adopted by the essayist is humorous or even sarcastic.

Hence, an essay is a type of written composition that presents an argument or a point of view on a specific topic. It is a genre of writing that is characterized by its focus on critical thinking and the use of evidence to support the argument. Essays can be written in a variety of formats, including narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive.

When studying the essay as a genre, it is important to understand the conventions and structure of different types of essays. For example, a narrative essay is often used to tell a personal story or to describe an experience, while a persuasive essay is used to convince the reader to adopt a particular point of view.

The structure of an essay typically includes an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The introduction should provide background information on the topic and clearly state the thesis, or main argument, of the essay. The body paragraphs should present evidence and analysis to support the thesis, and the conclusion should summarize the main points and restate the thesis.

In addition to understanding the conventions and structure of essays, it is also important to study the techniques and strategies used by successful essay writers. This can include learning how to use evidence effectively, how to develop a strong argument, and how to use language and style to engage the reader.

Overall, studying the essay as a genre can help improve one's writing skills, increase one's understanding of different types of written compositions, and develop the ability to think critically and present arguments effectively.



Notes:

Essay Of Studies:It is a formal essay.

Francis Bacon's Essays

"Essays" (1597 and 1612), a collection of short pieces in which Bacon writes on a wide range of topics including study, love, ambition, revenge, and truth. Francis Bacon's essays, published in book form in 1597, 1612, and 1625, were the first works in English that described themselves as essays. Bacon's essays cover a wide range of topics, from the nature of truth, to the pleasures of the mind, to the importance of education, and to the relationship between man and nature.

Bacon's style is marked by conciseness, epigrammatic wit, and a strong sense of the practical. He is often considered the father of the modern essay, and his essays are still widely read today for their insights into human nature, their advice on how to live a good life, and their ability to entertain and inspire.

One of his most famous essays is "Of Studies", in which Bacon writes about the value of knowledge and the importance of studying a wide range of subjects. He also emphasizes the importance of reading and the benefits of reading different types of texts, such as history, poetry, and philosophy.

Another famous essay is "Of Truth" in which Bacon discusses the importance of truth and the dangers of lying. He also talks about the importance of being honest and truthful in all aspects of life.

"Of Great Place" is an essay about ambition and the desire for power and wealth. In it, Bacon explores the nature of power and wealth and the dangers of becoming too absorbed in these things.

Overall, Bacon's essays are considered a classic of early modern English literature and still hold relevance today for their philosophical and moral insights.

His essays cover a wide range of topics including study, truth, death, love, marriage, friendship, and the pleasures of the imagination.

One of the most famous essays is "Of Truth," in which Bacon stresses the importance of truthful communication and the dangers of deception. He writes, "What is truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." He suggests that truth is a valuable commodity that should be sought after, and that lies and deceit can cause harm.

In "Of Death," Bacon reflects on the inevitability of death and the human fear of it. He argues that death should not be feared, as it is a natural part of life and should be accepted. He also suggests that death can bring benefits, such as the release from pain and the opportunity for the living to learn from the dead.

"Of Love" is another famous essay, in which Bacon explores the nature of love and its effects on the human mind and body. He writes, "The stage is more beholding to love, than the life of man." He suggests that love can be both a source of joy and a cause of pain, and that it can inspire people to great deeds.

In "Of Marriage and Single Life", Bacon compares the benefits and drawbacks of marriage and remaining single. He argues that marriage can bring companionship and security, but that it also brings responsibilities and can be a source of unhappiness. On the other hand, he suggests that remaining single allows for more freedom and the opportunity to focus on personal growth and development, but he argues that in single life there is lack of companionship and support. He states that single people may feel lonely and isolated without a partner to share their lives with.

"Of Friendship" is an essay in which Bacon reflects on the nature of friendship and its importance in human life. He writes, "There is no such flatterer as is a man's self." He suggests that true friendship is rare and valuable, and that it can bring joy and support in times of need.

Other notable essays in the collection include "Of Studies," in which Bacon advocates for the value of learning and the pursuit of knowledge, and "Of the Pleasures of the Imagination," in which he explores the ways in which the imagination can bring pleasure and delight.

To sum up, Bacon's Essays offer insightful reflections on a wide range of human experiences and emotions. They are notable for their clear, concise style and for the wisdom and practical advice that they offer.

Francis Bacon is considered one of the greatest prose writers of his era. His writing is marked by its clear, concise style and its focus on practical wisdom and advice. His essays, which cover a wide range of topics including truth, death, love, friendship, and the pleasures of the imagination, are considered classics of English literature. His writing style and techniques were widely imitated and had a profound influence on the development of the English essay form.

The features of Bacon's style

Bacon has used various features which can be termed as: Aphoristic, Paradox, Rhetorical Device, Imagery, Analogy, and allusion for being impersonal through saving his own personality. Bacon's works are classified as essays for having the artistic value of beauty and moral. Francis Bacon has distinctive features that fame his works through the ages. Bacon's style is compact yet polished and indeed some of its conciseness is due to the skillful adaptation of Latin idiom and phrase. His sentences are pregnant and have the capability of expanding into paragraph. He had a great and impressive mastery over the art of saying maximum into minimum words. It is not wrong to say that Francis Bacon introduced a new style of prose writing.

1.4 Practical Aspects of Study or Knowledge in Human Life

Some practical aspects of studying or acquiring knowledge in human life include:

Career Advancement: Gaining knowledge and skills in a specific field can lead to better job opportunities and career advancement.

Problem Solving: Knowledge and education can help individuals to analyze and solve problems more effectively.

Critical Thinking: Study and knowledge can help to improve critical thinking skills, allowing individuals to make better decisions and evaluate information more effectively.

Personal Growth: Learning new things can help individuals to grow and develop as individuals, and can lead to greater self-awareness and self-esteem.

Social Interaction: Knowledge and education can help individuals to communicate and interact more effectively with others, and can lead to greater understanding and empathy.

Thus, practical aspects of studying or acquiring knowledge in human life include the ability to apply knowledge to real-world problems, make informed decisions, and improve one's quality of life. This can include things like learning a new skill that can be used to secure a better job or improve financial stability, gaining knowledge about a particular subject in order to make more informed choices about health or politics, or simply learning for the sake of personal growth and self-improvement. Additionally, studying or acquiring knowledge can also help individuals to better understand and navigate the complex social and cultural systems in which they live.

1.5 The Influence of Learning on Different People

In his essay "Of Studies," Francis Bacon argues that learning has a positive influence on individuals and can help to improve their minds and expand their knowledge. He contends that studies, when chosen wisely and pursued diligently, can serve as a tool to improve one's mental faculties, sharpen the wits and make the person more eloquent and able to speak and write well. However, he also notes that the effectiveness of learning can vary depending on the individual and the specific circumstances in which they are learning.

Bacon contends that some people are naturally inclined to certain types of learning, and for them, acquiring knowledge in those areas may come more easily. He also notes that some people require more effort to acquire knowledge and that for them, it might be necessary to apply more diligence and perseverance. He also argues that different people have different needs and abilities, so it is important to choose studies that align with one's own abilities and goals.

He also notes that the quality of the education or instruction is also important in determining how much an individual will benefit from learning. He argues that poor instruction can lead to confusion and that it is better to seek out good teachers and guides.

Bacon also stresses the importance of balance in one's studies, warning against overdoing it and becoming too absorbed in one's studies to the point of neglecting other important aspects of life. He argues that excessive studies can lead to dullness and impair the memory. He advises that one should not spend too much time on any one subject, but rather to diversify one's studies and to take breaks from time to time to refresh the mind.

In the following quote Bacon suggests that there are three types of men when it comes to studies: crafty men, simple men, and wise men.

"Crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them,"

Crafty men condemn studies. These men may view studies as a waste of time or unnecessary. They may believe that they already have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life, and therefore see no value in studying.

Simple men admire studies. These men may view studies as a means to gain knowledge and improve themselves. They may have a strong desire to learn and understand the world around them. They may see wise men use studies. These men understand the value of studies and put their knowledge to practical use. They use what they have learned to improve themselves and their situation in life. They are not only admirers of studies but are able to apply the knowledge to practical life.

The quote implies that wise men are the ones who truly benefit from studies, as they are able to put their knowledge to use and make a positive impact on their lives. e the value of studying but are not wise enough to use the studies.

In conclusion, Bacon argues that learning is beneficial for all individuals and that it can help to improve the mind and expand knowledge, but the effectiveness of learning can vary depending on the individual, the specific circumstances in which they are learning and the quality of the instruction received. He emphasizes the importance of choosing studies wisely, applying diligence and perseverance, seeking out good teachers and guides, and maintaining balance in one's studies to achieve the best results.

Francis Bacon's life and work reflected the major social and political changes of his time. He lived during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, a time of great upheaval and change in England. His ideas on the scientific method, the role of the state, and the importance of reason and efficiency were in line with the broader trends of the era, which emphasized progress and innovation. He also held several high-ranking positions in the government, which gave him a unique perspective on the political landscape of the time. His work and ideas were shaped by the social and political context of his era, and had a lasting impact on the development of modern thought.

The title of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Studies"

The title of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Studies" is significant in that it reflects the main theme of the essay and the purpose of the author's writing. The word "studies" in the title refers to the act of learning and acquiring knowledge. The title, "Of Studies," implies that the essay will be about the importance and value of studying and learning.

In "Of Studies," Bacon argues that studies are essential for the advancement of knowledge and understanding, and are necessary for the development of the mind and the improvement of one's self. He writes, "Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability." This quote illustrates the idea that studies are not only valuable for their practical benefits, but also for the pleasure and satisfaction they bring.

The title, "Of Studies," also implies that the essay will be about the different types of studies and how they can be used to achieve different goals. Bacon writes about the different types of studies such as reading, writing, and mathematics and their usefulness in different fields. He also writes about the importance of balancing different types of studies and not becoming too focused on one area.

The title "Of Studies" is also significant in that it implies that the essay will be about the methods and techniques of studying. Bacon writes about the importance of selecting the right books, having a plan for studying, and avoiding distractions. He also writes about the importance of taking notes, summarizing, and memorizing, as well as the advantages of reading and writing.

Overall, the title "Of Studies" is significant in that it reflects the main theme of the essay, the importance of studying and learning, and the different types of studies and their usefulness. It also implies that the essay will be about the methods and techniques of studying, and the importance of balancing different types of studies. The title serves as a preview of the main points that Bacon will explore in the essay and it gives the reader an idea of what to expect in the essay.

Furthermore, the title "Of Studies" gives the impression of a broader and more comprehensive examination, rather than a specific examination of a particular subject matter. This title allows the reader to approach the essay with an open mind and consider the various aspects of studying and learning, rather than focusing on one specific area. In this way, the title provides a framework for the essay, and sets the tone for the reader to engage in a critical and analytical examination of the topic.

In conclusion, the title "Of Studies" is significant in that it reflects the main theme of the essay, the importance of studying and learning, and the different types of studies and their usefulness. It also implies that the essay will be about the methods and techniques of studying and the importance of balancing different types of studies. The title serves as a preview of the main points that Bacon will explore in the essay and it gives the reader an idea of what to expect in the essay. Additionally, the title provides a framework for the essay and sets the tone for the reader to engage in a critical and analytical examination of the topic.

Summary

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is known as the father of the English essay.

He was an English philosopher, statesman, and essayist who played a key role in the development of modern scientific method.

He represents in his works, particularly in his essays, the spirit of the Renaissance.

In his Essay Of Studies, Francis Bacon presents his thoughts on the value and purpose of studying various subjects.

Studying the essay as a genre can help improve one's writing skills, increase one's understanding of different types of written compositions, and develop the ability to think critically and present arguments effectively.

The practical aspects of studying or acquiring knowledge in human life include the ability to apply knowledge to real-world problems, make informed decisions, and improve one's quality of life.

Francis Bacon writes that learning has a positive influence on individuals and can help to improve their minds and expand their knowledge.

Francis Bacon died of pneumonia on April 9, 1626

Keywords

- **Essay** : a short piece of writing on a particular subject.
- **Genre** : a style or category of art, music, or literature.
- **Renaissance** : the revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th–16th centuries.
- **Study** : the devotion of time and attention to gaining knowledge of an academic subject.
- **Knowledge** : facts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education.

Self Assessment

1. Francis Bacon is called-----

- A. Father of the English Poetry
- B. Father of the English Drama
- C. Father of the English Essay
- D. Father of the English Tragedy

2. In which year was Francis Bacon born?

- A. 1667
- B. 1561
- C. 1791
- D. 1962

3. In which essay, Francis Bacon presents his thoughts on the value and purpose of studying various subjects.

- A. *Of Great Place*
- B. *Of Truth*
- C. *Of Studies*
- D. *Of Friendship*

4. What is the year of Francis Bacon's death?

- A. 1947
- B. 1667

C. 1832

D. 1626

5. Francis Bacon died of -----

A. cancer

B. pneumonia

C. heart-attack

D. tuberculosis

6. *Of Studies* is an-----

A. poem

B. play

C. essay

D. sonnet

7. "Crafty men condemn studies, simple men ----- them, and wise men use them;"

A. hate

B. condemn

C. admire

D. use

8. *Of Friendship* is an essay in which Bacon reflects on the nature of -----

A. marriage

B. hatred

C. love

D. friendship

9. The word 'essay' comes from the French word -----

A. essae

B. essai

C. eseai

D. eesei

10. In his essay "Of Studies," Francis Bacon argues that learning has a ----- influence on individuals.

A. negative

B. positive

C. dangerous

D. wrong

11. "Of Love" is a famous essay, in which Bacon explores the nature of love and its effects on the human mind and body.

A. True

B. False

12. Francis Bacon is considered one of the greatest playwright of his era.

A. true

B. False

13. Bacon, like the men of the Renaissance, was concerned more with this life and this world than the world and life beyond death.

A. True

B. False

14. Francis Bacon writes that learning has a negative influence on individuals.

A True

B. False

15. Essays can be written only in formal style.

A. True

B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. B | 3. C | 4. D | 5. B |
| 6. C | 7. C | 8. D | 9. B | 10. B |
| 11. A | 12. B | 13. A | 14. B | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. Write a detailed note on the life of Sir Francis Bacon.
2. Discuss some practical aspects of studying or acquiring knowledge in human life.
3. What is the influence of learning on different people. Discuss.
4. Who is called the father of the English essay and why?
5. Write a short note on the essay *Of Studies*.



Further Readings

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Unit 02: Francis Bacon: Of Studies

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Know about Sir Francis Bacon's life and his works.
- Critically analyse his essay *Of Studies*.
- Know the didactic content in the essay *Of Studies*.
- Understand the features of Bacon's Style.

Introduction

Francis Bacon is an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, journalist, orator and author. He is often referred to as "the father of English essay". Bacon, a Renaissance figure, is also known as the creator of empiricism and he encouraged scientific advancements. He was influenced hugely by the French- essayist, Michel de Montaigne. He was awarded 'Knighthood' in 1603.

As an essayist, he remained as a keen observer, eagerly scrutinizing the events happening around him. He preferred the epigrammatic style and his essays were pithy/short, terse, and formal in nature. Bacon created 'Aphoristic Essays' and it seemed like a collection of short and sharp maxims with tremendous compression. The sentences Bacon used were rhetorical in nature and forceful too. They are quite crisp, short and sententious. Each sentence stands by itself with a concentrated expression of weighty thought. For Bacon, man is the subject of his essays, which is one of the reasons for his works being popular beside other qualities.

Bacon described his essays as "dispersed meditations" and as "brief notes set down rather significantly than curiously". He focused on a particular subject in his essays and he never digressed from that central concern. According to Dean Church, "They (Bacon's Essays) come down like the strokes of a hammer".

Critics consider the language of Bacon in prose as supreme as Shakespeare's in verse. Bacon's essays were published in three successive editions during the years 1597, 1612 and 1625. His other major works are *The New Atlantis*, *The Advancement of Learning*, *Novum Organum*. Bacon's *Essays Civil and Moral* is a collection of 58 Essays including the famous "Of Friendship", "Of Studies", "Of Truth", "Of Death", etc. Alexander Pope has commented, "If parts allure these think how Bacon shin'd, The wisest, brightest and meanest of mankind".

Bacon's essays are considered as capsules of impersonal wisdom and classic examples of utilitarianism. They are objective and logically constructed. Bacon has extensively employed Latin words and phrases in his essays to convey the ideas to his readers. He wrote on a wide range of topics from religion to architecture, from studies to philosophy, etc. Notable literary historian, Henry Hallam writes, "They (Bacon's essays) are deeper and more discriminating than any earlier, or almost any later, work in the English language".

2.1 Life and Works of Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was an English philosopher, statesman, and essayist. He is best known for his works on empiricism and the scientific method. He served as attorney general and Lord Chancellor of England, and was a key figure in the development of the modern scientific method.

Bacon's most famous works include "The Advancement of Learning" (1605), "Novum Organum" (1620), and "The New Atlantis" (1627). "The Advancement of Learning" is an overview of the state of knowledge in his time, and "Novum Organum" is a treatise on the scientific method, in which Bacon argues that scientific knowledge should be based on observation and experimentation rather than on tradition and authority. "The New Atlantis" is a fictional work that describes a utopian society in which science and technology are used for the betterment of humanity.

Bacon's ideas on the scientific method had a significant impact on the development of modern science. He is often considered the father of the scientific method, and his ideas on observation, experimentation, and the use of inductive reasoning laid the foundation for the scientific revolution of the 17th century.

Bacon's life was not without controversy, as he was accused of taking bribes and was ultimately impeached and removed from office. He also had a tumultuous personal life, with several failed marriages and children. Despite these controversies, Bacon's contributions to the fields of philosophy and science have had a lasting impact and continue to be studied and discussed to this day.

"Of Studies"

The essay, "Of Studies" deliberates on the significance of books and reading. Bacon attempts to explain the merits and purpose of studies. "Of Studies" is one of the most quoted essays of Francis Bacon. In this essay, he does not only talk about bookish knowledge but also demonstrates the importance of experience. He also lists the benefits of reading and ultimately validates how studies can benefit a reader's life enormously in different ways. Bacon begins his essay by describing the three purposes of studies.

He is generally recognized as the first great writer of English philosophy although he had no great respect for the English language. It is a known fact that Bacon is influenced by Montaigne. Bacon's style is most remarkable for its terseness. Bacon displays a great talent for condensation. Every sentence in his essays is pregnant with meaning and is capable of being expanded into several sentences. Many of his sentences appear to be proverbial sayings or apophthegms by virtue of their gems of thoughts expressed in a pithy manner. He can say that most in the fewest words. His essays combine wisdom in thought and household expressions.

The Writing Style of Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon is often regarded as the 'Father of English essays'. But it is often argued whether his essays correspond to the conventional definition of the term. This is because Bacon's essays have a certain distinctive characteristics which make us question the classification of their genre.

The most notable feature of Bacon's essay is his aphoristic style. Aphorisms are straightforward statements that state a truth. Bacon in his essays writes in an aphoristic style making general statements. For example, in his essay "Of studies" Bacon states that studies have three purposes - to delight, for ornament and for ability. Again he says that there are different kinds of books - some are to be perused lightly, others to be digested and so on. Bacon merely states these facts almost as if they are established truths. He does not provide his personal opinion or give any examples as to which books are to be read lightly or which are to be digested. This aphoristic style in Bacon's writing leaves the reader to his own interpretations. Bacon uses the aphoristic style to enable the reader's active participation allowing him to interpret and add to the meaning of his statements. This is opposed to the magisterial style where the entire information is provided making the reader lazy and passive.

Another important feature of Bacon's essays is his impersonality. Bacon's personal choices and opinions are not reflected through his writings. His impersonality is aided by his aphoristic style. By providing the reader with statements of truth Bacon saves himself from revealing his true personality. He rarely exemplifies his arguments and when he does the examples are usually drawn from history, such as the example of Julius Caesar and Brutus in the essay "Of Friendship", which does not require his personal opinion. Bacon's personality is detached from his essays.

Bacon's essays also display a few other features. His essays are usually short, sometimes shorter than what the conventional definition of essay suggests. They often lack coherence. This is mainly because most of his essays are not divided into paragraphs and it is difficult for the reader to grasp a sudden change from one idea to another. His essays are observational rather than reflective. His style is very formal.

Introduction

The essay *Of Studies* by Sir Francis Bacon is the first essay in the series of ten essays published in 1597. Later, it was revised in 1612 with the addition of some more sentences and ideas in it along with the alteration in some vocabulary terms.

This essay is regarded as Bacon's masterpiece enriched with stylised Latin vocabulary, fresh and new ideas, logical and relevant themes and wisdom of the world.

For these reasons, the essay is still popular among individuals of all ages. Adopting a didactic approach, the essay informs the readers about the benefits and uses of studies in one's life.

2.2 Didactic Intent

Of Studies by Sir Francis Bacon, written in 1597 and enlarged in 1625, is an essay written in didactic style- it is intended to inform, or teach a lesson. Here, Bacon discusses the importance of studies, highlighting three main reasons to convince his readers of its necessity. In the end, it is told that merely studying a subject isn't enough. What's needed to perfect one's study is the exercise and practice of the studied subject matter. On the whole, *Of Studies* is an engaging read from "The Father of English Essays".

Bacon begins the essay by listing the three central reasons that studies are important for: delight, ornament and ability. He says that a man can deal with his problems one at a time based on experience, but it is only informed men who can give counsels according to any situation, whether or not they have directly trained in it. In the next paragraph, he hastens to add that too much of anything is not good- and that includes studies. Spending an excess amount of time on it will make one a sloth, while displaying too much in conversation will make one seem affected. And living life solely based on book-learned knowledge is plainly foolish. One has in-born natural talents which are honed by studying and embellished by experiences.

Naturally cunning men view studies with contempt, those with average wits admire it, and wise men learn from it. Because studies do not teach how one should use the information- it simply provides it, it is up to the person's wisdom to utilise it well. One should not study with the intention of contradicting or disproving others, nor should they entirely believe and rely upon everything they read- books should be read to understand and apply, to weigh and consider.

Bacon then says that some books are meant to be read in snippets, as only a few parts are necessary. Others are meant to be 'swallowed' as they are important in their entirety. And some are meant to be analysed and understood thoroughly, as they present principal information. Some books may be made up of excerpts from other books- but only excerpts of less important arguments may be read in this fashion. Removing key points from a book and reading it out of context is as good as not reading it at all.

Together, it is reading, writing and discussion that makes a man truly wise. If he only has little of one of these elements, then he must have an overflowing abundance of the other. There are different academic subjects which provide different aspects of intelligence to a person- history for wisdom, poetry for wit, morals for gravity, philosophy for depth. And it is the presence of one that aids the improvement of the other. Bacon then makes a connection between intellectual improvement and physical improvement.

Like how bowling is good for the stone and reins, and shooting for the lung and breast and so forth- which each sport aiding a different part of the body- each subject aids a different part of their intellectual capacity. If a man wants to learn to focus, let him study mathematics. If his wit is not up

to par, let him study Schoolmen. If he is not up to par in his reasoning and analytical strength, let him study law. Every intellectual capability which one's mind lacks has an apt solution in the form of a subject of study.

Sir Francis Bacon employs an informative, lesson-oriented structure to his essay. The vocabulary and context are fit to the late 1500s and early 1600s, as we can see by several references such as the reference to shooting and riding, which was especially popular in that time, and the use of a Latin phrase in the piece. The theme of the essay is the intelligent application of studies, rather than merely the concept of studying. Sir Bacon emphasises on the importance of knowing how to use what one has learnt.

In order to convey the importance of studying in a more efficient manner, he created three main reasons- to read for enjoyment, to read for merit, and to read for knowledge. However, it is interesting to note that he also inserts bits of advice, suggestions and explanations which elaborate his statements. Such an essay is termed 'didactic', as it is written with the intention of conveying a lesson or a point.

He points out in the first paragraph the difference between experts and learned men. Here, he draws a comparison between experience and book-based knowledge. Experience can make one an expert only in that particular subject matter, while reading can be done on several different topics- this may be likened to the modern, on-going debate of 'book-smart versus street smart'. Rather than choosing one, Sir Bacon underlines the importance of having both. A point to note is that despite advocating for the importance of studies, it is stressed that an excess of anything is harmful:

"To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar"

This is a cleverly strung sentence, drawing a firm boundary between necessity and imprudence. It also places weight on the significance of balance.

He also proceeds to reiterate the link between studied knowledge and experiential knowledge, saying that one embellishes the other. We may understand from this, as well as his emphasis on using what the book teaches, that his idea of studying gives value to the ability to apply it in the real world. He regards studying as a tool, something one should be able to connect to real-world scenarios and consequently use. The following sentence gives an insight to how a person may observe studying based on their natural intellectual capacity:

"Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them. for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation"

Studies are scorned by the shrewd, admired by the simple and observed by the wise.

Sir Bacon follows this with another aspect of studying a subject: intention. It must be acknowledged that one's reason for performing a certain task plays a great role in how well it is accomplished. Consider the line below:

"Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider"

One will not receive the same amount of knowledge if their intention is simply to disprove others. This may be because it is not a genuine desire to learn for oneself, but out of pure ambition, and therefore the motivation can disappear quickly. Similarly, Bacon also warns readers against naivety and quick relaxation. Believing everything immediately is equally as dangerous as learning without sincerity. The advice to "weigh and consider" once more links back to Sir Bacon's accentuation of application. One must understand what they study, when and how to use it, and the reason behind it. They must consider which information is valid for a given situation. It is only with this ability to think critically and use their book-learned information that they can say they are truly learned.

Sir Bacon also discusses how to study- sometimes it is better to read mere chapters of the books, while certain other books are meant to be thoroughly inspected. This may be symbolic of 'smart learning' over 'rote learning' in more contemporary language. It is important to know how to make use of one's time and energy, that is the only way not to waste effort on unnecessary information. He likens books which contain collections of important excerpts without context to "common distilled waters, flashy things." because it is a plateau. There is no further learning that can be done from such books, because we can only learn many things superficially, rather than one thing deeply. Not having context prevents us from understanding the true meaning behind the argument.

Another theme of Sir Bacon's essay is balance. Multiple times, he mentions the importance of being well-versed in more than one area. We may compare this to his earlier lesson of "too much of anything will cause harm." Having too much of one strength and none of the other will cause an imbalance of the mind- for example, the ability to memorize quickly, but the inability to focus does not lead to a learned man. Bacon's vision of an ideal learned man is one who can study, write and discuss.

As this is a didactic essay, Sir Bacon ends it in a rather prescriptive manner- he tells the readers of the importance of different academic subjects, and how they may improve one's skill and temperament. This advice is put forth in the form of information, with the idea of inspiring curiosity and willpower. He says :

"Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend"

He goes on to elaborate that each subject can be seen as a 'remedy' to a lack of ability. For example, if one suffers a lack of wit, the remedy is learning poetry. In order to make the explanation more relatable to his readers, he brings in the example of physical sports:

"Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like."

This is in a similar format of listing which physical activities will heal and help which parts of the body.

Bacon's main point in his essay *Of Studies*, is that there is a subject for every aspect of intellectual temperament, and becoming well versed in it will confirm personal growth and improvement. He ends the essay with "So every defect of the mind, may have a special receipt." However, as he makes clear throughout the essay, it is crucial to maintain a balance. Too much is harmful, too little is purposeless. Too much of one and not enough of the other will work in contradiction. Intent is key, and most importantly, the experience and application of what one has read is what truly proves if they have understood their lesson.

Highlighting the importance of studies, Bacon's essay illustrates the role studies play in an individual's daily life. For Bacon, the study is always related to the application of knowledge in practical life. At the beginning of his essay, Bacon describes the three main purposes of study including studying for gaining delight, studies done for ornamenting one's life and studying in order to improve one's ability. The author is the notion that only learned and well-read men can execute plans effectively, manage their daily affairs with expertise and lead a healthy and stable life. He further states that reading makes a full man; conference leads to a ready man while writing makes an exact man.

While throwing light on the advantages and usefulness of studies, Bacon also puts forward some demerits of study as he thinks that studying for a prolonged period of time may lead to laziness. He also condemns the act of studying from books solely without learning from nature around. The essay *Of Studies* further asserts the benefits of studies by considering this act as a medicine for the defects of the human mind and the source of enhancing one's wit.

He also condemns the act of studying from books solely without learning from nature around. The essay *Of Studies* further asserts the benefits of studies by considering this act as a medicine for the defects of the human mind and the s are only meant to be tasted; others are there to swallow while some books are meant for chewing and digesting properly. Therefore, the readers must choose wisely before studying any book to enhance his/her knowledge about the world around. bout the world around.

Bacon concludes his essay by suggesting that studies assist an individual in removing the defects of his/her mind as every problem of the human mind carries special importance for the individual and the world.

Conclusion

Bacon's essay *Of Studies* deals with the benefits of studies for the individuals in their daily lives. From reading books to writing papers, study plays a vital role in a man's life making him learned, witty and experienced.

The essay by Bacon is enriched with intellectual wisdom, pragmatic approach and practical knowledge; therefore, it is considered to be the most beneficial essay for the students and young individuals.

Although the essay is devoid of any emotions and colourful expressions, it is; nevertheless, a wonderful effort of teaching the readers about the importance of studying.

2.3 The features of Bacon's style

Bacon has used various features which can be termed as: Aphoristic, Paradox, Rhetorical Device, Imagery, Analogy, and allusion for being impersonal through saving his own personality. Bacon's works are classified as essays for having the artistic value of beauty and moral. Francis Bacon has distinctive features that fame his works through the ages. Bacon's style is compact yet polished and indeed some of its conciseness is due to the skilful adaptation of Latin idiom and phrase. His sentences are pregnant and have the capability of expending into paragraph. He had a great and impressive mastery over the art of saying maximum into minimum words.

It is not wrong to say that Francis Bacon introduced a new style of prose writing. Following are some stylistic qualities of Bacon's essays.

Short and concise sentences.

No Parenthesis.

Clarity.

Rhythm and Coherence.

Aphoristic style.

Themes related to worldly wisdom.

Conciseness as one of the major stylistic qualities of Francis Bacon:

Bacon uses short and concise sentences. His purpose is to explain his philosophy in lesser words. We hardly find any essay which is too long. It is easier for him to cut short the long sentences. A message which requires a paragraph, he can convey it in fewer words and that too without losing its meanings. Scarcely, any other writer of his era has this kind of ability. In short, he keeps his subject focused, clear and concise.

No Parenthesis:

Bacon has also removed parenthesis. He has no sentence that requires explanation; therefore, he does not need parenthesis. This stylistic quality of Bacon's essays, increases interest of readers. Every word is self-explanatory; each sentence explains itself.

Clarity in Prose Style of Francis Bacon:

Bacon's words and sentences are lucid and there is no ambiguity in them. There are allusions in his essays even then there is no vagueness. His style has attraction and it appeals to the readers due to clarity. He chooses simple and common words. Like previous writers, he too uses similes and metaphors but they are not far-fetched. He also gives examples mostly from everyday life experiences. Even a layman can understand his philosophy. Clarity, in this way, is another important ingredient of prose style of Sir Francis Bacon.

Rhythm and Coherence:

Besides, clarity and conciseness, coherence has its own importance. Lack of coherence in sentences means lack of interest of readers. Bacon knows it; therefore, there is a kind of rhythm in his essays. He elucidates his philosophy step by step. He divides subtopics in paragraphs. Several critics appreciate coherence in Bacon's essays. Coherence is harmony and harmony increases the interest of readers.

Aphoristic style:

It is an epigrammatic style of writing. All above mentioned qualities fall in it. Aphoristic style prefers describing facts and truths. We know that Francis Bacon does not create Utopian world in his essays. He is known for his worldly philosophy. One can become successful in this world if he follows him. Hence, his philosophy is based on truths and facts. He may be the meanest kind of person yet he always speaks the truth.

Aphoristic style is the combination of following qualities:

Epigram

Straightforward

Truthfulness

Impartiality

Impersonality

All above qualities are there in his essays. These make prose style of Francis Bacon charming as pointed out by F.G. Selby.

Themes:

So far as themes of his essays are concerned, we know that Bacon was the man of world and a politician. Most of the themes used by him are related to: Worldly wisdom. Ethical qualities. Government. State. Science.

His experience, in every field of life, is magnificent thus he shares it with his readers. He is a moralist though his morality is related to worldly success. His thematic concept is more related to word. His approach is Machiavellian and by giving solid examples from history, he proves it right. He prefers success to honour. As an opportunist, he suggests to avail every opportunity. Effectiveness of his style forces his readers to think twice on a matter.

Weaknesses in Prose Style of Francis Bacon:

There are some weaknesses which are noteworthy. Sometimes his grammatical structure is loose. He makes his sentences concise but readers see its effect directly on grammar. However, it does not affect meanings of the words. Furthermore, he uses excessive Latin phrases which sometimes create difficulty.

Conclusion:

Sir Francis Bacon is commonly known as father of English prose and essays because of his style. There is no match for him, hitherto. He had a busy life, therefore, he hardly found time for writing yet his talent of writing was unsurpassed up till now. English Literature is in debt to him for making large reformation in English prose. Indeed, he would be remembered every time an essay is written.

Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon is an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, jurist, orator and author. He is often referred to as "the father of English essay".

Bacon, a Renaissance figure is also known as the creator of empiricism and he encouraged scientific advancements. He was influenced hugely by the French- essayist, Michel de Montaigne. He was awarded 'Knighthood' in 1603.

As an essayist, he remained as a keen observer, eagerly scrutinizing the events happening around him. He preferred the epigrammatic style and his essays were pithy/short, terse, and formal in nature. Bacon created 'Aphoristic Essays' and it seemed like a collection of short and sharp maxims with tremendous compression. The sentences Bacon used were rhetorical in nature and forceful too. They are quite crisp, short and sententious. Each sentence stands by itself with a concentrated expression of weighty thought. For Bacon, man is the subject of his essays, which is one of the reasons for his works being popular beside other qualities.

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words and phrases in his essays to convey the ideas to his readers. He wrote on a wide range of topics from religion to architecture, from studies to philosophy, etc. Notable literary historian, Henry Hallam wrote that "They (Bacon's essays) are deeper and more discriminating than any earlier, or almost any later, work in the English language".

"Of Studies"

The essay, "Of Studies" deliberates on the significance of books and reading. Bacon attempts to explain the merits and purpose of studies. "Of Studies" is one of the most quoted essays of Francis Bacon. In this essay, he does not only talk about bookish knowledge but also demonstrates the importance of experience. He also lists the benefits of reading and ultimately validates how studies can benefit a reader's life enormously in different ways. Bacon begins his essay by describing the three purposes of studies.

Summary

Francis Bacon is an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, journalist, orator and author.

Bacon, a Renaissance figure, is also known as the creator of empiricism and he encouraged scientific advancements.

He was influenced hugely by the French- essayist, Michel de Montaigne.

He was awarded 'Knighthood' in 1603.

As an essayist, he remained as a keen observer, eagerly scrutinizing the events happening around him.

He preferred the epigrammatic style and his essays were pithy/short, terse, and formal in nature.

Bacon created 'Aphoristic Essays' and it seemed like a collection of short and sharp maxims with tremendous compression.

Critics consider the language of Bacon in prose as supreme as Shakespeare's in verse.

The essay, "Of Studies" deliberates on the significance of books and reading.

"Of Studies" is one of the most quoted essays of Francis Bacon.

The most notable feature of Bacon's essay is his aphoristic style.

Bacon's style of writing essays is very formal.

Of Studies is an essay written in didactic style- it is intended to inform, or teach a lesson.

Of Studies is an engaging read from "The Father of English Essays".

In his essay *Of Studies* Bacon makes a connection between intellectual improvement and physical improvement.

Sir Francis Bacon employs an informative, lesson-oriented structure to his essay.

Bacon has used various features which can be termed as: Aphoristic, Paradox, Rhetorical Device, Imagery, Analogy, and allusion for being impersonal through saving his own personality.

What are the main benefits of study in the essay "Of Studies" by Francis Bacon?

What does Bacon mean "Studies serve for delight" in his essay "Of Studies"?

What does Bacon mean "Studies serve for ornament" in his essay "Of Studies"?

What does Bacon mean "Studies serve for ability" in his essay "Of Studies"?

What is the chief use of studies for ornament according to Francis Bacon in his essay "Of Studies"?

Keywords

Aphoristic: use of concise, pithy statements that express a wise or clever observation about human nature or the world.

Paradox: a statement that appears to be contradictory or false, but upon closer examination, may reveal a deeper truth.

Rhetorical Device: any technique or method used to communicate effectively in speech or writing.

Imagery: use of descriptive language that evokes sensory experience, such as sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch.

Analogy: a comparison between two things that are similar in some way.

Allusion: a well-known person, place, event, or literary work.

Study: process of acquiring knowledge through reading, observation, or instruction.

Delight: a feeling of great pleasure or happiness.

Discourse: verbal or written communication, especially of a formal or extended nature.

Sloth: laziness, often characterized by a reluctance to exert oneself or engage in productive activity.

Crafty: clever or cunning, often in a negative sense, referring to someone who uses trickery or deceit to achieve their goals.

Contemn: to reject or disregard with contempt or disdain.

Confute: to prove to be false or incorrect, often through logical argument or evidence.

Diligence: hardworking and persistent effort, often characterized by attention to detail and a willingness to take on difficult or tedious tasks.

Conference: a meeting or gathering of people for the purpose of discussing or making decisions about a particular topic or issue.

Wandering: to move aimlessly or without direction.

Self Assessment

1. According to Bacon, what is the chief use of studies for delight?

- A. In privateness and retiring
- B. In discourse
- C. In the judgment and disposition of business
- D. In the company of others

2. What does Bacon suggest as an activity that can help someone who is easily distracted?

- A. Reading
- B. Writing
- C. Mathematics
- D. Logic and Rhetoric

3. What does Bacon advise as the right way to make the best of a man's life?

- A. To study
- B. To learn
- C. To consult
- D. All of the above

4. What does Bacon say is the use of reading?

- A. To contradict and confute

- B. To believe and take for granted
- C. To find talk and discourse
- D. To weigh and consider

5. What type of books does Bacon suggest to be chewed and digested?

- A. Histories
- B. Poets
- C. Mathematics
- D. Natural philosophy

6. According to Bacon, what is the chief use of studies for ornament?

- A. In privateness and retiring
- B. In discourse
- C. In the judgment and disposition of business
- D. In the company of others

7. Bacon says that if a man's wit be bent, what should he study?

- A. Histories
- B. Poets
- C. The postures of wrestlers
- D. Logic and Rhetoric

8. What does Bacon say is the use of writing?

- A. To make a full man
- B. To make a ready man
- C. To make an exact man
- D. To make a deep man

9. What does Bacon say is the benefit of life?

- A. To know the strength of it
- B. To know the weakness of it
- C. To know both the strength and weakness of it
- D. To know neither the strength nor the weakness of it

10. What does Bacon say is the chief use of studies for ability?

- A. In privateness and retiring
- B. In discourse
- C. In the judgment and disposition of business
- D. In the company of others

11. Francis Bacon believes that studies should be used only for the purpose of practical application in the real world.
A. True
B. False
12. Bacon advises that one should focus on reading, rather than talking or writing.
A. True
B. False
13. Bacon states that mathematics is the best subject for someone who is easily distracted.
A. True
B. False
14. Bacon argues that the pursuit of knowledge should be done in moderation and balance.
A. True
B. False
15. Bacon believes that dishonest or unreliable people are most respected by those who know them well.
A. True
B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

1. A 2. C 3. D 4. D 5. D
6. B 7. C 8. C 9. C 10. C
11. B 12. B 13. A 14. A 15. B

Review Questions

1. What is the purpose of studies according to Bacon?
2. What are the benefits of studies that Bacon describes in his essay?
3. What are the different features of Bacon's style?
4. Didactic content in Francis Bacon's essay *Of Studies*, discuss.
5. What is the overall message of Bacon's essay "Of Studies"?



Further Readings

"The Essays" by Francis Bacon

"Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science" by Benjamin Farrington

"The Cambridge Companion to Francis Bacon" edited by Markku Peltonen

"The Advancement of Learning" by Francis Bacon

"Francis Bacon: Critical and Theoretical Perspectives" edited by Markku Peltonen



Web Links

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Unit 03: Francis Bacon: Of Truth

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Know about some Philosophical truths
- Explore some theological truths
- Enumerate about some civil truths
- Do analysis of different truths

Introduction

Francis Bacon was an English philosopher, statesman, and essayist who lived from 1561 until 1626. He is regarded as one of the pioneers of the school of thought known as empiricism, which emphasizes the value of experience and observation in the search for knowledge.

Bacon was born in London, England, into a wealthy family. He completed his formal education at Trinity College in Cambridge before going on to Gray's Inn to study law. He entered politics in 1584 as a member of Parliament and eventually held the offices of Lord Chancellor and Attorney General under King James I. Bacon is primarily renowned for his contributions to philosophy and science, despite having a successful political career. He is credited with helping to establish the scientific method, which places a strong emphasis on the value of observation, experimentation, and the application of knowledge.

Bacon published several important works throughout his life, including "The Advancement of Learning" (1605) and "Novum Organum" (1620). In these works, he argued for the importance of empirical observation and experimentation in the pursuit of knowledge and criticized the traditional Aristotelian methods of inquiry.

Bacon's ideas had a significant impact on the development of science and philosophy, and his work continues to be studied and debated to this day. He died in 1626, possibly as a result of an experiment in which he tried to preserve a chicken by stuffing it with snow.

In brief, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was an English philosopher, statesman, and essayist, one of the founders of the field of empiricism and considered one of the founders of the scientific method. He had a successful political career but it is his contributions to philosophy and science that he is best remembered for. His ideas had a significant impact on the development of science and philosophy and his work continues to be studied and debated to this day.

Francis Bacon is best known for his collection of essays, which were first published in 1597. These essays cover a wide range of topics, including morality, politics, science, and philosophy. Some of the main themes that Bacon explores in his essays include:

The pursuit of knowledge: Bacon's essays are heavily influenced by his belief in the importance of observation, experimentation, and the use of reason in the pursuit of knowledge. He criticizes traditional methods of inquiry and argues for the importance of empirical observation and experimentation in the pursuit of truth.

The nature of truth: In many of his essays, Bacon explores the nature of truth from a philosophical perspective. He argues that truth is not something that can be easily discovered or understood, but rather something that must be actively sought after through diligent inquiry and careful observation.

The limitations of human understanding: Bacon recognizes the potential for bias and deception in human understanding and highlights the importance of recognizing and overcoming these limitations in order to approach the truth more objectively. **The importance of humility:** Bacon emphasizes the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth, recognizing the limitations of human understanding and the possibility of mysteries that go beyond reason and observation.

The importance of practicality and use: Bacon argues that the knowledge should be useful and practical and not just for the sake of knowledge itself.

The impact of human emotions: Bacon also explores the impact of human emotions on the pursuit of knowledge and argues that reason must be balanced with emotion in order to arrive at the truth.

The role of morality: Bacon's essays also address moral issues, exploring the nature of good and evil, and the importance of living a virtuous life.

In summary, Bacon's essays cover a wide range of topics, but some of the main themes include the pursuit of knowledge, the nature of truth, the limitations of human understanding, the importance of humility, the importance of practicality, the impact of human emotions, and the role of morality. His essays are heavily influenced by his belief in the importance of observation, experimentation, and the use of reason in the pursuit of knowledge.

3.1 Of Truth by Bacon Francis

In this essay, Bacon has presented the objective truth in various manifestations. Similarly, Bacon shares with us the subjective truth, operative in social life. "OF TRUTH" is Bacon's masterpiece that shows his keen observation of human beings with special regard to truth. In the beginning of the essay, Bacon rightly observes that generally people do not care for truth as Pilate, the governor of the Roman Empire, while conducting the trial of Jesus Christ, cares little for truth:

"What is truth? Said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer."

Advancing his essay, Bacon explores the reasons why the people do not like truth. First, truth is acquired through hard work and man is ever reluctant to work hard. Secondly, truth curtails man's freedom. More than that the real reason of man's disliking to truth is that man is attached to lies which Bacon says "a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself." Man loves falsehood because, Bacon says that truth is as if the bright light of the day and would show what men, in actual, are. They look attractive and colourful in the dim light of lies. He further adds,

"A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure."

It is a fact that man prefers to cherish illusions, which make his life more interesting. With a profound observation of man's psychology, Bacon states that if deprived of false pride and vanities, the human mind would contract like a deflated balloon and these human beings would become poor, sad and ill. However, poetic untruth is not gone unnoticed by Bacon's piercing intellect. He says though poetic untruth is a wine of the Devil in priest's eyes, yet it is not as harmful as the other lies are. Bacon being a literary artist illustrates this concept with an apt imagery that the poetic untruth is but the shadow of a lie. The enquiry of truth, knowledge of truth and belief of truth are compared with the enjoyment of love. Such a comparison lends the literary charm to this essay. Bacon further says in that the last act of creation was to create rational faculty, which helps in finding truth, is the finished product of God's blessing as he says:

"... The last was the light of reason...is the illumination of his spirit."

Bacon's moral idealism is obvious when he advancing his argument in favour of truth asserts that the earth can be made paradise only with the help of truth. Man should ever stick to truth in every matter, do the act of charity and have faith in every matter, do the act of charity and have faith in God. Bacon's strong belief in truth and Divinity is stated thus:

"Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth."

From the objective truth, Bacon passes judgment, to the subjective truth, which he calls "the truth of civil business". It is the compelling quality of truth, Bacon observes, that the persons who do not practice truth, acknowledge it. Bacon's idealistic moral attitude is obvious in these lines when he says: "..... that clear and round dealing is the honour of man's nature; and that mixture of falsehood is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work better, but it embaseth it."

Bacon further asserts that the liars are like a snake that goes basely upon the belly and not upon the feet. Imagery comprising comparison is apt and convincing. Moreover, Bacon refers to Montaigne who is of the view that "a lie faces God and shrinks from man". Bacon adds that falsehood is the height of wickedness and as such will invite the Judgment of God upon all human beings on Doom's day. In the essay, "OF TRUTH", there is no digression. All the arguments in the essay pertain to the single main idea, truth. Bacon's wide learning is clearly observed when he refers to Pilate (history), Lucian (Greek literature), Creation, Montaigne (a French essayist). "OF TRUTH" is enriched with striking similes and analogies, such as he equates liars as a snake moving basely on its belly, mixture of falsehood is like an alloy of gold and silver. Similarly, truth is 'open day light' whereas lie is 'candle light'. i.e. fake dim light. Truth is 'a pearl' i.e. worthy and precious whereas, lie is 'a diamond' that reflects light illusions when placed in daylight.

The essay "OF TRUTH" is not ornamental as was the practice of the Elizabethan prose writers. Bacon is simple, natural and straightforward in his essay though Elizabethan colour is also found in "OF TRUTH" because there is a moderate use of Latinism in the essay. Economy of words is found in the essay not alone, but syntactic brevity is also obvious in this essay. We find conversational ease in this essay, which is the outstanding feature of Bacon's style. There is a peculiar feature of Bacon i.e. aphorism. We find many short, crispy, memorable and witty sayings in this essay.. Therefore, Bacon concludes his essay with didacticism with a tinge of Christian morality.

Therefore, Bacon's essay "OF TRUTH" is rich in matter and manner. This is really a council 'civil and moral'. The world knows Sir Francis Bacon for his worldly wisdom. He had made an analysis of the world and in "Of Truth", he guided his readers how to get success even in critical situations. .Alexander Pope called Bacon meanest kind of person because of his worldly philosophy. Bacon always focuses on worldly benefits and rarely talks about the fruits of eternal life. In "Of Truth", he speaks in favour of the truth; he also differentiates it from lie and forces us to speak the truth in every situation. He supports his arguments through solid quotations.

Bacon also answers some of the old skeptical people, who were against the truth. He does not exaggerate truth but put reality in front of his readers. A person can only become honest if he speaks the truth. A lie may delight a person but it does not honour him.

3.2 Critical Analysis of "Of Truth"

Sir Francis Bacon starts his essay while referring the Ancient Roman Governor Pilate, who made the situation critical without doing an analysis of truth. Pilate asked for truth but did not wait for it. If he would have known the truth, he may have not passed the judgment to crucify the Christ. He then talks about skeptical minds, who are not easily convincible. He doubts that Pilate was also skeptical. Definitely, there are people who do not have strong beliefs. Numerous people are there in the world, who change their minds frequently. They consider that fixed beliefs are a sign of mental slavery. Whenever they think or take decisions, they use their free will; they stubbornly ignore every belief. In Greeks, there was a school of philosophers having skeptics. They may have died now but skeptical people are there even today in this world.

Why Do Not People Speak the Truth?

There are many reasons behind not speaking the truth. One of them is that discovery of truth requires efforts and time. Let us do a critical analysis of this truth from real life example. There are many courts in every country; each court has thousands of cases; in every case, either the defendant or the plaintiff is right. Every case has been heard for many years in order to find out who is speaking the truth. Secondly, both the parties (plaintiff and defendant) struggle to prove themselves right. Indeed Sir Francis Bacon is right. Effort and time are required to discover the truth. The second reason, which Bacon provides for not speaking the truth, is that it is hard to digest. When it is discovered people hardly believe it.

Then he talks about lies. He is of the view that lies attract people but no one adopts truth. He is confused that why people tell a lie for the sake of a lie. Nevertheless, he understands that poets sell lie because it gives pleasure to human beings. Traders tell lies because they want to sell their goods but lie for the sake of lie is not understandable.

How Is The Truth Different from Lie?

Bacon gives a real-life example. He says that if the audience sees a spectacle on the stage in daylight it will look as it is. On the other hand, if the same show is presented with candlelight then it will attract more people; it would definitely give pleasure to the audience. Lie, in the same way, has a beautiful and shiny cover, due to which people like lie instead of truth. However, if the truth were mixed with a lie then it would also give pleasure. Moreover, people have created their own false beliefs, judgments, and opinions. If these things were snatched from them, their condition would become miserable as these things give them hope and strange kind of pleasure.

3.3 Critical Analysis of "Of Truth" Shows that Poetry is not Harmful

Early writers of the church called poetry a devil's wine. It is because it exaggerates things and is full of fancies. It also takes a person in the world of imagination; therefore, they called poetry a lie

and harmful to human beings. Bacon agrees that the poetry is a lie but he denies the second allegation. He says that it is not harmful at all. He divides lies into two categories; short-term and long-term. Poetry tells lie but people soon forget it; therefore, it causes no harm to them. Only those lies are harmful that sink in the mind and are difficult to forget.

Truth Ends Pride:

The light was the first thing, which the God had created. Then He bestowed men, rational faculty. Since then, He is illuminating the human minds. Bacon advises that whenever a person takes a decision, he should rely on his rationality. It would be based upon truth. He quotes Lucretius, who says that realization of truth is the greatest pleasure in the world. When someone realizes the truth, he becomes aware of its importance. He also recognizes his false beliefs and silly hopes. Truth also nips the pride in the bud due to which a person becomes pitiful.

Importance of Truth:

If we deeply do critical analysis "Of Truth" then we realize that Bacon truth has its own significance. Falsehood brings disgrace and truth brings honor. Even those persons, who do not speak truth, know its worth. Furthermore, the truth is required not only in the field of theology and philosophy but also in every field of life. Bacon refers Montaigne, who says that a liar is always brave towards God but coward towards humans. By telling a lie, a liar directly challenges God. He knows that he has to face God on doomsday yet he promotes falsehood. Thus, he is brave enough to get punishment in eternal life.

At the end of the essay, we find some morality. Bacon tries his best to convince his readers and compels them to speak the truth. The last argument, which he advances, is the "fear of doomsday". A liar would be punished on the Day of Judgment, says Sir Francis Bacon.

Conclusion of "Of Truth Critical Analysis":

To conclude, Bacon in this essay persuades people to speak the truth at any cost. He appreciates those people who stick with the truth. Thus, his tone in this essay is didactic; style is lucid and examples are rich. Solid references from Greeks, Romans, other subjects and various philosophers demonstrate experience and knowledge of the writer in every field of life.

3.4 Philosophical Truth in "Of Truth"

In his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon explores the concept of truth from a philosophical perspective. He argues that truth is the "sovereign good" and that "the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature."

Bacon divides truth into two types: "truth of fact" and "truth of the mind." He explains that truth of fact refers to the correspondence between a statement and reality, whereas truth of the mind refers to the coherence of ideas within the mind. He also notes that there can be degrees of certainty in truth, and that some truths may be more certain than others.

Bacon also explores the idea that humans are naturally inclined to deceive themselves and others, and that it is only through diligent inquiry and careful observation that the truth can be discovered. He also emphasizes the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth, stating that "a little philosophy inclines man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy brightens men's minds about to religion."

In short, Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is an exploration of truth from a philosophical perspective, where he emphasizes the importance of truth as the "sovereign good" of human nature, and that truth can be divided into two types, "truth of fact" and "truth of the mind" and can be found through diligent inquiry and careful observation.

In his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon explores the concept of truth from a philosophical perspective and argues that truth is the "sovereign good" of human nature. He divides truth into two types: "truth of fact" and "truth of the mind."

Truth of fact refers to the correspondence between a statement and reality. It is the type of truth that can be verified through observation and experimentation. Bacon argues that this type of truth is important for practical purposes and for understanding the physical world. For example, the statement "water boils at 100 degrees Celsius at sea level" is a truth of fact that can be verified through experimentation.

Truth of the mind, on the other hand, refers to the coherence of ideas within the mind. It is the type of truth that deals with the relationships between concepts and ideas. Bacon argues that this type of truth is important for understanding the intellectual world and for making logical deductions. For example, the statement "all bachelors are unmarried" is a truth of the mind that can be deduced from the definitions of the terms "bachelor" and "unmarried."

Bacon also notes that there can be degrees of certainty in truth, and that some truths may be more certain than others. He argues that truth is not always easy to discover and that it often requires diligent inquiry and careful observation. He also emphasizes the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth, stating that "a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion."

Bacon also explores the idea that humans are naturally inclined to deceive themselves and others, and that it is only through diligent inquiry and careful observation that the truth can be discovered. He suggests that people often fall prey to their own biases and prejudices, and that it is important to approach the pursuit of truth with an open mind and a willingness to consider alternative perspectives.

In summary, Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is a philosophical exploration of the concept of truth, where he argues that truth is the "sovereign good" of human nature, and can be divided into two types: "truth of fact" and "truth of the mind." He emphasizes the importance of diligent inquiry and careful observation in discovering truth, and the need for humility and open-mindedness in the pursuit of truth. He also argues that truth can have different degrees of certainty and that human nature is inclined to deceive themselves and others.

Theological truth

Theological truth can be based on religious texts, personal experiences, or revelation and is often considered a matter of faith. This type of truth is usually not verifiable through observation or experimentation, but rather through spiritual experiences or personal belief. It is also important to note that theological truth can vary across different religions, denominations, and even individual believers.

In Bacon's essay "Of Truth" he speaks about the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth, which can also be applied to the pursuit of theological truth, as one may have to accept the limitations of human understanding and the possibility of mysteries that go beyond reason and observation.

3.5 Civil truth

In his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon does not specifically discuss the concept of "civil truth," but it can be inferred that he would consider it as a type of "truth of fact." Civil truth refers to the truth or accuracy of information and facts related to the legal and political systems of a society. It can include things such as the accurate recording of legal proceedings, the veracity of testimony in a court of law, and the authenticity of official documents.

In his essay "Of Truth" Bacon emphasizes the importance of diligent inquiry and careful observation in discovering truth, which would be particularly relevant in the context of civil truth. He also notes that there can be degrees of certainty in truth, and that some truths may be more certain than others. This would also be applicable in the context of civil truth, as some information and facts may be more verifiable and reliable than others.

Bacon also explores the idea that humans are naturally inclined to deceive themselves and others, and that it is only through diligent inquiry and careful observation that the truth can be discovered.

In the context of civil truth, this would be important to consider in terms of potential biases, prejudices, or manipulation of information that can occur in legal and political systems.

In summary, while Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth" does not specifically discuss the concept of "civil truth," it can be inferred that he would consider it as a type of "truth of fact" and it would be important to consider the importance of diligent inquiry, careful observation, and the potential for biases and manipulation of information in the context of civil truth.

In his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon explores the nature of truth from a philosophical perspective. He argues that truth is not something that can be easily discovered or understood, but rather something that must be actively sought after through diligent inquiry and careful observation.

One of the key themes in Bacon's essay is the idea that humans are naturally inclined to deceive themselves and others. He argues that it is only through diligent inquiry and careful observation that the truth can be discovered. This idea is particularly relevant in the context of civil truth, as it highlights the potential for biases, prejudices, or manipulation of information that can occur in legal and political systems.

Another important theme in Bacon's essay is the idea that there can be degrees of certainty in truth. He notes that some truths may be more certain than others, and that it is important to distinguish between probable and certain knowledge. This idea is also relevant in the context of civil truth, as some information and facts may be more verifiable and reliable than others.

Bacon also touches on the concept of theological truth, although it is not specifically discussed in the essay. Theological truth can be thought of as the truths or beliefs related to religion or spirituality. It is a type of truth that often deals with spiritual beliefs, doctrines, and teachings. He highlights the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth, which can also be applied to the pursuit of theological truth, as one may have to accept the limitations of human understanding and the possibility of mysteries that go beyond reason and observation.

Overall, in his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon explores the nature of truth from a philosophical perspective, while also highlighting the importance of diligent inquiry, careful observation, and the potential for biases and manipulation of information in the context of civil truth, and touches on the concept of theological truth and the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth.

Summary

Truth is a fundamental aspect of human life and is necessary for the proper functioning of society.

Bacon asserts that truth is "a true and justified statement."

Truth is often concealed by prejudice, ignorance, and false beliefs.

Bacon emphasizes the importance of avoiding false opinions and embracing the pursuit of truth.

He asserts that truth is the foundation of all knowledge and that knowledge is the basis for human progress and development.

Bacon also notes that the pursuit of truth can be challenging and requires effort, as well as the willingness to confront one's own biases and preconceptions.

Bacon stresses the importance of valuing truth and the pursuit of knowledge, as they are essential for human progress and development.

Keywords

Truth - A fact that is accepted as genuine or the state of being in accordance with fact or reality.

Knowledge - Awareness or understanding gained through experience or education.

Justified statement - A statement that can be logically defended or proven to be correct.

Prejudice - An unreasonable or unfair judgment made about a person, group, or thing without enough evidence.

Ignorance - The state of being uninformed or lacking knowledge about a particular subject.

False beliefs - Ideas that are not in accordance with fact or reality.

Pursuit of truth - The act of seeking or searching for the truth.

Human progress - The advancement of society, especially in terms of science, technology, and culture.

Bias - A preconceived opinion or inclination, often influenced by personal feelings or experiences, that affects judgment.

Development - The process of growth, improvement, or advancement, especially in terms of knowledge or technology.

Self Assessment

1. What is the main theme of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth"?
 - A. The pursuit of knowledge
 - B. The nature of truth
 - C. The limitations of human understanding
 - D. All of the above

2. What does Bacon argue is necessary in order to arrive at the truth?
 - A. Traditional methods of inquiry
 - B. Diligent inquiry and careful observation
 - C. Emotion alone
 - D. None of the above

3. What is Bacon's opinion on the role of reason in the pursuit of truth?
 - A. Reason is unnecessary
 - B. Reason is important but not sufficient
 - C. Reason is the only way to arrive at the truth
 - D. None of the above

4. How does Bacon feel about the potential for bias and deception in human understanding?
 - A. He is indifferent
 - B. He ignores it
 - C. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing and overcoming it
 - D. None of the above

5. What does Bacon argue is the importance of humility in the pursuit of truth?
 - A. Recognizing the limitations of human understanding
 - B. Recognizing the possibility of mysteries that go beyond reason and observation
 - C. Both a and b
 - D. None of the above

6. Why does Bacon believe that knowledge should be practical and useful?
 - A. It is more interesting that way
 - B. It is more fulfilling that way

- C. It will benefit society
- D. None of the above

7.How does Bacon feel about the impact of human emotions on the pursuit of knowledge?

- A. He believes emotions should be completely disregarded
- B. He believes emotions are irrelevant
- C. He believes reason must be balanced with emotion in order to arrive at the truth
- D. None of the above

8.What is Bacon's opinion on the role of morality in his essays?

- A. He believes morality is irrelevant
- B. He believes it is not as important as reason and observation
- C. He explores the nature of good and evil and the importance of living a virtuous life
- D. None of the above

9.What is Bacon's main criticism of traditional methods of inquiry?

- A. They are too slow
- B. They are too expensive
- C. They are not based on empirical observation and experimentation
- D. None of the above

10.What is Bacon's overall goal in writing his essays?

- A. To share his opinions on various topics
- B. To entertain his readers
- C. To promote the pursuit of knowledge through observation, experimentation, and reason
- D. None of the above

11.Francis Bacon argues that reason alone is sufficient for arriving at the truth.

- A. True
- B. False

12.Bacon believes that humility is unnecessary in the pursuit of truth.

- A. True
- B. False

13.The essay *Of Truth* discusses the importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood in order to avoid deception and error.

- A. True
- B. False

14.Bacon believes that traditional methods of inquiry are based on empirical observation and experimentation.

- A. True

B. False

15. Francis Bacon died in 1926.

A. True

B. False

Answers for self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 2. B | 3. B | 4. C | 5. C |
| 6. C | 7. C | 8. C | 9. C | 10. C |
| 11. B | 12. B | 13. A | 14. B | 15. A |

Review Questions

1. What role does Bacon believe truth plays in human life and society?
2. Why does Bacon emphasize the importance of avoiding false opinions and embracing the pursuit of truth?
3. What is Bacon's view on the impact of prejudice, ignorance, and false beliefs on the pursuit of truth?
4. Why does Bacon stress the importance of valuing truth and the pursuit of knowledge?
5. What message does Bacon convey through his essay "Of Truth"?
6. Critically analyze the essay "Of Truth" written by Francis Bacon.
7. What is the main theme of the essay "Of Truth" written by Francis Bacon.



Further Readings

- "The Essays" by Francis Bacon
- "Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science" by Benjamin Farrington
- "The Cambridge Companion to Francis Bacon" edited by Markku Peltonen
- "The Advancement of Learning" by Francis Bacon
- "Francis Bacon: Critical and Theoretical Perspectives" edited by Markku Peltonen
- "Francis Bacon: The Major Works" edited by Brian Vickers
- "Francis Bacon: The New Organon" edited by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne



Web Links

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Unit 04: Francis Bacon: Of Truth

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4.1 Lies and Falsehoods and their Origins

4.2 Moral idealism of Bacon's essay "Of Truth"

4.3 Stylistic analysis of the essay "Of Truth" by Bacon

Summary

Keywords

Self Assessment

True and False

Answers for Self Assessment

Review Questions

Further Readings

Objectives

After reading this unit the students will be able to:

- Know about the origins of lies and falsehoods
- Understand Moral idealism of Bacon
- Analyse stylistic technique of Bacon

Introduction

Francis Bacon was one of the leading figures in natural philosophy and in the field of scientific methodology in the period of transition from the Renaissance to the early modern era. As a lawyer, member of Parliament, and Queen's Counsel, Bacon wrote on questions of law, state and religion, as well as on contemporary politics; but he also published texts in which he speculated on possible conceptions of society, and he pondered questions of ethics (Essays) even in his works on natural philosophy (The Advancement of Learning).

After his studies at Trinity College, Cambridge and Gray's Inn, London, Bacon did not take up a post at a university, but instead tried to start a political career. Although his efforts were not crowned with success during the era of Queen Elizabeth, under James I he rose to the highest political office, Lord Chancellor. Bacon's international fame and influence spread during his last years, when he was able to focus his energies exclusively on his philosophical work, and even more so after his death, when English scientists of the Boyle circle (Invisible College) took up his idea of a cooperative research institution in their plans and preparations for establishing the Royal Society.

To the present-day Bacon is well known for his treatises on empiricist natural philosophy (The Advancement of Learning, *Novum Organum Scientiarum*) and for his doctrine of the idols, which he put forward in his early writings, as well as for the idea of a modern research institute, which he described in *Nova Atlantis*.

Francis Bacon was born January, 22, 1561, the second child of Sir Nicholas Bacon (Lord Keeper of the Seal) and his second wife Lady Anne Cooke Bacon, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, tutor to Edward VI and one of the leading humanists of the age. Lady Anne was highly erudite: she not only had a perfect command of Greek and Latin, but was also competent in Italian and French.

Together with his older brother Anthony, Francis grew up in a context determined by political power, humanist learning, and Calvinist zeal. His father had built a new house in Gorhambury in the 1560s, and Bacon was educated there for some seven years; later, along with Anthony, he went to Trinity College, Cambridge (1573–5), where he sharply criticized the scholastic methods of academic training. Their tutor was John Whitgift, in later life Archbishop of Canterbury. Whitgift provided the brothers with classical texts for their studies: Cicero, Demosthenes, Hermogenes, Livy, Sallust, and Xenophon (Peltonen 2007). Bacon began his studies at Gray's Inn in London in 1576; but from 1577 to 1578 he accompanied Sir Amias Paulet, the English ambassador, on his mission in Paris. According to Peltonen (2007):

During his stay in France, perhaps in autumn 1577, Bacon once visited England as the bearer of diplomatic post, delivering letters to Walsingham, Burghley, Leicester, and to the Queen herself.

When his father died in 1579, he returned to England. Bacon's small inheritance brought him into financial difficulties and since his maternal uncle, Lord Burghley, did not help him to get a lucrative post as a government official, he embarked on a political career in the House of Commons, after resuming his studies in Gray's Inn. In 1581 he entered the Commons as a member for Cornwall, and he remained a Member of Parliament for thirty-seven years. He was admitted to the bar in 1582 and in 1587 was elected as a reader at Gray's Inn. His involvement in high politics started in 1584, when he wrote his first political memorandum, *A Letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth*. Right from the beginning of his adult life, Bacon aimed at a revision of natural philosophy and—following his father's example—also tried to secure high political office. Very early on he tried to formulate outlines for a new system of the sciences, emphasizing empirical methods and laying the foundation for an applied science (*scientia operativa*). This twofold task, however, proved to be too ambitious to be realized in practice. Bacon's ideas concerning a reform of the sciences did not meet with much sympathy from Queen Elizabeth or from Lord Burghley. Small expectations on this front led him to become a successful lawyer and Parliamentarian. From 1584 to 1617 (the year he entered the House of Lords) he was an active member in the Commons. Supported by Walsingham's patronage, Bacon played a role in the investigation of English Catholics and argued for stern action against Mary Queen of Scots. He served on many committees, including one in 1588 which examined recusants; later he was a member of a committee to revise the laws of England. He was involved in the political aspects of religious questions, especially concerning the conflict between the Church of England and nonconformists.

From the late 1580s onwards, Bacon turned to the Earl of Essex as his patron. During this phase of his life, he particularly devoted himself to natural philosophy.

In 1593 Bacon fell out favor with the queen on account of his refusal to comply with her request for funds from Parliament. Although he did not vote against granting three subsidies to the government, he demanded that these should be paid over a period six, rather than three, years. This led Sir Robert Cecil and Sir Walter Raleigh to argue against him in Parliament. Bacon's patron, the Earl of Essex, for whom he had already served as a close political advisor and informer, was not able to mollify the queen's anger over the subsidies; and all Essex's attempts to secure a high post for Bacon (attorney-general or solicitor-general) came to nothing. Nevertheless, the queen valued Bacon's competence as a man of law. He was involved in the treason trial of Roderigo Lopez and later on in the proceedings against the Earl of Essex. In his contribution to the *Gesta Grayorum* (the traditional Christmas revels held in Gray's Inn) of 1594–5, Bacon had emphasized the necessity of scientific improvement and progress. Since he failed to secure for himself a position in the government, he considered the possibility of giving up politics and concentrating on natural philosophy. It is no wonder, then, that Bacon engaged in many scholarly and literary pursuits in the 1590s.

Bacon also worked in this phase of his career for the reform of English law. In 1597 his first book was published, the seminal version of his *Essays*, which contained only ten pieces (Klein 2004b). In 1601 Bacon sat in Elizabeth's last parliament, playing an extremely active role.

Bacon looked forward to the next reign and tried to get in contact with James VI of Scotland, Elizabeth's successor. During James' reign Bacon rose to power. He was knighted in 1603 and was created a learned counsel a year later.

Although Aristotle provided specific axioms for every scientific discipline, what Bacon found lacking in the Greek philosopher's work was a master principle or general theory of science, which could be applied to all branches of natural history and philosophy (Klein 2003a). For Bacon, Aristotle's cosmology, as well as his theory of science, had become obsolete and consequently so too had many of the medieval thinkers who followed his lead. He does not repudiate Aristotle

completely, but he opposes the humanistic interpretation of him, with its emphasis on syllogism and dialectics (*scientia operativa* versus textual hermeneutics) and the metaphysical treatment of natural philosophy in favor of natural forms (or nature's effects as structured modes of action, not artifacts), the stages of which correspond—in the shape of a pyramid of knowledge—to the structural order of nature itself.

From 1606 to 1612 Bacon pursued his work on natural philosophy, still under the auspices of a struggle with tradition. This tendency is exemplified in the unpublished tracts *Temporis partus masculus*, 1603/1608 (Bacon III [1887], 521–31), *Cogitata et Visa*, 1607 (Bacon III, 591–620), *Redargutio Philosophiarum*, 1608 (III, 557–85), and *De Principiis atque Originibus...*, 1612 (Bacon V [1889], 461–500). Bacon rediscovers the Pre-Socratic philosophers for himself, especially the atomists and among them Democritus as the leading figure. He gives preference to Democritus' natural philosophy in contrast to the scholastic—and thus Aristotelian—focus on deductive logic and belief in authorities. Bacon does not expect any approach based on tradition to start with a direct investigation of nature and then to ascend to empirical and general knowledge. This criticism is extended to Renaissance alchemy, magic, and astrology (*Temporis partus masculus*), because the 'methods' of these 'disciplines' are based on occasional insights, but do not command strategies to reproduce the natural effects under investigation. His criticism also concerns contemporary technical literature, in so far as it lacks a new view of nature and an innovative methodological program. Bacon takes to task the ancients, the scholastics and also the moderns. He not only criticizes Plato, Aristotle, and Galen for these failings, but also Jean Fernel, Paracelsus, and Telesio, while praising the Greek atomists and Roger Bacon.

Bacon's manuscripts already mention the doctrine of the idols as a necessary condition for constituting *scientia operativa*. In *Cogitata et Visa* he compares deductive logic as used by the scholastics to a spider's web, which is drawn out of its own entrails, whereas the bee is introduced as an image of *scientia operativa*. Like a bee, the empiricist, by means of his inductive method, collects the natural matter or products and then works them up into knowledge in order to produce honey, which is useful for healthy nutrition.

In Bacon's follow-up paper, *Redargutio Philosophiarum*, he carries on his empiricist project by referring to the doctrine of twofold truth, while in *De Principiis atque Originibus* he rejects alchemical theories concerning the transformation of substances in favor of Greek atomism. But in the same text he sharply criticizes his contemporary Telesio for propagating a non-experimental halfway house empiricism. Though Telesio proves to be a moderate 'modern', he clings to the Aristotelian framework by continuing to believe in the *quinta essentia* and in the doctrine of the two worlds, which presupposes two modes of natural law (one mode for the sublunary and another for the superlunary sphere).

"Of Truth"

Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is a philosophical exploration of the nature of truth, its importance, and its relationship to human knowledge and understanding. One of the most striking features of the essay is its brevity and conciseness. Bacon uses a variety of literary devices, such as aphorisms and rhetorical questions, to make his points in a succinct and memorable way.

The main theme of "Of Truth" is the importance of truth in human life. Bacon argues that truth is essential for the advancement of knowledge and understanding. He writes, "What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." This quote illustrates Bacon's belief that truth is often overlooked or dismissed by society, but it is essential to seek it out.

Bacon uses literary devices such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to strengthen his argument. For example, he compares truth to a mirror, stating that it reflects reality as it is, without any distortion or bias. He also uses analogy to illustrate the idea that truth is the foundation of knowledge and understanding. He writes, "The first creature of God in the works of the days was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his Spirit." This analogy illustrates the idea that truth is the light that illuminates the path to understanding.

Bacon's use of aphorisms in "Of Truth" adds to the memorability of the essay. His concise, pithy statements are easy to remember and convey important ideas in a memorable way. For example, he writes, "Truth is a good dog; but always beware of barking too close to the heels of an error, lest you get your brains kicked out." This quote illustrates the idea that truth should be pursued, but with caution, as one might approach a dog that may bite.

Bacon's use of rhetorical questions also contributes to the development of his argument. He

uses these questions to encourage readers to think about the topic and to consider different perspectives. For example, he writes, "What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer." This quote is a rhetorical question that challenges readers to consider the importance of truth and how it is perceived by different people.

The use of analogy adds to the richness of the essay by providing a vivid and concrete illustration of an abstract concept. Bacon uses analogy to illustrate the idea that truth is the foundation of knowledge and understanding. He writes, "The first creature of God in the works of the days was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his Spirit." This analogy illustrates the idea that truth is the light that illuminates the path to understanding.

Bacon's use of cause-and-effect relationships contributes to the development of his argument by showing how different factors are related. For example, he writes, "There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious." This quote illustrates the idea that lying and deceitfulness have negative consequences, such as shame and dishonor.

The purpose of Bacon's use of examples in "Of Truth" is to illustrate his points and make them more concrete. For example, he writes, "The great advantage of a man who talks truth is that he never needs to remember what he said." This quote is an example of how speaking truthfully can be beneficial.

Bacon's use of comparisons contributes to the development of his argument by showing how different things are similar in some respects. For example, he writes, "Truth is a good dog; but always beware of barking too close."

4.1 Lies and Falsehoods and their Origins

Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is a significant piece of literature for several reasons. One of the most important reasons is that it addresses the issue of truth and falsehood in a time when society was facing a crisis of trust and credibility. Bacon's essay is a call for people to be more discerning and skeptical about the information they receive, and to question the motives of those who seek to deceive them.

One of the key themes of the essay is the importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood. Bacon notes that "the great end of all human industry is the attainment of truth," and that truth is the foundation upon which all knowledge and understanding is built. He argues that people must be vigilant in their search for truth, and that they should not be swayed by the opinions of others or by the appearance of things.

Another significant aspect of the essay is its exploration of the origins of lies and falsehoods. Bacon notes that falsehoods often originate from the desire for power and control, and that people who seek to deceive others do so for their own gain. He also notes that people can be deceived by their own prejudices and biases, and that they must be aware of these biases in order to avoid being misled.

The essay also highlights the importance of integrity and honesty in the pursuit of truth. Bacon writes that "a mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure," but that this pleasure is fleeting and ultimately leads to harm. He encourages people to be honest and straightforward in their dealings with others, and to always speak the truth, even when it is uncomfortable or difficult.

The style of the essay is also significant. Bacon employs a clear, logical, and persuasive tone in his writing, which reflects the importance of truth and rationality in the pursuit of knowledge. His use of examples and anecdotes also adds to the effectiveness of his arguments and helps to illustrate the points he is making.

In conclusion, Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is a significant piece of literature for several reasons. It addresses the issue of truth and falsehood in a time when society was facing a crisis of trust and credibility. It also highlights the importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, the origins of lies and falsehoods, integrity and honesty in the pursuit of truth and the persuasive style of Bacon reflects the importance of truth and rationality in the pursuit of knowledge. The essay provides a valuable lesson for people on how to navigate the complex world of information and to be more discerning and skeptical about the information they receive.

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In his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon discusses the importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood in order to avoid deception and error. He also addresses the origins of lies and falsehoods.

Bacon argues that the origins of lies and falsehoods are rooted in human nature, and that people often resort to deception for personal gain or to avoid punishment. He writes, "The greatest and most important difficulty in the search of truth, arises from the nearly universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature."

Bacon also notes that people are often deceived by their own prejudices and preconceptions, which can lead them to accept falsehoods as truth. He states, "The human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds."

In addition, Bacon discusses the role of power and authority in spreading lies and falsehoods, stating that people in positions of power often use deception for their own advantage. He writes, "The human understanding is moved by those things most which strike and enter the mind simultaneously and suddenly, and so fill the imagination; and then it feigns and supposes all other things to be somehow, though it cannot see how, similar to those few things by which it is surrounded."

Overall, Bacon argues that the pursuit of truth is essential for human progress, and that individuals must be vigilant against deception and error in order to arrive at the truth.

4.2 Moral idealism of Bacon's essay "Of Truth"

In his essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon presents a moral ideal of the pursuit of truth as essential for human progress. He argues that truth is objective and that individuals must strive to distinguish between truth and falsehood in order to avoid deception and error. Bacon's moral idealism is rooted in the belief that the pursuit of truth is a moral imperative that is necessary for the betterment of humanity.

Bacon begins his essay by addressing the difficulty of finding truth and the nearly universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature that hinders the pursuit of truth. He notes that people often resort to deception for personal gain or to avoid punishment. However, Bacon argues that despite these obstacles, the pursuit of truth is still necessary for human progress. He states that "the first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason." This statement implies that the ability to reason and the pursuit of truth are integral parts of human nature and are necessary for the advancement of humanity.

Bacon also notes that people are often deceived by their own prejudices and preconceptions, which can lead them to accept falsehoods as truth. He states that "the human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds." This highlights the importance of critical thinking and the need to question and challenge one's own beliefs in order to arrive at the truth.

In addition, Bacon discusses the role of power and authority in spreading lies and falsehoods. He states that people in positions of power often use deception for their own advantage. Bacon argues that this is a moral failing and that individuals must be vigilant against deception and error in order to arrive at the truth.

Bacon concludes his essay by emphasizing the importance of the pursuit of truth as a moral ideal. He writes, "What is truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." This quote implies that Pilate, the Roman governor, did not understand the importance of truth and was not willing to invest the time and effort to seek it. Bacon argues that truth is an essential aspect of human nature and that individuals must be willing to seek it out and embrace it in order to improve humanity.

In summary, Bacon's moral idealism in "Of Truth" is rooted in the belief that the pursuit of truth is essential for human progress. He argues that truth is objective and that individuals must strive to distinguish between truth and falsehood in order to avoid deception and error. He also emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and the need to question and challenge one's own beliefs in order to arrive at the truth. Bacon's moral idealism is based on the idea that the pursuit of truth is a moral imperative that is necessary for the betterment of humanity.

4.3 Stylistic analysis of the essay "Of Truth" by Bacon

Francis Bacon's "Of Truth" is a classic example of his style of writing which is characterized by its clear and concise prose, logical structure, and the use of aphorisms and maxims.

One of the most striking features of "Of Truth" is its brevity and conciseness. Bacon's writing is characterized by short sentences and paragraphs that are easy to read and understand. He avoids using flowery language or grandiose phrases, and instead chooses to express his ideas in simple and straightforward language. This makes his writing accessible to a wide range of readers, and allows him to convey complex ideas in a clear and concise manner.

Another key feature of Bacon's writing style is his use of logical structure. "Of Truth" is divided into a series of short paragraphs, each of which focuses on a specific aspect of the topic of truth. Bacon begins by stating his main thesis and then proceeds to develop his argument in a logical and orderly fashion. He uses a variety of rhetorical devices such as cause-and-effect relationships, comparisons, and examples to support his claims. This logical structure makes it easy for readers to follow his argument and understand his ideas.

Bacon is also known for his use of aphorisms and maxims in his writing. These are short, pithy statements that express a general truth or principle. In "Of Truth," Bacon uses a number of aphorisms such as "the human understanding is moved by those things most which strike and enter the mind simultaneously and suddenly" and "the human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds" to convey his ideas. These aphorisms are memorable and provide a concise summary of the main points in the essay.

Bacon's use of literary devices such as metaphor, simile and analogy are also noteworthy. He employs metaphor to illustrate his point, for example when he writes "The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason." He also uses analogy to make an implicit comparison between two things that are similar in some respects. In "Of Truth" Bacon uses analogy to compare the importance of reason to that of light and also to illustrate how the understanding is prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world.

Bacon's writing style is also characterized by his use of rhetorical questions. He uses rhetorical questions to encourage readers to think about the topic and to consider different perspectives. For example, he asks "What is truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." This rhetorical question serves to highlight the importance of truth and to encourage readers to consider the significance of truth in their own lives.

In conclusion, Francis Bacon's "Of Truth" is a classic example of his style of writing which is characterized by its clear and concise prose, logical structure, and the use of aphorisms and maxims. His use of literary devices, rhetorical questions and analogy also adds to the richness of the essay. Bacon's writing is accessible to a wide range of readers, and allows him to convey complex ideas in a clear and concise manner. His logical structure makes it easy for readers to follow his argument and understand his ideas. The use of aphorisms and maxims provide a memorable and concise summary of the main points in the essay.

Significance of the title of the essay "Of Truth" by Bacon

The title of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is significant for several reasons. First, it represents the central theme of the essay, which is the importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood. The use of the word "Of" in the title implies that the essay is a discussion or examination of the concept of truth, rather than a statement of truth itself. This reflects Bacon's belief that truth is not something that can be taken for granted, but rather something that must be actively sought and understood.

The title also suggests that the essay is a part of a larger philosophical project, as it is one of a series of essays that Bacon wrote on various topics. This implies that truth is not a standalone concept but it is interconnected with other concepts like knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Furthermore, the title "Of Truth" can also be interpreted as an indication of Bacon's moral idealism. He believed that truth is not only a matter of fact but also a matter of morality. He argued that people should be honest, straightforward, and truthful in their dealings with others, and that speaking the truth is a moral imperative.

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Lastly, the title "Of Truth" could also be seen as a reflection of the historical context in which Bacon wrote the essay. In the early 17th century, there was a growing sense of skepticism and mistrust of authority, and many people were questioning the veracity of the information they were receiving. The title of the essay can be seen as a response to this skepticism, and as a call for people to be more discerning and critical in their search for truth.

In conclusion, the title of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth" is significant because it reflects the central theme of the essay, the interconnectedness of truth with other concepts, the moral idealism of Bacon and the historical context in which it was written. The title serves as a reminder of the importance of truth and the need to actively seek it out in order to understand the world and make moral choices.

Summary

Bacon writes that truth is the foundation of all knowledge and that without it, one can never truly understand the world around him.

Bacon defines truth as a statement or belief that corresponds with reality.

Bacon argues that lies and falsehoods have their roots in the human desire for power, wealth, and fame.

Bacon presents a moral ideal that calls on individuals to prioritize the pursuit of truth in their own lives and to reject lies and falsehoods, even when it is tempting to do so for personal gain.

Bacon notes that lies and falsehoods can have serious consequences, both for the liar and for society as a whole as it can cause division and mistrust.

Bacon's moral ideal is aimed at creating a society based on honesty, integrity, and fairness, where truth is valued and upheld as a guiding principle.

Keywords

Reality: The correspondence of a statement or belief with the actual state of affairs in the world.

Discernment: The act of recognizing or distinguishing truth from falsehood.

Personal gain: The benefits that an individual obtains from lying or presenting falsehoods.

Division: The separation or breaking apart of a group or society into smaller units due to disagreement or conflict.

Mistrust: The lack of confidence or suspicion about the honesty or intentions of others.

Injustice: Unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups, often resulting in harm or oppression.

Morality: The principles or rules of behavior that guide individuals and society, often based on a sense of right and wrong.

Self Assessment

1. What is one of the most striking features of Francis Bacon's "Of Truth"?

- A. Its brevity and conciseness
- B. Its flowery language
- C. Its grandiose phrases
- D. Its complexity

2. What is another key feature of Bacon's writing style in "Of Truth"?

- A. Its use of logical structure
- B. Its use of flowery language
- C. Its use of grandiose phrases
- D. Its use of metaphor

3. How does Bacon develop his argument in "Of Truth"?

- A. By using a variety of rhetorical devices such as cause-and-effect relationships, comparisons, and examples
- B. By using flowery language
- C. By using grandiose phrases
- D. By using metaphor

4. What is the purpose of Bacon's use of aphorisms in "Of Truth"?

- A. To make the essay more memorable
- B. To make the essay more complex
- C. To make the essay more difficult to understand
- D. To make the essay more flowery

5. How does Bacon use analogy in "Of Truth"?

- A. To make an implicit comparison between two things that are similar in some respects
- B. To make the essay more memorable
- C. To make the essay more complex
- D. To make the essay more difficult to understand

6. What is the purpose of Bacon's use of rhetorical questions in "Of Truth"?

- A. To encourage readers to think about the topic
- B. To make the essay more complex
- C. To make the essay more difficult to understand
- D. To make the essay more flowery

7. What literary devices does Bacon use in "Of Truth"?

- A. Metaphor, simile and analogy
- B. Grandiose phrases
- C. Flowery language
- D. Complex sentences

8. How does Bacon's use of literary devices add to the richness of the essay "Of Truth"?

- A. By illustrating his points
- B. By making the essay more complex
- C. By making the essay more difficult to understand
- D. By making the essay more flowery

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9. How is the topic of truth developed in "Of Truth"?
- A. By stating the main thesis and then proceeding to develop the argument in a logical and orderly fashion
 - B. By using flowery language
 - C. By using grandiose phrases
 - D. By using metaphor
10. What is the main thesis of the essay "Of Truth"?
- A. The importance of truth
 - B. The use of flowery language
 - C. The use of grandiose phrases
 - D. The use of metaphor
11. Francis Bacon's "Of Truth" is known for its brevity and conciseness.
- A. True
 - B. False
12. One of the key features of Bacon's writing style in "Of Truth" is its use of flowery language.
- A. True
 - B. False
13. Bacon develops his argument in "Of Truth" by using a variety of rhetorical devices such as cause-and-effect relationships, comparisons, and examples.
- A. True
 - B. False
14. The purpose of Bacon's use of aphorisms in "Of Truth" is to make the essay more memorable.
- A. True
 - B. False
15. Bacon uses analogy in "Of Truth" to make the essay more complex.
- A. True
 - B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. A | 3. A | 4. A | 5. A |
| 6. A | 7. A | 8. A | 9. A | 10. A |
| 11. A | 12. B | 13. A | 14. A | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. What is the main theme of Francis Bacon's essay "Of Truth"?

2. What is the purpose of Bacon's use of aphorisms in the essay "Of Truth"?
3. Write a detailed note on the essay "Of Truth".
4. Discuss the moral idealism in the essay "Of Truth" written by Francis Bacon.
5. What are the stylistic features of the essay "Of Truth" written by Francis Bacon?



Further Readings

- "The Essays" by Francis Bacon
- "Francis Bacon: Philosopher of Industrial Science" by Benjamin Farrington
- "The Cambridge Companion to Francis Bacon" edited by Markku Peltonen
- "The Advancement of Learning" by Francis Bacon
- "Francis Bacon: Critical and Theoretical Perspectives" edited by Markku Peltonen
- "Francis Bacon: The Major Works" edited by Brian Vickers
- "Francis Bacon: The New Organon" edited by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne



Web Links

- <https://www.thoughtco.com/of-truth-by-francis-bacon-1690073>
- <https://englishsummary.com/of-truth-francis-bacon-summary/>
- <https://litpriest.com/essays/of-truth-summary-analysis-francis-bacon/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvdiskVXNRI>
- <https://www.eng-literature.com/2021/08/of-truth-summary-analysis.html>

Unit 05: Joseph Addison: Pleasures of Imagination

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5.5 Sense and Understanding

Summary

Keywords

Self Assessment

Answers for Self Assessment

Review Questions

Further Readings

Objective

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Analyze the essay "Pleasures of the Imagination"
- Enumerate the different types of imagination
- Elaborate Sight as primary source of imagination
- Know about the distinguishing pleasures of imagination
- Understand Sense and understanding

Introduction

Joseph Addison was an 18th-century English essayist, poet, and playwright. He was born in 1672 in Milston, Wiltshire and died in 1719 in London, England. He was one of the most important figures of the Augustan Age, a time of great literary activity in England. During this period, Addison made a significant contribution to the development of English literature, particularly through his essays in "The Spectator," a daily publication that he co-founded with Richard Steele.

Addison's Early Life and Education

Addison was educated at Charterhouse School and then at Queen's College, Oxford, where he earned a degree in classical literature. He then went on to study law at the Middle Temple in London. However, he never practiced law and instead turned to writing and publishing.

Literary Career

Addison's first major work was the play "Cato," which was performed in 1713 and was a great success. The play was based on the life of Cato the Younger, a Roman statesman, and was praised for its political and moral themes.

In 1711, Addison and Steele launched "The Spectator," a daily publication that aimed to inform, entertain, and enlighten its readers. The publication was written in the form of essays, with each essay focusing on a different topic. Addison contributed many essays to "The Spectator," in which he discussed a wide range of topics, including literature, politics, and moral issues. He also wrote essays on topics such as the pleasures of imagination, the role of friendship, and the importance of education.

Addison's writing style was characterized by its wit, elegance, and clarity. He was known for his ability to present complex ideas in a simple and accessible manner. His essays in "The Spectator" were widely read and greatly influenced the development of English literature. They helped to establish the essay as a popular literary genre and set a standard for future essayists to follow.

Addison's Contributions to English Literature

Addison's writings had a profound impact on English literature and society. He was a key figure in the development of the Augustan Age, which saw a revival of classical learning and a flowering of English literature. His essays in "The Spectator" helped to establish the publication as a model of elegant writing and wit, and his contributions to the paper helped to set the standard for the English essay.

Addison was also a poet, and his works reflect his love of classical literature. He wrote a number of poems, including "The Campaign," "The Drummer," and "The Works of Virgil." He was also a translator, and his translations of classical works helped to introduce the works of Virgil, Terence, and other classical authors to a wider audience.

Addison's Political Views

Addison was a Whig, a member of the political party that supported the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the principles of limited monarchy and parliamentary democracy. His political views were reflected in his writings, particularly in his essays in "The Spectator." In these essays, he expressed his support for the Whig principles of liberty and justice, and he criticized the policies of the Tory government.

Addison's Legacy

Addison's contributions to English literature and society have been widely recognized, and he is considered one of the most important figures of the Augustan Age. He is remembered for his wit, elegance, and clarity, and his writings continue to be widely read and studied.

Addison's essays in "The Spectator" had a profound impact on the development of the English essay, and his contributions to the publication helped to set the standard for the genre.

Joseph Addison was an 18th-century English essayist, poet, and politician who was best known for his contributions to *The Spectator*, a periodical that he co-founded with Sir Richard Steele. Throughout his life, Addison wrote a number of essays that explored a wide range of topics, from the pleasures of imagination to the importance of virtue.

Writing Style: Addison's writing style is characterized by its wit, elegance, and clarity. He was known for his ability to write on complex topics in a manner that was both accessible and entertaining. He was also a master of the essay form, using his writing to explore a variety of themes and ideas. Addison's writing style is characterized by its ability to balance reason and emotion, making his essays appealing to both the mind and the heart.

Themes: Addison's essays often focus on the importance of virtue, the pleasures of imagination, and the role of reason in our lives. He believed that imagination was a source of pleasure and a means of enriching our experiences. In his essay "The Pleasures of Imagination," Addison explores the power of imagination and how it shapes our perceptions and experiences. He also believed that virtue was essential to a fulfilling life and that reason was the key to unlocking its benefits. In his essays, Addison often used the example of ancient heroes and heroes of his own time to illustrate the importance of virtue and the role of reason in shaping our lives.

Influence: Addison's essays had a profound influence on 18th-century English literature and culture. His writing style was widely imitated and his ideas on the importance of virtue and the role of imagination were widely discussed. Addison's essays also played a significant role in shaping public opinion and contributed to the development of the English essay as a genre.

In conclusion, Joseph Addison was a gifted essayist who used his writing to explore a wide range of themes and ideas. His wit, elegance, and clarity made his essays both entertaining and thought-

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provoking, and his influence on 18th-century English literature and culture was profound. Today, Addison's essays are still widely read and admired for their insight into the human experience and their ability to entertain and educate.

Joseph Addison was an 18th-century English essayist, poet, and statesman. He is best known for his contributions to *The Spectator*, a daily publication that ran from 1711 to 1712, which he co-founded and co-wrote with Sir Richard Steele. Addison's essays are notable for their wit, style, and elegance, and they continue to be widely read and studied today.

The Spectator: One of Addison's most significant contributions was his role in founding and writing *The Spectator*, a daily publication that aimed to provide its readers with insightful commentary on politics, society, and culture. Addison's essays in *The Spectator* are notable for their wit, humor, and elegance, and they continue to be widely read and admired today. Many of Addison's essays in *The Spectator* deal with moral and ethical issues, such as the importance of honesty, integrity, and charity.

The Tatler: Before *The Spectator*, Addison wrote for *The Tatler*, a daily publication that ran from 1709 to 1711. Like *The Spectator*, *The Tatler* aimed to provide its readers with insightful commentary on politics, society, and culture, but it also covered a wider range of topics, including literature, science, and history. Addison's essays in *The Tatler* are notable for their wit, humor, and elegance, and they continue to be widely read and admired today.

Poetry: In addition to his essays, Addison was also a notable poet, and his poems were widely read and admired during his lifetime. Some of his most notable poems include "To the Shades," "An Ode to the Thunder," and "The Campaign." Addison's poetry is notable for its wit, humor, and elegance, and it continues to be widely read and studied today.

Drama: Addison was also a notable playwright, and his plays were widely performed and well received during his lifetime. Some of his most notable plays include "Cato," "The Drummer," and "The Drummer." Addison's plays are notable for their wit, humor, and elegance, and they continue to be widely performed and studied today.

Political Career: In addition to his contributions to literature and the arts, Addison was also a notable statesman, and he served in several important political positions during his lifetime. He was appointed as the Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, and he also served as the Under-Secretary of State. Addison's political career was marked by his commitment to political and social reforms, and he was widely regarded as a champion of the common people.

In conclusion, Joseph Addison was a significant figure in 18th-century England, and his contributions to literature, the arts, and politics continue to be widely read and admired today. His essays in *The Spectator* and *The Tatler* are notable for their wit, humor, and elegance, and his poetry and plays are also widely read and admired. Addison's political career was marked by his commitment to political and social reforms, and he was widely regarded as a champion of the common people. Addison's legacy continues to be felt today, and his works continue to be widely read and studied.

5.1 Joseph Addison's Essay "Pleasures of the Imagination"

Joseph Addison's "The Pleasures of Imagination" is a famous essay that explores the role of imagination in human life and its ability to bring joy and delight to people. The essay was first published in *The Spectator*, a periodical co-founded by Addison and Sir Richard Steele, in 1712 and reflects the ideas of the Augustan Age of English Literature.

Addison defines imagination as "the power of forming mental images, ideas, or concepts of external objects not present to the senses." He argues that imagination is not only a source of pleasure but also a fundamental part of human experience and creativity. He believes that imagination has the ability to transport people to different worlds, to evoke emotions, and to provide a source of endless entertainment.

The essay is divided into three parts. The first part explores the pleasures of imagination in nature. Addison marvels at the beauty of the natural world and the way in which it can evoke a range of emotions in people. He cites examples of natural phenomena such as thunderstorms, sunsets, and the changing seasons as sources of inspiration for the imagination. He also highlights the way in which nature can be transformed by the imagination, such as how the moon can appear to change shape as it moves across the sky.

In the second part of the essay, Addison turns his attention to the pleasures of imagination in the arts. He argues that art, whether it is painting, music, or poetry, has the power to engage the imagination and bring people immense joy and delight. He highlights the way in which a painting can bring to life the stories and characters it depicts, and how music can evoke emotions and transport people to different worlds. He also touches on the way in which the imagination can play a role in the creation of art, allowing artists to bring to life their own unique visions and perspectives.

The final part of the essay explores the pleasures of imagination in the mind. Addison argues that the mind is the greatest source of imaginative pleasure, and that it has the ability to create its own unique worlds and experiences. He highlights the way in which the imagination can bring people joy and delight, even in the face of adversity, by providing them with the power to escape their present circumstances and experience something new and exciting. He also touches on the way in which the imagination can provide a source of comfort and solace in difficult times, helping people to overcome their fears and anxieties.

In conclusion, Addison's "The Pleasures of Imagination" is a powerful and thought-provoking essay that explores the role of imagination in human life and its ability to bring joy and delight. Addison argues that imagination is a fundamental part of human experience and creativity, and that it has the power to transport people to different worlds, evoke emotions, and provide a source of endless entertainment. The essay remains relevant today and continues to inspire generations of readers and thinkers, highlighting the importance of imagination in our lives and the role it plays in shaping our experiences and perspectives.

5.2 Types of Imagination

In his essay "The Pleasures of Imagination," Joseph Addison explores the different types of imagination and how they contribute to the pleasures of life. According to Addison, there are two types of imagination: the raising imagination and the embellishing imagination.

The raising imagination refers to the ability to create something new and original in the mind. This type of imagination allows us to generate ideas, concepts, and images that are not necessarily based on reality. Addison believed that this type of imagination was essential to human creativity and was a key source of pleasure in life.

The embellishing imagination, on the other hand, refers to the ability to add detail, depth, and beauty to what already exists. This type of imagination takes existing objects, events, or scenes and transforms them into something new and imaginative. Addison believed that this type of imagination was crucial to our enjoyment of the world around us, as it allowed us to see familiar things in new and imaginative ways.

Addison also believed that the imagination was closely linked to the senses, particularly sight. He argued that sight was the primary source of imagination, as it allowed us to visualize and bring to life the images in our minds. He also believed that imagination was a means of enriching our sensory experiences, adding meaning and beauty to what we see, hear, and feel.

In conclusion, Joseph Addison's essay "The Pleasures of Imagination" is a significant contribution to the understanding of imagination and its role in shaping our experiences and perceptions. Addison's distinction between the raising imagination and the embellishing imagination provides a framework for understanding how imagination works and how it contributes to our enjoyment of life. His insights into the importance of imagination and its connection to the senses are still relevant today and continue to inspire new generations of thinkers and artists.

5.3 Sight as Primary Source of Imagination

In his essay "The Pleasures of Imagination," Joseph Addison argues that sight is the primary source of imagination. He believed that the ability to visualize and bring to life the images in our minds was crucial to the imagination and its role in shaping our experiences and perceptions.

Addison believed that the imagination and the senses were closely linked, and that sight was the most important of the senses in terms of its contribution to imagination. He argued that the ability to visualize was essential to the imagination and that it allowed us to create new and original ideas, concepts, and images in our minds.

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Furthermore, Addison believed that sight was a means of enriching our sensory experiences and adding meaning and beauty to what we see. He argued that the imagination allowed us to see familiar things in new and imaginative ways, and that it was this ability that made our sensory experiences more enjoyable and fulfilling.

In conclusion, Joseph Addison's argument that sight is the primary source of imagination is a significant contribution to our understanding of imagination and its role in shaping our experiences and perceptions. His insights into the relationship between the imagination and the senses, and his belief in the importance of visualizing and bringing to life the images in our minds, continue to be relevant and inspiring today.

5.4 Distinguishing Pleasures of Imagination

In his essay "The Pleasures of Imagination," Joseph Addison explores the concept of imagination and its role in bringing pleasure to our lives. He argues that imagination is a powerful tool that can provide us with a variety of pleasures that are distinct from the pleasures of the senses. In this critical analysis, we will examine Addison's distinction between the pleasures of imagination and the pleasures of the senses, and how he argues that imagination is a source of pleasure in its own right.

Addison distinguishes between the pleasures of imagination and the pleasures of the senses by pointing out that the former are not dependent on external objects or events. The pleasures of imagination, according to Addison, are created and experienced solely within the mind and are not dependent on external stimuli. In contrast, the pleasures of the senses are dependent on the stimuli that are received through the senses. For example, the pleasure of eating is dependent on the taste and texture of the food that is consumed, while the pleasure of imagination is not dependent on any external objects or events.

Addison argues that the pleasures of imagination are not limited by reality and are not subject to the limitations of the physical world. He believes that imagination can create images and experiences that are beyond the scope of reality and that these imaginary experiences can provide us with immense pleasure. For example, the imagination can create images of fantastical creatures, such as dragons and unicorns, that are not found in the physical world.

Addison also argues that the pleasures of imagination are more refined and elevated than the pleasures of the senses. He believes that imagination allows us to experience beauty, harmony, and order in ways that are not possible through the senses alone. He argues that the imagination can create a world of beauty and perfection that is not found in the physical world, and that this imaginary world can provide us with immense pleasure and satisfaction.

Addison also believes that imagination is a means of enriching our sensory experiences. He argues that imagination can add depth, meaning, and beauty to what we see, hear, and feel, making our sensory experiences more enjoyable and fulfilling. For example, the imagination can add an emotional or psychological dimension to a physical object, such as a landscape, making it more meaningful and memorable.

In conclusion, Joseph Addison's essay "The Pleasures of Imagination" is a significant contribution to our understanding of imagination and its role in bringing pleasure to our lives. Addison's distinction between the pleasures of imagination and the pleasures of the senses highlights the unique qualities of imagination as a source of pleasure. His argument that imagination is a means of creating and experiencing beauty, harmony, and order, and of enriching our sensory experiences, is still relevant and inspiring today. Addison's essay remains an important contribution to the understanding of imagination and its role in shaping our experiences and perceptions.

5.5 Sense and Understanding

In his essay "The Pleasures of Imagination," Joseph Addison explores the relationship between imagination and the senses, and the role of imagination in shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world. He argues that imagination is closely linked to the senses, but that it also goes beyond the senses and contributes to our understanding of the world in ways that are distinct from the senses. In this critical analysis, we will examine Addison's views on the

relationship between imagination and the senses and how he argues that imagination contributes to our understanding of the world.

Addison argues that imagination is closely linked to the senses, but that it also goes beyond the senses. He believes that imagination takes the information received through the senses and processes it in ways that are not limited by the physical world. For example, the imagination can create images and experiences that are beyond the scope of reality, and that these imaginary experiences can provide us with new and unique insights into the world.

Addison also argues that imagination is an important tool for understanding the world. He believes that imagination can bring order and harmony to our perceptions and understanding of the world, and that it can help us to see connections and relationships that are not immediately apparent through the senses. He argues that imagination can provide us with new and original ideas, concepts, and images that contribute to our understanding of the world.

Addison also argues that imagination is a means of enriching our sensory experiences and adding meaning and beauty to what we see, hear, and feel. He believes that imagination can add an emotional or psychological dimension to our sensory experiences, making them more enjoyable and fulfilling. He argues that imagination is a powerful tool for shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world, and that it can provide us with a deeper appreciation and understanding of the world around us.

In conclusion, Joseph Addison's essay "The Pleasures of Imagination" is a significant contribution to our understanding of the relationship between imagination and the senses and how imagination contributes to our understanding of the world. Addison's argument that imagination is closely linked to the senses, but also goes beyond the senses, highlights the unique qualities of imagination as a means of understanding the world. His argument that imagination is a powerful tool for enriching our sensory experiences and adding meaning and beauty to what we see, hear, and feel, is still relevant and inspiring today. Addison's essay remains an important contribution to the understanding of imagination and its role in shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world.

Significance of the Title

The title of Joseph Addison's essay "The Pleasures of Imagination" is a crucial aspect of the piece, as it sets the tone for the entire essay and provides a framework for understanding its central theme. Through his title, Addison expresses his belief in the power of imagination and its ability to bring joy and fulfillment to human life.

In his essay, Addison explores the idea that imagination can bring pleasure in a number of ways. He argues that imagination has the ability to evoke emotions and sensations, and that these emotions and sensations can bring joy and satisfaction to the individual. He also argues that imagination has the power to transport individuals to other worlds and to allow them to experience new and exciting things, even if they are only imagined.

Additionally, Addison highlights the fact that imagination has the power to bring people together and to foster a sense of community. He argues that by sharing our imaginations, we can connect with others in a deeper and more meaningful way, and that this can bring pleasure to both the individual and to the larger community as a whole.

Furthermore, Addison argues that imagination has the power to enrich our understanding of the world and to provide a deeper appreciation of the beauty and majesty of nature. He writes that imagination can help us to see beyond the immediate and to view the world in a new and exciting way, and that this can bring us great pleasure and fulfillment.

In conclusion, the title of Addison's essay, "The Pleasures of Imagination," reflects the central theme of the piece and provides a framework for understanding the importance of imagination in human life. Through his exploration of the pleasures of imagination, Addison argues that imagination has the power to bring joy and fulfillment to the individual, to connect people and foster community, and to enrich our understanding of the world.

The central theme of Joseph Addison's essay "The Pleasures of Imagination"

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The central theme of Joseph Addison's essay "The Pleasures of Imagination" is the power of imagination to bring joy and fulfillment to human life. Addison argues that imagination is a vital aspect of human experience, and that it has the ability to evoke emotions and sensations, transport individuals to other worlds, foster community, and enrich our understanding of the world.

Throughout the essay, Addison provides a detailed exploration of the different ways in which imagination can bring pleasure. He writes that imagination has the ability to evoke emotions and sensations, and that these emotions and sensations can bring joy and satisfaction to the individual. He also argues that imagination has the power to transport individuals to other worlds and to allow them to experience new and exciting things, even if they are only imagined.

Additionally, Addison highlights the fact that imagination has the power to bring people together and to foster a sense of community. He argues that by sharing our imaginations, we can connect with others in a deeper and more meaningful way, and that this can bring pleasure to both the individual and to the larger community as a whole.

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In conclusion, the central theme of Addison's essay is the power of imagination to bring joy and fulfillment to human life. Through his exploration of the pleasures of imagination, Addison argues that imagination is a vital aspect of human experience and has the ability to enrich our lives in a number of ways.

Joseph Addison believed that imagination plays a significant role in human life, and it is not just limited to the arts and poetry. He believed that imagination enriches human experience by allowing people to experience the beauty and pleasures of the world in new and unique ways.

According to Joseph Addison, imagination and the senses are closely connected. He believed that imagination uses the experiences of the senses to create new and unique perceptions of the world.

Joseph Addison believed that imagination and understanding are also closely connected. He believed that imagination is not just limited to the senses but also involves the understanding, and that it is through the combination of the senses and understanding that imagination creates its richest and most profound experiences.

In "The Pleasures of Imagination," Joseph Addison believed that sight is the primary source of imagination. He believed that the visual experiences provided by sight are the foundation for the imagination, as they provide the raw material that the imagination can transform into unique and beautiful experiences.

According to Joseph Addison, the distinguishing pleasures of imagination are the unique experiences it provides. He believed that imagination allows people to experience the beauty and wonders of the world in new and different ways, enriching their lives and providing them with a source of ongoing pleasure and enjoyment.

Summary

Joseph Addison was an 18th-century English essayist, poet, and playwright.

He was born in 1672 in Milston, Wiltshire and died in 1719 in London, England.

Addison's writing style was characterized by its wit, elegance, and clarity.

Addison's essays often focus on the importance of virtue, the pleasures of imagination, and the role of reason in our lives.

In addition to his contributions to literature and the arts, Addison was also a notable statesman, and he served in several important political positions during his lifetime.

According to Addison, there are two types of imagination: the raising imagination and the embellishing imagination.

Addison believes that raising imagination is essential to human creativity and is a key source of pleasure in life.

Discursive Prose

Addison writes that embellishing imagination is crucial to our enjoyment of the world around us, as it allows us to see familiar things in new and imaginative ways.

Addison argues that imagination has the power to bring joy and fulfillment to the individual, to connect people and foster community, and to enrich our understanding of the world.

His argument that imagination is a means of creating and experiencing beauty, harmony, and order, and of enriching our sensory experiences, is still relevant and inspiring today.

Keywords

Pleasure: a feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment

Imagination: the ability that you have to form pictures or ideas in your mind of things that are new and exciting

Sight: the faculty or power of seeing

Sensory: relating to sensation or the physical senses; transmitted or perceived by the senses.

Self Assessment

1. Who is the author of "The Pleasures of Imagination"?

- A. William Wordsworth
- B. Samuel Johnson
- C. Joseph Addison
- D. Samuel Taylor Coleridge

2. What is the central theme of "The Pleasures of Imagination"?

- A. The power of nature
- B. The beauty of the world
- C. The importance of imagination
- D. The pleasures of the imagination

3. What does Addison argue about imagination in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?

- A. Imagination is a hindrance to human experience
- B. Imagination has no impact on human life
- C. Imagination is a vital aspect of human life
- D. Imagination is not important to human experience

4. What are the different ways in which imagination can bring pleasure according to Addison in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?

- A. Transport individuals to other worlds
- B. Foster community
- C. Enrich our understanding of the world
- D. All of the above

5. How does imagination help in bringing people together according to Addison in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?

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- A. By making people isolated
 - B. By fostering a sense of community
 - C. By making people angry with each other
 - D. By making people forget the world
6. What does Addison believe about the ability of imagination to evoke emotions and sensations?
- A. It is weak
 - B. It is strong
 - C. It has no impact
 - D. It depends on the individual
7. How does imagination enrich our understanding of the world according to Addison in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?
- A. By limiting our perspective
 - B. By allowing us to see beyond the immediate
 - C. By making us forgetful
 - D. By not allowing us to understand the world
8. What is the impact of imagination on human life according to Addison in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?
- A. It is unimportant
 - B. It brings joy and fulfillment
 - C. It causes trouble
 - D. It brings negativity
9. What does Addison believe about the power of imagination to transport individuals to other worlds?
- A. It is weak
 - B. It is strong
 - C. It has no impact
 - D. It depends on the individual
10. How does imagination bring pleasure to the individual according to Addison in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?
- A. By evoking emotions and sensations
 - B. By limiting our perspective
 - C. By making us forgetful
 - D. By not allowing us to understand the world
11. How does imagination bring pleasure to the larger community according to Addison in "The Pleasures of Imagination"?
- A. By making people isolated

- B. By fostering a sense of community
 C. By making people angry with each other
 D. By making people forget the world
12. Joseph Addison believed that imagination is only connected to the senses and not the understanding.
- A. True
 B. False
13. According to Joseph Addison, imagination is an innate human ability.
- A. True
 B. False
14. Joseph Addison believed that imagination is important only for artists and poets.
- A. True
 B. False
15. According to Joseph Addison, imagination is the source of all false beliefs.
- A. True
 B. False

Answers for SelfAssessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. D | 3. C | 4. D | 5. B |
| 6. B | 7. B | 8. B | 9. B | 10. A |
| 11. B | 12. B | 13. A | 14. B | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. What was Joseph Addison's view on the role of imagination in human life according to "The Pleasures of Imagination"?
2. According to Joseph Addison, what is the relationship between imagination and the senses?
3. What was Joseph Addison's view on the relationship between imagination and understanding?
4. In "The Pleasures of Imagination," what role does sight play in the imagination?
5. According to Joseph Addison, what are the distinguishing pleasures of imagination?
6. Write a note on the life and works of Joseph Addison
 What is the significance of the title of the essay "Pleasures of Imagination"?



Further Readings

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Unit 05: Joseph Addison: Pleasures of Imagination

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**Web Links**

<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/addison-the-pleasures-of-the-imagination>

<https://www.bartleby.com/essay/The-Pleasures-of-the-Imagination>

Unit 06: Joseph Addison: Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Analyze the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey"
- Enumerate different aspects of the essay
- Elaborate the main theme of the essay
- Know about the essay and the writer

Introduction

Joseph Addison

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) was an English essayist, poet, and politician who is best known for his contribution to the periodical literature of the 18th century. He is one of the founders of the literary genre known as the periodical essay, which was a popular form of literary expression during the 18th century.

Addison was born in Wiltshire, England, and received his education at Charterhouse and Oxford University. He became famous for his poetry, especially his poem "The Campaign" (1704), which celebrated the Duke of Marlborough's victory at the Battle of Blenheim.

In 1709, Addison collaborated with Richard Steele in founding *The Tatler*, a literary and social journal that dealt with politics, literature, and society. *The Tatler* was followed by *The Spectator*, which Addison edited from 1711 to 1712, and which became one of the most influential periodicals of the 18th century. *The Spectator* was published daily, and each issue included essays on a wide range of topics, such as literature, politics, religion, and society. Addison's essays in *The Spectator* were characterized by their lucid and elegant style, their wit, and their moral and didactic tone.

Addison's other works include his tragedy "Cato" (1713), which was a huge success and became a classic of English drama, and his poems "The Campaign" and "The Traveller" (1718). Addison also served as a Member of Parliament and held several high-level government positions, including Secretary of State for the Southern Department.

Addison's writing had a profound influence on the literary and cultural landscape of the 18th century. His essays were widely read and admired for their moral and social commentary, and helped to shape the emerging English middle class culture. Addison's writing style, characterized by its clarity, elegance, and wit, also influenced many other writers of his time and later periods.

Overall, Joseph Addison is remembered as one of the most important writers and thinkers of the 18th century, whose literary and cultural contributions helped to shape modern English society and culture.

Analysis of the Essay

In the essay, the narrator, who is presumably Addison himself, recounts a conversation he had with his friend Sir Roger de Coverley, who had read a previous paper by the narrator on Westminster Abbey.

Sir Roger praises the narrator's paper and expresses his interest in visiting the Abbey again to see the tombs, which he had not done since reading history. The narrator realizes that Sir Roger's interest in the tombs is likely due to his recent reading of *Bakers Chronicle*, a historical work that Sir Roger has been referencing in his discussions with another friend, Sir Andrew Freeport.

The essay is a humorous and affectionate portrayal of Sir Roger, a fictional character created by Addison and his collaborator Richard Steele, who represents the ideal of the English country gentleman. Sir Roger is depicted as a charming and eccentric figure who is interested in history and culture, but also retains a certain naivety and simplicity.

Through Sir Roger's character, Addison highlights the importance of preserving and appreciating cultural heritage, as well as the need for a balance between tradition and progress. The essay also showcases Addison's own interest in history and literature, as well as his skill in creating memorable and endearing characters.

The narrator describes how he found Sir Roger in his dressing room, being attended to by his butler who was shaving him. After Sir Roger was dressed, he asked for a glass of Widow Trueby's Water, a type of medicinal water that he always drank before going out. The Knight then recommended the narrator to try a dram of it as well, saying that it was the best thing against the Stone or Gravel.

The Stone and Gravel refer to medical conditions related to the kidneys and bladder, and it was believed that certain mineral waters could help alleviate the symptoms. Widow Trueby's Water was one such water that was highly valued for its supposed curative properties.

Sir Roger's recommendation of the water to the narrator is an example of his kind and generous nature. Despite the narrator's initial distaste for the water, Sir Roger believed that it would be beneficial for him and recommended it with "so much heartiness." Sir Roger explains to the narrator that he believes Widow Trueby's Water is not only good for preventing kidney and bladder stones but also for keeping off infection while staying in town.

Sir Roger then reveals that he had stocked up on the water upon hearing news of the sickness being at Dautzick, which may refer to a historical outbreak of the plague in the city of Danzig in the 17th century.

Suddenly, Sir Roger interrupts himself and instructs one of his servants to call for a hackney coach, emphasizing that the driver must be an elderly man. This abrupt change in subject shows Sir Roger's tendency to shift from one topic to another without any apparent connection. The reason for his desire to have an elderly coachman is not immediately clear, but it may be related to his belief that older people are more reliable and trustworthy than younger ones.

Sir Roger resumes his discussion of Widow Trueby's Water, praising the widow for her charitable works and claiming that she did more good than all the doctors and apothecaries in the county combined.

Sir Roger goes on to describe how Widow Trueby distilled every poppy that grew within five miles of her and distributed her water for free to people of all classes. He also mentions that she had a substantial jointure, a type of settlement or allowance made to a woman on her marriage, and that many people in the country hoped for a match between him and her.

Sir Roger's comment that he "could not have done better" if he had not been engaged suggests that he considers Widow Trueby a suitable match for himself, despite the fact that she is a widow and likely older than him. This further emphasizes Sir Roger's unconventional views and his tendency to follow his own instincts rather than social norms.

Sir Roger's discourse on Widow Trueby's Water is interrupted by the arrival of a coach that his servant has called for.

Unit 06: Joseph Addison: Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey

Before getting into the coach, Sir Roger inspects the wheels and asks the coachman if the axletree, a shaft connecting the wheels, is in good condition. When the coachman assures him that it is, Sir Roger turns to the narrator and tells him that the coachman looks like an honest man.

This moment highlights Sir Roger's attention to detail and his concern for safety and reliability. His interest in the condition of the coach's wheels and axletree shows his practical nature and his desire to ensure a smooth and safe journey. At the same time, his quick judgment of the coachman's character based on his appearance reflects his tendency to rely on intuition and personal observation rather than relying on societal norms or conventional wisdom.

Sir Roger interrupts the journey again, this time to ask the coachman if he smokes. When the coachman confirms that he does, Sir Roger directs him to stop at a good tobacconist and buy a roll of their best Virginia tobacco.

This moment highlights Sir Roger's love for tobacco and his generosity in sharing it with others. It also reveals his willingness to break from convention and take spontaneous actions to pursue his own desires.

As the narrator and Sir Roger make their way up the body of the church, Sir Roger points at the trophies on a monument and praises the man depicted, then flings his hand towards Sir Cloudsly Shovel's monument, calling him a very gallant man. When they arrive at Busby's tomb, Sir Roger speaks again in a similar vein, calling him a great man and mentioning that he had whipped his grandfather. Sir Roger's comments and behavior show his appreciation for bravery, gallantry, and greatness, as well as his respect for tradition and history.

When they entered the chapel, Sir Roger stood close to the historian and listened attentively to his account of the various figures. He was particularly pleased to see the statue of the statesman Cecil on his knees and concluded that they were all great men.

However, Sir Roger was also interested in the statue of a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth who had died from a needle prick. When the interpreter told them about her name and family, Sir Roger was very curious about her and wondered why Sir Richard Baker, a famous chronicler, had not mentioned her in his chronicle. This shows that Sir Roger was not only interested in the famous and powerful figure. During the visit, Sir Roger and his companions come across the two Coronation Chairs, one of which is known as the ancient chair brought from Scotland and is believed to have been used by Jacob, the biblical figure.

Sir Roger, who is portrayed as an old-fashioned and traditional man, questions the authority of the claim that Jacob had ever been in Scotland. The guide or interpreter instead tries to collect a forfeit from Sir Roger, which irritates him a bit. However, the guide does not press the issue, and Sir Roger soon regains his good humor.

The essay also mentions Will Wimble, a character known for his habit of taking small souvenirs from historic sites, and Sir Roger jokingly suggests that if he were there, he would surely try to take a tobacco-stopper from one of the chairs.

The essay portrays Sir Roger as a curious and somewhat skeptical observer of history, who is not easily swayed by claims without sufficient evidence. However, he maintains a good-natured attitude and humor throughout the visit.

Sir Roger is depicted as a knowledgeable and opinionated observer of history. He lays his hand upon Edward III's sword and proceeds to give his companions a detailed account of the history of the Black Prince.

Sir Roger then declares, based on Sir Richard Baker's opinion, that Edward III was one of the greatest English monarchs. This shows Sir Roger's deep respect for the monarchy and his pride in English history.

The group is then shown Edward the Confessor's tomb, and Sir Roger shares a curious fact with them: that he was the first person to touch for the Evil, a disease believed to be cured by the touch of a royal person. He then mentions that Henry IV also touched for the Evil, but Sir Roger shakes his head and comments on the many unfortunate events that occurred during that reign, alluding to the fact that he may not hold Henry IV in as high regard as Edward III.

This essay continues to portray Sir Roger as an enthusiastic and knowledgeable lover of history, who takes pride in his country's past and traditions.

Sir Roger and his companion are shown a monument of an English king without a head, with the guide explaining that the head, made of beaten silver, had been stolen several years prior.

Sir Roger immediately quips that it was probably a Whig who had stolen it, implying his political bias as a Tory. He then makes a light-hearted suggestion that they should lock up their kings better, lest someone carries off the body too. This shows Sir Roger's sense of humor and his tendency to make jokes even in somewhat serious situations.

Additionally, his remark about Whigs may also indicate his political views and alignment with the Tory party, which opposed the Whig party during the time period in which the essay is set.

Overall, this essay continues to portray Sir Roger as a witty and jovial character with a deep appreciation for English history, while also hinting at his political affiliations.

In this essay Sir Roger is depicted as a knowledgeable and enthusiastic observer of history. The guide points out the monuments of Henry V and Queen Elizabeth to the group, and Sir Roger seizes the opportunity to share his admiration for these historical figures.

The essay mentions that Sir Roger is able to "shine" during this discussion, which suggests that he is particularly knowledgeable and passionate about these two monarchs. He also uses this opportunity to praise Sir Richard Baker, a historian who wrote about English history, and notes with some surprise that there were many kings mentioned in his works whose monuments he had not yet seen in the Abbey.

The narrator expresses his own personal reaction to Sir Roger's enthusiastic and patriotic demeanor during their visit to Westminster Abbey.

The narrator notes that they are pleased to see Sir Roger's "honest Passion" for the glory of his country and his "respectful Gratitude" towards the memory of its princes. This suggests that the narrator shares Sir Roger's love for England and its history, and is moved by his display of patriotism and respect for the monarchy.

The narrator reinforces the theme of national pride and appreciation for English history that runs throughout the essay, and highlights the narrator's admiration for Sir Roger's character and values.

The essay continues to reinforce Sir Roger's deep interest and respect for English history, as well as his willingness to acknowledge and praise other historians who share his passion for the subject.

The narrator mentions that Sir Roger's good nature extends to everyone he meets, including the interpreter, whom he regarded as an extraordinary man. Sir Roger then showed his appreciation by shaking the interpreter's hand as they parted ways, and even invited him to visit his lodgings in Norfolk-Buildings to discuss these matters more in-depth.

This gesture exemplifies Sir Roger's generous and hospitable character, as well as his willingness to engage with people from all walks of life, regardless of their social status or occupation. The passage emphasizes Sir Roger's open-mindedness and his desire to learn and understand new things, even from someone who may be considered a lesser person in society.

Main Themes

Tradition and heritage: The essay explores the significance of Westminster Abbey as a historical and cultural landmark, showcasing the rich history and traditions of England. The narrator describes the various monuments and tombs in the Abbey, highlighting the important figures and events they represent.

Character and personality: The essay portrays the character of Sir Roger as a benevolent, hospitable, and kind-hearted person, who embodies the virtues of an English gentleman. The narrator provides numerous anecdotes and examples of Sir Roger's behavior and personality, which serve to illustrate his character.

Social hierarchy and class: The essay touches on the idea of social hierarchy and class distinctions, as seen through the interactions between Sir Roger and the interpreter. Despite being from different social classes, Sir Roger treats the interpreter with respect and kindness, emphasizing the importance of treating others with dignity and courtesy.

Religion and spirituality: The essay touches on the theme of religion and spirituality, as seen through the narrator's descriptions of the various religious monuments and symbols in

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Westminster Abbey. Sir Roger's reverence for these symbols and his pious nature also reflect this theme.

Overall, the essay celebrates the cultural, social, and spiritual heritage of England, while also emphasizing the importance of kindness, respect, and open-mindedness towards others.

Sir Roger visited Westminster Abbey because he was interested in the historical and religious significance of the site.

6.1 Visiting the Resting Place

In the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey" by Joseph Addison, the author describes a visit he took with his friend Sir Roger to Westminster Abbey. Sir Roger, who was an elderly gentleman, expressed a desire to visit the resting place of his ancestors and other notable figures buried in the Abbey.

As they walked through the Abbey, Sir Roger showed great reverence for the history and architecture of the place. For Sir Roger, visiting the resting place of his ancestors was a way to connect with his nation's heritage and pay respect to those who had come before him. Addison noted that his friend's visit was not just a matter of curiosity or sightseeing, but a solemn and meaningful experience that touched him deeply.

Through Sir Roger's visit to Westminster Abbey, Addison illustrates the importance of paying homage to those who have gone before us and the power of historical places to inspire awe and reverence. The essay is a tribute to the past and a reminder of the value of preserving and honouring our cultural heritage.

6.2 Familiarizing with the Dead Souls

In the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey" by Joseph Addison, the author discusses the experience of taking his friend, Sir Roger, on a tour of Westminster Abbey. During their visit, Addison notes that Sir Roger was particularly interested in the various monuments and memorials to historical figures. Sir Roger, the subject of the essay, is a character who is deeply interested in the history and culture of England, and his visit to Westminster Abbey is an opportunity for him to connect with the past.

When Addison writes about familiarizing with the dead souls, he means that by visiting the tombs and memorials of great figures from the past, we can come to understand them as human beings and feel a sense of connection to their achievements and struggles. By contemplating the lives of those who have gone before us, we can gain perspective on our own lives and find inspiration to live more purposeful and meaningful lives.

Addison describes Sir Roger's visit to Westminster Abbey as a kind of pilgrimage, where he is able to pay his respects to the great men and women of England's past and feel a sense of gratitude for their contributions to society. In doing so, Sir Roger is able to connect with a larger sense of history and tradition, and to understand himself as part of a larger community of people who have worked to make England a great nation.

6.3 A dialogue with the unseen

In the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey" by Joseph Addison, the phrase "a dialogue with the unseen" refers to the idea that when one visits a place of great historical and cultural significance, such as Westminster Abbey, they are engaging in a conversation or exchange with the past, with those who have gone before them and who are no longer physically present.

Addison suggests that such a dialogue can take many forms, but it ultimately involves a kind of communion with the spirits of the past, as the visitor reflects on the lives and accomplishments of those who are interred or memorialized in the Abbey. This can be a deeply spiritual and emotional experience, as the visitor feels a sense of connection to something greater than themselves and to the long chain of human history.

In the essay, Sir Roger de Coverley, a fictional character, is portrayed as engaging in this kind of dialogue as he visits Westminster Abbey. He is moved by the sense of history and reverence that

permeates the place, and he spends time contemplating the lives and legacies of those who are buried or commemorated there. Through Sir Roger's example, Addison suggests that this kind of dialogue with the unseen can be a profound and meaningful experience, one that can enrich our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

Summary

"Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey" is an essay written by Joseph Addison. The essay presents the thoughts and observations of Addison's fictional character, Sir Roger, who visits Westminster Abbey in London.

Sir Roger is a kind and gentle man, who likes to spend his time visiting various places in London.

One day, Sir Roger decides to visit Westminster Abbey, a famous historical site in London.

As he enters the Abbey, Sir Roger is filled with awe and admiration for the grandeur of the building.

Sir Roger is impressed by the memorials and statues of famous people in the Abbey. He expresses his reverence for the dead and his belief in the afterlife.

Sir Roger's visit to Westminster Abbey provides him with an opportunity to reflect on the transience of life and the importance of leaving a legacy.

Sir Roger's reflections on life and death are optimistic, and he believes that a good reputation and a virtuous life are the keys to a happy afterlife.

Keywords

Sir Roger: Sir Roger is a fictional character created by Joseph Addison who is the protagonist of the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey". He is a wealthy, kind-hearted, and traditional man who values honor, loyalty, and social norms.

Westminster Abbey: Westminster Abbey is a famous church located in London, England. It is a royal church and the burial place of many historical figures such as kings, queens, and poets. It is also a popular tourist attraction.

Spectator: The Spectator was a daily periodical published in the 18th century in England.

Tradition: Tradition refers to the customs, beliefs, and practices that are passed down from one generation to another.

Patriotism: Patriotism refers to the love and devotion to one's country.

Charity: Charity refers to the act of giving to those in need.

Self Assessment

1. Who is the protagonist of the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey"?

- A. Joseph Addison
- B. Westminster Abbey
- C. Sir Roger
- D. The Spectator

2. What is Westminster Abbey?

- A. A famous church located in London, England
- B. A daily periodical published in the 18th century in England
- C. A royal palace located in London, England
- D. A historical battlefield located in England

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3. Who wrote the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey"?

- A. Sir Roger
- B. Joseph Addison
- C. The Spectator
- D. Westminster Abbey

4. What does Sir Roger value?

- A. Dishonesty and deceit
- B. Modernism and change
- C. Honor, loyalty, and social norms
- D. Disrespect and irreverence

5. What does tradition refer to?

- A. The customs, beliefs, and practices that are passed down from one generation to another
- B. The act of giving to those in need
- C. Love and devotion to one's country
- D. None of the above

6. What does patriotism refer to?

- A. The act of giving to those in need
- B. Love and devotion to one's country
- C. The customs, beliefs, and practices that are passed down from one generation to another
- D. None of the above

7. What is The Spectator?

- A. A famous church located in London, England
- B. A daily periodical published in the 18th century in England
- C. A royal palace located in London, England
- D. A historical battlefield

8. Who is the main character of the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey" by Addison?

- A. Sir Roger
- B. Addison
- C. Westminster Abbey
- D. The narrator

9. In the essay, Sir Roger is described as _____.

- A. A wealthy businessman
- B. A retired military officer
- C. A devout Christian
- D. An eccentric country gentleman

10. What is the main subject of Joseph Addison's essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey"?

- A. The beauty of the Westminster Abbey
- B. The history of the Westminster Abbey
- C. Sir Roger's reaction to visiting the Westminster Abbey
- D. The architecture of the Westminster Abbey

11. Why did Sir Roger visit Westminster Abbey?

- A. He was forced to by his chaplain
- B. He was interested in the historical significance of the site
- C. He wanted to see the poets buried there
- D. He was looking for a quiet place to pray

12. Sir Roger was not interested in visiting Westminster Abbey.

- A. True
- B. False

13. Sir Roger was not interested in the historical significance of the Abbey.

- A. True
- B. False

14. Sir Roger was not moved by the memorial to the Unknown Soldier.

- A. True
- B. False

15. Sir Roger believed that the Abbey was a fitting place for great men to be honored.

- A. True
- B. False

16. Sir Roger did not appreciate Westminster Abbey.

- A. True
- B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. A | 3. B | 4. C | 5. A |
| 6. B | 7. B | 8. A | 9. D | 10. C |
| 11. B | 12. B | 13. B | 14. B | 15. A |
| 16. B | | | | |

Review Questions

1. Why did Sir Roger visit Westminster Abbey?
2. What is the main message of the writer in the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey".
3. Critically analyse the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey".
4. Write the themes of the essay "Sir Roger at Westminster Abbey".
5. Critically analyse the character of Sir Roger.



Further Readings

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Web Links

<http://fullreads.com/essay/no-329-sir-roger-at-westminster-abbey-from-the-spectator/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78lyTc2hKJY>

Unit 07: Jonathan Swift: Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation

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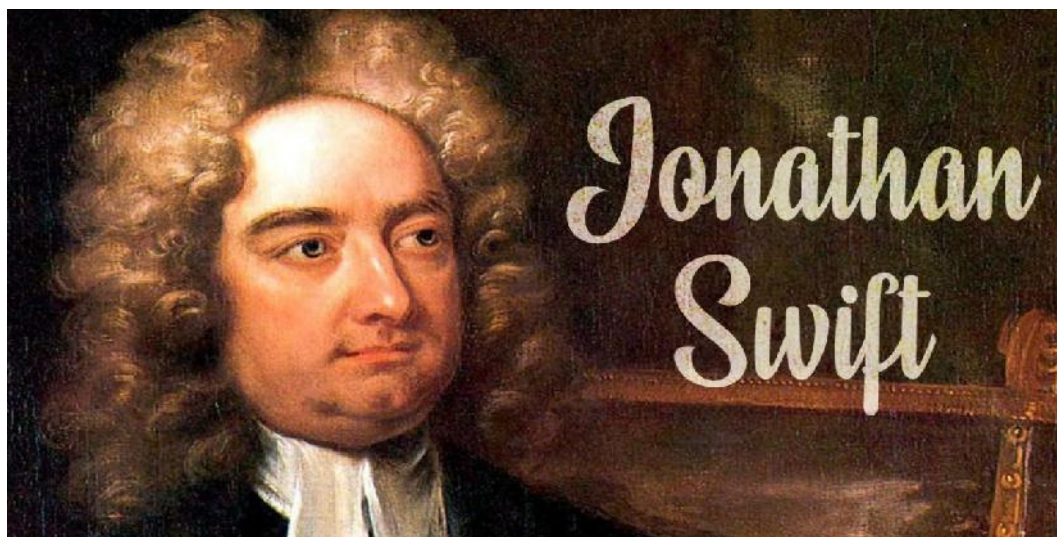
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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the life and works of Jonathan Swift
- Analyze the essay "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"
- Enumerate the Critical approaches to conversation
- Understand the difference between gossip and conversation
- Recognize the errors while participating in agreeable conversation
- Know about the discourse on etiquette

Introduction



Jonathan Swift was an Anglo-Irish writer, poet, and satirist, who lived from 1667 to 1745. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest English-language writers of the early 18th century, and is best known for his works "Gulliver's Travels" and "A Modest Proposal".

Swift was born in Dublin, Ireland, to English parents. He was educated at Kilkenny College and later at Trinity College, Dublin. After completing his education, he became a chaplain and secretary to Sir William Temple, an English statesman. This experience gave him exposure to the political and social issues of the time, which greatly influenced his writing.

In 1704, Swift published his first major work, "A Tale of a Tub", a satirical attack on the corruption of the Church and the abuse of power by religious leaders. The book was highly controversial and earned him a reputation as a brilliant satirist. He continued to write satires throughout his life, including "The Battle of the Books" (1704) and "A Modest Proposal" (1729). The latter is a satirical essay that proposes a solution to the problem of overpopulation in Ireland by suggesting that the poor sell their children as food to the rich.

Swift's masterpiece, "Gulliver's Travels", was published in 1726 and is considered one of the greatest works of satire in English literature. The book tells the story of a man named Lemuel Gulliver and his travels to various imaginary lands, each with its own absurdities and absurd customs. The book is a satirical commentary on human nature and the political and social issues of Swift's time.

Swift was also a prominent political writer, and he used his writing to express his views on the political and social issues of the day. He was a strong supporter of Irish independence and was critical of England's treatment of Ireland. He wrote several political pamphlets, including "The Drapier's Letters" (1724), in which he argued against the British government's plan to introduce new coins in Ireland.

Throughout his life, Swift suffered from Meniere's disease, a condition that caused vertigo, tinnitus, and deafness. Despite his ill health, he continued to write and publish his works. He was also a friend and mentor to several young writers, including Alexander Pope, and was highly respected by his contemporaries.

Swift died in 1745 at the age of 78 and was buried in Dublin's St. Patrick's Cathedral. His legacy has been immense, and he is considered one of the greatest writers in the English language. His works continue to be widely read and studied, and his wit and satire are still relevant and highly regarded today.

In conclusion, Jonathan Swift was a towering figure of English literature and a master of satire. He used his writing to comment on the political and social issues of his time and to expose the absurdities and follies of human nature. He remains one of the greatest writers of the 18th century and his legacy continues to be celebrated and revered.

7.1 "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"

"Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" is a satirical essay written by Jonathan Swift. In this essay, Swift offers a humorous and critical perspective on the art of conversation and the social customs and norms that govern it. He critiques the manners and behaviors of conversationalists during his time. The essay was published in 1713 and written as a series of hints and suggestions for those who wanted to improve their conversational skills and avoid common errors.

In the essay, Swift points out that conversation is an important aspect of social interaction and that it is essential for individuals to be able to converse in a polite and agreeable manner. He emphasizes the importance of avoiding rude and unpleasant behaviors, such as interrupting others, speaking too loudly or excessively, or being overly critical. He also stresses the importance of avoiding gossip, which he considers a waste of time and a damaging form of conversation.

Swift goes on to identify several common errors that individuals make while participating in conversation. For example, he points out that many people are overly eager to talk about themselves and their own experiences, without taking the time to listen to others or ask questions. He also criticizes individuals who speak in a monotonous or boring manner, or who constantly repeat themselves. He encourages conversationalists to be engaged, lively, and interesting in their interactions.

The essay also contains a discourse on etiquette, with Swift offering suggestions for how individuals should behave in various social situations. For example, he advises that individuals

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should avoid being overly familiar or intimate with others, and that they should be mindful of their tone and language when speaking to those in positions of authority. He also encourages individuals to be polite and respectful in their interactions with others, regardless of social status or wealth.

Swift's essay is notable for its wit and humor, as well as its relevance to contemporary social issues. He uses satire and irony to make his points, and his writing is often characterized by a sharp and insightful understanding of human behavior. He also provides practical advice for those who want to improve their conversational skills, and his suggestions are still relevant today.

In conclusion, "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" is a witty and insightful critique of the manners and behaviors of conversationalists during the early 18th century. It offers practical advice for those who want to improve their conversational skills and avoid common errors, and its relevance to contemporary social issues is evidence of its lasting impact. The essay is a testament to Swift's mastery of satire and his ability to use humor to make important points about human behavior and social interaction.

7.2 Critical Approaches to Conversation

Jonathan Swift's "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" is a satirical essay that critiques the manners and social norms of contemporary conversation. Through his witty and biting commentary, Swift exposes the superficiality, emptiness, and shallowness of polite society and its obsession with appearances. In this essay, he offers a number of critical approaches to conversation, arguing that true conversation should involve intellectual exchange and meaningful discussion, rather than mere small talk and pleasantries. In his essay, Swift critiques the following aspects of conversation:

Superficiality: Swift begins his essay by pointing out that conversation is an important aspect of social life, but it is also one that is often taken for granted. He argues that people are more concerned with impressing others and conforming to social norms than with genuine communication and intellectual exchange. He notes that people often use puns, jokes, and other forms of wordplay in conversation as a way of showing off their wit and intelligence, but that this often detracts from the overall quality of the conversation. Instead of meaningful discussion, Swift laments, people engage in empty talk and meaningless pleasantries that do little to advance understanding or deepen relationships.

Manners: Swift also takes aim at the manners and conventions of polite society, arguing that they often get in the way of true communication. He notes that people are more concerned with observing the rules of etiquette and appearing well-mannered than with being genuine and authentic in their conversations. He observes that people often become overly concerned with making a good impression, leading them to be overly cautious and reserved in their interactions with others. Swift argues that this type of behavior stifles conversation and makes it difficult for people to form meaningful connections with one another.

Empty talk: One of the key critical approaches to conversation that Swift highlights in his essay is the idea that true conversation should involve intellectual exchange and meaningful discussion. He notes that conversation is a valuable opportunity for people to engage with one another on a deeper level, to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences, and to learn from one another. He argues that the best conversations are those that challenge us, that make us think, and that help us to grow and develop as individuals. Swift exposes the emptiness and shallowness of polite society and its obsession with appearances.

Intellectual exchange: Swift argues that true conversation should involve intellectual exchange and meaningful discussion, rather than mere small talk and pleasantries. In his essay Swift offers the idea that manners and conventions should not be the primary focus of conversation. He notes that while manners are important and have a place in society, they should not get in the way of true communication. Swift argues that people should not be so concerned with appearing well-mannered that they become overly reserved and cautious in their interactions with others. Instead, he advocates for a more open and authentic approach to conversation, in which people are free to be themselves and engage with one another on a deeper level. Swift argues that good conversation should be focused on intellectual exchange and meaningful discussion, not on trying to impress others.

Puns and jokes: Swift criticizes the excessive use of puns, jokes, and other forms of wordplay in conversation, which he sees as a form of social one-upmanship. He notes that these types of behavior often detract from the overall quality of the conversation.

Thus, Jonathan Swift's "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" provides a number of critical approaches to conversation. By using humor and irony, Swift critiques the common practices of his time and offers his own vision of what good conversation should be.

7.3 Difference Between Gossip and Conversation

In the essay, Swift distinguishes between gossip and conversation and highlights the differences between the two. He argues that true conversation should be a meaningful exchange of ideas and opinions, while gossip is often nothing more than idle chatter and speculation about other people's lives.

Gossip, according to Swift, is one of the most common forms of conversation in polite society. He notes that people often engage in gossip as a way of filling the time or impressing others with their knowledge of the latest news and rumors. Swift argues that gossip is shallow, empty, and superficial, and serves no real purpose other than to pass the time or to satisfy a nosy curiosity. He notes that gossip often lacks substance and lacks the intellectual and emotional depth of true conversation.

Swift contrasts gossip with true conversation, which he argues should be an exchange of ideas and opinions between individuals. He notes that true conversation is a valuable opportunity for people to engage with one another on a deeper level, to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences, and to learn from one another. He argues that the best conversations are those that challenge us, that make us think, and that help us to grow and develop as individuals. Swift notes that too often, conversation is reduced to mere small talk and pleasantries, which do little to deepen our understanding of the world or of one another.

Swift also critiques the mannerisms and conventions of polite society, which he argues often stifle true conversation. He notes that people are often more concerned with observing the rules of etiquette and appearing well-mannered than with being genuine and authentic in their conversations. He observes that people often become overly concerned with making a good impression, leading them to be overly cautious and reserved in their interactions with others. Swift argues that this type of behavior stifles conversation and makes it difficult for people to form meaningful connections with one another.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of gossip and to promote true conversation, Swift offers several suggestions. He notes that people should be more mindful of their behavior in conversation, avoiding empty talk and focusing on intellectual exchange. He argues that people should be more open and authentic in their interactions with others, avoiding the superficiality and shallowness that so often characterize polite society. He also advocates for a more relaxed and informal approach to conversation, which will help to create an environment that is more conducive to genuine communication.

Swift's essay provides a valuable perspective on the importance of conversation and the differences between gossip and true conversation. By highlighting the shallow and superficial nature of gossip and the stifling effect of manners and conventions, Swift offers a vision of what good conversation should be. He argues that true conversation should be an exchange of ideas and opinions that challenges us, makes us think, and helps us to grow and develop as individuals.

In conclusion, Jonathan Swift's "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" provides a critical perspective on the mannerisms and social norms of contemporary conversation. Through his witty and biting commentary, Swift exposes the superficiality, emptiness, and shallowness of polite society and its obsession with appearances. Swift makes a clear distinction between gossip and conversation, viewing gossip as a negative and harmful form of interaction, and conversation as a productive and valuable aspect of social life. Through his witty and humorous writing, Swift encourages individuals to engage in conversation in a way that is respectful, engaging, and meaningful. He argues that conversation is a valuable form of social interaction that has the potential to enrich one's life and foster meaningful connections with others. He encourages individuals to engage in conversation that is lively, interesting, and respectful, and he provides suggestions for how to participate in conversation in a productive and enjoyable way.

7.4 Errors while Participating in Agreeable Conversation

In "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation," Jonathan Swift identifies following errors that individuals make while participating in conversation.

Interrupting others: Swift argues that interrupting others is a major mistake in conversation, as it shows a lack of respect for the speaker and makes it difficult for the conversation to flow smoothly. He notes that this type of behavior is not only rude and disrespectful, but it also detracts from the quality of the conversation. Swift argues that people should be more patient and respectful in their interactions with others, and that they should listen carefully to what others have to say before jumping in with their own thoughts and opinions.

Dominating the conversation: Swift also criticizes individuals who dominate the conversation, monopolizing the conversation with their own thoughts and opinions, and failing to give others a chance to speak. He notes that some people feel the need to constantly talk and monopolize the conversation, often at the expense of others. This type of behavior not only makes the conversation one-sided and unengaging, but also creates an atmosphere of discomfort and resentment among the participants. Swift argues that the best conversations are those in which all participants have an opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions, and that people should be mindful of giving others the chance to speak.

Not listening: Swift argues that it is important to be an active and attentive listener in conversation, and that failing to listen can make the conversation dull and unproductive. He also addresses the role of manners and etiquette in conversation. He notes that while manners and etiquette can be useful in creating a sense of order and respect, they can also stifle conversation and lead to superficial and shallow interactions. Swift argues that people should be more mindful of the conventions of polite society, but that they should also be more relaxed and spontaneous in their conversations, in order to create an atmosphere that is more conducive to genuine communication. He suggests that people should strive to be attentive listeners, and to seek to understand the perspectives of others.

Speaking too much or too little: Swift also notes that individuals who speak too much or too little can detract from the quality of the conversation, and that finding the right balance is important for a productive and enjoyable conversation. Speaking too much refers to dominating the conversation, either by talking excessively about oneself or by interrupting others. This can make others feel unvalued and unheard, and can lead to boredom and disinterest. Swift warns that people who speak too much are often viewed as self-absorbed and lacking in social graces. They may also be seen as impolite and inconsiderate, as they do not allow others to participate in the conversation. On the other hand, speaking too little refers to being reticent or shy during conversation. People who are prone to speaking too little may be intimidated or nervous in social situations, and may struggle to contribute to the conversation. This can lead to a lack of participation and a sense of disengagement from the conversation. Swift notes that people who speak too little are often perceived as aloof or uninterested, and they may miss out on opportunities to connect with others and to share their thoughts and ideas. He argues that a healthy balance between speaking too much and too little is crucial for successful and enjoyable conversation.

Being overly critical: Swift argues that individuals who are overly critical or judgmental in conversation can make the conversation tense and unpleasant, and can damage relationships. Being overly critical refers to the act of judging, analyzing, and scrutinizing everything in an excessively harsh and negative manner. People who are overly critical are often seen as negative and difficult to be around, as their constant criticism can be draining and demotivating to those around them. This type of behavior can damage personal relationships and harm one's social and professional reputation.

Being insincere: Finally, Swift criticizes individuals who are insincere in conversation, suggesting that it is important to be authentic and genuine in conversation in order to foster meaningful connections with others. One of the main errors that Swift addresses is the overuse of compliments and flattery. He notes that people often feel the need to shower others with compliments, even when they don't truly believe them. This type of insincere flattery not only detracts from the authenticity of the conversation, but also creates a sense of mistrust and suspicion among the participants. Swift argues that this type of behavior is not only insincere but also ineffective, as

people are able to see through false compliments and they often lead to a decrease in the overall quality of the conversation.

In sum, in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation," Swift identifies several common errors that individuals make while participating in conversation, and he provides practical advice for avoiding these mistakes and participating in productive and enjoyable conversation. Through his witty and humorous writing, Swift encourages individuals to engage in conversation in a way that is respectful, engaging, and meaningful.

7.5 Discourse on Etiquette

In "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation," Jonathan Swift provides a discourse on etiquette and the importance of proper manners in conversation. Swift argues that good manners and etiquette are essential for productive and enjoyable conversation, and that individuals who do not adhere to these standards can detract from the quality of the conversation. According to Swift, etiquette is not only about following social norms, but also about demonstrating respect and consideration for others.

Swift identifies several key aspects of etiquette that are important in conversation, including:

Respect: Swift argues that individuals must show respect for each other in conversation, including listening attentively, avoiding interruptions, and avoiding offensive or rude remarks. He suggests that people should demonstrate respect for others by being attentive listeners and avoiding interruptions. He notes that interruptions can be seen as disrespectful and can disrupt the flow of the conversation. He also encourages people to use proper titles and forms of address, as these small gestures can help to establish a sense of respect and consideration.

Civility: Swift also emphasizes the importance of civility in conversation, encouraging individuals to speak politely, avoid personal attacks, and avoid heated arguments. He advocates the importance of avoiding interruptions and allowing others to speak without being drowned out. He also notes that using proper titles and forms of address can help to establish a sense of respect and consideration in conversations. He emphasizes that people should avoid discussing sensitive topics, such as politics and religion, unless they are well-informed and prepared to engage in a respectful dialogue. Swift also highlights the importance of being mindful of one's tone and demeanor during conversation. He suggests that people should avoid behaviors that may cause offense or discomfort to others and should strive to maintain a sense of calm and wisdom in all interactions.

Clarity: Swift suggests that individuals should strive to be clear and concise in conversation, and that they should avoid speaking in a confusing or vague manner. He suggests that people should strive to be direct and straightforward in their communication, avoiding ambiguous statements that can lead to misunderstandings. He writes that by demonstrating clarity in all interactions, individuals can create more positive and meaningful connections with others.

Humor: Swift notes that humor can be a valuable aspect of conversation, as long as it is done in a respectful and appropriate manner. He suggests that people should use humor in moderation, avoiding overly aggressive or offensive jokes. He also emphasizes the importance of being mindful of the audience and avoiding jokes that may be inappropriate or insensitive. He argues that humor can be an important tool for enhancing conversations and improving relationships.

Brevity: Swift also stresses the importance of brevity in conversation, arguing that individuals should avoid speaking at length about trivial or unimportant topics. Swift suggests that people should strive to be brief and to-the-point in their speech, avoiding lengthy and overly detailed explanations. He argues that this helps to maintain the flow of conversation and ensures that everyone involved is able to fully engage in the conversation.

In addition to these specific aspects of etiquette, Swift also provides general advice for engaging in conversation in a polite and respectful manner, including avoiding dominance and competition, and focusing on meaningful and productive conversation.

In sum, in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation," Swift provides a discourse on etiquette, emphasizing the importance of proper manners and etiquette in productive and enjoyable conversation. Through his witty and humorous writing, Swift encourages individuals to engage in conversation in a way that is respectful, engaging, and meaningful.

Theme

Unit 07: Jonathan Swift: Hints Towards an essay on Conversation

One of the key themes in the essay is the idea of authenticity in conversation. Swift critiques the tendency of people to put on false pretenses and engage in shallow, insincere conversations in order to impress others. He suggests that genuine and meaningful conversations are rare and that people should strive to be more authentic and sincere in their interactions with others.

Another important theme in the essay is the idea of conversation as a form of self-expression. Swift notes that conversations can reveal a great deal about a person's character and beliefs, and that people should be mindful of the impact their words and actions have on others. He also suggests that conversations can be used as a means of exploring and understanding different perspectives and ideas.

The essay is written in a witty and biting style, and Swift uses humor and irony to highlight the absurdities and excesses of contemporary conversation practices. Despite its satirical tone, the essay is also deeply insightful, and Swift's observations on the nature of conversation and its role in human interaction continue to be relevant and thought-provoking today.

In conclusion, "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" is a masterful example of Swift's satirical style and his critical perspective on contemporary society. Through his humorous and insightful observations on the art of conversation, Swift offers a commentary on the importance of authenticity, self-expression, and meaningful human interaction.



Note: Swift was also a pioneer in the field of political satire

Summary

- The essay aims to provide guidelines for good conversation practices.
- Swift argues that conversation is important for building relationships and maintaining social connections.
- Swift distinguishes between gossip and conversation, pointing out that gossip is harmful to both the gossiper and the subject of the gossip.
- Swift identifies common errors in conversation, including talking too much or too little, dominating the conversation, and talking too loudly or too quietly.
- Swift suggests that good conversation requires skills such as active listening, clear and concise speech, and consideration for others.
- Swift discusses the importance of good manners and etiquette in conversation, including avoiding offensive language and being polite to others.
- Swift argues that humor is an important aspect of conversation and can be used to ease tensions and lighten the mood.
- Swift suggests avoiding controversial topics, such as religion and politics, in conversation.
- Swift concludes that good conversation is an essential aspect of social interaction and should be cultivated through careful consideration and practice.
- The essay is written in a satirical tone, using humor and irony to make its points.

Keywords

Conversation: a talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged.

Discourse: written or spoken communication or debate.

Errors: mistakes

Gossip: casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true.

Etiquette: good manners

Self Assessment

1. Who wrote "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
 - A. John Donne
 - B. Samuel Johnson
 - C. Jonathan Swift
 - D. Alexander Pope

2. What is the main theme of "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
 - A. The importance of friendship
 - B. The role of women in society
 - C. The errors in conversation and the importance of etiquette
 - D. The impact of war on society

3. What is one error in conversation that Swift identifies in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
 - A. Speaking too much
 - B. Listening too much
 - C. Telling lies
 - D. Being too smart

4. What does Swift advise in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" about interrupting others in conversation?
 - A. It is a good thing to do
 - B. It shows respect for the speaker
 - C. It is acceptable in certain situations
 - D. It is a major mistake

5. How does Swift feel about humor in conversation, according to "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
 - A. It is not important
 - B. It should be avoided
 - C. It can be valuable as long as it is done in a respectful manner
 - D. It should be the focus of the conversation

6. Who is Jonathan Swift best known for?
 - A. His works on philosophy
 - B. His poems
 - C. His essays on politics and society
 - D. His novels

7. What is Swift's most famous work?
 - A. "A Tale of a Tub"

Unit 07: Jonathan Swift: Hints Towards an essay on Conversation

- B. "Gulliver's Travels"
- C. "The Battle of the Books"
- D. "The Essay on Man"

8. What is the main theme of "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" ?

- A. The importance of education
- B. The dangers of political corruption
- C. The adventures of a man in strange lands
- D. The idea of authenticity in conversation

9. When was Jonathan Swift born?

- A. 1667
- B. 1567
- C. 1767
- D. 1467

10. Where was Jonathan Swift born?

- A. Dublin, Ireland
- B. London, England
- C. Edinburgh, Scotland
- D. Paris, France

11. What was Jonathan Swift's religious affiliation?

- A. Protestant
- B. Catholic
- C. Atheist
- D. Anglican

12. What was Jonathan Swift's political stance?

- A. Conservative
- B. Liberal
- C. Socialist
- D. Whig

13. What was Jonathan Swift's profession before becoming a writer?

- A. Teacher
- B. Priest
- C. Lawyer
- D. Doctor

14. What was the main focus of Jonathan Swift's writing?

- A. Religion
- B. Politics and society
- C. Love and relationships
- D. Adventure and fantasy

15. How did Jonathan Swift view human nature, according to his writing?

- A. As inherently good
- B. As inherently evil
- C. As complex and difficult to understand
- D. As simply indifferent

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. C | 3. A | 4. D | 5. C |
| 6. C | 7. B | 8. D | 9. A | 10. A |
| 11. D | 12. D | 13. B | 14. B | 15. C |

Review Questions

1. What is the central theme of "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
2. How does Swift critique the manner of conversation in his time in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
3. What are some of the errors in conversation that Swift identifies in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
4. What is the role of etiquette in conversation, according to Swift in "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
5. What can we learn about the society and culture of Swift's time from "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation"?
6. What is your personal opinion on the relevance of "Hints Towards an Essay on Conversation" in today's world?



Further Readings

"A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift

"Gulliver's Travels" by Jonathan Swift

"The Battle of the Books" by Jonathan Swift

"The Art of Conversation" by Dale Carnegie

"The Book of Good Manners: A Guide to Polite Usage for All Social Functions" by W.D. Jefferson

"Manners, Culture and Dress of the Best American Society, Including Social, Commercial and Legal Forms" by Richard A. Wells

"The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift" edited by Christopher Fox

"Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age" by Irvin Ehrenpreis.

**Web Links**

<https://www.bartleby.com/27/8.html>

http://essays.quotidiana.org/swift/hints_towards_an_essay/

<http://www.grtbooks.com/JonathanSwift/EssayOnConversation.asp?idx=2&lng=al&lst=al&aa=SW&at=ES&yr=1709>

Unit 08: Jonathan Swift: Thoughts on Various Subjects

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Analyze the essay “Thoughts on Various Subjects”
- Enumerate some thoughts on religion given by Jonathan Swift in “Thoughts on Various Subjects”
- Elaborate some thoughts on philosophy given by Jonathan Swift in “Thoughts on Various Subjects”
- Know about some thoughts on human nature given by Jonathan Swift in “Thoughts on Various Subjects”
- Understand the essay “Thoughts on Various Subjects” as a satire

Introduction

Jonathan Swift

Anglo-Irish poet, satirist, essayist, and political pamphleteer Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin, Ireland. He spent much of his early adult life in England before returning to Dublin to serve as Dean of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin for the last 30 years of his life. It was this later stage when he would write most of his greatest works. Best known as the author of *A Modest Proposal* (1729), *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), and *A Tale Of A Tub* (1704), Swift is widely acknowledged as the greatest prose satirist in the history of English literature.

Swift’s father died months before Jonathan was born, and his mother returned to England shortly after giving birth, leaving Jonathan in the care of his uncle in Dublin. Swift’s extended family had several interesting literary connections: his grandmother, Elizabeth (Dryden) Swift, was the niece of Sir Erasmus Dryden, grandfather of the poet John Dryden. The same grandmother’s aunt, Katherine (Throckmorton) Dryden, was a first cousin of Elizabeth, wife of Sir Walter Raleigh. His great-great grandmother, Margaret (Godwin) Swift, was the sister of Francis Godwin, author of *The Man in the Moone*, which influenced parts of Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. His uncle, Thomas Swift, married a daughter of the poet and playwright Sir William Davenant, a godson of William

Shakespeare. Swift's uncle served as Jonathan's benefactor, sending him to Trinity College Dublin, where he earned his BA and befriended writer William Congreve. Swift also studied toward his MA before the Glorious Revolution of 1688 forced Jonathan to move to England, where he would work as a secretary to a diplomat. He would earn an MA from Hart Hall, Oxford University, in 1692, and eventually a Doctor in Divinity .

Swift suffered a stroke in 1742, leaving him unable to speak. He died three years later, and was buried at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

Thoughts on Various Subjects

Thoughts on Various Subjects is the title of a satirical essay by Jonathan Swift. It consists of a series of short epigrams or apothegms with no particular connections between them. In this work Swift covers a wide range of topics, from religion and philosophy to politics and human nature. Swift's writing style is characterized by his sharp wit, sarcasm, and irony, and he often uses satire to criticize contemporary society and its shortcomings. In this work, he expresses his views on a variety of issues, including the role of government, the importance of education, the corrupting influence of power and wealth, and the hypocrisy of the church.

Swift's work also provides insights into his personal beliefs and values. He was a staunch advocate for social justice and equality, and he frequently spoke out against the oppression of the poor and marginalized. He was also deeply skeptical of human nature, and he believed that people were inherently flawed and prone to corruption and greed. Swift's insights and observations are still relevant today, and his writing continues to inspire and provoke readers more than three centuries after his death.

"Thoughts on Various Subjects" is a collection of quotes and musings by Jonathan Swift, a famous author known for his satirical works such as "Gulliver's Travels." The collection covers a wide range of topics, including truth, books, human nature, education, criticism, politics, wealth, and women. The quotes provide insight into Swift's beliefs and attitudes on these subjects, often offering a witty and satirical commentary on human behavior and society. However, it's important to note that one of the quotes regarding children is a satirical statement from Swift's work "A Modest Proposal" and is not to be taken seriously or as reflective of Swift's actual beliefs.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was one of the most celebrated political satirists of his age. However, embedded in his writing are numerous astute observations on the mind and brain. Today, Swift is perhaps best remembered as the literary author of Gulliver's Travels (1726). However, to his contemporaries he was considered a leading commentator on the politics of England's relations with Ireland, and a significant spiritual head of the Church as the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin for over 30 years (from 1713 to the time of his death in 1745).

In this collection of aphorisms, Jonathan Swift reflects on various aspects of human behavior and society.

In his work Swift suggests that although people may have religious beliefs, they often use them to justify hate rather than love. Next he observes that throughout history, people have been consumed with transient interests and conflicts, but this is no different in the present day. The third quote notes that even the wisest person cannot predict all outcomes because unforeseeable events can change everything.

He argues that a confident and positive attitude can be effective in persuading others, especially when speaking to a large audience. He laments that people often do not heed advice or warnings, making it difficult to change their behavior. Swift humorously speculates that even if advice could be found on the moon, it might be useless without the passage of time.

Swift suggests that people tend to focus on the positive aspects of their desires before they are fulfilled, but afterward, they tend to dwell on the negative consequences. Swift's observations are often satirical and critical, highlighting the limitations and foibles of human nature.

In this essay Jonathan Swift offers insights into various aspects of human nature and society.

Unit 08: Jonathan Swift: Thoughts on Various Subjects

He suggests that religion, like a child, needs miraculous events to sustain it, even as it ages. Swift writes that pleasures often come at the cost of pain or lethargy, similar to spending next year's earnings prematurely.

In his essay Swift reflects on the process of personal growth, with the latter part of life dedicated to correcting past mistakes and misguided beliefs. The fourth quote advises writers to consider what information they are glad to know when reading old books, in order to know what knowledge will be valuable to future generations.

Swift contrasts the treatment of historical figures in poetry and history. While poets often immortalize themselves through their work, historians focus on the actions and events rather than the authors themselves.

Swift suggests that true genius is often met with opposition from those who lack the same level of intelligence or creativity. He observes that even those with many advantages in life are vulnerable to unexpected events that can disrupt their sense of well-being.

Swift argues that cowards should be punished with death rather than ignominy, as the fear of death is the greatest deterrent for them. Overall, Swift's observations are often sharp, satirical, and critical, highlighting the flaws and contradictions in human nature and society.

Swift suggests that great inventions often come from times of ignorance and from unexpected sources. He gives examples such as the compass, gunpowder, and printing, which were developed during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and by the Germans, who were not considered a particularly inventive nation at the time.

Swift questions the validity of common beliefs about ghosts and spirits. He notes that it is often only one person in a group who claims to see a spirit, and suggests that this may be due to that person's emotional state rather than the presence of an actual ghost.

Swift reflects on the idea that neither ignorance nor knowledge will excuse moral failings or lack of faith in the day of judgment. He suggests that both groups have equal opportunities for forgiveness, but some vices and scruples may be forgiven based on the strength of temptation.

He considers the value of historical accounts and the challenge for writers in distinguishing important details from less significant ones, particularly as time passes and certain details lose their relevance.

He comments on the tendency of writers to describe the present age as "critical" and parallels this to the way that divines describe the age as "sinful."

Swift points out the tendency of people to focus on the future and predict how their time will be remembered, but in reality, people's attention is usually absorbed by present matters.

The writer writes about the chameleon's tongue, which is able to move quickly and adapt to its environment.

Swift talks about the loss of identity that comes with being granted a peerage, either in the form of losing one's surname for a spiritual peer, or losing one's Christian name for a temporal peer.

Swift suggests that great inventions often arise during times of ignorance and from unexpected sources. The writer notes that the use of the compass, gunpowder, and printing, which are considered among the greatest inventions of all time, arose during periods of ignorance. The speaker also comments that these inventions were created by the Germans, who are sometimes considered a dull nation.

The writer argues that the common belief in ghosts and spectres is false, since they are usually only seen by one person at a time. The speaker suggests that this is because the sightings are often caused by the imagination or mental state of the person seeing them, rather than by the presence of a ghost.

Swift suggests that both the wise and the ignorant will be held accountable for their actions on the Day of Judgment. The speaker argues that both groups are without excuse for their lack of morals or faith, but acknowledges that some allowances may be made for those who face greater temptations or challenges.

The writer comments on the tendency of writers to describe the present era as a "critical age," just as religious leaders often refer to it as a "sinful age." The speaker suggests that this may be a cliché or overused phrase.

Swift describes individuals who possess positive qualities that benefit others, but not themselves. The writer likens these individuals to a sundial on the front of a house, which provides information to others but not to the owner within.

Swift suggests that weaker parties in disputes use deception to make themselves appear stronger. He criticizes those who, in an effort to eliminate biases, end up eradicating important values such as religion and honesty. Swift suggests that limiting possessions can be beneficial because it limits people's desires, making it easier for them to focus on the public good. Further Swift suggests that there are three ways for a person to deal with criticism from others: to ignore it, to respond in kind, or to try to live in a way that avoids it. Swift draws a humorous comparison between the physical features of animals in hot and cold climates. The author criticizes astrologers who claim to be able to predict the outcome of a lawsuit based on the position of the stars, without considering the merits of the case. Swift defends the Book of Tobit and suggests that it may contain elements of poetry. The writer compares people with good qualities that benefit others but not themselves to a sundial that serves others but not its owner. The writer suggests that recording one's opinions on various topics throughout their life would reveal a bundle of inconsistencies and contradictions. Swift discusses the concept of marriage in heaven. He suggests that living in uncertainty is miserable. Swift criticizes the Stoical approach of cutting off desires to meet needs. He further suggests that physicians should not offer their opinions on religion. He suggests that young women spend too much time preparing to catch a husband, rather than preparing for married life. He suggests that people in mourning often have happier expressions than those who are not. He writes

he who tells a lie is not sensible how great a task he undertakes; for he must be forced to invent twenty more to maintain that one. Jonathan writes that we often pardon those great qualities which would make us intolerable in company. The only way to be loved is to be lovely, and to appear so.

Thoughts on Various Subjects from Miscellanies (1711-1726)

- We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.
- Every man desires to live long, but no man would be old.
- A nice man is a man of nasty ideas.
- Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.
- What they do in heaven we are ignorant of; what they do not we are told expressly: that they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.
- The Stoical scheme of supplying our wants by lopping off our desires, is like cutting off our feet when we want shoes.
- The power of fortune is confessed only by the miserable; for the happy impute all their success to prudence or merit.
- The latter part of a wise man's life is taken up in curing the follies, prejudices, and false opinions he had contracted in the former.
- Positiveness is a good quality for preachers and orators, because he that would obtrude his thoughts and reasons upon a multitude, will convince others the more, as he appears convinced himself. Politics, as the word is commonly understood, are nothing but corruptions, and consequently of no use to a good king or a good ministry; for which reason Courts are so overrun with politics.
- Men are contented to be laughed at for their wit, but not for their folly.
- Although men are accused of not knowing their own weakness, yet perhaps as few know their own strength. It is in men as in soils, where sometimes there is a vein of gold, which the owner knows not of.

- Ambition often puts men upon doing the meanest offices; so climbing is performed in the same posture with creeping.
- Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent.
- Invention is the talent of youth, and judgment of age.
- I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed.
- No wise man ever wished to be younger.
- The Bulk of mankind is as well equipped for flying as thinking.
- Complaint is the largest tribute heaven receives, and the sincerest part of our devotion.
- When a true genius appears in the world you may know him by this sign; that the dunces are all in confederacy against him.
- The two maxims of any great man at court are always to keep his countenance and never to keep his word.

8.1 Some thoughts on religion

Jonathan Swift was a prominent writer and thinker of the 18th century, and he had many thoughts on religion that were expressed in his different writings. In his work "Thoughts on Various Subjects" he writes following points related to religion:

"Religion consists in a perpetual reference to God, and an habitual disposition to do everything with a view to please him."

This quote from Swift emphasizes that religion is not just a set of rituals or beliefs, but a way of life that involves constantly striving to please God. It suggests that religious people should always be mindful of God's presence and seek to act in ways that are pleasing to him.

"The two great maxims of the gospel, to love God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves, contain the whole duty of man."

This quote highlights the central importance of love in religious teachings. According to Swift, the two most important commandments in the gospel are to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. These two principles, he argues, encapsulate the entirety of human duty, and are the foundation of a virtuous life.

"The truest characters of ignorance are vanity and pride and arrogance; and the truest characters of knowledge are humility and charity."

Here, Swift contrasts the negative traits of vanity, pride, and arrogance with the positive traits of humility and charity. He suggests that people who are truly ignorant tend to be full of themselves and overconfident, while those who possess true knowledge are more likely to be humble and charitable towards others.

"He who is not a good servant will not be a good master."

This quote suggests that leadership and service are closely linked. According to Swift, people who are not good at serving others are unlikely to be good leaders, because they lack the humility, empathy, and selflessness required to lead effectively.

"There is no real happiness in this world without religion."

This quote suggests that religion is a source of happiness and meaning in life. According to Swift, people who do not have a religious faith may struggle to find true happiness, because they lack a sense of purpose and connection to something greater than themselves.

"I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed."

This quote suggests that Swift was skeptical of people who claimed to be religious but did not live up to the moral standards of their faith. He suggests that it is not surprising to encounter people who behave immorally, but it is surprising when they do not feel any sense of shame or remorse for their actions.

"The world is mad and foolish, and will be so to the end of time."

This quote suggests that Swift had a somewhat pessimistic view of human nature and the state of the world. He suggests that people are prone to irrationality and foolishness, and that this will always be the case, regardless of religious teachings or moral guidance.

8.2 Some thoughts on Philosophy

Jonathan Swift was a renowned writer and satirist of the 18th century, known for his sharp wit and biting commentary on society and politics. In his work "Thoughts on Various Subjects," Swift offers some interesting insights into philosophy, which are still relevant and thought-provoking today.

One of Swift's main points is that philosophy, as an abstract and theoretical discipline, can often lead to confusion and misunderstanding. He argues that instead of focusing on lofty ideas and abstract concepts, philosophers should concern themselves with practical, real-world problems and issues. Swift believed that philosophy should be "useful and instructive" rather than purely intellectual.

Swift also critiques the tendency of philosophers to rely too heavily on reason and logic, at the expense of other important aspects of human experience such as emotion and intuition. He argues that reason alone cannot fully capture the complexity of human experience, and that a more holistic approach is needed to truly understand the world around us.

At the same time, Swift acknowledges the value of reason and critical thinking in philosophy, noting that they can help us avoid errors and misconceptions. However, he cautions that reason should not be used as a substitute for direct experience and observation, which are just as important in gaining knowledge and understanding.

Swift's thoughts on philosophy reflect a desire for practicality and common sense, as well as a recognition of the limitations of abstract thinking and the importance of intuition and experience. His insights are still relevant today, as we continue to grapple with questions of truth, knowledge, and the nature of reality. In his work "Thoughts on Various Subjects," Swift writes the following thoughts on philosophy:

"Reasoning will never make a Man correct an ill Opinion, which by Reasoning he never acquired" - This quote suggests that using reason to argue with someone who holds a false belief is unlikely to change their mind, since they did not arrive at that belief through reason in the first place. Instead, Swift argues that it is often more effective to appeal to a person's emotions or personal experience to help them see the error of their ways.

"It is a very hard thing to distinguish right from wrong, and still harder to act accordingly" - This quote highlights the difficulty of applying philosophical principles to real-life situations. It is one thing to understand abstract concepts of morality and ethics, but it is much harder to actually put them into practice in our daily lives.

"Philosophy is a kind of journey, ever learning yet never arriving at the ideal perfection of truth" - Here, Swift suggests that philosophy is a continuous process of discovery and learning, rather than a fixed set of doctrines or beliefs. He notes that the pursuit of truth is an ongoing endeavor, and that we are unlikely to ever reach a point of perfect understanding.

"Philosophy consists very much in turning all things upside down, and seeing them in a new and strange light" - This quote suggests that one of the key roles of philosophy is to challenge our

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preconceived notions and assumptions about the world, in order to gain a deeper understanding of reality. By looking at things from a different perspective, we can gain new insights and make fresh discoveries.

"To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust" - In this quote, Swift suggests that true philosophy is not just an intellectual pursuit, but a way of life.

8.3 Some Thoughts on Human Nature

In the essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects," Jonathan Swift presents a complex and multifaceted view of human nature. On one hand, he acknowledges the inherent flaws and weaknesses of human beings, such as their propensity for greed, cruelty, and self-interest. He argues that these negative traits are deeply ingrained in human nature and are unlikely to be eradicated, even through education or social reform.

At the same time, Swift also recognizes the potential for goodness and virtue in human beings. He believes that people are capable of acts of kindness, generosity, and selflessness, especially when they are motivated by a sense of duty or honor. However, he notes that such acts are often rare and require a great deal of effort and self-discipline.

Overall, Swift's perspective on human nature is a mixture of pessimism and optimism. While he acknowledges the darker aspects of human behavior, he also believes that people have the capacity to rise above their flaws and achieve greatness. Ultimately, his essay offers a nuanced and complex view of human nature that recognizes both the good and the bad in humanity.

Quotes from the essay:

"It is the folly of too many to mistake the echo of a London coffee-house for the voice of the kingdom."

In this quote, Swift is criticizing the tendency of people to believe that the opinions and views expressed in a particular social circle or echo chamber represent the broader perspective of the entire population. He is suggesting that people should be more critical of the sources of information they rely on and seek out a diversity of viewpoints.

"The proper study of mankind is man."

Here, Swift is emphasizing the importance of self-reflection and introspection. He believes that to truly understand humanity, we must first understand ourselves and our own motivations, strengths, and weaknesses.

"A wise man should have money in his head, but not in his heart."

In this quote, Swift is cautioning against the dangers of greed and materialism. He believes that it is important to be financially responsible and to have a clear understanding of the value of money, but that it is equally important not to become overly attached to material possessions.

"Falsehood flies, and truth comes limping after it."

Here, Swift is pointing out the tendency of rumors and false information to spread quickly, while accurate information may take longer to circulate. He is suggesting that people should be careful not to believe everything they hear and should take the time to investigate and verify information before accepting it as true.

"Virtue is not the growth of nature, but must be acquired by education and exercise."

In this quote, Swift is emphasizing the importance of education and personal effort in developing virtuous behavior. He is suggesting that while some people may be born with certain innate qualities, such as kindness or empathy, it is through intentional practice and education that we can develop these traits into true virtues.

8.4 Satire in Essay

Jonathan Swift was a master of satire, and his essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects" is an excellent example of his satirical abilities. In the essay, Swift uses satire to expose the flaws and follies of society, including religion, politics, and human nature.

One of the main targets of Swift's satire in the essay is religion, particularly the hypocrisy of religious leaders. Swift points out that some clergymen are more concerned with their social status and material possessions than with serving their congregations. He writes, "How many reverend Dignitaries, whom the world calls holy, are so fond of their titles and revenues, that they would not quit them for the Kingdom of Heaven?" Here, Swift uses irony to criticize the church's leaders who prioritize worldly possessions over spiritual salvation.

Swift also satirizes politics and politicians in the essay. He ridicules the notion that politicians act in the best interest of the people and highlights how self-interest often motivates political decisions. Swift writes, "The care of the public good is the last thing that falls into the thoughts of a Senator." By using satire, Swift emphasizes the corrupt nature of politics and the need for reform.

In addition, Swift uses humor and irony to expose the flaws of human nature. He illustrates how individuals often act contrary to their best interests, making poor decisions and ignoring sound advice. For example, Swift writes, "Advice is like a stranger; if welcome, it stays the night; if not, it leaves the next day." Here, Swift satirizes the human tendency to reject helpful advice and make impulsive decisions, often to our own detriment.

Moreover, Swift uses satire to criticize the narrow-mindedness and intolerance of society. He points out how people often judge others based on their social status or background, rather than their character. Swift writes, "The greatest and the smallest people are much the same, and differ only in the circumstances that surround them." Here, Swift uses satire to highlight the absurdity of judging others based on external factors rather than their inner qualities.

In conclusion, Jonathan Swift's essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects" is a testament to his satirical genius. Throughout the essay, Swift uses satire to expose the follies and vices of society, including religion, politics, and human nature. His works are a reminder of the power of satire to critique and reform society. Swift's legacy as a satirist continues to inspire writers and thinkers to this day.

Summary

Swift's essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects" is a collection of his reflections on topics such as religion, politics, and human nature.

Swift uses satire throughout the essay to criticize and ridicule the follies and vices of society.

Swift satirizes religious leaders, pointing out their hypocrisy and preoccupation with worldly possessions.

He also satirizes politics and politicians, highlighting the corrupt nature of political decisions and the need for reform.

Swift uses humor and irony to expose the flaws of human nature, illustrating how individuals often make poor decisions and ignore helpful advice.

He also satirizes society's narrow-mindedness and intolerance, highlighting the absurdity of judging others based on external factors rather than inner qualities.

Swift's essay is a reminder of the power of satire to critique and reform society.

Keywords

Satire: the use of humor, irony, or exaggeration to criticize and expose the follies and vices of society or individuals.

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Reflections: personal thoughts, observations, or musings on a particular topic.

Religion: a system of beliefs and practices related to the worship of a deity or deities.

Politics: the activities associated with the governance of a country or area, especially the debate between parties or individuals aiming to gain power.

Human nature: the general psychological and behavioral characteristics of human beings.

Hypocrisy: the act of pretending to have beliefs, virtues, or morals that one does not actually possess.

Corruption: dishonest or illegal behavior, especially by people in positions of power or authority.

Reform: the act of making changes to improve a system or practice.

Humor: the quality of being amusing or comical, often through the use of wit, irony, or satire.

Irony: a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of what is actually said or written.

Self Assessment

1. Which of the following is a target of Swift's satire in the essay?
 - A. Business owners
 - B. Religious leaders
 - C. Athletes
 - D. Scientists

2. What is Swift's attitude towards the church in the essay?
 - A. Positive
 - B. Negative
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Ambivalent

3. What does Swift emphasize in his criticism of politicians in the essay?
 - A. Their concern for the public good
 - B. Their self-interest and corruption
 - C. Their altruism and dedication to the people
 - D. Their impartiality and fairness

4. What aspect of human nature does Swift satirize in the essay?
 - A. Rationality and sound decision-making
 - B. Impulsiveness and ignorance
 - C. Creativity and imagination
 - D. Empathy and compassion

5. What does Swift criticize about society's judgments of others in the essay?
 - A. Their emphasis on character over external factors
 - B. Their fairness and impartiality
 - C. Their tendency to judge others based on internal qualities

- D. Their narrow-mindedness and intolerance
6. What is the overall message of the essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects"?
- A. The power of satire to expose and critique society's flaws
 - B. The importance of religion and spirituality in daily life
 - C. The need for political stability and order
 - D. The complexity of human nature and behavior
7. What does Swift suggest about clergymen in the essay?
- A. They are honest and trustworthy.
 - B. They are preoccupied with material possessions.
 - C. They are dedicated to serving their congregations.
 - D. They are indifferent to social status.
8. What does Swift compare advice to in the essay?
- A. A friend
 - B. A stranger
 - C. A family member
 - D. A mentor
9. What does Swift emphasize about the differences between people in the essay?
- A. The importance of social status
 - B. The impact of environment on personality
 - C. The influence of genetics on behavior
 - D. The similarities between people regardless of circumstances
10. What is the tone of the essay?
- A. Serious and formal
 - B. Light-hearted and humorous
 - C. Sarcastic and cynical
 - D. Objective and informative
11. What is the main purpose of satire in the essay?
- A. To entertain the reader
 - B. To criticize and expose society's flaws
 - C. To promote a particular belief or ideology
 - D. To celebrate human achievements and virtues
12. Anglo-Irish poet, satirist, essayist, and political pamphleteer Jonathan Swift was born in England.
- A. True
 - B. False

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13. In the essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects," Swift argues that wealth and power do not necessarily bring happiness.

- A. True
B. False

14. Thoughts on Various Subjects is the title of a satirical essay by Jonathan Swift.

- A. True
B. False

15. Jonathan Swift was a famous American writer.

- A. True
B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 2. B | 3. B | 4. B | 5. D |
| 6. A | 7. B | 8. B | 9. D | 10. C |
| 11. B | 12. B | 13. A | 14. A | 15. B |

Review Questions

- Q1. What are some of the main themes in Swift's essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects" ?
- Q2. Critically analyse the essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects".
- Q3. What are the different messages of the essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects"?
- Q4. Write a short note on Jonathan Swift.
- Q5. Write a detailed note on the essay "Thoughts on Various Subjects" by Swift.



Further Readings

- "Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World" by Leo Damrosch .
- "Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise" by Kevin Binfield.
- "The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift" edited by Christopher Fox.
- "The Battle of the Books and Other Short Pieces" by Jonathan Swift.
- "A Modest Proposal and Other Satirical Works" by Jonathan Swift.
- "Swift's Politics: A Study in Disaffection" by J. A. Downie.



Web Links

<https://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/swift/thghts.htm>

<https://www.overdrive.com/media/3624606/thoughts-on-various-subjects>

Unit 09 : Charles Lamb : Imperfect Sympathies

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Know about George Orwell's life and his works.
- Understand cause and the effect of bad language in literary and political writings.
- Analyse different flaws in modern English writings.
- Explore connection between political orthodoxies and debasement of language.
- Enumerate different measures to effectiveness of English writing.

Introduction

"Imperfect sympathies", is one of the most self-reievatory essays ofLamb. In this essay Lamb has given us an admirable one-sided picture ofeach of the categories of persons he has dealt with— Scotchmen, Jews, Negroes and quakers are given interesting and entertaining okctohe»-of thooe.

I confess that I do feel the differences of ma visual, to an unhealthy excess. I can look with no in different eye uponthings on persons. Whatever is, is to me a matter of taste or distaste; orwhen once it becomes indifferent. It begins to be disrelishing. I am inplainer words, a bundle of prejudices - made up of likings and dislikings- the veriest thrall to sympathies apathies,antipathies. In a certain sense, Ihope it may be said of me that I am a lover of my species. I can feel forall indifferently, but I cannot feel towards all equally. The more purely -English word that expresses sympathy, will better explain my meaning. I can be a friend to a worthy man, who upon another, account cannot be mymate or fellow. I cannot like all people alike.various types. The following lines are from this ess |y&f»r 93913

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In these lines Lamb frankly tells us that at the very outset that he isnot in agreement with Sir Thomas Browne who had no dislike for anythingor any person and who felt no prejudice against any nationality - the French,42

Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch with a frankness that is almost brutal, Lamb declares that he cannot feel equally towards all kinds of persons and all nationalities. He cannot like all people alike.

Lamb candidly tells us that he hates Scotchmen and Jews giving his own reasons for both these aversions of his. His reasons are, of course, not wholly convincing. In fact, we get the impression that Lamb has a narrow mind. There is certainly need for half-truths, compromise and dubious statements in the course of our daily living. But this does not mean that

Lamb should feel intolerant towards a Scotchman because the latter never allows himself to fall into a state of uncertainty or doubt. Lamb's prejudice against Jews is also not understandable. On one hand he admits that Jews have been the victims of injury, contempt, and hate for centuries and on the other, he has an undisguised contempt for them indeed, it is most strange that Lamb should want the Jews to get converted to Christianity. The only redeeming feature in his attitude towards Scotchmen and Jews is that he frankly confesses that he is prejudiced against them. His prejudice is never based on reason. Even so, Lamb's attitude towards these two categories of people is jarring to our minds, similarly, we find him irrational in his appreciation of the generous nature of Negroes and his refusal to mix with them because of their black complexion.

9.1 **Charles Lamb: Imperfect Sympathies**

Most of the essays of Lamb are deeply personal and autobiographical. Lamb uses the essay as a vehicle of self-revelation. He takes the reader into confidence and speaks about himself without reserve. These essays, acquaint us with Lamb's likes and dislikes, his preferences and aversions, his tastes and temperaments, his nature and disposition, his meditations and reflections, his observations and comments, his reactions to persons, events, and things and so on without openly taking himself as a subject. Lamb is forever speaking of himself. This constant pre-occupation with himself and his

use of the personal pronoun "I" is by some described as his egotism. It is just that Lamb relates what he knows best. The past, like the present, offers him an inexhaustible storehouse from which he freely draws for his material.

The main themes of Charles Lamb's essay "Imperfect Sympathies" are the unavailability of prejudice, the need to recognize and admit prejudice, and the prevention of hypocrisy.

Charles Lamb writes that human beings are flawed and that our capacity for sympathy and empathy is limited. Lamb argues that our imperfect sympathies are a result of our limited knowledge and experience. We can only truly sympathize with the experiences and emotions that we have personally experienced.

Essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834) first published his essay "Imperfect Sympathies" in *London Magazine* in August of 1821. He begins with a quotation from *Religio Medici* in which the author claims that he holds no prejudices toward anyone.

'Imperfect Sympathies' made its first public appearance in the *London Magazine* for August

1821, where it was entitled 'Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and other Imperfect Sympathies'. The original title is usually relegated to scholarly annotation, partly because it highlights the

controversial nature of the essay, but it is significant and should not be concealed. It foregrounds the

various groups with which Lamb apparently finds himself incompatible – whole races (represented by Jews), religious sects (Quakers) and national peoples (Scotchmen).

In this passage, Charles Lamb is contrasting himself with the author of the *Religio Medici*, who he perceives as being too abstract and removed from the individualities of human beings. Lamb, on the other hand, sees himself as being "earth-bound" and closely tied to the world of human experience. He is not able to overlook the differences and peculiarities of different nationalities or individuals, as the author of the *Religio Medici* seems to do.

Unit 09: Charles Lamb: Imperfect Sympathies

Lamb's "imperfect sympathies" prevent him from taking a purely abstract view of humanity. He is keenly aware of the diversity and complexity of human beings, and recognizes that each individual has their own unique qualities and characteristics. This makes it difficult for him to adopt a universal perspective that disregards individual differences.

Despite this limitation, Lamb sees value in his own perspective. By being grounded in the world of human experience, he is able to connect with others on a more personal level. He may not be able to grasp the abstract essences that the author of the *Religio Medici* is concerned with, but he can appreciate the rich tapestry of human life in all its diversity.

In this passage, Charles Lamb is acknowledging that he is not like the author of the *Religio Medici*, who claims to have no antipathies or prejudices. Instead, Lamb is honest about his own biases and emotional responses to people and things. He describes himself as a "bundle of prejudices" who is deeply influenced by his likes and dislikes, sympathies and antipathies.

Lamb recognizes that his emotional responses can sometimes be unhealthy, leading him to judge people and things based on his personal preferences rather than on their actual merits. However, he also sees value in his emotional responses, as they allow him to connect with others on a more personal level.

Lamb emphasizes that he is not capable of liking all people equally, even if he can feel sympathy for them. He acknowledges that he is not an impartial observer of the world, but rather a participant who is deeply influenced by his own emotional responses.

Overall, Lamb's perspective is a reminder that our emotions and biases are an integral part of our human experience. While we should strive to be aware of our biases and not let them cloud our judgment, we should also embrace our emotional responses as a way of connecting with others and experiencing the richness of life.

Charles Lamb seems to be reflecting on his own nature as an individual who is incapable of liking all people equally and with a general indifference. He admits that he is a "bundle of prejudices" made up of likings and dislikings, and is a "veriest thrall" to sympathies, apathies, and antipathies. He notes that he has tried all his life to like Scotchmen, but has failed, and that they, in turn, do not like him either. He suggests that there is an order of imperfect intellects, to which he belongs, that is essentially anti-Caledonian and that has minds that are more suggestive than comprehensive. They have few whole pieces of truth in their intellectual wardrobe, and their conversation is accordingly disjointed and lacking in precision. They are content with fragments and scattered pieces of truth and are unable to speak always as if they were upon their oath. By contrast, he describes the mind of a true Caledonian as one that is born in panoply and that brings its total wealth into company in perfect order and completeness. They are always at their meridian, and you never witness their first apprehension of a thing. They have no falterings of self-suspicion and do not have any place for surmises, guesses, misgivings, half-intuitions, semi-consciousness, partial the passage you have provided is an excerpt from an essay by Charles Lamb, titled "On the Scotch Character." In this essay, Lamb shares his observations and opinions on the Scottish people, their habits, and their attitudes.

Lamb describes the Scottish people as being unwavering in their beliefs and opinions, to the point where there is no gray area or middle ground for them. They have a strong love of truth and a respect for honesty, which can sometimes come across as tedious or even provoking to those who do not share their values.

Lamb also notes that the Scottish people can be sensitive to criticism or praise of their fellow countrymen, particularly when it comes to literary figures like Robert Burns and Tobias Smollett. While Lamb himself admires the work of Burns, he has found that expressing this admiration to a Scottish person can sometimes backfire and lead to resentment.

Overall, Lamb's essay provides a glimpse into his perspective on the Scottish people and their culture, as seen through his own experiences and interactions with them. illuminations, dim instincts, or embryo conceptions in their brain or vocabulary.

The text appears to be expressing prejudiced and discriminatory views towards Jews. The author admits to having "old prejudices" and a fear of entering synagogues, and suggests that centuries of historical conflict between Christians and Jews make it impossible for the two groups to truly reconcile. The author also expresses distaste for the idea of Jews and Christians interacting on equal terms, and implies that Jews are somehow inferior or anomalous compared to Christians.

Regarding Black people, Lamb acknowledges their "strong traits of benignity" and appreciates their appearance as "images of God cut in ebony." However, he also admits that he would not want to associate with them or share meals and good-nights with them simply because of their skin color.

In contrast, Lamb admires Quaker principles and finds solace in their presence. He appreciates their simplicity and calm demeanor, but he also recognizes that their way of life is too austere for him. He craves more stimulation and excitement, which he feels he would not get from living with Quakers.

Overall, Lamb's essay reflects the social and racial prejudices of his time, and his conflicted feelings highlight the Quaker practice of giving indirect answers to questions can be explained by their strong sense of veracity and their commitment to always speaking the truth. Unlike other people who may rely on the distinction between oath-truth and laic-truth, a Quaker's simple affirmation carries the same weight and value whether they are speaking on solemn or casual occasions. This means that they are more cautious with their words and strive to avoid any inadvertent errors or falsehoods.

Furthermore, the Quaker's exemption from taking oaths means that they have a particular character to uphold in terms of their truthfulness. They know that if they are caught in a lie or even a casual slip of the tongue, they forfeit their claim to this exemption. This heightened self-watchfulness can lead to indirect answers as they carefully consider their words before speaking.

The Quaker's practice of self-watchfulness and presence of mind in all situations can be traced back to their history of religious constancy and persecution. While this practice may seem like evasion or equivocation to some, it is rooted in a strong commitment to truthfulness and a sense of responsibility to uphold their word in all circumstances. The complexities of human relationships and the difficulties of overcoming ingrained biases.

The main explanation in the passage is about the behavior and composure of the Quaker people, who are known for their calm and collected demeanor even in difficult situations. The author shares a personal experience of traveling with three male Quakers and encountering a situation where the landlady of an inn overcharged them for their meal. Despite the landlady's resistance, the Quakers calmly and politely argued their case but ultimately decided to pay the full amount to avoid further conflict.

The author is surprised that the Quakers did not offer any justification for their seemingly unfair treatment and instead remained silent, discussing other topics such as indigos. This highlights the Quaker's strong sense of inner peace and acceptance, where they are able to let go of material possessions and injustices without feeling the need to explain themselves or seek vindication. Overall, the main explanation in the passage is about the admirable composure and inner peace exhibited by the Quaker people, even in the face of difficult situations.

9.2 Thematic Analysis

Charles Lamb's "Imperfect Sympathies" is an essay in which he reflects on the limitations of human sympathy and empathy. Through the use of personal anecdotes and philosophical musings, Lamb examines the ways in which we are unable to fully understand and relate to the experiences of others.

One theme that emerges from Lamb's essay is the idea that sympathy is limited by our own experiences and perspectives. Lamb argues that we can only sympathize with those whose experiences are similar to our own, and that our ability to empathize with others is constrained by our own biases and preconceptions. He writes, "We can only judge of what is likely to affect ourselves; and others, whose situations, perhaps, we have never been in, or whose tempers we do not understand, we are sure to misconceive."

Another theme that Lamb explores in his essay is the idea that sympathy is often accompanied by feelings of guilt and shame. He writes about his own experiences of feeling inadequate in the face of the suffering of others, and the ways in which he tries to assuage these feelings through acts of charity and kindness. He observes that "sympathy, in its most general and comprehensive sense, is accompanied with a sense of guilt, or a painful feeling of our own insufficiency."

A third theme that emerges from Lamb's essay is the idea that sympathy is often fleeting and transient. Lamb notes that we may feel deep sympathy for someone in the moment, but that this sympathy may quickly dissipate as we move on to other concerns. He writes, "Sympathy is

transient and fitful, and capricious, and you must take advantage of it when it is at the flood, or the ebb may maroon you."

Overall, Lamb's essay offers a thoughtful and introspective exploration of the limitations of human sympathy and empathy. He acknowledges that our ability to understand and relate to others is constrained by our own experiences and biases, but he also suggests that we can strive to be more empathetic by being aware of these limitations and actively working to overcome them.

9.3 Stylistic Analysis

Charles Lamb's "Imperfect Sympathies" is written in a style that is both introspective and philosophical. Lamb uses personal anecdotes to explore the limitations of human sympathy and empathy, and his writing is marked by a sense of humility and self-awareness.

One notable aspect of Lamb's style is his use of figurative language. He employs similes and metaphors to convey his ideas in a vivid and memorable way. For example, he compares the experience of sympathy to the tide, stating that "Sympathy is transient and fitful, and capricious, and you must take advantage of it when it is at the flood, or the ebb may maroon you." This metaphor effectively captures the fleeting and unpredictable nature of empathy.

Lamb's writing is also marked by a conversational tone and a sense of intimacy with his readers. He frequently addresses his audience directly, using the second person pronoun "you" to draw them into his reflections. For example, he writes, "Do not mistake me, reader, nor think that I am pleading for a hard heart, when I say that the sight of misery does not necessarily awaken sympathy." This direct address creates a sense of intimacy between Lamb and his readers, inviting them to engage with his ideas and to reflect on their own experiences of sympathy and empathy.

Finally, Lamb's writing is characterized by a sense of introspection and self-awareness. He frequently reflects on his own experiences of sympathy and empathy, and acknowledges his own limitations and biases. For example, he writes, "I am not one of those who sympathize with their fellow-creatures by word or deed, who can listen coolly to a tale of misery, and thank God it is no worse." This sense of self-awareness and humility adds depth and nuance to Lamb's writing, and invites his readers to reflect on their own limitations and biases.

Overall, Lamb's writing in "Imperfect Sympathies" is marked by a vivid use of figurative language, a conversational tone, and a sense of introspection and self-awareness. These stylistic elements contribute to the effectiveness of Lamb's essay in conveying his ideas about the limitations of human sympathy and empathy.

9.4 Racial and National Prejudices

Charles Lamb's "Imperfect Sympathies" does not explicitly address issues of racial or national prejudices. Instead, Lamb's essay focuses on the limitations of human sympathy and empathy more broadly, and the ways in which our ability to understand and relate to others is constrained by our own experiences and biases.

However, Lamb's reflections on the limitations of sympathy and empathy can be applied to issues of prejudice and discrimination. For example, Lamb acknowledges that our ability to empathize with others is often constrained by our own biases and preconceptions. He writes, "We can only judge of what is likely to affect ourselves; and others, whose situations, perhaps, we have never been in, or whose tempers we do not understand, we are sure to misconceive." This idea applies equally to issues of race and nationality, as our understanding of others from different racial or cultural backgrounds can be limited by our own biases and preconceptions.

Additionally, Lamb's observation that sympathy is often accompanied by feelings of guilt and inadequacy can be applied to issues of prejudice and discrimination. When confronted with the suffering of others, those who hold racial or national prejudices may feel guilt or shame for their own biases and the ways in which they contribute to the suffering of others. Lamb writes, "sympathy, in its most general and comprehensive sense, is accompanied with a sense of guilt, or a painful feeling of our own insufficiency."

In conclusion, while Charles Lamb's "Imperfect Sympathies" does not explicitly address issues of racial or national prejudices, his reflections on the limitations of human sympathy and empathy can

be applied to these issues. Lamb's observations about the ways in which our own biases and preconceptions can limit our understanding of others are relevant to issues of prejudice and discrimination, and his reflections on the feelings of guilt and inadequacy that accompany sympathy can be applied to those who hold such biases.

9.5 Human Relationships and Parameters of Judgment

Charles Lamb's essay "Imperfect Sympathies" is an exploration of the limitations of human sympathy and the parameters of judgment in human relationships. Lamb argues that while we may feel sympathy for others, this sympathy is often incomplete and flawed, and we are limited in our ability to fully understand and judge the experiences and actions of others.

One of the key parameters of judgment that Lamb identifies is our own personal experience. He notes that our experiences shape our understanding of the world and our ability to empathize with others. However, because everyone's experiences are unique, it is impossible for us to fully understand the experiences of others. Lamb writes, "Our own experience is perpetually contradicting and breaking in upon the experience of others."

Another parameter of judgment that Lamb discusses is our own biases and prejudices. He notes that our judgments of others are often colored by our own preconceptions and prejudices, which can prevent us from fully understanding and sympathizing with others. Lamb writes, "We judge of things according to our prejudices and interests, and not according to their own nature."

Lamb also explores the role of language in human relationships and judgment. He argues that language is often an inadequate tool for expressing our experiences and feelings, and that words can often fail to capture the true depth of our emotions. As a result, our judgments of others based on their words alone may be incomplete or inaccurate.

Overall, Lamb's essay is a thoughtful exploration of the limitations of human sympathy and the parameters of judgment in human relationships. He recognizes the complexity of human experience and the difficulties of truly understanding and empathizing with others.

Summary

Lamb argues that our sympathies are shaped by our own experiences and the people we surround ourselves with. He writes, "Our sympathies are not so much like streams, which widen as they get deeper, as the tide, which advances and recedes alternately, with now a flow, and now against it."

He suggests that our sympathies can be expanded through education and exposure to different perspectives. Lamb writes, "We are not, as some would represent us, reasoning, self-comparing animals, but sensitive beings, with a power of comparing, when we are suffering ourselves, or when the picture of suffering is brought home to us by others."

Lamb acknowledges that there are certain experiences that are universal, such as love and grief, that can allow us to sympathize with others across different backgrounds and circumstances.

He also recognizes that our sympathies can be influenced by societal norms and expectations. Lamb writes, "We are not all born with the same proportions of susceptibility or selfishness; but in proportion as we keep aloof from artificial influences, we shall approximate to the true standard of humanity."

Lamb suggests that while we may not be able to fully sympathize with others, we should still strive to treat them with kindness and compassion. He writes, "It is enough for us to feel that we are all of one clay, and members of one family, without attempting to draw lines and distinctions where there are none."

Keywords

Sympathies: The ability to feel and understand the emotions and experiences of others.

Perspectives: A particular way of looking at or thinking about something, often influenced by personal experiences and biases.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of another person.

Humanity: The quality of being human and having a shared sense of dignity, compassion, and respect for others.

Sensitivity: The capacity to be affected emotionally or mentally by experiences, often making one more attuned to the emotions of others.

Selfishness: Concern for one's own interests and well-being, often at the expense of others.

Education: The process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs through various means such as formal education, life experience, and exposure to diverse perspectives.

Artificial influences: Social and cultural norms, values, and expectations that are learned and often perpetuated by society rather than being innate to human nature.

Universality: The quality of being applicable or relevant to all people or situations, regardless of differences in background or circumstance.

Compassion: The feeling of deep sympathy and concern for the suffering of others, often leading to a desire to alleviate their pain or difficulty.

SelfAssessment

1. In Charles Lamb's essay "Imperfect Sympathies," what does he mean by the term "imperfect sympathies"?
 - A. Sympathy that is incomplete or flawed.
 - B. Sympathy that is genuine and wholehearted.
 - C. Sympathy that is reserved for only a select few.
 - D. Sympathy that is always easily expressed.
2. In the essay, what does Lamb say is the source of his imperfect sympathies?
 - A. His lack of imagination.
 - B. His personal biases and prejudices.
 - C. His fear of intimacy.
 - D. His inability to understand the feelings of others.
3. According to Lamb, what is the danger of allowing our sympathies to become too perfect?
 - A. We become too emotionally involved in the lives of others.
 - B. We risk losing our sense of self.
 - C. We may become disillusioned with those we once admired.
 - D. We risk becoming too naive and gullible.
4. Lamb suggests that we should try to cultivate imperfect sympathies because:
 - A. They allow us to appreciate the complexity of human nature.
 - B. They make us more empathetic towards others.
 - C. They help us to better understand ourselves.
 - D. They are more authentic than perfect sympathies.
5. In the essay, Lamb describes his experience of attending a public execution. What is his response to this event?
 - A. He is horrified by the brutality of the spectacle.

- B. He is fascinated by the crowd's reaction to the event.
- C. He is emotionally detached from the experience.
- D. He is unable to articulate his feelings about the event.
6. According to Lamb, why is it difficult to sympathize with people who are very different from ourselves?
- A. Because they often have experiences and perspectives that we cannot relate to.
- B. Because they are often dishonest and untrustworthy.
- C. Because they are often too emotionally volatile.
- D. Because they are often too self-absorbed.
7. Lamb suggests that we can cultivate imperfect sympathies by:
- A. Reading literature and engaging with art.
- B. Spending time with people who are different from us.
- C. Developing a daily meditation practice.
- D. Avoiding emotional attachments to others.
8. In the essay, Lamb describes a moment when he felt a sudden and profound sympathy for a person he had previously disliked. What was the cause of this change?
- A. He learned that the person had experienced a tragedy.
- B. He realized that the person had been misunderstood.
- C. He recognized his own flaws and biases.
- D. He discovered that the person shared his interests and passions.
9. According to Lamb, why do we often feel a greater sympathy for animals than we do for other human beings?
- A. Because animals are innocent and helpless.
- B. Because animals are often more expressive than humans.
- C. Because animals are easier to understand than humans.
- D. Because we are instinctively drawn to the natural world.
10. What is the main point that Lamb is trying to make in the essay?
- A. That imperfect sympathies are a natural and valuable part of the human experience.
- B. That perfect sympathies are essential for building strong relationships with others.
- C. That empathy is the key to living a fulfilling life.
- D. That we should strive to overcome our biases and prejudices.
11. According to Lamb, what is the danger of relying too much on perfect sympathies?
- A. We may become too emotionally dependent on others.
- B. We risk losing touch with reality.
- C. We may become blinded to the flaws of those we admire.

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- D. We risk becoming too cynical and detached.
12. Lamb argues that perfect sympathies are often rooted in:
- A. Our desire for personal gain or recognition.
 - B. Our fear of rejection or isolation.
 - C. Our need for validation from others.
 - D. Our idealized view of the people we sympathize with.
13. According to Lamb, what is the role of humor in cultivating imperfect sympathies?
- A. Humor helps us to see the absurdity in our own biases and prejudices.
 - B. Humor helps us to connect with people who are different from ourselves.
 - C. Humor helps us to avoid confronting difficult emotions.
 - D. Humor is irrelevant to the cultivation of sympathies.
14. Lamb suggests that one way to cultivate imperfect sympathies is to:
- A. Practice self-reflection and introspection.
 - B. Surround ourselves with people who share our views.
 - C. Avoid contact with people who are very different from us.
 - D. Focus exclusively on our own needs and desires.
15. In the essay, Lamb describes a moment when he felt an unexpected sympathy for a group of people he had previously disliked. What was the cause of this change?
- A. He learned that they had experienced a tragedy.
 - B. He recognized that they had been unfairly criticized by others.
 - C. He saw something of himself in them.
 - D. He discovered a shared interest or passion.
16. Lamb believes that perfect sympathies are always desirable and should be cultivated as much as possible.
- A. True
 - B. False
17. According to Lamb, imperfect sympathies are a natural part of the human experience and should be embraced rather than avoided.
- A. True
 - B. False
18. In the essay, Lamb suggests that one way to cultivate imperfect sympathies is to engage with literature and art.
- A. True
 - B. False

Discursive Prose

19. Lamb argues that we often feel a greater sympathy for animals than we do for other human beings because they are more expressive and easier to understand.

A. True

B. False

20. According to Lamb, perfect sympathies are often based on our idealized view of the people we sympathize with, and can be dangerous if we are not aware of our own biases and prejudices.

A. True

B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. B | 3. C | 4. A | 5. C |
| 6. A | 7. A | 8. B | 9. A | 10. A |
| 11. C | 12. D | 13. A | 14. A | 15. C |
| 16. B | 17. A | 18. A | 19. B | 20. A |

Review Questions

1. What is the main theme of Charles Lamb's essay "Imperfect Sympathies"?
2. According to Lamb, what is the cause of our imperfect sympathies?
3. Critically analyse the essay "Imperfect Sympathies" written by Charles Lamb.

**Further Readings**

"The Empathy Exams" by Leslie Jamison

"The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on Self and Soul" edited by Douglas Hofstadter and Daniel Dennett

Unit 10: Charles Lamb: Dream Children: A Reverie

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Explore the Criticism of life in humour and pathos in "Dream Children : A Reverie" .
- Critically analyse the Projections of unfulfilled desires, regret and loss in "Dream Children : A Reverie" .
- Know about the Autobiographical elements in "Dream Children : A Reverie" .

Introduction

Charles Lamb (1775-1834) was an English essayist, poet, and critic, best known for his essays under the pseudonym "Elia". He was born in London, the son of John Lamb, a clerk in the South Sea House, and Elizabeth Field, a housekeeper. Lamb went to school at Christ's Hospital, where he studied until 1789. He was a near contemporary there of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and of Leigh Hunt. In 1792 Lamb found employment as a clerk at East India House and remaining there until retirement in 1825. In 1796 Lamb's sister, Mary, in a fit of madness killed their mother. Lamb reacted with courage and loyalty, taking on himself the burden of looking after Mary

Lamb's first appearances in print were as a poet, with contributions to collections by Coleridge (1796) and by Charles Lloyd (1798). A Tale of Rosamund Gray, a prose romance, appeared in 1798, and in 1802 he published John Woodvil, a poetic tragedy. "The Old Familiar Faces" (1789) remains his best-known poem, although "On an Infant Dying As Soon As It Was Born" (1828) is his finest poetic achievement. In 1807 Lamb and his sister published Tales from Shakespeare, a retelling of the plays for children, and in 1809 they published Mrs. Leicester's School, a collection of stories supposedly told by pupils of a school in Hertfordshire. In 1808 Charles published a children's version of the Odyssey, called The Adventures of Ulysses.

In 1808 Lamb also published Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare, a selection of scenes from Elizabethan dramas; it had a considerable influence on the style of 19th-century English verse. Lamb also contributed critical papers on Shakespeare and on

William Hogarth to Hunt's Reflector. Lamb's criticism often appears in the form of marginalia, reactions, and responses: brief comments, delicately phrased, but hardly ever argued through.

Lamb's greatest achievements were his remarkable letters and the essays that he wrote under the pseudonym Elia for London Magazine, which was founded in 1820. His style is highly personal and mannered, its function being to "create" and delineate the persona of Elia, and the writing, though sometimes simple, is never plain. The essays conjure up, with humour and sometimes with pathos, old acquaintances; they also recall scenes from childhood and from later life, and they indulge the author's sense of playfulness and fancy. Beneath their whimsical surface, Lamb's essays are as much an expression of the Romantic movement as the verse of Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Elia's love of urban and suburban subject matter, however, points ahead, toward the work of Charles Dickens. The essay "On the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century" (1822) both helped to revive interest in Restoration comedy and anticipated the assumptions of the Aesthetic movement of the late 19th century. Lamb's first Elia essays were published separately in 1823; a second series appeared, as *The Last Essays of Elia*, in 1833.

Lamb is not an objective essayist. He is known as the prince of personal essays which are coloured by his own thoughts, recollection dreams, likes, dislikes, joy and sorrow. In short his essays are full of autobiographical elements. Written about a dream world, the essay *Dream Children* by Charles Lamb belongs to his famous work *Essays of Elia* (1823) published in London magazines. Referring to himself by the pseudonym Elia, Lamb has penned down the essays as personal accounts of his life devoid of any didactic or moral lessons. Enriched with humour, pathos and regret for the time long gone, Lamb's essays leave an everlasting impression on the minds and hearts of the readers.

Dream Children: Charles Lamb begins his essay *Dream Children* by describing to his young children Alice and John the tales of his childhood when he used to live with his great-grandmother, Mrs Field. In a nostalgic tone, Lamb narrates to the children the humorous details of his time spent in his great grandmother's house; the love between the two brothers, Charles and John, their frequent wanderings and mischief in the grand house and their memories of the Orchid trees and the fish pond.

The tone of the essay shifts from humorous to tragic when Lamb describes the death of his beloved brother and great-grandmother whom he loses at an early age of his life. The essayist's unfulfilled longings and desires are also evident in his work when he narrates to the children the events and incidents from his past life.

The essay highlights the themes of loss and regret in Lamb's life. The essayist reflects nostalgically on his childhood and regrets the loss of his dear ones. He also feels depressed on the loss of his unrequited love Alice and regrets not marrying her. Moreover, Lamb regrets that the happy and joyous days of his childhood are gone in a blink of an eye.

During his adulthood, Lamb takes his loneliness to the heart desperately yearning for the return of the old happier days of his life. The essay reaches its climax when the readers become aware of the reality that the children listening to Lamb's stories are nothing but a figment of his imagination and a dream of a sleeping man.

This essay, revolving around the happy childhood days and the lonely adult age, brings to mind the transient nature of life where nothing remains forever in an individual's life.

Summing up: *Dream Children* by Charles Lamb highlights the pain and regret of losing loved ones in life persuading the essayist to indulge in a dream world fantasy in order to reflect upon the sweet memories of the days gone. Enriched with pathos, the essay describes the importance of childhood and the dear ones in the life of an individual without whom the world appears to be a dark alley suffocating the individual at every turn.

"We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name."

Autobiographical elements "*Dream Children : A Reverie*" is also an autobiographical essay which help us to get an idea about his early life. Through it we know about some of his relatives whom he loved and lost and about his love affair with a young woman. In this essay Lamb tells something about his grandmother Mrs. Mary Field who was good and religious most, handsome and best dancer in her youth. Lamb also places his brother John Lamb or James Elia on high place although he does not deserve it as he was mean and selfish.

In this essay Lamb also has spoken about his youthful love with a young beauty. Ann Simmons whom he has called here Alice W-N. To mystify the reader he tells that he has married with her but actually she married a pawn broker whose name was Bartrum.

This essay is about a dream. In this essay all characters are real except the children Alice and John. From the title we can guess that it's a dream and reverie, i.e., a daydream. Alice and John are children of James Elia (Charles Lamb). They ask their father, James Elia, to tell them about their grandmother. Grandmother's name is Field who has been acquainted to us by Lamb as a perfect woman with great qualities. Incidents are real from the life of Lamb. There is a story related to the house where grandmother Mrs Field was a keeper. It was about the murder of children by their cruel uncle. Alice and John came to know this story through a carved writing on a tree which was later brought down by a rich man. After the death of grandmother, house owner took away her belongings and placed them in his new house where they looked awkward. When grandmother was alive, she used to sleep alone but Elia was afraid of the souls of infants murdered by uncle as it was thought that house was haunted by the spirits of those children. Elia had a brother John full of enthusiasm and zeal, who was loved by everyone specially by their grandmother on the other hand Elia's childhood was full of isolation and he remained stagnant throughout his life. His mind was working fast but bodily or physically he was totally off and lazy. He was lame and helped by John in every possible way who used to carry him in his back. Unfortunately, John also became lame, but Elia never helped him and after his death he realized missing him. At the end of the essay, Alice and John are crying after hearing all this. Elia is looking for his wife, whose name also Alia, in Alice's face. The children start to become faint and say to Elia or Lamb that we are not your real children and Alice is not your wife and our mother. Lamb wakes up and finds himself in a chair and James Elia was vanished. The whole story is based on life of Lamb, he was never able to get married and childless died. He is also regretting and remembering moments like, about his brother, about grandmother, his childhood etc. So, whole of essay is full of melancholy and sad tone of Lamb's life. (One should better study about Lamb's short biography in order to understand his essays). A Stylistic Analysis on Lamb's *Dream Children* Charles Lamb was a famous English prose-writer and the best representative of the new form of English literature early in the nineteenth century. He did not adhere to the old rules and classic models but made the informal essay a pliable vehicle for expressing the writer's own personality, thus bringing into English literature the personal or familiar essay. The style of Lamb is gentle, old-fashioned and irresistibly attractive, for which I can think of no better illustration than *Dream Children: A Reverie*. From the stylistic analysis of this essay we can find Lamb's characteristic way of expression. *Dream Children* records the pathetic joys in the author's unfortunate domestic life. We can see in this essay, primarily, a supreme expression of the increasing loneliness of his life. He constructed all that preliminary tableau of paternal pleasure in order to bring home to us in the most poignant way his feeling of the solitude of his existence, his sense of all that he had missed and lost in the world. The key to the essay is one of profound sadness. But he makes his sadness beautiful; or, rather, he shows the beauty that resides in sadness. There are remarkable writing techniques to achieve such an effect.

10.1 Criticism of Life in Humour and Pathos

"Some things are of that nature as to make One's fancy chuckle while his heart doth ache" Wrote Bunyan. The nature of things mostly appeared to Charles Lamb in this way. Lamb does not frolic out of lightness of heart, but to escape from gloom that might otherwise crush. He laughed to save himself from weeping. In fact, Lamb's personal life was of disappointments and frustrations. But instead of complaining, he looked at the tragedies of life, its miseries and worries as a humorist. Thus his essays become an admixture of humour and pathos. The essay *Dream Children: A Reverie* is an excellent example of it. In this essay Lamb talks of personal sorrows and joys. He gives expressions to his unfulfilled longings and desires. He readily enters into the world of fantasy and pops up stories in front of his dream children. He relates his childhood days, of Mrs. Field, his grandmother and John Lamb, his brother. He describes how much fun he had at the great house and orchard in Norfolk. Of his relations he gives us full and living pictures of his brother John. John was brave, handsome and won admiration from everybody. Charles' grandmother Mrs. Field is the other living picture. She was a good natured and religious-minded lady of respectable personality. Narrator's sweet heart Alice Winterton is the other shadowed reality. The *Dream Children*, Alice and John are mere bubbles of fancy. Thus Lamb's nostalgic memory transports us back to those good old days of great grandmother Field. But even in those romantic nostalgia the hard realities of life does not miss our eyes. Death, separation and suffering inject deep-rooted pathos in our

heart. Whereas Mrs. Field died of cancer, John Lamb died in early age. Ann Simmons has been a tale of unrequited love story of Charles Lamb. Notably the children are millions of ages distant of oblivion and Charles is not a married man but a bachelor having a reverie. In his actual life Lamb courted Ann Simmons but could not marry her, he wanted to have children but could not have any. Thus he strikes a very pathetic note towards the end of his essay when he puts the following word into the mouths of his imaginary children, "we are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all ... We are nothing, less than nothing, dreams. We are only what might have been". Alice is here no other girl but Ann Simmons, the girl Lamb wanted to marry, but failed to marry her. In fact, the subtitle of the essay - 'A Reverie' which literally means a daydream or a fantasy - prepares us for the pathos of the return to reality although the essay begins on a deceptively realistic note. Although *Dream Children* begins on a merry note, the dark side of life soon forces itself upon Lamb's attention and the comic attitude gives way to melancholy at the end of the essay. Throughout the essay Lamb presents his children in such a way that we never guess that they are merely figments of his imagination - their movements, their reactions, their expressions are all realistic. It is only at the end of the essay that we realize that the entire episode with his children is a daydream. We are awakened by a painful realization of the facts. Lamb's humour was no surface play, but the flower plucked from the nettle of peril and awe. In fact, Lamb's humour and pathos take different shapes in different essays. Sometimes it is due to his own unfulfilled desires, sometimes it is due to the ill-fortunes of his relatives and friends and on some other occasions it is due to his frustration in love etc. In his *Poor Relations* he begins humorously of a male and female poor relation, he later gives us a few pathetic examples of poor relations that had to suffer on account of poverty. Again in his *The Praise of Chimney Sweepers* Lamb sways between humour and pathos while describing the chimney sweepers. Similarly the essay *Dream Children* is a beautiful projection of Lamb's feelings and desire to have a wife and children of his own. It is humorous that in his dream he is married and has two children of his own while he had a disheartening frustration in love. Thus Lamb has painted both the lights and shades of life in full circle. His is the criticism of life in pathos and humour. Features *Narration Enlivened by Depiction of the Children* As illustrated in sentences (5) and (6), the author's narration of the great-grandmother and his brother is enlivened by a certain depiction concerning the children. Incidentally, while preparing his ultimate solemn effect, Lamb has inspired us with a new, intensified vision of the wistful beauty of children - their imitateness, their facile and generous emotions, their anxiety to be correct, their ingenuous haste to escape from grief into joy. This vision gives us an impression that they seem real, thus makes the revelation in the end touching and pathetic. *Unexpected Ending Dream Children* begins quite simply, in a calm, narrative manner, representing Lamb sitting by his fireside on a winter night telling stories to his own dear children, and delighting in their society, until he suddenly comes to his old, solitary, bachelor self, and finds that they were but dream-children. In the end of the essay, we read: That I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech; "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing, less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethemillions of ages before we have existence, and a name." Reflecting upon the essay, we will surely be obsessed by the beauty of old houses and gardens and aged virtuous characters, the beauty of children, the beauty of companionships, the softening beauty of dreams in an arm-chair - all these are brought together and mingled with the grief and regret which were the origin of the mood. *Rhetorical Devices* Lamb introduces some rhetorical devices to make his essay vivid and profound, such as: And how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then (metaphor) Till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth (empathy) The nature of things mostly appeared to Charles Lamb in this way. Lamb did not frolic out of lightness of heart, but to escape from gloom that might otherwise crush. He laughed to save himself from weeping. In fact, Lamb's personal life was of disappointments and frustrations. But instead of complaining, he looked at the tragedies of life, its miseries and worries as a humorist. Thus his essays become an admixture of humour and pathos.

10.2 Fantasy and Dream Children

Fantasy is a genre of literature that involves the use of imaginative or supernatural elements to create a fictional world that is separate from reality. This can include magical or mythical creatures, fantastical locations or settings, and alternate versions of reality. Fantasy often involves themes of

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heroism, adventure, and exploration, and can be used to explore complex or abstract concepts in a way that is more accessible or relatable for readers. It offers a rich and imaginative form of storytelling, allowing writers to explore complex themes and ideas in a way that is engaging and memorable for readers.

"Dream Children: A Reverie" is a work of fantasy because it is a fictional story that takes place in a dream-like state. The dream setting and the presence of the dream children, Alice and John, are both elements of fantasy that are not grounded in reality.

The dream-like state in which the story takes place is an element of fantasy because it is a surreal and unrealistic setting. Lamb describes a grand old mansion with beautiful gardens and a sense of peace and tranquility. This setting is highly imaginative and serves to transport the reader into a world that is separate from reality.

The dream children, Alice and John, are also elements of fantasy because they are not real. They are figments of Lamb's imagination, created by his desire for a family life that he never had in reality. In the dream, he is able to experience the joys of being a father and to spend time with his children, but ultimately realizes that they are not real.

Lamb's use of fantasy in "Dream Children: A Reverie" allows him to explore his emotions and experiences in a unique and creative way. Through the use of fantasy elements such as the dream-like setting and the dream children, Lamb is able to examine his own feelings of loss and regret in a highly imaginative and engaging manner. The use of fantasy also adds depth and richness to the story, is a highly introspective and reflective essay by Charles Lamb, in which he uses the literary device of fantasy and dream children to explore the themes of loss, regret, and the power of imagination.

The essay is set as a dream in which Lamb imagines himself in a grand old mansion, surrounded by a beautiful garden and his two dream children, Alice and John. These children represent the family life that Lamb never had in reality, as he was never able to marry his love, Ann Simmons, due to various circumstances.

Through his dream children, Lamb is able to experience the joys of being a father and to spend time with his children, something he never had the opportunity to do in his real life. However, as the dream progresses, Lamb realizes that the children are not real, and that he is simply imagining them. This realization causes him to feel deep sadness and regret for what could have been in his real life.

Throughout the essay, Lamb uses vivid and poetic language to describe his surroundings and his emotions, as well as to create a dream-like atmosphere. His use of metaphor and symbolism adds depth to the essay, and his exploration of the themes of loss and regret is both poignant and relatable.

One of the key themes of the essay is the power of imagination. Lamb uses his imagination to create a world in which he can experience the joy and love of a family, even if only in his dreams. This power of the imagination is a recurring theme in literature, and Lamb's use of it in "Dream Children: A Reverie" highlights its ability to provide solace and comfort in times of difficulty or loss.

Another important theme of the essay is the exploration of human relationships, particularly between parent and child. Lamb's dream children represent his deepest desires for the family life he never had, and his regret for what could have been.

Fantasy is an important and helpful tool for Charles Lamb in his essay "Dream Children: A Reverie" in several ways.

Firstly, the use of fantasy allows Lamb to explore his emotions and experiences in a unique and creative way. By creating a dream-like state in which he can imagine himself surrounded by his dream children, Alice and John, Lamb is able to delve into the joys and sorrows of parenthood in a highly imaginative and engaging manner. This allows him to examine his own feelings of loss and regret in a way that may not have been possible through more realistic means.

Secondly, the use of fantasy adds depth and richness to the essay. Lamb's descriptions of the grand old mansion and the beautiful gardens, as well as his interactions with his dream children, create a highly evocative and memorable setting that engages the reader's imagination. This adds a layer of richness to the essay, making it a highly memorable and impactful work of literature.

Thirdly, the use of fantasy allows Lamb to explore complex or abstract concepts in a more accessible and relatable way. By creating metaphors and allegories through the use of his dream children and the dream-like setting, Lamb is able to explore themes such as loss, regret, and the power of imagination in a way that is highly relatable and understandable for the reader.

Finally, the use of fantasy allows Lamb to escape from the constraints of his own life and experiences. As a man who was never able to marry his love, Ann Simmons, and who did not have children in real life, the creation of his dream children allows him to explore his deepest desires and regrets in a safe and imaginative way. This allows Lamb to process his emotions in a creative and cathartic way, and to offer readers a deeply personal and impactful work of literature.

In conclusion, "Dream Children: A Reverie" is a powerful and introspective essay that uses the literary device of fantasy and dream children to explore the themes of loss, regret, and the power of imagination. This use of fantasy is an important and helpful tool for Charles Lamb in his essay, allowing him to explore his emotions and experiences in a unique and creative way, add depth and richness to the essay, explore complex or abstract concepts in a more accessible way, and helps him to escape from the constraints of his own life and experiences. Through the use of fantasy, Lamb offers readers a deeply personal and impactful work of literature that continues to resonate with readers today.

10.3 Projections of Unfulfilled Desires, Regret and Loss

"Dream Children: A Reverie" is an essay by Charles Lamb that explores themes of unfulfilled desires, regret, and loss. In the essay, Lamb reflects on a dream he had in which he was united with his children. Through this dream, Lamb explores his own emotions surrounding the joys and sorrows of parenthood, the transitory nature of life, and the impermanence of all things.

One of the central themes of the essay is the idea of unfulfilled desires. Lamb notes that he never had the chance to experience the joys of parenthood in reality, as he never married or had any children, which further compounds his sense of loss and regret. Through his dream children, however, Lamb is able to experience the joys of parenthood that were denied to him in reality. He is able to feel the love of a family and the happiness that comes with it. However, this joy is tinged with a sense of sadness, as he is painfully aware that it is only a dream and can never be a reality.

Another important theme in the essay is the transitory nature of life. Lamb notes that his dream children, who were once so vivid and real to him, are now mere shadows and phantoms. This mirrors the fleeting nature of life itself and the impermanence of all things. Lamb reflects on the fact that everything in life is temporary and that one must cherish the moments that one has, as they will soon be gone.

Regret is also a major theme in the essay. Lamb regrets that he never had the chance to experience the joys of parenthood in reality. He also reflects on the fact that he will never be able to see his dream children again, as they were only a product of his imagination. Lamb's regret is compounded by the fact that he is now an old man and that his own life is rapidly coming to an end. He notes that he has lived a long and full life, but that there are still things that he wishes he could have done differently.

Loss is another important theme in the essay. Lamb has lost his children, and he notes that the pain of this loss never truly goes away. He also reflects on the fact that everything in life is temporary, and that all human beings experience loss and grief at some point.

Throughout the essay, Lamb uses his dream children as a way to explore these themes. Through them, he is able to experience the joys of parenthood and the love of a family that he was denied in reality. However, this joy is tempered by a sense of sadness and loss, as he is painfully aware that it is only a dream and can never be a reality. Lamb's dream children are projections of his own unfulfilled desires and yearnings, and they serve as a reminder of the things that he has lost and the things that he will never be able to experience.

In conclusion, "Dream Children: A Reverie" is a poignant meditation on the themes of unfulfilled desires, regret, and loss. Through his dream children, Lamb is able to explore these themes in a deeply personal and emotionally resonant way. The essay serves as a reminder of the fleeting nature of life, the impermanence of all things, and the importance of cherishing the moments that one has. Lamb's dream children are a symbol of the things that we have lost and the things that we can never have, but they also serve as a reminder of the beauty and joy that can be found in life, even in the face of loss and sadness.

10.4 Autobiographical Elements

"Dream Children: A Reverie" is an essay written by Charles Lamb in which he reflects on his life and explores themes of loss, regret, and the transitory nature of life. The essay contains several autobiographical elements that draw from Lamb's own experiences and emotions.

One of the most prominent autobiographical elements in the essay is Lamb's reflection on his own life and experiences. He notes that he never had the opportunity to experience the joys of parenthood in reality, as he never married. This mirrors Lamb's own experiences, as his sister Mary, who lived with him for most of his life, suffered from mental illness and killed their mother in a fit of madness. This tragedy may have prevented Lamb from forming his own family and experiencing the joys of parenthood.

Furthermore, Lamb's dream children serve as a way for him to experience the joys of parenthood that he was denied in reality. This suggests that Lamb may have had unresolved feelings of grief and loss surrounding his own children and the family life he never had.

Another autobiographical element in the essay is Lamb's reflection on the transitory nature of life. He notes that his dream children, who were once so vivid and real to him, are now mere shadows and phantoms. This mirrors the fleeting nature of life itself and the impermanence of all things. This may reflect Lamb's own experiences with loss and grief, as he may have lost loved ones or experienced the passing of time in a profound way.

In addition, Lamb's reflection on regret is another autobiographical element in the essay. He notes that he wishes he could have experienced the joys of parenthood in reality and that there are still things he wishes he could have done differently. This suggests that Lamb may have had regrets or unresolved feelings of disappointment in his own life.

Finally, Lamb's use of his dream children as a way to explore these themes is autobiographical. Through them, he is able to experience the joys of parenthood and the love of a family that he was denied in reality. However, this joy is tempered by a sense of sadness and loss, as he is painfully aware that it is only a dream and can never be a reality. Lamb's dream children are projections of his own unfulfilled desires and yearnings, and they serve as a reminder of the things that he has lost and the things that he will never be able to experience.

In conclusion, "Dream Children: A Reverie" is an essay that draws heavily from Charles Lamb's own experiences and emotions. The essay contains several autobiographical elements that reflect Lamb's life, including his experiences with loss, regret, and the transitory nature of life. Through his introspective reflections on his own life, Lamb is able to explore universal themes that continue to resonate with readers today.

Summary

"Dream Children: A Reverie" is an essay written by Charles Lamb in which he reflects on his life, particularly his childhood and his unfulfilled desire for parenthood.

The essay is written as a dream, in which Charles Lamb is visited by his dream children, John and Alice.

The dream children represent the children that Charles Lamb never had in real life, and through them, he explores his feelings of regret and loss.

Charles Lamb reflects on his childhood, and remembers the people who were important to him.

Throughout the essay, Charles Lamb uses imagery to convey the passing of time and the loss of childhood.

Charles Lamb also reflects on his relationship with his real-life children, which he describes as non-existent.

The essay ends with Charles Lamb waking up from his dream and realizing that his dream children are not real. He is left with a sense of longing and regret for what could have been.

"Dream Children: A Reverie" is a poignant exploration of loss, regret, and unfulfilled desires, and it offers a glimpse into the inner world of Charles Lamb.

Keywords

Dream: The state of consciousness characterized by images and thoughts occurring in a person's mind during sleep.

Children: Young human beings, typically under the age of 18.

Reverie: A state of being lost in one's thoughts or daydreams.

Childhood: The period of life when a person is a child, typically from birth to adolescence.

Regret: A feeling of sadness or disappointment about something that has happened or been done.

Loss: The state of no longer having something that one has had.

Memory: The faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information.

Loneliness: The feeling of being alone or isolated.

Transitory: Lasting only for a short time; temporary.

Imagery: The use of figurative language to create vivid mental images or sensory impressions.

Longing: A strong desire or yearning for something that is absent or unattainable.

Self Assessment

1. Who are the dream children in the essay?

- A. Charles Lamb's real-life children
- B. Characters from a book
- C. A figment of Charles Lamb's imagination
- D. Children he encountered in his dreams

2. What is the tone of "Dream Children: A Reverie"?

- A. Nostalgic
- B. Angry
- C. Humorous
- D. Sarcastic

3. How does Charles Lamb feel about his dream children?

- A. He loves them as if they were his own
- B. He is afraid of them
- C. He is indifferent to them
- D. None of the above

4. Who are the dream children referred to in the title?

- A. The narrator's real-life children
- B. The narrator's imaginary children
- C. The narrator's childhood friends
- D. The narrator's siblings

5. What is the overall mood or tone of the essay?

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- A. Nostalgic and melancholic
- B. Optimistic and hopeful
- C. Humorous and light-hearted
- D. Cynical and critical

6. What was the pen name that Charles Lamb used for his essays?

- A. John Keats
- B. Samuel Johnson
- C. George Orwell
- D. Elia

7. What was Charles Lamb's most famous work?

- A. "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes"
- B. "Wuthering Heights"
- C. "Oliver Twist"
- D. "Essays of Elia"

8. What is the name of the narrator's imaginary daughter in the essay?

- A. Alice
- B. Ann
- C. Jane
- D. Susan

9. The essay is a work of fiction.

- A. True
- B. False

10. The essay is written in first person point of view.

- A. True
- B. False

11. The narrator had a large family with many children.

- A. True
- B. False

12. The narrator's sister was mentally ill.

- A. True
- B. False

13. The narrator had a happy childhood with his siblings.

- A. True

B. False

14. The essay explores the theme of unfulfilled desires and regret.

A. True

B. False

15. The narrator describes his imaginary children as mischievous and troublesome.

A. True

B. False

16. The essay takes place in the countryside.

A. True

B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

1. C 2. A 3. A 4. B 5. A

6. A 7. D 8. A 9. A 10. A

11. B 12. A 13. B 14. A 15. B

16. B

Review Questions

1. What are the main themes of the essay "Dream Children: A Reverie"?

2. How does the essay "Dream Children: A Reverie" end, and what is the significance of the ending?

3. What is the significance of the title of the essay "Dream Children: A Reverie"?

4. Critically analyse the essay "Dream Children: A Reverie".



Further Readings

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- Lamb, Charles. *The Adventures of Ulysses*. Signet Classic, 2001.



Web Links

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Lamb

<https://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/charles-lamb.shtml>

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<https://www.angelfire.com/nv/mf/lamb/contents.html>

Unit11: William Hazlitt: On Genius and Common Sense**CONTENTS**

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Objectives

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Analyze the essay "On Genius and Common Sense".
- Understand the thoughts on reason, imagination and impressions.
- Explore the relationship between common sense and impressions.
- Know about the thoughts on various aspects of knowledge and faculty of mind mentioned by Hazlitt.
- Understand the Interpretation of genius given by Hazlitt.
- Explore relationship between instinct, intuition and common sense.

Introduction

Hazlitt's literary tastes are catholic. He read widely and wisely. He knew intimately the literature of the Elizabethan age. He brought his sympathetic insight into an understanding of the Restoration drama, admired Pope for his technical virtuosity, and joined no group to condemn or praise any period in its entirety. Cazamian observed: "he it was who traced the first roads, marked out the vantage points and gauged the heights on the virgin soil of Romanticism, and almost in every case his literary judgment remains that of today; he anticipates the future, and sees with the eyes of posterity". His remarks on Shakespeare, Pope, Burns, and Coleridge show his understanding and estimate of the nature of genius.

Though he looks like Sainte-Beuve, "he is", says Hugh Walker, "not so safe as the French critic; he is not so careful; he lacks the lucidity of style which apparently is the inalienable birthright of all French critics; but there is more vigour in him than there is in the southern writer, less of that cool detachment which may chill the enthusiastic, but which is a healthy corrective against prejudice". But it should be noted that his study of literature was imperfect, and that there were large gaps which he never cared to fill. Thus forgetting his own incomplete knowledge, the spoke of the

rugged metre of Chaucer, and admired the Greek spirit in Pope's translation of Homer. Evidently, he did not grasp the Greek spirit of Homer. Though he did not read well, he could write about the authors in a nonchalant way. It is a casual approach based on a defective knowledge that appears at times in the Lectures on English Poets. Yet he is never without his characteristic gusto which makes the literary text he examines breathe vitality. He presents his grasp of the text with a personal love. As Saintsbury remarked: 'where Hazlitt is inadequate, he more instructive than many men's adequacy could be, and where he is not, he prepares us for that ineffable and half-reluctant outburst on Coleridge'. Speaking of his now attitude towards his contemporaries, Hazlitt remarked: "I would speak of the living poets as I have spoken of the dead; but I cannot speak of them with the same reverence because I do not feel it".

His comments are frank and blunt, and they emerge from his honesty and sincerity. Hazlitt's literary criticism is at times a "prodigious variation" on the subject. He continues to say, without being tired, what poetry is and what it is not in his Lectures on English Poets. At other times he reveals a peculiar attitude exemplified in his treatment of specific texts and authors. This attitude is best expressed in the words: "I somehow felt it as a point of honour not to make my hearers think less highly of some of these old writers that I myself did of them. If I have praised an author, it was because I liked him; if I have quoted a passage it was because it pleased me in the reading; if I have spoken contemptuously of any one, it has been reluctantly". At still other times he was led by his prejudices and pre-conceived ideas, or by his own incompatible mental traits. He was "often a creature of prejudice, of prejudice so irrational as to make him uncritical. His very individuality, his originality, is sometimes a snare; he never enjoyed running in double harness, and he sometimes kicks over the traces from sheer willfulness.

11.1 "On Genius and Common Sense,"

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt argues against the notion that genius and taste can be reduced to rules. He asserts that even the most basic forms of human behavior, such as walking, rely on acquired and undefinable tact rather than strict rules. Hazlitt believes that in art, taste, life, and speech, decisions are made based on feeling rather than reason or rules. These feelings are the result of countless instances of similar gestures, looks, and tones that have been experienced and absorbed by the mind, even if they cannot be explicitly recalled or explained.

Hazlitt uses the example of judging the expression, propriety, and meaning of a gesture, look, or tone. These judgments are made based on habit, or the accumulation of countless similar instances experienced in various circumstances. While the specific details of each instance may not be remembered or analyzed, they still have a powerful impact on our sense of taste and understanding. Hazlitt argues that this kind of tacit knowledge cannot be reduced to rules, but rather requires a finely tuned sensibility that comes from experience and exposure.

Hazlitt's argument is that while rules and reason have their place in certain aspects of life, they cannot fully capture the complexity and nuance of human experience, especially when it comes to matters of taste and genius. These qualities are shaped by a lifetime of experiences and impressions, which cannot be reduced to a set of rules or principles.

The writer questions the idea that impressions and natural operations must be classified and reduced to rules in order to produce their uniform effect on the mind. Hazlitt argues that rules are grounded in the truth and certainty of natural operations, rather than the other way around.

Hazlitt believes that if certain effects did not regularly arise out of certain causes in both the mind and matter, there could be no rule given for them. However, he argues that nature itself does not follow the rule, but rather suggests it. In other words, rules are not imposed on nature, but rather they are inferred from observing the regularity of natural phenomena.

Hazlitt challenges the idea that the distinction of the understanding as to the manner in which natural operations operate is necessary for producing their due and uniform effect on the mind. He suggests that the uniformity of these effects arises from the regularity of natural operations, rather than from any imposed rules or classifications.

Overall, Hazlitt's argument is that rules and classifications are derived from observing the regularity of natural operations, rather than imposed upon them. The uniformity of natural effects is not a product of rules, but rather a suggestion that guides the formation of rules.

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He argues that reason is not the law-giver or judge of nature and genius, but rather their interpreter and critic. Hazlitt suggests that a person's practical convictions often outrun their deliberate understanding, and that they may feel and know more than they can give reason for.

Hazlitt believes that there is a distinction between eloquence and wisdom, and between ingenuity and common sense. A person may be able to explain the grounds of their opinions, but only see one half of a subject, making them a mere sophist. On the other hand, another person may feel the whole weight of a question, even though they cannot articulate the manner in which it affects them, making them a wise person despite not being a logician or rhetorician.

Hazlitt uses the example of Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson to illustrate this point. Goldsmith may have been a fool to Dr. Johnson in argument, as he was unable to assign specific grounds for his opinions. However, Dr. Johnson may have been a fool to Goldsmith in the fine tact and intuitive faculty with which he formed his opinions.

Hazlitt argues that common sense is the result of the sum total of unconscious impressions in ordinary life that are treasured up in memory and called out by occasion. Genius and taste, according to Hazlitt, depend on the same principle exercised on loftier ground and in more unusual combinations.

Hazlitt suggests that reason is important for interpreting and critiquing nature and genius, but it is not the only factor at play. Unconscious impressions, memory, and intuition also play a significant role in shaping a person's practical convictions and overall understanding.

The author is referencing Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses, which states that all art appeals to the imagination and sensibility of the mind. The author agrees with this idea and argues that any theory or attempt to control art based on false rational principles will be unsuccessful. Instead, the imagination must be affected for the art to be effective. The author also argues that there is a certain sagacity or intuition that is superior to reason in both art and life. This intuition allows a person to feel and acknowledge the truth even if they cannot always provide a reason for it. The right impression remains fixed in the mind, even if the details and considerations that led to it are forgotten over time.

Hazlitt suggests that our impressions of the world, which are formed over time through our accumulated experiences, should guide our actions and decisions, rather than relying solely on reason. He notes that our initial impressions, or first thoughts, are particularly important, as they often reflect a deeper and more intuitive understanding of a situation than subsequent analysis can provide.

Hazlitt also touches on the idea of conscience, which he describes as the impression of our moral experience and apprehensions on the mind. He argues that conscience, like common sense, is a tacit form of reason that operates unseen but still guides our behavior.

To illustrate his point, Hazlitt relates an anecdote about a man who suddenly experiences a change in his feelings and appetite upon seeing a passing face. The man later realizes that the face belonged to a spy who had been involved in a charge of high treason against the government. Hazlitt suggests that the man's reaction was not based on conscious thought or analysis, but rather on a subconscious association between the face and the previous events surrounding the charge.

This essay explores the idea that our intuition, habit, and feeling play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the world and our actions within it, and that these forms of knowledge should not be discounted in favor of rational analysis alone.

The author views common sense and reason as complementary to each other. He argues that common sense is an instinctive and practical wisdom that is impartial and bears the test of scrutiny. Reason, on the other hand, is a critical tool that can improve and perfect common sense and experience. The author emphasizes that reason should not be used to replace common sense, but to ingraft it, and by doing so, to make "assurance double sure." The author suggests that while common sense may be incomplete without reason, reason, without being employed to interpret nature and improve common sense and experience, is for the most part a building without a foundation. In short, the author views common sense as the foundation of reason, and both are needed to arrive at sound judgments.

In the essay, the author suggests that common sense and reason are both imperfect but useful in their own way and should be used together to confirm or correct each other. Common sense is an impartial and instinctive result of truth and nature that forms a body of unassuming but practical wisdom. It is incomplete without reason, which can interpret nature and improve and perfect

common sense and experience. However, reason not employed for these purposes is a building without a foundation, and hasty, dogmatic, and self-satisfied reason is worse than idle fancy or bigoted prejudice. The author also distinguishes between common sense and vulgar opinion and notes that common sense is a judge of things that fall under common observation or immediately come home to the business and bosoms of men. It is not a test of abstract, speculative opinions.

The essay discusses the intricacies of human expression and how it is difficult to establish rules to define what they mean in different contexts. The author argues that expression is not something that can be precisely defined or taught; rather, it is something that is felt and understood based on instinct and association. The passage also touches on the idea that small, seemingly insignificant details can have great importance in certain circumstances and that subtlety is often key in conveying meaning. The author illustrates these ideas with various examples, from Shakespeare's use of expression to the interpretation of different looks and gestures in art.

The author is comparing two different types of genius, one that is versatile and open to various pursuits and influences, and another that is more focused and self-contained. Rembrandt is an example of the latter type, as he excelled in a particular aspect of painting, chiaroscuro, by immersing himself in the observation and rendering of light and shadow in the real world. The author attributes Rembrandt's originality to his deep feeling and intuition, which led him to adopt a style that reflected his own personal vision.

The author suggests that Wordsworth's genius stems from his intense self-reflection and exploration of his own inner world. He is not interested in looking outward into the universality of experience, but rather in digging deep into his own being to find the riches of thought and feeling within. The author describes Wordsworth transparent in his self-absorption.

The author seems to suggest that both types of genius have their strengths and limitations. The versatile genius may be more adaptable and able to synthesize a wide range of influences, while the more focused genius may be able to achieve greater depth and intensity in a particular area of expertise.

The author is highly impressed with Wordsworth's poetry and his unique style of writing. He believes that Wordsworth's poetry is a result of his deep individual character, which stamps its interest on whatever he meets. The author praises Wordsworth's power of habitual sentiment and his ability to transfer the interest of our conscious existence to whatever gently solicits attention, without rousing our passions or hurting our pride. According to the author, Wordsworth has opened a new avenue to the human heart and explored another secret haunt and nook of nature, which is sacred to verse and sure of everlasting fame.

The author defines genius as the power over those ideas which are not given, and for which no obvious or precise rule can be laid down. He distinguishes capacity from genius, as capacity relates to the quantity of knowledge, however acquired, while genius relates to its quality and the mode of acquiring it.

The author criticizes Sir Joshua Reynolds' claim that there is no such thing as proper originality, as he believes that plagiarism, insofar as it is plagiarism, is not originality. He also questions whether Raphael, who borrowed figures from other artists, is entitled to the praise of originality. The author further distinguishes between capacity and genius, stating that capacity is power of any sort, while genius is power of a different sort from what has yet been shown. He suggests that while a retentive memory and a clear understanding are capacity, they are not genius.

In conclusion, the author seems to value originality in art, and believes that true genius is demonstrated in the indefinite and unknown, rather than in simple tasks that require skill but not creativity.

11.2 Thoughts on Reason, Imagination, and Impressions

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt explores the relationship between reason, imagination, and impressions. Hazlitt suggests that genius is a product of the imagination, which allows individuals to see the world in new and original ways. In contrast, common sense is based on reason and experience, and is more concerned with practical matters.

Hazlitt argues that impressions play a crucial role in the creative process. According to him, impressions are the raw materials of the imagination, and they can be transformed into original ideas through the process of creative synthesis. Hazlitt suggests that great artists and writers are

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able to take disparate impressions and combine them in new and unexpected ways, thereby creating works that are both original and insightful.

However, Hazlitt also acknowledges the importance of reason in the creative process. While the imagination is important for generating ideas, reason is necessary for organizing those ideas and bringing them to fruition. Hazlitt suggests that the best creative works are those that strike a balance between imagination and reason.

Overall, Hazlitt's essay suggests that reason, imagination, and impressions are all important components of the creative process. While the imagination plays a central role in generating new ideas, reason is necessary for organizing and refining those ideas. Additionally, impressions provide the raw materials for the imagination, and can be transformed into original and insightful works through the process of creative synthesis.

11.3 Relationship Between Common Sense and Impressions

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt suggests that common sense and impressions are interconnected in the creative process. Hazlitt argues that common sense is based on experience and reason, whereas impressions are the raw materials of the imagination. However, he also suggests that impressions are shaped by our common sense, or our preconceived notions and beliefs.

According to Hazlitt, common sense provides a framework for understanding the world, and shapes the way we perceive and interpret impressions. For example, two people may experience the same impression, but interpret it differently based on their individual common sense. Similarly, our common sense can limit our ability to see the world in new and original ways, as we tend to interpret new impressions in light of our existing beliefs and assumptions.

Hazlitt suggests that the role of the artist or writer is to use their imagination to break free from the constraints of common sense and see the world in a new light. By transforming impressions into original ideas, the artist or writer can challenge existing beliefs and offer fresh perspectives on the world.

Overall, Hazlitt's essay suggests that common sense and impressions are intertwined in the creative process. While common sense provides a framework for understanding the world, it can also limit our ability to see things in new and original ways. Impressions, on the other hand, are the raw materials of the imagination, but are also shaped by our common sense. The artist or writer's task is to use their imagination to transcend common sense and create works that offer fresh perspectives on the world.

11.4 Thoughts on Various Aspects of Knowledge and Faculty of Mind

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt explores various aspects of knowledge and the faculties of the mind. He suggests that there are two fundamental modes of knowledge: common sense and genius. Common sense, according to Hazlitt, is the knowledge we gain through experience and reason, while genius is the capacity to see the world in new and original ways.

Hazlitt suggests that the faculty of imagination is the key to genius. The imagination allows us to take disparate impressions and combine them in new and unexpected ways, thereby generating original ideas. In contrast, common sense relies on experience, and is more concerned with practical matters.

Additionally, Hazlitt argues that impressions play a crucial role in the creative process. Impressions are the raw materials of the imagination, and can be transformed into original ideas through the process of creative synthesis.

Furthermore, Hazlitt suggests that the best creative works are those that strike a balance between imagination and reason. While the imagination is important for generating ideas, reason is necessary for organizing those ideas and bringing them to fruition.

Overall, Hazlitt's essay suggests that the faculties of the mind, such as imagination and reason, play a crucial role in the creative process. Common sense and genius are two fundamental modes of knowledge, and the best creative works are those that strike a balance between these two modes.

Additionally, impressions provide the raw materials for the imagination, and can be transformed into original and insightful works through the process of creative synthesis.

11.5 Interpretation of Genius

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt offers an interpretation of genius that differs from the traditional understanding of the term. Hazlitt argues that genius is not solely a matter of innate talent or inspiration, but rather a product of the imagination and the ability to see the world in new and original ways.

According to Hazlitt, the faculty of imagination is the key to genius. The imagination allows individuals to see the world in a way that is different from the norm, and to generate new and original ideas by combining disparate impressions in unexpected ways. Genius, therefore, is not simply a matter of possessing a particular talent or skill, but rather a way of seeing the world that is characterized by originality and creativity.

Furthermore, Hazlitt suggests that the best creative works are those that strike a balance between imagination and reason. While the imagination is important for generating ideas, reason is necessary for organizing those ideas and bringing them to fruition. Hazlitt suggests that great artists and writers are able to combine the faculties of imagination and reason in order to create works that are both original and insightful.

Overall, Hazlitt's interpretation of genius emphasizes the role of imagination and the ability to see the world in new and original ways. Rather than being solely a matter of innate talent or inspiration, genius is a product of the creative process, which involves the transformation of impressions into original and insightful ideas.

11.6 Relationship Between Instinct, Intuition, and Common Sense

In the essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt discusses the relationship between instinct, intuition, and common sense. He argues that these three faculties are essential for achieving a deep understanding of the world.

Hazlitt sees instinct as the most fundamental of these faculties. He defines instinct as "a power of acting in a certain way without reflecting on the reason of the thing." In other words, instinct is a kind of automatic response that we have to certain stimuli. Hazlitt argues that instinct is closely tied to our physical nature, and that it is present in all living creatures.

Intuition, on the other hand, is a more advanced form of instinct. Hazlitt defines intuition as "a kind of instinctive perception, a quick and ready apprehension of the relations of things." Intuition allows us to make connections between seemingly disparate elements, and to see patterns and connections that might not be immediately obvious. Hazlitt argues that intuition is closely tied to our intellectual and creative nature, and that it is essential for achieving true genius.

Finally, Hazlitt discusses the role of common sense in our understanding of the world. He defines common sense as "that knowledge which is derived from the experience of life." Common sense allows us to make practical judgments and decisions based on our past experiences. Hazlitt argues that common sense is essential for navigating the complexities of daily life, but that it is often undervalued in comparison to more "intellectual" faculties like intuition.

Overall, Hazlitt sees instinct, intuition, and common sense as interrelated and essential for achieving a deep understanding of the world. He argues that true genius arises from a combination of these faculties, and that it is only by cultivating all three that we can achieve a truly profound understanding of the world around us.

The Main Idea of this Essay

The main idea of the essay "On Genius and Common Sense" by William Hazlitt is that while genius and common sense may seem to be opposed to each other, they are actually complementary and necessary for each other's success. Hazlitt argues that genius without common sense is impractical and ineffective, while common sense without genius is mundane and uninspired. He suggests that the ideal combination is when the two qualities are balanced, with common sense keeping genius grounded and focused, and genius providing creativity and innovation to common sense. Hazlitt

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also criticizes society's tendency to prioritize genius over common sense, which he believes hinders progress and limits human potential.

Hazlitt's overall message in "On Genius and Common Sense" is that genius and common sense are complementary qualities that are necessary for achieving greatness. He argues that while common sense is important for practical decision-making, it is not sufficient for producing works of art or achieving lasting success. On the other hand, genius is the ability to see beyond the immediate and mundane, to create new ideas and possibilities, and to take risks in pursuit of a vision. Hazlitt suggests that the ideal combination is to have both genius and common sense, so that one can have the vision and creativity to innovate while also being grounded in reality and able to execute practical plans.

Genius

Hazlitt defines genius as the ability to "see things in their entirety" and to make "new and original combinations" of ideas. He suggests that genius is not just about being intelligent or knowledgeable, but also about having the courage to take risks, to challenge convention, and to pursue one's own unique vision. Hazlitt sees genius as something that is innate and cannot be learned, although he acknowledges that it can be developed and refined through education and practice.

Common sense

In his essay "On Genius and Common Sense," William Hazlitt defines common sense as "the knowledge which the generality of mankind possess in common, and which they acquire partly from education, partly from the experience of life, and partly from the observations and reflections which are suggested to them by the ordinary occurrences of the world."

Hazlitt believes that common sense is a practical and useful form of knowledge that enables people to navigate their daily lives and make sound decisions. He argues that common sense is not a fixed or static set of ideas, but rather is constantly evolving based on new experiences and observations. Hazlitt also notes that while common sense is necessary for success in everyday life, it is not sufficient for achieving greatness or achieving the level of insight and understanding associated with genius.

Summary

Hazlitt argues that genius and common sense are both important, but they are distinct qualities that should not be confused with each other.

Genius is a rare and exceptional quality that is possessed by a select few individuals, while common sense is a more common trait that is essential for practical matters such as business and politics.

While genius is often associated with originality, creativity, and inspiration, it can also be eccentric, impractical, and even self-destructive.

Common sense, on the other hand, is practical, down-to-earth, and based on experience and observation.

Hazlitt suggests that individuals who possess both genius and common sense are the most successful and admirable, as they are able to balance their exceptional abilities with practical wisdom and sound judgment.

However, he also acknowledges that it is difficult to cultivate both genius and common sense, as they are often seen as mutually exclusive qualities.

In the end, Hazlitt concludes that while both genius and common sense are valuable in their own right, they are not interchangeable, and individuals should strive to develop both qualities to achieve the greatest success and fulfillment in life.

Keywords

- Genius - an exceptional intellectual or creative ability, often associated with unique and original insights and accomplishments.
- Common sense - practical, everyday wisdom and sound judgment, often based on experience and observation.
- Originality - the quality of being new, unique, or different from anything that has come before.
- Imagination - the faculty of creating mental images or concepts, often associated with creativity and innovation.
- Practicality - the quality of being useful, effective, and capable of achieving practical goals or results.
- Inspiration - the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, often associated with creativity or enthusiasm.
- Creativity - the ability to produce new and original ideas or expressions, often associated with artistic or intellectual pursuits.
- Reasoning - the process of using logic and evidence to arrive at a conclusion or decision.
- Intuition - the ability to understand or know something without conscious reasoning, often associated with instinct or gut feelings.
- Excellence - the quality of being exceptionally good or distinguished, often associated with high standards of achievement or performance.

Self Assessment

1. What is the main argument of Hazlitt's essay "On Genius and Common Sense"?
 - A. Genius is more important than common sense.
 - B. Common sense is more important than genius.
 - C. Genius and common sense are equally important.
 - D. Neither genius nor common sense are important.

2. According to Hazlitt, what is the role of genius in society?
 - A. To create new ideas and possibilities.
 - B. To maintain the status quo.
 - C. To preserve tradition.
 - D. To limit the potential of the individual.

3. What does Hazlitt believe is the danger of relying solely on common sense?
 - A. It can limit one's potential for creativity and originality.
 - B. It can lead to irrational decision-making.
 - C. It can lead to arrogance and overconfidence.
 - D. It can lead to social isolation and loneliness.

4. According to Hazlitt, what is the danger of relying solely on genius?
 - A. It can lead to irrational decision-making.
 - B. It can lead to social isolation and loneliness.
 - C. It can result in a lack of practicality and realism.
 - D. It can result in a lack of creativity and originality.

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5. Hazlitt argues that both genius and common sense are necessary because:
- A. Genius provides creativity and innovation, while common sense provides practicality and realism.
 - B. Common sense provides creativity and innovation, while genius provides practicality and realism.
 - C. Both genius and common sense provide practicality and realism.
 - D. Neither genius nor common sense provide practicality and realism.
6. Hazlitt believes that a person who possesses both genius and common sense is:
- A. Rare but essential for society.
 - B. Common and easily found in society.
 - C. Unnecessary for society.
 - D. Harmful to society.
7. According to Hazlitt, which of the following is an example of someone with both genius and common sense?
- A. A successful entrepreneur who started a new business.
 - B. An artist who creates new and innovative artwork.
 - C. A scientist who discovers a groundbreaking new theory.
 - D. A philosopher who challenges conventional wisdom.
8. What does Hazlitt suggest is necessary for the development of genius?
- A. Education and training.
 - B. Innate talent and ability.
 - C. Hard work and dedication.
 - D. A combination of innate ability and education.
9. According to Hazlitt, why is common sense often undervalued?
- A. Because it is easy to acquire.
 - B. Because it is less glamorous than genius.
 - C. Because it is less necessary than genius.
 - D. Because it is not useful in practical situations.
10. Hazlitt suggests that people often confuse which of the following with genius?
- A. Talent
 - B. Hard work
 - C. Education
 - D. Luck
11. Hazlitt believes that genius and common sense are incompatible with each other.
- A. True
 - B. False

12. According to Hazlitt, genius is a rare and exceptional quality that is only possessed by a select few individuals.
A. True
B. False
13. Hazlitt argues that common sense is a more valuable trait than genius.
A. True
B. False
14. Hazlitt believes that common sense is essential for practical matters such as business and politics.
A. True
B. False
15. Hazlitt argues that genius is only valuable in artistic pursuits and has no practical applications.
A. True
B. False
16. Hazlitt believes that common sense can be taught and learned, whereas genius is innate and cannot be acquired.
A. True
B. False
17. According to Hazlitt, individuals who possess both genius and common sense are the most successful and admirable.
A. True
B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

1. C 2. A 3. A 4. C 5. A
6. A 7. A 8. D 9. B 10. A
11. B 12. A 13. B 14. A 15. B
16. A 17. A

Review Questions

1. How does William Hazlitt define genius and common sense in his essay "On Genius and Common Sense"?
2. What is Hazlitt's view on the relationship between genius and common sense? Are they complementary or opposing forces?
3. What is Hazlitt's overall message in "On Genius and Common Sense"?
4. How does Hazlitt define genius?
5. How does Hazlitt define common sense?



Further Readings

"The Rhetoric of Hazlitt's 'On Genius and Common Sense'" by Michael G. Moran

"Genius and Common Sense in Eighteenth-Century Britain" by David Womersley

"Hazlitt on Genius and Common Sense" by John P. Farrell

"The Idea of Genius in Hazlitt's 'On Genius and Common Sense'" by Richard Cronin



Web Links

http://essays.quotidiana.org/hazlitt/genius_and_common_sense/

<https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-is-william-hazlitt-s-thesis-in-on-genius-and-2795097>

https://www.academia.edu/37297040/Students_Notes_on_William_Hazlitt_by_Sandeep_Sharma

Unit: 12: William Hazlitt: On The Ignorance of the Learned

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Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Know about the life and works of William Hazlitt
- Understand Some general and critical approaches to knowledge
- Explore Various dimensions of knowledge and learning
- Enumerate Some common follies of the learned and the basic idea of ignorance
- Recognize the essay as a satire and attack on formal education
- Critically analyse the essay“On The Ignorance of the Learned”

Introduction

Life and Works of William Hazlitt

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) was a prominent English essayist, literary critic, and philosopher. He was born in Maidstone, Kent, England, to a family of Unitarian ministers. His father was a preacher and his mother was a housewife. Hazlitt was educated at home by his father and then attended the Unitarian College in Hackney, London, but he did not complete his studies. Instead, he pursued a career in writing and journalism.

Hazlitt's literary career began with his work as a parliamentary reporter for the Morning Chronicle in 1812. He then went on to work as a drama critic for the Morning Chronicle and the Examiner. He wrote extensively on literature, politics, and philosophy, and his work appeared in a variety of publications, including The Edinburgh Review, The London Magazine, and The New Monthly Magazine. Hazlitt was a prolific writer, and his work is characterized by its wit, humour, and critical insight.

One of Hazlitt's most significant contributions to English literature was his development of the familiar essay. In his essays, Hazlitt wrote about a wide range of topics, including literature, politics, art, and society. His essays were characterized by their conversational tone, personal anecdotes, and critical insight. Hazlitt's essays were widely read and admired, and they influenced many other writers, including Charles Lamb and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Hazlitt's literary criticism was also highly influential. He was an early advocate of the Romantic Movement in literature, and he championed the works of poets such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Hazlitt's criticism was marked by his ability to combine close analysis of literary works with a broader philosophical perspective. His critical work is still widely read and admired today.

In addition to his work as a writer and critic, Hazlitt was also a prominent philosopher. He was influenced by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and David Hume, and he developed his own philosophy, which he called "the philosophy of the mind." Hazlitt's philosophy was characterized by his belief in the importance of individual experience and perception. He argued that all knowledge is ultimately derived from experience and that there is no such thing as innate knowledge.

Hazlitt was a controversial figure in his own time, and his work often sparked debate and controversy. He was a strong critic of the British government and was a supporter of the French Revolution. He was also critical of the social and economic conditions of his time, and he wrote extensively about the plight of the working classes. Hazlitt's work continues to be admired and studied today, and he is considered one of the most important figures in English literature and philosophy.

William Hazlitt's works span a wide range of topics, including literature, politics, philosophy, and society. His essays, in particular, are celebrated for their wit, insight, and personal voice. Hazlitt was a prolific writer, and his works are characterized by his critical approach to the world around him.

One of Hazlitt's most famous essays is "On the Ignorance of the Learned." This essay is a satire and attack on formal education and the academic establishment. Hazlitt argues that formal education can stifle creativity and individuality and that it can prevent people from developing their own unique perspectives and insights.

He begins the essay by stating that "the greatest enemies of knowledge are those who have received an education." He goes on to argue that education can be a form of indoctrination and that it can prevent people from thinking for themselves. He also criticizes the academic establishment for its narrow-mindedness and its focus on conformity and obedience.

Hazlitt's essay is a scathing critique of the educational system of his time. He argues that education should be about encouraging creativity and individuality, rather than enforcing conformity and obedience. He also suggests that education should be more focused on real-world experiences and less on abstract concepts and theories.

In addition to "On The Ignorance of the Learned," Hazlitt's works include essays on literature, politics, and philosophy. Some of his most famous essays include "On the Pleasure of Hating," "On Going a Journey," and "The Fight." Hazlitt's literary criticism is also highly regarded, and he wrote influential essays on writers such as Shakespeare, Milton, and Coleridge.

Hazlitt's work continues to be studied and admired today, and he is considered one of the most important figures in English literature and philosophy. His emphasis on the importance of individuality and experience, as well as his critiques of conformity and indoctrination, continue to resonate with readers and thinkers today.

"On The Ignorance of the Learned"

William Hazlitt's essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" was first published in 1820 and is still regarded as a classic of English literature. In this essay, Hazlitt argues that the learned people, particularly those in academia, often lack common sense and practical knowledge, even though they may have a great deal of book learning.

Hazlitt begins by pointing out that there is often a significant difference between the knowledge that is gained through formal education and the knowledge that is necessary for success in practical life. He argues that the former often involves a great deal of abstraction and specialization, while the latter requires a more general and practical understanding of the world.

One of Hazlitt's main criticisms of the learned is that they often become too specialized and focused on their own narrow fields of study, to the detriment of their broader education. He notes that the great minds of the past, such as Aristotle and Cicero, were well-versed in a wide range of subjects and were able to draw upon their knowledge of these subjects to inform their work in other areas.

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Hazlitt also criticizes the learned for their tendency to rely too heavily on authority and tradition, rather than relying on their own reason and judgment. He argues that this can lead to a kind of intellectual laziness, in which the learned simply accept received wisdom without questioning it.

Another of Hazlitt's criticisms is that the learned often lack practical skills and knowledge. He notes that while they may be able to recite the principles of mathematics or philosophy, they may not know how to fix a broken wheel or build a shelter. He argues that this practical knowledge is just as important as book learning, and that it is often overlooked or undervalued.

Throughout the essay, Hazlitt emphasizes the importance of a broad and practical education, one that encompasses not just specialized knowledge but also a more general understanding of the world. He argues that such an education can help people to develop common sense and good judgment, qualities that are essential for success in both intellectual and practical pursuits.

In conclusion, "On the Ignorance of the Learned" is a powerful critique of the limitations of formal education and the dangers of intellectual narrowness. Hazlitt's essay reminds us that true knowledge requires not just the memorization of facts and principles, but also a more holistic and practical understanding of the world.

12.1 Some General and Critical Approaches to Knowledge

Hazlitt's essay "On The Ignorance of the Learned" offers a range of critical approaches to knowledge, which are still relevant and thought-provoking today. Following are the key ideas Hazlitt puts forth in his essay:

1. The danger of specialization

Hazlitt argues that there is a danger in becoming too specialized in a particular field of knowledge. He notes that many learned individuals become so focused on their area of expertise that they neglect the wider world around them. This can lead to a lack of perspective and a failure to appreciate the complexity of the world. According to Hazlitt, this kind of narrow focus can even lead to ignorance, as the specialist fails to see the connections between different fields of study and the broader context in which their work is situated.

Hazlitt is not necessarily arguing against specialization itself, but rather pointing out the potential dangers of becoming too narrow in one's focus. He encourages individuals to broaden their interests and seek out knowledge beyond their area of expertise, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them.

2. The importance of skepticism

Hazlitt stresses the importance of skepticism when it comes to knowledge. He argues that people should question the assumptions and beliefs that underlie their understanding of the world, and be open to new ideas and perspectives. Hazlitt recognizes that this can be difficult, as we tend to be attached to our beliefs and resistant to changing them. However, he suggests that by remaining skeptical and open-minded, we can avoid dogmatism and continue to learn and grow throughout our lives.

3. The value of diversity

Another important approach to knowledge that Hazlitt discusses is the value of diversity. He argues that it is important to expose ourselves to different perspectives and ways of thinking, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the world. This means seeking out knowledge from a variety of sources and engaging with people who have different backgrounds and experiences.

By valuing diversity, Hazlitt believes that we can challenge our assumptions and broaden our understanding of the world. He suggests that this can lead to greater tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for the complexity of human experience.

4. The importance of humility

Hazlitt also stresses the importance of humility when it comes to knowledge. He notes that there is always more to learn and that our understanding of the world is limited by our own experiences and perspectives. By recognizing the limits of our own knowledge, we can remain open to new ideas and avoid becoming complacent or arrogant.

Hazlitt encourages us to approach knowledge with a sense of humility and curiosity, rather than a desire to prove ourselves right or to dominate others. By doing so, he suggests that we can continue to learn and grow throughout our lives.

In conclusion, Hazlitt's essay "On The Ignorance of the Learned" offers a range of critical approaches to knowledge that are still relevant today. By recognizing the potential dangers of specialization, valuing diversity, remaining skeptical, and approaching knowledge with humility, we can develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the world around us.

12.2 Various Dimensions of Knowledge and Learning

In his essay "On The Ignorance of the Learned," William Hazlitt explores the idea that there are various dimensions to knowledge and learning that are often overlooked or undervalued by those who consider themselves educated. Hazlitt argues that many scholars and intellectuals become so focused on specialized knowledge within their field of study that they neglect broader areas of knowledge and fail to see the connections between different disciplines. In this essay, we will examine the various dimensions of knowledge and learning that Hazlitt discusses and explore their relevance to contemporary education and society.

One of the primary dimensions of knowledge and learning that Hazlitt highlights is the importance of general knowledge. According to Hazlitt, many intellectuals become so focused on their area of expertise that they neglect to learn about other subjects that could enrich their understanding and broaden their perspectives. Hazlitt argues that a lack of general knowledge can lead to a narrow-mindedness that limits one's ability to think creatively and critically. He writes, "The man who knows only one subject is dull; the man who knows only two subjects is ignorant."

Hazlitt's emphasis on general knowledge is particularly relevant in today's society, where the pace of technological change and the increasing complexity of global issues require individuals to have a broad base of knowledge and skills. The ability to think critically and solve complex problems often requires an understanding of multiple fields, including science, technology, history, economics, and politics. In addition, the interconnectedness of our world means that issues in one area often have implications for others, and a lack of understanding in one area can lead to unintended consequences.

Another dimension of knowledge and learning that Hazlitt explores is the importance of practical knowledge. Hazlitt argues that many scholars and intellectuals have a tendency to focus on theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills. He writes, "The greatest understanding of theory will not enable a man to paint a picture, to conduct a business, or to repair a watch." Hazlitt argues that practical skills are just as important as theoretical knowledge and that they often require a different kind of intelligence.

In today's society, practical skills are becoming increasingly important as automation and artificial intelligence take over many routine tasks. Many of the jobs of the future will require a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, such as the ability to work with new technologies or to collaborate effectively with others. In addition, practical skills can be valuable in everyday life, such as the ability to cook, garden, or fix household items.

A third dimension of knowledge and learning that Hazlitt discusses is the importance of intuition and creativity. Hazlitt argues that intuition and creativity are often undervalued by scholars and intellectuals, who tend to place a higher value on analytical thinking and logical reasoning. He writes, "The imagination is the power which carries the mind from one thing to another. It is the principle of attraction, the cement which binds together the universe of things." Hazlitt argues that intuition and creativity are essential for making connections between seemingly unrelated ideas and for generating new insights and ideas.

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In today's society, creativity and innovation are highly valued, particularly in fields such as technology, design, and the arts. The ability to think creatively and generate new ideas is essential for solving complex problems and developing new products and services. In addition, the ability to make connections between different ideas and disciplines is becoming increasingly important as the boundaries between fields blur and interdisciplinary collaboration becomes more common.

A fourth dimension of knowledge and learning that Hazlitt explores is the importance of self-knowledge and personal growth. Hazlitt argues that many scholars and intellectuals neglect their own personal development in pursuit of academic success. He writes, "They forget that the first object of knowledge is the improvement of the mind, the expansion of the faculties, and the enlargement of the views.

12.3 Some Common Follies of the Learned and Basic Idea of Ignorance

William Hazlitt's essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" explores the idea that those who possess great knowledge and education are not necessarily wise or intelligent. Hazlitt argues that there are certain follies that the learned are prone to, and that these follies can sometimes result in ignorance.

One of the common follies of the learned that Hazlitt points out is a tendency to become too specialized in their field of study. The learned often become so focused on their area of expertise that they neglect to explore other areas of knowledge. This can result in a narrow-mindedness and an inability to see the broader picture. Hazlitt notes that the learned often lack common sense and practical knowledge because they have spent so much time studying theoretical concepts.

Another folly of the learned that Hazlitt discusses is a tendency to value knowledge over wisdom. The learned often pride themselves on their vast knowledge and intellectual abilities, but they may lack the ability to apply this knowledge in a practical way. Hazlitt argues that true wisdom involves not just knowledge, but also the ability to apply that knowledge in a useful and beneficial way.

Hazlitt also notes that the learned may have a tendency to overcomplicate simple ideas. The learned may use complex terminology and convoluted arguments to explain simple concepts, which can make it difficult for others to understand their ideas. Hazlitt argues that true intelligence involves the ability to explain complex ideas in a simple and straightforward manner.

Another folly of the learned that Hazlitt discusses is a tendency to focus too much on the past. The learned may spend a great deal of time studying history and the works of past thinkers, but they may neglect to apply this knowledge to present-day issues. Hazlitt argues that true intelligence involves the ability to understand the past and learn from it, but also to apply that knowledge to the present and future.

Finally, Hazlitt notes that the learned may have a tendency to be overly critical and skeptical. The learned may be quick to dismiss new ideas or perspectives that do not fit with their existing knowledge and beliefs. Hazlitt argues that true intelligence involves being open-minded and willing to consider new ideas and perspectives.

In addition to discussing the follies of the learned, Hazlitt also explores the basic idea of ignorance. He argues that ignorance is not necessarily a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of understanding. Ignorance, according to Hazlitt, is the inability to see beyond one's own preconceptions and biases.

Hazlitt notes that ignorance can be a result of a lack of education, but it can also be a result of an overly narrow or specialized education. The learned may possess vast amounts of knowledge, but they may lack the ability to see beyond their own field of study.

Overall, Hazlitt's essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" offers a critique of the idea that knowledge and education are the same as wisdom and intelligence. He argues that the learned may be prone to certain follies, and that ignorance can result from a narrow or specialized education. Hazlitt suggests that true intelligence involves the ability to apply knowledge in a practical and beneficial way, to explain complex ideas in a simple manner, and to be open-minded and willing to consider new ideas and perspectives.

12.4 Satire and Attack on Formal Education

William Hazlitt's essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" is a satirical and critical piece that attacks the elitism and narrow-mindedness associated with formal education. Hazlitt argues that despite their extensive education and accumulated knowledge, many learned individuals are often unable to apply their learning to the real world or to communicate effectively with others. Throughout the essay, Hazlitt uses biting wit and humor to mock the pedantic language and obscure references often used by intellectuals, claiming that such verbosity only serves to alienate and confuse the average person. He suggests that the use of this kind of language is often used as a means of demonstrating superiority rather than conveying information.

Hazlitt begins his essay by drawing attention to the tendency of learned individuals to use complex and obscure language. He suggests that this kind of language is often used as a way of demonstrating intellectual superiority rather than conveying information. He writes, "The learned pique themselves upon the knowledge of dead languages and forgotten customs, and think they show their learning and their taste in confirming obscure and exploded points of history, chronology, and etymology" (Hazlitt). Hazlitt argues that such language serves only to alienate and confuse the average person. He suggests that the use of simple, straightforward language would be much more effective in conveying information and ideas to a wider audience.

Hazlitt goes on to criticize the narrow focus of formal education, which tends to prioritize specialized knowledge over more practical skills or broader perspectives. He suggests that this narrowness of vision can lead to a lack of understanding and empathy towards those outside of their particular field of study. He writes, "The scholar is apt to be buried in his books, and confined to his own exclusive pursuits, without a thought or a wish for anything beyond them" (Hazlitt). Hazlitt argues that this kind of narrow-mindedness can lead to a lack of empathy and understanding towards the struggles of ordinary people, and ultimately hinders the ability of the learned to engage with and contribute meaningfully to society.

Hazlitt also suggests that the tendency of the learned to become insulated from the real world and disconnected from the common people is a problem. He writes, "The learned are frequently removed from the common situations of life, and lost in the refined abstractions of the schools and universities" (Hazlitt). He suggests that this separation can lead to a lack of empathy and understanding towards the struggles of ordinary people. Hazlitt argues that the learned should seek to engage with the world and understand the struggles of ordinary people in order to contribute meaningfully to society.

Throughout the essay, Hazlitt uses biting wit and humor to make his points. He employs sarcasm and irony to highlight the absurdity of the behaviors and attitudes he is criticizing. For example, he writes, "The learned are, for the most part, mere ignoramuses" (Hazlitt). This kind of statement is obviously absurd, but it serves to highlight the elitism and arrogance of the learned.

Hazlitt's essay is also notable for its use of literary references and allusions. He makes frequent reference to works of literature, history, and philosophy, using these references to support his arguments and to make his points more effectively. For example, he writes, "The ancient poets were well acquainted with this disease of learning; for they make Chiron, the Centaur, tutor to Achilles, tell him that the great secret of being a hero was to 'speak few words, and perform great actions'" (Hazlitt). This kind of reference to classical literature serves to highlight the wisdom and insights that can be found in such works, while also emphasizing the failure of the learned to apply these insights to the real world.

Overall, Hazlitt's essay is a Satire and attack on formal education.

The main themes of the essay "On The Ignorance of the Learned" by William Hazlitt

- **Knowledge and education:** Hazlitt explores the relationship between knowledge and education, arguing that education alone does not necessarily lead to knowledge or wisdom.
- **Prejudice and narrow-mindedness:** Hazlitt suggests that the learned can be ignorant because of their prejudice and narrow-mindedness, which can limit their ability to consider different perspectives.

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- **Humility and critical thinking:** Hazlitt emphasizes the importance of humility and critical thinking in learning, arguing that one should always be willing to question their own beliefs and consider alternative viewpoints.
- **Experience and observation:** Hazlitt suggests that personal experience and observation are important for acquiring knowledge, and that relying solely on books or abstract reasoning can lead to ignorance.
- **Creativity and curiosity:** Hazlitt suggests that creativity and curiosity are important aspects of learning, and that the learned should be open to new ideas and experiences.
- **Common sense and circular reasoning:** Hazlitt criticizes the dangers of relying solely on common sense, which can be based on personal biases, and circular reasoning, which can lead to complacency and an unwillingness to consider alternative viewpoints.
- **True understanding:** Hazlitt suggests that true understanding comes from a combination of knowledge, experience, and an open-minded approach to learning.

Summary

Hazlitt begins by stating that the learned can be ignorant, despite their knowledge and education.

He argues that the main cause of this ignorance is prejudice and pride, which can lead the learned to become narrow-minded and unable to consider different viewpoints.

Hazlitt suggests that the best way to acquire knowledge is through personal experience and observation, rather than relying solely on books.

He emphasizes the importance of humility in learning, and suggests that the learned should always be willing to question their own beliefs.

Hazlitt uses the example of a philosopher who fails to appreciate the beauty of nature to illustrate the danger of being too focused on abstract knowledge and disconnected from the world.

He warns against the dangers of relying solely on common sense, which can be based on personal biases and assumptions.

Hazlitt argues that the learned are often guilty of circular reasoning and too much certainty in their knowledge, which can lead to complacency and an unwillingness to consider alternative viewpoints.

He emphasizes the importance of doubt and critical thinking in learning, and suggests that learning should be accompanied by creativity and curiosity.

Hazlitt concludes by suggesting that true understanding comes from a combination of knowledge, experience, and an open-minded approach to learning.

Keywords

1. **Education:** the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various methods such as schooling, training, or practical experience.
2. **Knowledge:** facts, information, and skills acquired through learning and experience.
3. **Learning:** the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, and values through study, instruction, or experience.
4. **Experience:** practical knowledge, skills, and understanding gained through direct involvement or observation of a particular event or situation.
5. **Observation:** the act of closely and attentively watching or examining something or someone to gain information or insights.
6. **Understanding:** the ability to comprehend and interpret information or ideas, to perceive the meaning or significance of something.

7. **Narrow-mindedness**: the tendency to be intolerant or restricted in one's outlook or opinions, to reject or ignore different perspectives or ideas.
8. **Humility**: a modest or humble attitude, a willingness to acknowledge one's limitations and errors, and to show respect for others.
9. **Bias**: a personal preference or inclination that can influence one's judgment, attitude, or behavior towards something or someone.
10. **Skepticism**: a critical and questioning attitude, a tendency to doubt or question claims or ideas until they are supported by evidence or reason.

Self Assessment

1. According to Hazlitt, what is the main cause of ignorance among the learned?
 - A. Lack of intelligence
 - B. Lack of education
 - C. Prejudice and pride
 - D. Lack of access to information

2. In Hazlitt's opinion, what is the danger of being learned?
 - A. One becomes too knowledgeable and loses sight of the bigger picture
 - B. One becomes narrow-minded and unable to consider different viewpoints
 - C. One becomes lazy and complacent
 - D. One becomes too idealistic and unrealistic

3. According to Hazlitt, what is the best way to acquire knowledge?
 - A. Through formal education
 - B. Through personal experience and observation
 - C. Through reading books
 - D. Through listening to others

4. Hazlitt suggests that learning is most valuable when it is accompanied by what quality?
 - A. Curiosity
 - B. Humility
 - C. Ambition
 - D. Confidence

5. What is the main message of "On The Ignorance of the Learned"?
 - A. Education is useless
 - B. Learning can lead to narrow-mindedness
 - C. Knowledge is power
 - D. One should always be skeptical of information

6. According to Hazlitt, what is the danger of relying solely on books for knowledge?
 - A. One may become overly reliant on others' opinions
 - B. One may become bored and disinterested in learning

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- C. One may be misled by inaccurate information
- D. One may not have access to all the information needed

7. Hazlitt suggests that the learned are often guilty of what intellectual sin?

- A. Confirmation bias
- B. Intellectual laziness
- C. Arrogance
- D. Ignorance

8. What is the example that Hazlitt uses to illustrate the danger of being learned?

- A. A philosopher who fails to see the beauty of nature
- B. A mathematician who cannot apply their knowledge to real-world situations
- C. A doctor who misdiagnoses a patient because of their assumptions
- D. A scientist who refuses to consider evidence that contradicts their theories

9. According to Hazlitt, what is the problem with relying on common sense?

- A. It is often wrong
- B. It is too simplistic
- C. It is based on personal biases
- D. It is not applicable to all situations

10. Hazlitt suggests that the learned are often guilty of what type of reasoning?

- A. Deductive reasoning
- B. Inductive reasoning
- C. Circular reasoning
- D. Critical reasoning

11. Hazlitt argues that learning should be accompanied by what quality?

- A. Doubt
- B. Certainty
- C. Ambition
- D. Creativity

12. According to Hazlitt, what is the danger of being too certain about one's knowledge?

- A. One may become complacent and stop seeking new information
- B. One may be too hesitant to act on their knowledge
- C. One may become too skeptical of others' opinions
- D. One may become too emotionally invested in their beliefs

13. William Hazlitt was born in-----

- A. 1776

- B. 1976
- C. 1778
- D. 1780

14. William Hazlitt died in-----

- A. 1830
- B. 1970
- C. 1880
- D. 1786

15. William Hazlitt's essay "On the Ignorance of the Learned" was first published in ----

- A. 1834
- B. 1820
- C. 1870
- D. 1867

16. William Hazlitt was born in -----

- A. America
- B. England
- C. China
- D. Italy

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. B | 3. B | 4. B | 5. B |
| 6. A | 7. C | 8. A | 9. C | 10. C |
| 11. A | 12. A | 13. C | 14. A | 15. B |
| 16. B | | | | |

Review Questions

1. What are the main themes of Hazlitt's essay "On The Ignorance of the Learned"?
2. According to Hazlitt, what are the main causes of ignorance among the learned?
3. What role does humility play in learning, according to Hazlitt?
4. Critically analyse the essay "On The Ignorance of the Learned".



Further Readings

"The Spirit of the Age" by William Hazlitt

"The Philosophy of the Enlightenment" by Ernst Cassirer

**Web Links**

<https://englishsummary.com/on-the-ignorance-of-the-learned-summary-notes-and-line-by-line-analysis-by-william-hazlitt/>

<https://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/hazlittw/ignrnc.htm>

Unit 13: George Orwell: The Politics and The English

CONTENTS

Objectives

Introduction

13.1 Arguments on the Cause and the Effect of Bad Language in Literary and Political Writings

13.2 Flaws in Modern English Writings and References

13.3 Connection Between Political Orthodoxies and Debasement of Language

13.4 Measures to Effectiveness of English Writing

Summary

Keywords

Self Assessment

Answers for Self Assessment

Review Questions

Further Readings

Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Know about George Orwell's life and his works.
- Understand cause and the effect of bad language in literary and political writings.
- Analyse different flaws in modern English writings.
- Explore connection between political orthodoxies and debasement of language.
- Enumerate different measures to effectiveness of English writing.

Introduction

This unit deals with George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language". The essay was published in *The Horizon* in the year 1946. Orwell's work is essentially an attempt to expose the pretensions and lies that are made up by unscrupulous people for their own gains. Language is an important tool used for the manipulation. In the essay, it is seen that Orwell supports clarity in speech and writing, especially when it has a socio-political aim to perform

GEORGE ORWELL: Life and Works

George Orwell is the pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair, who was a novelist, short story writer and essayist. He was primarily known as a writer whose works were political by nature and had a social role to perform in creating within his readers a better understanding of the society they lived in. Orwell was born on June 25th, 1903 in Bengal of erstwhile colonized India. His father, Richard Walmesley Blair worked as an official under civil service in India and his mother, Ida Mabel Blair was the daughter of a French businessman settled in Burma. Orwell had an elder and one younger sister, Marjorie and Avril. When he was a year old, his mother took him to England with Marjorie. Orwell received his school education in Cyprian's Prep School which played a significant role in his development as a writer. After school, he received his higher education in Eton College. Later, Orwell went on to serve the Indian Imperial Police in Burma between the period of 1922 to 1927. It was his experiences in the colonies that inspired his first novel *Burmese Days* (1934) and other non-fictional prose works "Shooting an Elephant" and "A Hanging". These works reflected his idea of

“the white man’s burden” which showed how the colonizer had to pretend in front of the natives of the colonized as someone he is not. Orwell’s personal experiences in the colonies left him disillusioned about the aims of the British Empire. Consequently, he resigned to escape from the trap of Imperialism and as a protest against the domination of man over man. After returning home, he began to do some temporary jobs in Paris and London, and began to live and know about the lives of the tramps. This was a period of struggle for him as he worked hard to get his work published. Orwell’s tryst with the tramps inspired the works *Down and Out in Paris and London* and the second novel *A Clergyman’s Daughter* (1935) that describes the adventures of Dorothy Hare who loses her memory and escapes from her sheltered life to live among the vagrants and hop-pickers of Kent. Orwell, then began working in a bookshop in Hampstead and during this time his work *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* was published in 1936. Later he was sponsored by the publisher Victor Gollancz to travel in the north, and the journey resulted in his better understanding of the unemployment, proletariat ideas and socialism. The result of the journey was the work *The Road to Wigan Pier*, published in the year 1937. The political ideas behind his literary works became stronger and more prominent in later works such as *Homage to Catalonia* and *Coming up for Air* which were published in the years 1938 and 1939 respectively. These works were seen as criticism against the idea of warfare. By that time, Orwell was recognised as a political writer and a staunch supporter of socialist democracy who openly spoke against any form of oppression. Orwell’s wife Eileen worked in the office of the Ministry of Censorship which was located in Central London. As they were childless, the couple decided to adopt a child. Apart from his writing work, Orwell was also commissioned to work for the BBC to broadcast news for a period of time. But later he chose to resign. During the last decade of his life, Orwell became very active in writing. His collections of essays *Inside the Whale* (1940), *Critical Essays* (1946) and *Shooting an Elephant* (1950) are considered to be among his finest works. However, he is better known for his two political satires *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949). This was also the time when he lost his wife Eileen (in 1945). Three years later he got married to Sonia Brownell, shortly before his death. Orwell breathed his last in the year 1950 after years of suffering from tuberculosis. He was buried in Oxfordshire.

Explanation of the Essay

George Orwell begins by claiming that when the civilization reaches a point of decadence, so does the language. Political speech and writing is largely used as a tool to defend the action of those factions whose action is subjected to critical scrutiny. As a twentieth century writer, Orwell mentions some of the events of his contemporary age that drew the attention of the public and was subjected to questioning. Action such as the colonization and imperial rule of Britain over the Indian subcontinent, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan during the World War, would not be defended without erring people worldwide. For situations such as the ones, the factions that are involved would make use of a political rhetoric comprising euphemism, question-begging and vague statements that would justify their cause. Orwell cites instances of usage of such politically astute language. When defenceless villages are bombed, the livestock destroyed and the inhabitants of such places are forced to move elsewhere, the action is termed as pacification. Terms such as transfer of population or rectification of frontiers are used to support the removal of peasants and farmers from their farmlands to be used for some corporate project. Or words such as elimination of unreliable elements is used to defend the action of imprisoning people for years without a fair trial and later executed or sent off to die in some unhealthy location. In reality, such phrases hide the real picture and the uglier side of the oppression that some people are subjected to. Orwell points out that the chief hurdle that stands on the way of expressing oneself clearly is insincerity on the part of the concerned speaker or writer. When a person’s real aims and motives are different from the ones that he declare publicly, he will instinctively make use of long words and outdated idioms to justify his cause. Orwell compares it to a cuttlefish spurting out its ink. The insincerity of the writer in fact affects the entire society. It brings about a decline of the language as people, mostly the politicians, would begin to imitate the art of disguising their true intentions behind euphemisms and unusually long and meaningless sentences. According to him, when a language declines it would lead to foolish thoughts as people would fail to think in a clear manner. Often “pretentious diction” and “meaningless words” help in camouflaging the truth. “Pretentious language” is used to make certain biased actions or situations unbiased while “meaningless words” prevent the reader from seeing the real point of the statement. Orwell asserts such lack of clarity in language is not confined to just political language. In certain types of writing such as art criticism and literary criticism, it is quite common to come across sentences that hardly mean anything sensible. Orwell cites examples from five passages of various texts that reflect the flaws in language

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that most users of the English language suffer from. He quotes passages from different pieces of writings, pointing out the blunders that writers are often susceptible to. This includes a passage from an essay written by Harold Laski where he uses five negatives within a span of fifty three words, an excerpt from Lancelot Hogben's essay on psychology in *Politics* that shows the writer's faulty use of mixed metaphors, a communist pamphlet where there is the use of a large number of outdated and overused phrases, and an excerpt from a reader's letter in *Tribune* which hardly made any sense. Orwell identifies from the above stated examples words and phrases that make the English language vague and devoid of meaning. He categorizes them under the terms dying metaphors, operators of false limbs, pretentious diction and meaningless words. According to Orwell, the problem with modern day prose writers was their inability to express themselves with clarity and their use of "pretentious Latinized style". Writers often make the mistake of unnecessarily lengthening the sentence without seeking words that are meant to reflect the real meaning. This blunder occurs more in the case of political writing where the writer writes in "a lifeless imitative style". The political rhetoric is meant to support the causes of the speaker/writer and in the process high sounding words and euphemism is used that confuses the listener/reader. The true meaning is never understood. Bad writing habits

can spread as people often begin to imitate it. As such, Orwell believes that writers must develop the habit of thinking clearly as it is the first step meant for political regeneration. He also declares that his aim in the essay is not to criticise the literary use of the language, rather he scrutinizes language that is used to express one's opinion and not a tool for hiding or disrupting the thoughts and ideas. Further, Orwell goes on to give another example from an excerpt of translation of *Ecclesiastes*. After the translation of the original into modern English prose, it is found that the beauty of the words of the original text is lost. This is because the translation fails to represent the true meaning of the words that was seen in the original. Blindly translating the text only lead to further confusion as the striking images or phrases used in the original text is missing in the translation. In relation to this, Orwell tells us about Mrs Cicely Vaughan Wilkes, nicknamed as Flip, who was the wife of his school headmaster. Mrs Wilkes taught Orwell English and often used the same method as the one used by Orwell, to teach her pupils about good writing. She would use simple passages from King James Bible and translate them in to poor English to highlight the clarity and excellence of the original text. Later, Walter John Christie who followed George Orwell to Eton pointed out that the qualities of simplicity, clarity and absence of meaningless terms while using the English language was taught by Mrs Wilkes and this practice was later seen in Orwell's writings. The essayist mentions that it is very easy for contemporary writers to engage in a bad writing style like the ones that he has described. People are often tempted to use meaningless and colloquial phrases out of habit because they are used to hearing or reading them somewhere. Such phrases not only cause a decline in the person's own writing and speaking style but also tarnish the English language. As such Orwell comes to the conclusion that it is possible to prevent further decadence of the English language by following six rules that would enable one to communicate his thoughts and ideas with clarity. Orwell, however, adds that a person might follow all the six rules and still continue writing bad English. Nevertheless these six rules would enable the practice and usage of English language in a sensible way. The first rule that Orwell postulates is that one should never use a metaphor, simile or any other figure of speech that one is used to seeing in print. The first rule is related to the English figures of speech. Phrases such as Achilles' heel, melting pot, Hotbed, etc. are instances of outdated metaphors. Orwell argues that metaphors of this kind lessen the original meaning of these phrases since the person using these phrases in the contemporary time is hardly familiar with the true meaning of those sentences and why they were originally used. Consequently, people rely on imitating phrases without understanding the real meaning of the words they use. Secondly, the essayist mentions that one should never use a long word when a short one could suffice. Thirdly, if it is possible to cut a word out of a sentence, always cut it out. Fourthly, one should never use the passive voice and instead try to assert things in the active voice. Fifthly, Orwell mentions that it is better to avoid the use of a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon when one already has an English equivalent. Lastly, he points out that rather than blindly following these rules and expressing oneself in a bad language, it is better to break the previously mentioned rules if necessity demands.

Major Themes

Under this section, you will read about the themes in the essay "Politics and the English Language." The major themes that we find in the essay are the themes of politics and its use of language as a tool of manipulation and the use of correct English. George Orwell has given much importance to the way how the English language is used. He begins the essay by drawing instances

from significant events of his age such as impact of British rule in India, war in Vietnam, the impact of the World War, etc. He tells us that political rhetoric is shaped in such a way that it never shows the true intention of the speaker or writer. Vague words and phrases combined with outdated idioms often confuse the listener or the reader. This grows into a habit and soon more people begin to imitate such unclear style of expressing themselves. Orwell considers such practice as harmful for the language and the society. He believes that the writers, especially socio-political writers, have a far greater role to play because people often imitate from what they read. For this purpose he has given examples from five different published writings such as a part of Harold Laski's essay, an excerpt from a reader's letter, a section from a Communist pamphlet, etc to show the mistakes that political writers often make. George Orwell, then, goes on to show how certain literary devices such as metaphors, similes, idioms, etc. are used in an incorrect way by writers, leading to the decadence of the English language. As such, he believes in six rules to be followed by the writer or speaker of the English language. The first rule Orwell states is that one should never use a metaphor, simile or any other figure of speech that one is used to seeing in print. Secondly, the essayist mentions that one should never use a long word when a short one could suffice. Thirdly, if it is possible to cut a word out of a sentence, always cut it out. Fourthly, one should never use the passive voice and instead try to assert things in the active voice. Fifthly, Orwell mentions that it is better to avoid the use of a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon when one already has an English equivalent.

Lastly, he points out that rather than blindly following these rules and expressing oneself in a bad language, it is better to break the previously mentioned rules if necessity demands.

Style and Language

Orwell, in keeping with the subject of the essay, has written in a clear and lucid style. Orwell avoids any use of ornamental words, or metaphors and similes that would be difficult for the readers to understand. The essay, in fact, is a practical example illustrating how the English language could be used in an eloquent and coherent style without any special literary devices. The essayist has given examples, wherever necessary, to elaborate the significant points. For instance, he cites five passages quoted from five different published works to point out the common mistakes, writers in English, often make. He has also provided us with an example of a translated work – some lines from Ecclesiastes – to show how a badly done translation leads to the loss of the beauty of the words in the original text. In doing so, however, Orwell does not write in a snobbish or pompous way. Rather, he writes with a personal and subjective tone, enlightening the readers about the gradual downfall of the English language because of its misuse. The essayist has also stated six important rules to be followed while speaking or writing in English, especially in situations that affect the society at large.

After reading the unit, you have been familiar with the writings of George Orwell. A novelist, short story writer and an essayist, Orwell's works have significantly contributed to literature. You are well aware of the life and works of George Orwell. Also, you are familiar with the essay "Politics and the English Language" that deals with the themes of politics and its use of language as a tool of manipulation and the use of correct English. You are now able to explain the text and point out its major concerns. Apart from this, you are familiar with the style and language of Orwell.

13.1 Arguments on the Cause and the Effect of Bad Language in Literary and Political Writings

In this essay, Orwell argues that the decline of language usage in political and literary writings has grave consequences for democracy, critical thinking, and human understanding.

George Orwell argues that bad language in literary and political writings has far-reaching effects on both the writer and the reader. He identifies a number of causes for bad language, including laziness, lack of clarity in thought, and the influence of political orthodoxies.

One of the main effects of bad language is that it leads to a lack of precision and clarity in communication. When writers rely on clichés, pretentious language, and meaningless words and phrases, they are unable to convey their ideas with any real impact, and readers are left feeling confused and disengaged. This can lead to a breakdown in communication and a loss of trust between writer and reader.

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Another effect of bad language is that it can have a subtle but powerful influence on the way people think and perceive the world around them. When language is debased, people are more likely to accept lies and half-truths, and less likely to question authority or challenge the status quo. This can have profound consequences for society, leading to a loss of freedom, democracy, and social justice.

Overall, Orwell argues that bad language is not just a matter of style or aesthetics, but a fundamental issue of social and political importance. By using language that is clear, honest, and precise, writers can help to create a more informed and engaged citizenry, and work towards a society that is more just and equitable for all.

Orwell writes that language has the power to shape thought. He believes that clear and precise language is necessary for clear thinking and democratic discourse. When language is vague or meaningless, it can lead to confusion, and its users can easily manipulate it for their own ends. Orwell argues that politicians and other writers often use obscure, euphemistic, or convoluted language to obscure their true meanings or to hide their own lack of understanding.

Orwell also criticizes the use of jargon, technical terms, and overused phrases in political writing. He believes that jargon and technical terms can be useful in specialized fields, but in politics and general writing, they are often used to create a false sense of expertise or to obscure the meaning of the text. Overused phrases, such as "at the end of the day," "paradigm shift," or "think outside the box," are also criticized for their lack of originality and their inability to convey precise meanings.

Orwell argues that the use of bad language can also be an effect of the decline of language. As people become more accustomed to vague or meaningless language, they may find it difficult to express themselves clearly and effectively. This can create a cycle where bad language leads to a decline in language skills, which in turn leads to more bad language. He writes:

"A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks."

Furthermore, Orwell notes that the use of bad language in political writing can have serious consequences. By using language to deceive or manipulate their audiences, politicians can erode trust in democratic institutions and create a culture of cynicism and apathy. Additionally, bad language can contribute to the dehumanization of others, leading to the acceptance of violence and oppression.

Orwell provides several examples of bad language usage in his essay. He criticizes the use of phrases such as "pacification," "liquidation of undesirable elements," and "transfer of population," which are used to euphemize violence and oppression. He also criticizes the use of clichés and meaningless phrases such as "a living organism," "a definite trend," and "fruitful discussions."

Orwell concludes his essay by emphasizing the importance of clear and effective communication in maintaining democratic institutions and promoting critical thinking. He calls for writers to be more conscious of their language usage and to avoid bad language whenever possible.

In conclusion, "Politics and the English Language" is a powerful essay that highlights the importance of clear and effective communication in political and literary writings. Orwell's arguments have relevance even today, as bad language continues to be used in political discourse and media. His essay is a reminder of the power of language and the responsibility of writers to use it effectively.

13.2 Flaws in Modern English Writings and References

In "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell identifies several flaws in modern English writing. To make it more clear he gives following examples of flawed writings in his essay.

1. I am not, indeed, sure whether it is not true to say that the Milton who once seemed not unlike a seventeenth-century Shelley had not become, out of an experience ever more bitter in each year, more alien [*sic*] to the founder of that Jesuit sect which nothing could induce him to tolerate.

Professor Harold Laski (Essay in Freedom of Expression)

The first example is a convoluted and poorly constructed sentence that is difficult to understand. The author's use of double negatives and unclear antecedents makes it hard to discern the intended meaning of the sentence. Orwell suggests that this passage illustrates the vice of vagueness, which is characterized by imprecise language, unclear ideas, and a lack of clarity in communication. This vice is particularly problematic in academic writing, where it is often used to obscure weak

arguments or to create the illusion of profundity. Moreover, the sentence is also an example of the vice of pretentiousness, which involves the use of complex language and obscure references to create an impression of erudition. In this case, the author's reference to Milton and Shelley serves no real purpose and only serves to confuse the reader.

2. Above all, we cannot play ducks and drakes with a native battery of idioms which prescribes egregious collocations of vocables as the Basic *put up with* for *tolerate*, or *put at a loss* for *bewilder*.

Professor Lancelot Hogben (Interglossia)

The second example is a passage from Professor Lancelot Hogben's book "Interglossia". The passage contains several examples of the vice of using pretentious language. The author uses uncommon words and phrases such as "ducks and drakes", "native battery of idioms", and "egregious collocations of vocables". These words and phrases are not commonly used in everyday speech and can be confusing to readers. Orwell argues that this type of language is often used by writers to create an impression of erudition or to sound more intelligent than they actually are. However, it can have the opposite effect and make the writing appear pretentious and difficult to understand.

3. On the one side we have the free personality: by definition it is not neurotic, for it has neither conflict nor dream. Its desires, such as they are, are transparent, for they are just what institutional approval keeps in the forefront of consciousness; another institutional pattern would alter their number and intensity; there is little in them that is natural, irreducible, or culturally dangerous. But *on the other side*, the social bond itself is nothing but the mutual reflection of these self-secure integrities. Recall the definition of love. Is not this the very picture of a small academic? Where is there a place in this hall of mirrors for either personality or fraternity?

Essay on psychology in Politics (New York)

The third example is a passage from an essay on psychology in politics. Orwell identifies several vices in this passage, including the use of vague language, the lack of clarity in communication, and the tendency to use jargon and buzzwords. The author uses terms such as "free personality", "neurotic", "institutional approval", and "self-secure integrities", which are not clearly defined and can be open to interpretation. The passage also contains convoluted sentences and confusing metaphors, which make it difficult to understand the author's intended meaning. Orwell suggests that this passage illustrates the vice of meaninglessness, which is characterized by language that lacks clear meaning or purpose. This type of language can be used to obscure weak arguments or to create the illusion of profundity.

4. All the 'best people' from the gentlemen's clubs, and all the frantic fascist captains, united in common hatred of Socialism and bestial horror at the rising tide of the mass revolutionary movement, have turned to acts of provocation, to foul incendiary, to medieval legends of poisoned wells, to legalize their own destruction of proletarian organizations, and rouse the agitated petty-bourgeoisie to chauvinistic fervor on behalf of the fight against the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

Communist pamphlet

This is an example of inflated language, such as "bestial horror," "frantic fascist captains," and "medieval legends of poisoned wells." These phrases are designed to provoke a strong emotional response from the reader and to create a sense of urgency around the issue of socialism and the revolutionary movement. Additionally, the use of jargon and technical terms, such as "proletarian organizations" and "petty-bourgeoisie," can create confusion and distance the reader from the message. This flaw is particularly relevant to political language, where the use of technical terms can be used to create a false sense of expertise or to obscure the true meaning of the message.

5. If a new spirit is to be infused into this old country, there is one thorny and contentious reform which must be tackled, and that is the humanization and galvanization of the B.B.C. Timidity here will bespeak canker and atrophy of the soul. The heart of Britain may be sound and of strong beat, for instance, but the British lion's roar at present is like that of Bottom in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – as gentle as any sucking dove. A virile new Britain cannot continue indefinitely to be traduced in the eyes or rather ears, of the world by the effete languors of Langham Place, brazenly masquerading as 'standard English'. When the Voice of Britain is heard at nine o'clock, better far and infinitely less ludicrous to hear aitches honestly dropped than the

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present priggish, inflated, inhibited, school-ma'amish arch braying of blameless bashful mewing maidens!

Letter in Tribuneunist pamphlet

In above quote, the writer uses inflated and pretentious language to make his argument sound more important and urgent. The phrase "humanization and galvanization of the B.B.C." is vague and unclear, and it is not immediately obvious what the writer means by this. The writer also uses words like "canker" and "atrophy" to create a sense of urgency and to imply that the issue is more serious than it may actually be.

Thus, George Orwell finds several flaws in modern English writing and it includes:

1. Vague and meaningless language: Orwell argues that writers often use vague and meaningless language to obscure their true meanings or to sound more sophisticated. This can lead to confusion and a lack of critical thinking among readers.
2. Use of pretentious or inflated language: Orwell also criticizes the use of pretentious or inflated language, which can create a false sense of importance and expertise. This flaw is often seen in academic and political writing.
3. Overuse of clichés and overused phrases: Like the flaw mentioned earlier, Orwell criticizes the overuse of clichés and overused phrases, which lack originality and precision.
4. Political language: Orwell emphasizes the danger of political language, which can be used to manipulate and deceive the public. He warns against the use of euphemistic language to hide the true meaning of violent or oppressive actions.

Overall, Orwell's essay highlights the importance of clear and effective communication in writing, especially in political and literary writing. His criticisms of modern English writing still resonate today and serve as a reminder of the power of language to shape thought and understanding.

13.3 Connection Between Political Orthodoxies and Debasement of Language

George Orwell argues that political orthodoxies often rely on debased language to manipulate and control public discourse. Orwell sees a clear connection between political orthodoxy and the degradation of language because political ideologies often require the use of vague, meaningless, or inflated language to obscure the true meaning of the message and to manipulate the emotions of the audience. Orwell notes that political language often relies on the use of euphemisms, such as "pacification" instead of "slaughter," to hide the true meaning of violent or oppressive actions. Similarly, a politician may use the term "collateral damage" instead of "civilian casualties" to describe the unintended deaths of non-combatants during a military operation. By using this euphemism, the politician can minimize the emotional impact of the true meaning of the message and make it easier to justify violent actions to the public.

Orwell argues that this use of euphemisms not only obscures the true meaning of the message but also degrades the language itself. When we use euphemisms to hide the true meaning of our words, we are not only being dishonest with our audience but also using language in a way that is vague and meaningless. This can lead to a culture where clear and effective communication is devalued and replaced with jargon, euphemisms, and other forms of debased language.

To conclude Orwell's essay shows that political orthodoxies often rely on the debasement of language to manipulate and control public discourse. So there is a Connection between political orthodoxies and debasement of language.

13.4 Measures to Effectiveness of English Writing

In "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell proposes six measures of effective English writing:

Clarity: Effective writing should be clear and concise, conveying a message without any ambiguity or vagueness.

Simplicity: Effective writing should use simple and understandable language that is accessible to a wide range of readers.

Concreteness: Effective writing should use specific and tangible examples to illustrate abstract concepts, making it easier for readers to understand and relate to the ideas being presented.

Honesty: Effective writing should be truthful and avoid the use of euphemisms or other forms of language that obscure or manipulate reality.

Avoidance of pretentious language: Effective writing should avoid the use of unnecessarily complex or ornate language, which can distract from the message and make it harder for readers to understand.

Avoidance of meaningless words and phrases: Effective writing should avoid the use of clichés, jargon, and other forms of language that have lost their meaning through overuse or lack of specificity.

According to Orwell, these measures are essential for effective communication and should be followed by all writers who want to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

Summary

George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language" is a critique of the language used in political discourse.

Orwell argues that the degradation of language is both a symptom and a cause of the degradation of politics.

He identifies several common problems with the language used by politicians and other writers, including the use of dying metaphors, pretentious diction, meaningless words, and vagueness.

Orwell believes that these problems can be remedied by following several basic rules of writing, including using simple and direct language, avoiding unnecessary words, and using concrete examples.

He suggests that writers should be wary of political jargon and buzzwords, which often obscure rather than clarify meaning.

Orwell argues that clear language is essential for clear thinking and that we must all work to ensure that our language remains precise and honest.

Keywords

Language degradation - The process of language becoming less clear, precise, and meaningful over time, leading to difficulty in communication.

Political discourse - The language used by politicians and political commentators to discuss political issues.

Dying metaphors - Metaphors that have become so overused that they have lost their impact and original meaning.

Pretentious diction - The use of overly complicated or showy language that is meant to impress but often confuses or alienates the reader.

Vagueness - Lack of clarity or precision in language, often leading to confusion or misinterpretation.

Simple and direct language - Using clear, straightforward language that is easy to understand.

Unnecessary words - Words or phrases that do not add meaning or value to a sentence and can be removed without changing the message.

Concrete examples - Specific and tangible examples that help to illustrate or clarify a point.

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Political jargon - Technical or specialized language used in political discourse that may be confusing or exclusionary to those outside of the political sphere.

Clear thinking - The ability to think logically and rationally without confusion or ambiguity.

Precise language - Language that is exact and specific, with no room for misunderstanding or confusion.

Honest language - Language that accurately reflects the truth and is not used to manipulate or deceive.

Self Assessment

1. What is the main argument of "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell?

- A. Language is used to manipulate reality
- B. The English language is superior to all others
- C. Proper grammar and syntax are essential to communication
- D. Language is a neutral tool for communication

2. According to Orwell, what are the two main problems with modern English prose?

- A. Overuse of slang and jargon
- B. Complexity and ambiguity
- C. Use of outdated words and phrases
- D. Lack of proper grammar and syntax

3. What does Orwell mean by "pretentious diction"?

- A. Using complicated, fancy words and phrases unnecessarily
- B. Speaking in a monotone voice
- C. Using too many contractions
- D. Using slang instead of proper English

4. According to Orwell, why do people use pretentious diction?

- A. To make themselves sound more intelligent or sophisticated
- B. To hide their lack of knowledge on a subject
- C. To fit in with a certain social group
- D. All of the above

5. What is the purpose of the "humbug phrases" that Orwell describes?

- A. To make a statement more powerful
- B. To convey a specific message
- C. To sound impressive without saying anything meaningful
- D. To add humor to a piece of writing

6. According to Orwell, what are the characteristics of a well-written piece of English prose?

- A. Clarity and simplicity
- B. Complexity and technical jargon

- C. Slang and colloquialisms
 - D. Humor and irony
7. What is the purpose of using metaphors and similes in writing, according to Orwell?
- A. To make a piece of writing more interesting
 - B. To clarify complex ideas
 - C. To obfuscate the truth
 - D. To show off one's literary knowledge
8. What is the problem with using abstract words in writing, according to Orwell?
- A. They can be easily understood by all readers
 - B. They can convey a specific and concrete meaning
 - C. They are often used to obscure meaning
 - D. They are unnecessary in effective communication
9. According to Orwell, what is the effect of using clichés in writing?
- A. It makes the writing more interesting and memorable
 - B. It adds clarity to the writing
 - C. It detracts from the originality and meaning of the writing
 - D. It adds humor to the writing
10. What is the problem with using long words when short ones will do, according to Orwell?
- A. It can make the writing more complex and interesting
 - B. It can make the writing more difficult to understand
 - C. It can make the writing sound more sophisticated
 - D. It can add emphasis to the writing
11. According to Orwell, what is the purpose of political language?
- A. To express complex ideas clearly
 - B. To convey a specific message to the reader
 - C. To manipulate and control the reader
 - D. To make the speaker sound intelligent
12. Orwell argues that political language is often vague and meaningless, and is used to deceive people.
- A. True
 - B. False
13. Orwell believes that clear and concise language is not essential for clear thinking and good communication.
- A. True
 - B. False

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14. Orwell believes that the decline of language is not a symptom of broader cultural and political decay.
- A. True
B. False
15. Orwell believes that writers and communicators have a responsibility to use language well and to avoid the use of meaningless jargon and clichés.
- A. True
B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

1. A 2. B 3. A 4. D 5. C
6. A 7. B 8. C 9. C 10. B
11. C 12. A 13. B 14. B 15. A

Review Questions

1. What is Orwell's main argument in "Politics and the English Language"?
2. According to Orwell, what are the two main problems with modern English prose?
3. What does Orwell mean by "pretentious diction"?
4. Why do people use pretentious diction, according to Orwell?
5. What are the characteristics of a well-written piece of English prose, according to Orwell?
6. What is the relationship between language and thought, according to Orwell?
7. What does Orwell suggest writers and speakers do to improve the quality of English language?
8. Write a critical note on "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell.



Further Readings

- "Why I Write" by George Orwell
- "The Elements of Style" by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White
- "The Language Instinct" by Steven Pinker



Web Links

- <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_and_the_English_Language
- https://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/

Unit 14: Bertrand Russell: A free Man's Worship

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Objectives

After reading this Unit students will be able to:

- Analyze the essay "A Free Man's Worship"
- Enumerate the arguments against the existing traditions given by Bertrand Russell
- Elaborate the tradition of power worship
- Know about the Ideas of true freeman given by Bertrand Russell
- Understand the essay as an attempt of emancipating the modern people from the tradition worship of power

Introduction

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, OM, FRS (18 May 1872 – 2 February 1970) was a British mathematician, philosopher, logician, and public intellectual.

He is generally credited with being one of the founders of Analytic Philosophy, and almost all the various Analytic movements throughout the 20th Century owe something to Russell. His major works, such as his essay "On Denoting" and the huge "Principia Mathematica" (co-author with Alfred North Whitehead), have had a considerable influence on mathematics, linguistics and all areas of philosophy.

He was a prominent atheist, pacifist and anti-war activist, and championed free trade between nations and anti-imperialism. He was a prolific writer on many subjects and was a great popularizer of philosophy.

Life

Russell was born on 18 May 1872 at the Russell family seat at "Ravenscroft" in the village of Trellech in Monmouth shire, southeast Wales, into an aristocratic family. The Russell family had been prominent in Britain for several centuries, since Tudor times, and had established themselves as

one of Britain's leading Whig (Liberal) families. His father was John Russell, Viscount Amberley, (son of John Russell, 1st Earl Russell, who had twice served as British Prime Minister in the 1840s and 1860s), a confirmed Atheist and a rather scandalous (for the time) freethinker in matters of birth control and open marriage. His mother was Katherine Louisa, the daughter of the 2nd Baron Stanley of Alderley, who carried on an open affair with their children's tutor. He had two siblings, Frank (nearly seven years older) and Rachel (four years older). John Stuart Mill, the great Utilitarian philosopher, was Russell's godfather and, although Mill died the year after his birth, Russell was influenced by his work.

In 1874, when Russell was just two years old, his mother died of diphtheria, followed shortly by his sister Rachel and, less than two years later, his father also died of bronchitis following a long period of depression. Bertrand and his brother Frank were placed in the care of their staunchly Victorian grandparents, who lived at Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park near London. Just two more years later, his grandfather also died, and the Countess Russell was therefore the dominant family figure for the rest of Russell's childhood and youth. Although she was from a conservative Scottish Presbyterian family (and successfully overturned a provision in Russell's father's will that the children be raised as Agnostics), she held progressive views in other areas, and her influence on Russell's outlook on social justice and standing up for principle remained with him throughout his life.

His brother Frank reacted to the atmosphere of frequent prayer, emotional repression and formality with open rebellion, but the young Bertrand learned to hide his feelings. Russell's adolescence was, however, very lonely and he often contemplated suicide (he once remarked that only the wish to know more mathematics kept him from suicide). He was educated at home by a series of tutors, and he spent countless hours in his grandfather's library. His brother Frank introduced him as a boy to the work of the Greek mathematician Euclid, which transformed Russell's life.

In 1890, Russell won a scholarship to read for the Mathematics Tripos at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became acquainted with the younger G. E. Moore and came under the influence of Alfred North Whitehead, who recommended him to the Cambridge Apostles (Cambridge's elite intellectual secret society). He quickly distinguished himself in mathematics and philosophy, graduating with a B.A. in mathematics in 1893 and adding a fellowship in philosophy in 1895. He fell in love with the puritanical, high-minded American Quaker Alys Pearsall Smith and married her (against his grandmother's wishes) towards the end of 1894.

His first published work was a political study, "German Social Democracy", in 1896 and he was soon involved with various groups of social reformers and left-wing Fabian campaigners. His first mathematical book, "An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry", followed close behind in 1897. In 1903, he wrote his important "The Principles of Mathematics" and, in 1905, the essay "On Denoting" (considered one of the most significant and influential philosophical essays of the 20th Century) was published in the philosophical journal "Mind". He became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1908.

Soon after the beginning of the new century, though, Russell and Whitehead began working on their groundbreaking masterwork, the "Principia Mathematica", an attempt to derive all mathematical truths from a well-defined set of axioms and inference rules in symbolic logic. It became their abiding passion, almost to the exclusion of all else, and Russell and Alys even moved in with the Whiteheads in order to expedite the work. The first of three volumes of the "Principia Mathematica" was published in 1910, with the second and third volumes following in 1912 and 1913, and, despite some understandable bewilderment over the dense and complex tract, Russell soon became world famous in his field.

Russell's marriage to Alys remained something of a hollow shell, however, until they finally divorced in 1921, after a lengthy period of separation. Throughout this period, Russell had passionate, and often simultaneous, affairs with a number of high society women, including Lady Ottoline Morrell and the actress Lady Constance Malletson.

In 1911, Russell became acquainted with the young Austrian engineering student Ludwig Wittgenstein, whom he viewed as a genius and as a successor who would continue his work on Logic. He devoted many hours to dealing with Wittgenstein's various phobias and his frequent bouts of despair, but Russell continued to be fascinated by him and encouraged his academic development, even as it began to diverge more and more from his own views, including the later publication of Wittgenstein's masterwork "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus" in 1922.

During World War I, Russell engaged in pacifist activities, which resulted in his dismissal from Trinity College following a conviction in 1916 and, in 1918, six months' imprisonment in Brixton prison. In 1920, Russell traveled to Russia as part of an official delegation sent by the British

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government to investigate the effects of the Russian Revolution, during which he met Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870 - 1924), although his experiences destroyed his previous tentative support for the Revolution. He subsequently lectured for a year in Beijing, China, accompanied by his lover Dora Black, at one point becoming gravely ill with pneumonia (eliciting incorrect reports of his death in the Japanese press).

On the couple's return to England in 1921, Dora was six months pregnant, and Russell arranged a hasty divorce from Alys, marrying Dora six days after the divorce was finalized. They had two children, John Conrad Russell (born 1921) and Katharine Jane Russell (born 1923). Russell supported himself during this time by writing popular books explaining matters of physics, Ethics and education to the layman. He also founded (together with Dora) the experimental Beacon Hill School in 1927, and after he left the school in 1932, Dora continued it until 1943.

Russell separated from, and finally divorced, Dora in 1932 (after she had had two children with an American journalist, Griffin Barry). He married his third wife, an Oxford undergraduate (who had also been his children's governess since the summer of 1930) named Patricia ("Peter") Spence. They had a son, Conrad Sebastian Robert Russell, who later became a prominent historian and one of the leading figures in the Liberal Democrat party.

After the World War II, Russell moved to the United States, teaching at the University of Chicago and then the University of California, Los Angeles. He was appointed professor at the City College of New York in 1940 but the appointment was annulled by a court judgment after a public outcry over his opinions and morals. He joined the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia, lecturing to a varied audience on the history of philosophy. These lectures would form the basis of his book, "A History of Western Philosophy" (1945), a great commercial success which provided him with a steady income for the remainder of his life.

He returned to Britain in 1944 and rejoined the faculty of Trinity College. He was now world famous, even outside of academic circles, and frequently either the subject or author of magazine and newspaper articles, as well as a regular participant in many BBC radio broadcasts. In 1949, he was awarded the Order of Merit and, in 1950, the Nobel Prize for Literature (at least partly on the merit of his "A History of Western Philosophy"). In 1952, Russell divorced his third wife, and soon after the divorce married his fourth wife, Edith Finch, whom he had known since 1925. Edith remained with him until his death, and by all accounts their marriage was a happy, close and loving one.

Russell spent the 1950s and 1960s engaged in various political causes (primarily related to nuclear disarmament, opposition to the Vietnam War and Israeli aggression in the Middle East), in company with several other prominent intellectuals of the time, and became something of a hero among many of the youthful members of the New Left. He published his three-volume autobiography in 1967, 1968 and 1969, and, although frail, he remained lucid and clear thinking up to the day of his death.

Russell died of influenza on 2 February 1970, aged 97, after suddenly falling ill while reading at his home in Penrhyndeudraeth, Merionethshire, Wales. He was cremated at Colwyn Bay and, in accordance with his wishes, there was no religious ceremony. His ashes were scattered over the Welsh mountains later that year.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, Russell along with G. E. Moore and Alfred North Whitehead, was largely responsible for the British "revolt" against the dominant Idealism of G. W. F. Hegel. They strove to eliminate what they saw as meaningless and incoherent assertions in philosophy and sought clarity and precision in argument by the use of exact language and by breaking down philosophical propositions into their simplest grammatical components. Russell, in particular, saw formal Logic and science as the principal tools of the philosopher, and he wanted to end what he saw as the excesses of Metaphysics, adopting William of Ockham's principle against multiplying unnecessary entities (Occam's Razor) as a central part of the method of analysis.

Russell was particularly critical of the doctrine of internal relations, a doctrine he ascribed to the Absolute Idealism of G. W. F. Hegel and the Pragmatism of C. S. Peirce. Russell argued that this would make space, time, science and the concept of number not fully intelligible.

Russell had great influence on modern mathematical Logic. His first mathematical book, "An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry" (1897), was heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant, but he soon rejected it completely when he realized that it would have made Albert Einstein's schema of space-time impossible.

As a young man, he became very interested in the definition of number and followed Gottlob Frege in taking a logicist approach in which Logic was in turn based upon mathematical set theory. In fact, Russell pursued a parallel course to Frege to some extent, and spent several years working on ideas that Frege had, unbeknown to Russell, already addressed. It was only later that Russell became responsible for bringing the largely unknown Frege to the attention of the English-speaking world.

It was with his 1903 work, "The Principles of Mathematics", though, that Russell finally superseded Frege's work. He identified what has come to be known as Russell's Paradox to show that Frege's naive set theory led to a contradiction. The paradox can be stated as the set of things, x , that are such that x is not a member of x , and is sometimes explained by the simplistic (but more easily understood) example, "If a barber shaves all and only those men in the village who do not shave themselves, does he shave himself?". When he found out about this breakthrough, Frege completely abandoned his Logicism.

Russell however, continued to defend Logicism and along with his former teacher, Alfred North Whitehead, wrote the monumental three-volume "Principia Mathematica" (the first volume, published in 1910, is largely ascribed to Russell). During the ten years or so that Russell and Whitehead spent on the "Principia", draft after draft was begun and abandoned as Russell constantly re-thought his basic premises. Eventually, Whitehead insisted on publication of the work, even if it was not complete, although they were forced to publish it at their own expense as no commercial publishers would touch it. Perhaps more than any other single work, it established the specialty of mathematical or symbolic logic, and it established Russell's name in the international mathematical and philosophical community. Influential as it was, though, the work fell prey to the 1931 Incompleteness Theorems of Kurt Gödel (1906 - 1978) which pointed out the inherent limitations of all but the most trivial formal systems for arithmetic of mathematical interest. So, it was only with the effective abandonment of the Principia project, by which time Russell was nearly 40, that he turned away from Logic and towards other aspects of philosophy, where he was to prove himself almost as influential.

Perhaps more than anyone before him, Russell made language a central part of philosophy. Philosophers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and the practitioners of Ordinary Language Philosophy were to a large extent amplifying or responding to Russell's earlier ideas .

His most significant contribution to Philosophy of Language is his theory of descriptions, which he presented in his seminal essay, "On Denoting" (1905). The theory is often illustrated using the phrase "the present King of France" (when France has no king), and Russell's solution was basically to analyze not the term alone but the entire proposition that contained a definite description, and then allow the definite descriptions to be broken apart and treated separately from the predication that is the obvious content of the entire proposition.

Russell's most systematic treatment of philosophical analysis was what he called Logical Atomism, developed in a set of lectures in 1918. He set forth his concept of an ideal, isomorphic language that would mirror the world, whereby our knowledge could be reduced to terms of atomic propositions and their truth-functional compounds. He believed that the world consists of a plurality of logically independent facts, and that our knowledge depends on the data of our direct experience of them. Thus, every meaningful proposition must consist of terms referring directly to objects with which we are acquainted (or they must be defined by other terms referring to objects with which we are acquainted), a kind of radical Empiricism. In time, he came to doubt the value of this theory, and was particularly troubled by the required assumption of isomorphism (a one-to-one relation between two sets, which preserves the relations existing between elements in its domain).

In Epistemology, he distinguished between two ways in which we can be familiar with objects, "knowledge by acquaintance" (our own sense data, momentary perceptions of colours, sounds, etc) and "knowledge by description" (everything else, including the physical objects themselves, which can only be inferred or reasoned to and not known directly). In his later philosophy, however, Russell subscribed to a kind of neutral monism (similar to that held by William James and first formulated by Baruch Spinoza) which maintained that the distinctions between the material and mental worlds were really arbitrary, and that both could be reduced to neutral properties.

Russell remained throughout his life, though, an out-and-out empiricist, in the tradition of Locke and Hume, and he always maintained that the scientific method - knowledge derived from empirical research verified through repeated testing - was the appropriate method of analysis (Scientism), although he believed that science (and philosophy, for that matter) could only reach tentative and piecemeal answers, and that attempts to find organic unities were largely futile.

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However, the very fact that he made science a central part of his method was instrumental in making the Philosophy of Science a full-blooded separate branch of philosophy, and he greatly influenced both the verifications in the Logical Positivism movement as well as the falsifications.

Although Russell wrote on Ethics, being greatly influenced by the Ethical Non-Naturalism of G. E. Moore's "Principia Ethica", he did not believe that Ethics was really a bona fide part of philosophy. In time, however, he abandoned any belief in objective moral values and came to prefer a view closer to the Ethical Subjectivism of David Hume.

For most of his life Russell maintained religion (as well as other systematic ideologies such as Communism) to be little more than superstition, and remained a high profile Atheist (although he did accept the ontological argument for the existence of God for a time during his undergraduate years). He was careful, however, to distinguish between his Atheism as regards certain types of god concepts, and his Agnosticism regarding some other types of superhuman intelligence. He believed that, despite any positive effects it might have, religion was largely harmful to people, serving to impede knowledge, foster fear and dependency, and cause much of the war, oppression and misery that have beset the world.

14.1 "A Free Man's Worship"

"A Free Man's Worship" is an essay by Bertrand Russell that was first published in 1903. It is a philosophical work that deals with issues of morality, religion, and the meaning of life. In this essay, Russell presents a view of the universe that is bleak and pessimistic, but argues that humans have the power to create their own meaning and purpose.

This essay is his attempt of emancipating the modern people from the bloody tradition worship of power. Russell begins by acknowledging the scientific understanding of the world, which suggests that the universe is indifferent to human desires and beliefs. According to Russell, this understanding leads to a sense of despair and hopelessness, as it suggests that there is no ultimate purpose to human existence.

However, Russell argues that humans have the ability to create their own meaning and purpose in life, through the pursuit of knowledge and the development of ethical values. He suggests that the pursuit of knowledge is a worthy goal in itself, as it allows us to better understand the world and our place in it. Additionally, he argues that the development of ethical values, such as compassion and justice, is essential for creating a better world.

Russell also suggests that humans can find solace in the beauty and wonder of the natural world. He argues that the appreciation of art, music, and nature can provide a sense of transcendence that goes beyond the mundane concerns of daily life. Ultimately, Russell suggests that while the scientific understanding of the world may seem bleak, it is still possible for humans to find meaning and purpose in life. He encourages us to embrace our freedom and creativity.

Russell does not take allusion from any other sources but only Marlow because in his drama the description given by Mephistopheles is the most probable creation story, related to science. So he takes his allusion and believes that the creation story is the most logical. Any way Russell believes that human beings came in to existence and the first savage ancestors were totally powerless on the hand of nature.

Bertrand Russell believes that our savage ancestors found themselves helpless and powerless because nature was dark and chaotic and no means to think otherwise. They began to imagine a power that was unseen for them they thought that, here must be some visible force, which is beyond their sight and control. Than they thought is, they gave some worship to that power. It would make their life better, more helpful and powerful. Thinking so they established the power of imagination and began to worship to that power which is the worst task made by them.

After they established power and began to worship it a tradition of worshipping over power was developed. The tradition of worship came to be developed in such a negative way that we worship God; the blood thirst demonic picture of God, was created so that we worsened the tradition more and more. He gives two examples of God to criticize the negative tradition of worship. The Moloch God was worshiped by scarifying the children by burning them in to the flame of fire. He also criticizes the God in the Book of Job in Bible where both Gods, the Moloch God as well as other God in negative sense they are the source of suffering rather than love to the worshipper. He criticized

such demon like Gods and attacks over the negative tradition of worship. He suggests that it is the time to alter the tradition of worship but it is better to stop to worship if we can.

Russell reminds the moral readers that only humans can distinguish between good and bad or right and wrong. He says that human being is different from other creation of Mother Nature, in the sense that only humans have the indomitable nature of spirit that is using our mind. He reminds us that by using the mind, we can think, imagine, analyze and evaluate what is right and what is wrong. He thinks that power and its worship is very meaningless.

In his opinion, there is no human power but super human power such as nature, time and death. In nature, there is the power of change and violence. In time, there is power of fate and in death, there is the power of finality, in this power there is such force, which we cannot control or prevent. Whatever we worship after these powers, they are deaf, dumb and victimization. No one can be immortal; no one can escape from the moth of death at last. To use such mind is touse (dishevel) indomitable nature of our spirit and by using so we can conclude that our worship to power is meaningless. We should be indifferent to the power. It is better not to worship power. If not so it is the time to alter the tradition of power worship and it is better to worship good, loveable and affectionate power.

Russell suggests us that when we stop to worship power we can be freeman. To be a freeman it is very difficult because we are guided by our petty and trivial personal selfish desire. We are bounded in the material world so we cannot renounce this world. Until and unless we renounce such material desires, we cannot be a free man. It is like the world of a dark cave, which is difficult to cross, but once we cross it we will reach a beautiful temple, which is to be the freeman.

What Russell says is if we abandon our personal selfish desire and if we reject the material world, we become freeman and we have different type of world of the worship. The Freeman does not worship like the savage who worships as a slave on the feet of power to fulfill his petty and trivial desires. But, to the freeman worship is different because he is not the slave on the feet of power. Instead, his worship is deep thinking or meditation for the welfare of humanity. In Russell's opinion, A Freeman's Worship is to burn in to the fire of worldly human passions. It is the great thinking of human for the benefit of the human world like Buddha.

In this essay, Bertrand Russell explores the human predicament in a universe without a god. He argues that traditional religion offers a false consolation by positing a benevolent god who created the world for a purpose and who will ultimately save humanity. Russell contends that science and reason have debunked this view of the world and that humanity is left alone in a cold and indifferent universe. Yet, despite this bleak reality, Russell maintains that there is still room for a "free man's worship."

He argues that humans can find meaning and fulfillment in striving for the betterment of humanity, even if they know that there is no ultimate purpose to the universe. This kind of worship is not directed toward a deity, but toward humanity itself and the ideals of truth, beauty, and justice. Through this kind of worship, humans can create their own purpose and meaning in life and work to make the world a better place. Russell acknowledges that this kind of worship is not easy and requires great courage and determination, but he argues that it is ultimately more fulfilling than the false consolation of traditional religion.

In conclusion, Russell calls on humans to embrace a free man's worship and to strive for a better world, even in the face of a cold and indifferent universe, creating a better world for ourselves and for future generations.

14.2 The Tradition of Power Worship

In "A Free Man's Worship," Bertrand Russell presents a fictional account of the history of the creation, as told by Mephistopheles to Dr. Faustus. According to this account, the universe was created by a God who grew tired of the endless praise of the angels and decided to create beings whom he could torture and who would worship him despite his cruelty.

The account goes on to describe the evolution of the universe, from the formation of planets to the emergence of life and the eventual rise of human beings. Man, according to this account, is born with the power of thought and the knowledge of good and evil, as well as a cruel thirst for worship.

Man looks at the world and sees chaos, struggle, and death. He believes that there must be a hidden purpose to it all, and that this purpose is good. However, he also sees that there is nothing in the

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visible world that is worthy of reverence. So he stands aside from the struggle, believing that God intended for harmony to come out of chaos through human efforts.

But Man also realizes that he is flawed and that his instincts are often sinful. He asks God for forgiveness, but doubts that he can be justly forgiven. So he invents a divine plan by which God's wrath can be appeased. He makes the present even worse in the hope that the future will be better. And he gives thanks to God for the strength to forgo even the joys that are possible.

God, according to this account, smiles upon Man's perfect renunciation and worship. But he also sends another sun crashing into Man's sun, causing everything to return to nebula. This ending suggests that even the perfect worship of Man is ultimately meaningless, as all things must eventually return to chaos and nothingness.

Russell marvels at the fact that, in the midst of an uncaring and indifferent universe, humans have emerged with the ability to think, feel, and create. He describes this as a "strange mystery" and notes that it is through this ability that humans are able to transcend their limitations and examine, criticize, and know the world around them. Despite the fact that death is an inescapable part of human existence, Russell believes that humans are still able to find meaning and purpose in their brief lives through their capacity for imagination and creativity.

The author argues that even though primitive people feel oppressed by the powers of nature, they are willing to prostrate themselves before their gods because they value power above all else. The author refers to the "long history of cruelty and torture, of degradation and human sacrifice" that has been endured in the hope of placating these gods.

The author then introduces the concept of the religion of Moloch, which is characterized by the cringing submission of the slave to his master. In this type of religion, the believer is unable to question the worthiness of his master or the morality of his actions. The author suggests that this type of religion is common among primitive societies that have not yet acknowledged the independence of ideals.

Bertrand Russell explores the evolution of human worship and the relationship between power and morality. He argues that in the early stages of human civilization, the worship of power was common, and people were willing to submit to their gods without questioning whether they deserved worship. This form of worship is known as the religion of Moloch, where power is the ultimate value and may be worshipped despite the infliction of pain and suffering.

14.3 Arguments Against the Existing Traditions

As human morality evolved, the demands of the ideal world were felt, and worship had to be given to gods of another kind than those created by the savage. Some still maintained that naked power was worthy of worship, while others recognized the need for a god that embodied both power and goodness. The latter group believed that the world of fact could be harmonious with the world of ideals and thus created a god that was all-powerful and all-good, the mystic unity of what is and what should be.

However, Russell argues that the world of fact is not good, and by submitting our judgment to it, we are being slavish. Instead, we should exalt the dignity of humans by freeing ourselves from the tyranny of non-human power. In light of this, we are presented with a choice: shall we worship force, or shall we worship goodness? Shall our god be recognized as evil, or shall he be created by our conscience and embody goodness?

Russell challenges readers to reflect on the evolution of human worship and the relationship between power and morality. He suggests that we should strive to create a world in which goodness is the ultimate value and not power. The author argues that this choice is a momentous one, with profound implications for our morality. If we choose to worship Force, we are submitting to a hostile universe and sacrificing our best to evil. But if we choose to worship Goodness, we are freeing ourselves from the tyranny of non-human Power and exalting the dignity of Man. The author suggests that this choice is not only a moral one, but also affects our whole approach to life and our understanding of the world.

The author explores the idea of renunciation, or giving up on desires and worldly goods, as a means of achieving wisdom and spiritual growth. The author argues that Christianity's emphasis on renunciation has been wise, as it has helped people to purify their ideals and discover austere

truths. He writes that renunciation can lead to a greater understanding of the world and oneself. The author also acknowledges that passive renunciation is not enough. The vision of heaven and the temple of our own ideals can be glimpsed through imagination, music, architecture, reason, and beauty. These things can inspire us to fashion our lives and the world around us to better serve our needs and values.

The author notes that the forces of nature, such as Time, Fate, and Death, are greater than anything we find in ourselves, and that the slave is doomed to worship them. However, to contemplate these forces and feel their passionless splendour is greater still, and it can make us free men. When we abandon the struggle for private happiness and burn with passion for eternal things, we achieve emancipation. This liberation is achieved through a contemplation of Fate, which is subdued by the mind that leaves nothing to be purged by the purifying fire of Time.

The author argues that the free man is united with his fellow-men by the strongest of all ties, the tie of a common doom. He finds a new vision that sheds light of love over every daily task. The life of Man is a long march through the night, and the free man is tortured by weariness and pain, surrounded by invisible foes, towards a goal that few can hope to reach. As our comrades vanish from our sight, we can help them by shedding sunshine on their path, lightening their sorrows by the balm of sympathy, giving them the pure joy of a never-tiring affection, strengthening failing courage, and instilling faith in hours of despair. We should not weigh their merits and demerits, but think only of their need, remembering that they are fellow-sufferers in the same darkness, actors in the same tragedy as ourselves. The author writes that the contemplation of Fate and the recognition of our common doom can free us from the slavery of worshipping Time, Fate, and Death. By focusing on eternal things and helping our fellow-sufferers, we can achieve emancipation and become free men.

Russell encourages readers to reject the "coward terrors" of fatalism and instead embrace a sense of defiance and pride in the face of overwhelming odds. He suggests that we should strive to maintain a free and independent mind, unencumbered by the "wanton tyranny" of external circumstances. Russell's message is one of resilience and perseverance. He urges us to be like Atlas, shouldering the weight of the world with determination and unwavering commitment to our ideals. Even in the face of the most crushing adversity, we can still find a way to create meaning and purpose in our lives, and to make a difference in the world around us.

This essay explores the limitations of science and rationality in explaining the mysteries of existence, and argues that a meaningful life can only be found through the pursuit of ethical and aesthetic values. One of the central themes of the essay is the idea that human beings are insignificant in the grand scheme of things. Russell argues that science has taught us that the universe is vast, ancient, and operates according to impersonal laws that do not care about human values or aspirations. In this view, humanity is a tiny, fleeting speck in a vast and impersonal cosmos, with no inherent purpose or meaning.

However, Russell argues that despite this bleak picture, humans can still find a sense of purpose and value in life. He suggests that this can be achieved through the pursuit of ethical and aesthetic values, such as the pursuit of beauty, goodness, and truth. In this way, human beings can create their own meaning in life, even if it is not inherent in the universe itself.

Another key aspect of the essay is Russell's critique of religion. He argues that traditional religious beliefs are based on myths and superstitions that do not stand up to rational scrutiny. Instead, he suggests that humans should embrace a scientific and rational worldview, based on empirical evidence and logical reasoning.

However, Russell acknowledges that science and rationality have their own limitations. They cannot answer all of the big questions about existence, such as why we are here, or what happens after we die. In the absence of these answers, Russell suggests that humans must create their own values and meaning in life, based on their own experiences and aspirations.

Overall, "A Free Man's Worship" is a powerful and thought-provoking essay that challenges readers to think deeply about the meaning of life and the role of humanity in the universe. It suggests that while we may be small and insignificant in the grand scheme of things, we can still find value and purpose in life through the pursuit of ethical and aesthetic values, and by creating our own meaning in the face of an indifferent universe.

In his essay "A Free Man's Worship," Bertrand Russell discusses the tradition of power worship, which refers to the human tendency to worship and submit to powerful forces, whether they be gods, monarchs, or other forms of authority. According to Russell, this tradition has its roots in the

fear and uncertainty that humans face in a world they do not fully understand, and it has persisted throughout history despite the advances of science and reason.

Russell argues that power worship can take many forms, but it is always characterized by a belief in the superiority of the powerful and the submission of the powerless. In the religious context, for example, humans have traditionally worshipped gods as all-powerful and all-knowing beings who control the fate of the world. In the political context, monarchs and other rulers have been revered as the embodiment of power and authority.

According to Russell, power worship is inherently dangerous because it encourages people to give up their own agency and freedom in exchange for the false promise of protection and security. By submitting to the powerful, people become complicit in their own oppression, and they may even be led to engage in destructive behavior in the name of their rulers.

14.4 An Attempt of Emancipating the Modern People from the Tradition Worship of Power

Russell believes that the only way to overcome power worship is through a commitment to reason and free thought. By using our intellect to understand the world around us and to challenge the traditional sources of authority, we can break free from the cycle of submission and oppression that has plagued human societies for centuries.

In short, Russell's discussion of power worship highlights the dangers of blindly submitting to powerful forces and encourages us to think critically about the sources of authority in our lives. By embracing reason and free thought, we can overcome our fear and uncertainty and become truly free. Russell also criticizes traditional religious beliefs for promoting ignorance and superstition. He argues that religious beliefs are based on faith rather than reason, and that this leads to a rejection of science and reason. He suggests that a naturalistic worldview encourages scientific inquiry and rational thinking, and that this leads to a better understanding of the world.

Russell suggests that the traditional worship of power has its roots in humanity's fear of the unknown and the desire for safety and security. This fear has led people to create religions and ideologies that promise to protect them from the dangers of the world. However, this worship of power has also led to the creation of oppressive systems of government and social structures that prioritize the interests of the few over the many.

Russell argues that modern people must reject this worship of power and instead embrace a worldview that values knowledge and beauty. He believes that the pursuit of knowledge and the appreciation of beauty are the most important goals that humanity can aspire to. By seeking knowledge and appreciating beauty, we can transcend our fear and achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

14.5 Ideas of True Freeman

Russell argues that the true freeman is not bound by the limitations of traditional systems of power and authority. Instead, they are free to pursue their own interests and passions, without fear or inhibition. They are not beholden to any particular religion or ideology, but instead, they seek to understand the world through reason and evidence.

Furthermore, Russell suggests that the true freeman is not motivated by fear or the desire for power over others. They do not seek to dominate or control those around them, but rather, they seek to understand and appreciate the beauty and complexity of the world. They recognize that all humans are fundamentally equal, and they reject the notion that some individuals or groups are inherently superior to others.

Russell suggests that the true freeman is someone who has liberated themselves from the fear of death and the limitations of the physical world. They recognize that life is finite and that death is inevitable, but they are not afraid. Instead, they embrace the beauty and wonder of existence, and they seek to make the most of their time on earth.

In conclusion, the idea of the true freeman in "A Free Man's Worship" is someone who has liberated themselves from the fear of power and the limitations of traditional systems of authority. They

value knowledge and beauty above all else, and they seek to understand and appreciate the world around them. They are not motivated by fear or the desire for power over others, but instead, they are motivated by a deep sense of curiosity and wonder about existence.

Main Points

The main theme of the essay is the struggle between human desires for happiness and fulfillment, and the stark reality of the universe as indifferent and cruel. Russell argues that humans must create their own meaning and purpose in life, as there is no inherent meaning or purpose to be found in the universe.

According to the writer: The "tragic sense of life" refers to the realization that our desires and aspirations are often frustrated by the harsh realities of the world, and that ultimately we are all subject to death and destruction. This sense of tragedy is inherent in the human condition and cannot be escaped.

Russell is critical of religion, arguing that it is a product of human fear and ignorance. He sees religion as an attempt to find comfort and meaning in a universe that is fundamentally indifferent to human concerns. However, he acknowledges that religion can offer solace and hope to those who need it, even if it is not based on objective truth.

Russell sees philosophy as a way to explore the fundamental questions of human existence, such as the nature of reality, the meaning of life, and the existence of God. He believes that philosophy can help us to better understand ourselves and the world around us, and to create our own meaning and purpose in life.

Russell suggests that humans can find meaning in life by creating their own values and goals, and by pursuing them with passion and commitment. He argues that even though the universe may be indifferent to our desires and aspirations, we can still find joy and fulfillment in the pursuit of our own goals and the realization of our own potential.

Summary

Russell suggests that:

- The universe is indifferent to humanity.
- Humans must create their own meaning in life.
- Religion has perpetuated the idea that humans are insignificant in the grand scheme of things.
- Humans have the potential to create their own values and meanings.
- The pursuit of knowledge can create meaning in life.
- The appreciation of beauty can provide a sense of meaning and fulfillment.
- Humans must face the universe's indifference with courage and dignity.
- Embracing creativity and intelligence can lead to true freedom.

Keywords

Courage - the ability to face difficult situations with bravery.

Dignity - the quality of being worthy of respect.

Freedom - the ability to live according to our own desires and principles.

Creativity - the ability to come up with new ideas and expressions.

Self Assessment

1. What is the main question that Bertrand Russell addresses in his essay "A Free Man's Worship"?
 - A. What is the meaning of life?

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- B. How can we achieve happiness?
 - C. Why do we suffer?
 - D. How can we find inner peace?
2. Russell argues that human beings are:
- A. Free to make their own choices
 - B. Determined by fate
 - C. Controlled by external forces
 - D. Victims of circumstance
3. What is the "tragic" aspect of human existence, according to Russell?
- A. The fact that we are mortal
 - B. The existence of evil in the world
 - C. The limitations of human knowledge
 - D. The absence of a higher purpose in life
4. According to Russell, what is the consequence of recognizing the absence of a higher purpose in life?
- A. A sense of hopelessness and despair
 - B. A newfound appreciation for the present moment
 - C. A desire to create one's own purpose in life
 - D. A rejection of traditional morality and values
5. According to Russell, what is the value of art and beauty?
- A. They provide a temporary escape from reality
 - B. They reveal the underlying truth of existence
 - C. They distract us from the hardships of life
 - D. They serve no practical purpose
6. Russell believes that the scientific worldview:
- A. Is incompatible with religion
 - B. Is limited by human perception
 - C. Offers the only reliable method of knowledge
 - D. Is a product of cultural bias
7. Russell suggests that the ultimate goal of human society should be:
- A. The pursuit of knowledge
 - B. The pursuit of happiness
 - C. The elimination of suffering
 - D. The realization of human potential
8. Russell suggests that the concept of God:

- A. Is a product of human imagination
 - B. Is a necessary part of human psychology
 - C. Provides comfort in times of crisis
 - D. Offers a source of moral guidance
9. According to Russell, what is the role of reason in human affairs?
- A. To provide a foundation for morality
 - B. To discover the underlying structure of reality
 - C. To overcome human limitations
 - D. To justify our beliefs and desires
10. Russell suggests that the pursuit of knowledge:
- A. Leads to greater understanding and wisdom
 - B. Is a distraction from more important concerns
 - C. Is a source of arrogance and delusion
 - D. Is a source of depression
11. Bertrand Russell's essay "A Free Man's Worship" was first published in 1903
- A. True
 - B. False
12. The essay explores Russell's views on the nature of the universe and the place of humanity within it.
- A. True
 - B. False
13. Russell suggests that the universe is ultimately meaningless and indifferent to human concerns.
- A. True
 - B. False
14. Russell contends that, despite this bleak outlook, humans can still find solace and meaning in their own creative endeavors.
- A. True
 - B. False
15. Russell believes that the pursuit of knowledge and truth is ultimately futile and pointless.
- A. True
 - B. False

Answers for Self Assessment

- | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. A | 2. A | 3. D | 4. A | 5. B |
| 6. C | 7. D | 8. A | 9. B | 10. A |
| 11. A | 12. A | 13. A | 14. A | 15. B |

Review Questions

1. What is the main theme of Russell's essay "A Free Man's Worship"?
2. What is the "tragic sense of life" according to Russell?
3. What is Russell's view on religion?
4. What is the role of philosophy, according to Russell?
5. How does Russell suggest that humans can find meaning in life despite the indifferent universe?



Further Readings

"The Problems of Philosophy" by Bertrand Russell

"The Will to Believe" by William James

"Beyond Good and Evil" by Friedrich Nietzsche

"The Myth of Sisyphus" by Albert Camus



Web Links

<https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/courses/264/fmw.htm>

<https://reasonandmeaning.com/2015/12/12/summary-of-bertrand-russells-a-free-mans-worship/>

<https://www.bachelorandmaster.com/creationofknowledge/freemans-worship.html>

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