

The Heterological Thinkers

LITERARY CRITICISM: LESSON 2

Id. Card

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Lesson 2: The Heterological Thinkers

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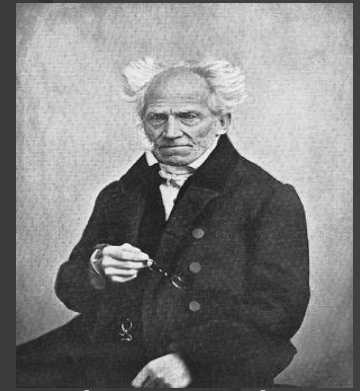
Answers

References

Objectives

- After Studying the lesson the students should know the Heterological thinkers' theories.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)



- A German Philosopher
- A very pessimistic Philosopher
- Born on February 22, 1788 in Danzig, Poland
- Schopenhauer's father--- Heinrich Floris Schopenhauer is a merchant
- Moved to Hamburg when Schopenhauer was five
- Stayed in France for two years and England for one year
- →learnt how to speak French and English
- He left his family business and began studies at the University of Göttingen when he was 19
- In the university, Plato and Kant were introduced to him
- Enrolled in the University of Berlin
- Moved to Rudolstadt, where he entitled *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*
- Settled permanently in Frankfurt (June, 1833)
- A favorable review of his philosophy was published in 1853
- Died of heart failure when he was 72 years old (September 21, 1860)

Schopenhauer's Ideas

- The mind-body problem is the world knot. Only in man's case do we know the thing in itself behind the bodily phenomenon. Your body is the phenomenal manifestation of your inner self. By analogy the inner reality of all material things is psychic. Schopenhauer was a panpsychist.
- The phenomenal world exists only for the noumenal mind. Kant's forms of sensibility and categories apply only to phenomena, not to the mind. The basic category is the principle of sufficient reason.
- The noumenal mind is chiefly volitional, not cognitive. The will has primacy over theoretical reason (Kant). Reason is a tool of the will. Descartes's view of man as a thinking thing is rejected.
- Reason rationalizes, and is duped by the will. Schopenhauer anticipates Freud's idea of the unconscious.
- Struggle for survival among species and play of forces in inanimate matter are expressions of the will.

- But the will to live is destined to frustration
- All will is want, hence frustrating.
- If the will were satisfied, it would vanish. Satisfaction is just enough to keep the will alive to suffer more, to whet its appetite for more satisfaction, and so to intensify want.
- If the will is satisfied, the result is not true satisfaction but boredom, a new kind of pain.
- The satisfaction of a seemingly all-important desire merely allows other repressed desires to come forward, and thus is not truly satisfying.
- Satisfaction is the elimination of pain, and so cannot exist without pain.
- Human suffering exceeds that of the animals, since we suffer by consciousness of anticipated pain.
- We want contradictory things: evidence of one desire is not evidence of the absence of opposite desires. We want to be together, but are not happy together. We want a vacation, and yet on vacation want to return to work.

- As soon as we acquire wisdom, old age erodes our faculties and we die.
- ⦿ Redemption comes from emancipation from the will to live, from asceticism.
 - ⦿ Temporary redemption comes through contemplating works of art, adopting the aesthetic standpoint of detachment from the will.
 - ⦿ Permanent emancipation comes from Buddhist renunciation of the will to live.

Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Will

- Inspired by Plato and Kant
- Will = what actually exists (the noumena)
- Observable reality = what appears to us (phenomena)
- There's an impersonal force that controls all the things, including us
- → Schopenhauer referred this as the "Will"
- Our body: Two Ways to be perceived
- 1) Subjectively (Will) → we are aware of it through pleasures and pains
- 2) Objectively, i.e.: perceive our hand objectively, just as a surgeon perceives it during an operation
- Schopenhauer: Will is blind
- Schopenhauer: Will is not free
- Few people can see past their own wills to the big picture
- To Schopenhauer, humans were motivated ONLY by their own desires

Pros and Cons

Pros:

- A good theory to account for the World
- (When objects are perceived by subjects)

Cons:

- Will controls us instead of us controlling will
- Will is not free and can never be satisfied
- too negative and subjective

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)



- ◉ Born in 1844, Nietzsche came from a long line of Lutheran ministers (*father, grandfather*)
- ◉ Studied “Classics” and became a brilliant professor
- ◉ Left the University to live in solitude and write
- ◉ By his mid-40s, Nietzsche began his life-long battle with mental illness (*engendered by syphilis*)
- ◉ By the 1890s, he became internationally known, although he knew nothing of success
- ◉ In 1900, at age of 56, Nietzsche died in an insane asylum
- ◉ His Life-Long Goal: He was committed to teaching us how to live life to the fullest. This could best be done in a godless, meaningless world!

The Will to Power

It is the only law and the only “morality”.

It applies to all living things. The pressure for survival or adaptation is less important than the desire to expand one’s power.

Living in itself appears as a subsidiary aim, something necessary to promote one’s power.

The notion of the will to power is contrasted by Nietzsche with that of utilitarianism, which claims all people want fundamentally to be happy.

Humans are divided into a natural aristocratic group and a naturally dependent and inferior one, which are always opposed. Exploitation is a natural consequence of the will to power.

Superior people express the will to power, taking advantage of their natural gifts to achieve their full potential and dominance over others.

Inferior people use different ideologies, or “slave moralities”, to try to **deny the will to power**.

Self expressing the will to power – truly living – can’t be “wrong”.

Master vs. Slave Morality

Master morality is the original system of morality.

This is the morality of the SUPERIOR PEOPLE. They are BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL. They believe that “what is injurious to them is injurious in itself”.

Good is associated with wealth, strength, health, inspiring fear and power. It means power-enhancing, tending to the full development of natural ability.

Bad is related with the lack of power, poor, weak, sick and pathetic. It means contemptible, power-diminishing, tending to the artificial limitation of natural ability.

To fulfill full human potential, the noble soul lives according to the first law of nature: the Will to Power.

Slave morality is a social illness. It is essentially a morality of utility.

This is the morality of the INFERIOR PEOPLE.

Most slaves choose to be victims. This morality favours a limited existence. It “makes the best of a bad situation”. It promotes virtues such as pity, the complaisant and obliging hand, warm heart, patience, humility and friendliness, which serve to ease existence for those who suffer.

Good is related to charity, pity, restraint, and subservience. It means “tending to ease suffering”.

Evil is seen in the cruel, selfish, wealthy, indulgent and aggressive. It means “tending to inspire fear”.

Henri Bergson (1859–1941)



- ⦿ defined human experience through *duration*, psychological time consisting of the constant flow from the past into the future rather than a succession of chronological instants.
- ⦿ believed that reality is a past that constantly becomes something new.
- ⦿ held that intuition is the most trustworthy guide to understanding.

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

- Matthew Arnold has been regarded by some as one of the founding figures of modern English criticism. Matthew Arnold was not only a cultural critic but also a poet and an educator.
- Central to Arnold's literary criticism is the problem of living adequately in late
- industrial society. Arnold's world view is deeply humanist.
- Arnold's central terms and phrases all derive ultimately from his analysis of the malaise of modern culture. He sees the human being in industrial society as mechanized, as wholly given to "external" pursuits, as stunted in his spiritual
- and moral sensibility.
- Arnold was somewhat obsessed with the narrow moralism and mercantilism of the bourgeoisie, whom he termed philistines.
- His essay "The Function of Criticism" is concerned to counteract the philistinism of the world as defined by the English bourgeoisie, enshrined in the restrictive obsession of this class with practicality, utility, and reason: in a phrase, with the imperatives of the immediate present.

- In one sense, Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism" is original and controversial in as much as it seeks to redefine the central responsibilities of criticism.
- While he acknowledges that the "critical faculty is lower than the inventive," and that the exercise of the "creative power . . . is the highest function of man," he suggests that it is an atmosphere of appropriate criticism that creates the conditions in which creative genius can be realized.
- The work of the literary genius, says Arnold, is not, like the philosopher, to discover new ideas; the literary work is not one of analysis and discovery but of "synthesis and exposition." It needs to be inspired by certain conditions: by "a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas."
- The aim of the literary work is to present these ideas "in the most effective and attractive combinations," in beautiful form.
- It is precisely the task of criticism to "establish an order of ideas" and "to make the best ideas prevail."

- ⦿ It is the business of the critical power “in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is.
- ⦿ He suggests that “the creation of a modern poet . . . implies a great critical effort behind it.
- ⦿ If the poet is to express elements of modern life which is so complex, he needs to be nourished by a climate of ideas prepared through a critical endeavor.
- ⦿ The time is ripe, says Arnold, for true criticism to “avail itself of the field now opening to it . . . The rule may be summed up in one word *disinterestedness*.
- ⦿ How is criticism to be disinterested? By “keeping aloof,” says Arnold, from “the practical view of things,” by “following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas.

- ⦿ Criticism must be entirely independent of all interests.
- ⦿ And its purpose? To lead man “towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things”
- ⦿ Critic should keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere, and betake himself “to the serener life of the mind and spirit”.
- ⦿ Only in this way, by continually enlarging the stock of “true and fresh ideas,” can the critic be of true service to the practical world.

He calls culture “*study of perfection*”. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good”.

- The aims of culture, according to Arnold, are identical with those of religion, which Arnold calls “the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself, – religion, that voice of the deepest human experience.”
- Because culture represents for Arnold an inward condition of the mind and not outward circumstances, he regards its function as especially crucial in our modern civilization which is “mechanical and external” as well as strongly individualistic, specialized, and internalized.
- Arnold is here moving toward his later notion that poetry will replace the function of religion.
- The task of both criticism and culture, then, is to place the pragmatic bourgeois
- vision of life in a broader historical and international context. But the notion of “disinterestedness” implies the possibility of a somehow timeless and universal perspective.
- It is, he claims, to poetry that we must turn, not merely for spiritual and emotional support and consolation but to interpret life for us. He defines poetry as a criticism of life. Poetry’s
- high function is actually to replace religion and philosophy.
- He declares that good literature is what follows the theory and rules of classics.

Summary

- The “heterological” or alternative tradition was initiated by Schopenhauer who, in explicit opposition to Hegel, launched a radical critique of Enlightenment notions such as the scientific progress of civilization and the perfectibility of individual and state through refinement of the faculty of reason.
- The heterological tradition opened up by Schopenhauer was continued by figures such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Bergson, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, and modern feminists, thinkers who challenged the very discipline of philosophy and its claims to arrive at truth through reason.
- They emphasized instead the role of emotion, the body, sexuality, the unconscious, as well as of pragmatic interests.
- This tradition exhibits some historical continuity with the Romantics, the symbolists, and decadents, as well as several affiliations with humanists such as Irving Babbitt in America and Matthew Arnold in England, both of whom deplored the effects of the French Revolution.

Key and Specialized Terms

- Will: There's an impersonal force that controls all the things, including us Schopenhauer referred this as the "Will".
- Intuition: Power of knowing something without reasoning or learned skill.
- Philistines: Arnold was somewhat obsessed with the narrow moralism and mercantilism of the bourgeoisie, whom he termed philistines.

Multiple Questions

- 1- According to Schopenhauer there's an impersonal force that controls all the thing including us, i.e. ...
 - a. God
 - b. nature
 - c. money
 - d. will
- 2- Regarding Nietzsche's idea which one is Slave morality?
 - a. power-enhancing, tending to the full development of natural ability
 - b. contemptible, power-diminishing, tending to the artificial limitation of natural ability.
 - c. They believe that "what is injurious to them is injurious in itself".
 - d. This is the morality of the Strong People.
- 3- Who did believe that reality is a past that constantly becomes something new?
 - a. Hegel
 - b. Nietzsche
 - c. Kant
 - d. Bergson
- 4- The aims of culture, according to Arnold, are identical with those of ...
 - a. art
 - b. philosophy
 - c. religion
 - d. science

Answers

- ⦿ 1- d
- ⦿ 2- b
- ⦿ 3- d
- ⦿ 4- c

References

- Habib, M. A. R. *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005.