

Michel montaigne essay example

[Parts of the World](#), [Europe](#)



Abstract

Michel Montaigne was a French philanthropist who authored several essays which he wrote mostly out of his own experience. He seeks to describe people in the outmost honesty, including him. Montaigne was writing his essays at a time when Europe was experiencing great political and religious calamities. There were divisions in the Christianity arena and the papal authority was being challenged. Although this did not directly influence his writing it had some impact on some of his works. He was trying to pass on his own reflections to the readers most of which were derived from his personal opinions and experiences. He wrote many essays on different subject matters in a very subjective manner. He referred mostly to what he had learnt or read which renders the essays as factual. The essay hereby, analyzes Montaigne's work on three of his essay which mainly focuses on how knowledge is acquired and whether we can learn the truth by acquiring knowledge. He based his essays on the European civilization.

Michel Montaigne has authored several essays which he wrote mostly out of his experience. He seeks to describe people in the outmost honesty including him. He input his own commentaries and the readers can easily associate with him. He sees education as the source of human knowledge which leads to discovering of the truth. Giving birth to a child is not the end of it but the beginning of a tiresome journey of training the child to be a person of integrity and self-worth. The acquiring of knowledge depends on the upbringing and education of a child. To him marriage was important in the upbringing of a child but he did not advocate for romantic love. Children are born with inbuilt characters and knowhow and have ambitions of their own

which we try to change to suit what we think is right for them. We make choices for them based their actions while they are small and have no judgmental capacity. We waste time trying to teach and educate them on things they don't have the capacity to grasp.

Montaigne stipulates that we should ensure that we guide our children to follow the right path that is fruitful and beneficial to them. According to him learning opens the door to fortune and success. The success of using a tutor depends on the ultimate goal that is intended to be achieved. For an individual who chooses to seek education for his or her own gain or to acquire knowledge in a certain field, they should select a guide who is knowledgeable and understands the subject matter. The instructor should not be the sole source of ideas. Education according to Montaigne should be a whole some process that involves not only instilling knowledge on children but also building their intellectual capacity. The tutor should be a well rounded person who is not only learned but endowed with wisdom. Learning should aim at helping children idealize what they have learnt on their own but not memorize.

Learning should not just involve the instructor giving lectures to students who just sit and listen. He advocates that learning should use practical lessons and a participatory strategy to educate children. Children should be given a chance to brainstorm and do clarification. The tutor should know the pace of the students as they all have different understanding capacities. Children should be tested on what they have learnt or understood for each lesson taught. He portrays the education of children while growing up as very important. We should build the capacity of the children to have the

knowledge to be able to unearth the truth as we raise them; men learn to be courageous and strong as they grow up.

The ultimate objective of education should be to transform individuals to be better people, build on their character, promote wisdom and contribute to the physical development of the learner. . Montaigne states that, “it’s not enough to toughen his soul we must also toughen the muscles”. Tutors should therefore take their students through physical exercises to give the child something else to focus on. To achieve this entire process, the tutor should give personal attention to the child. Schooling is important as the child gains practical and intellectual skills, most of which cannot be achieved through home-based learning like most of the science subjects and mathematics. It is also important to teach children on moral values on the way they ought to behave as they grow up.

Cannibalism was practiced in the ancient Latin and European continents. Montaigne did a comparison of two continents; the tribes of the Native American society and the new European western society. The Native Americans killed prisoners of war and fed on them. On the other hand the European society rampaged on their neighbors, tortured and killed them, burnt their houses and grabbed their land and property. This same people thought the natives were barbaric due to their cannibalistic practices while they were “eating the people alive” according to Montaigne. According to him this was total hypocrisy. He referred to the people of the European nation to which he actually belonged as “far barbaric”. He was quick to defend the actions of the natives although he acknowledged that what they were doing was not appropriate.

According to Montaigne, people call barbaric what they do not do or practice . To the natives , cannibalism was a culture under which they fed on the prisoners of war as revenge against their enemies. It was not done for the nourishment purpose. Montaigne defended their actions stating that they did some virtues things that were respected by the Europeans such as feeding the prisoners. The European culture according to Montaigne was not the basis of civilizations as they engaged in primitive acts of torture and murder like fighting battles in order to acquire land. He states, “ Seeing so clearly into their faults, we should be so blind to our own.” The European people were so quick to judge the actions of others as primitive while they themselves are committing worse evils . One must be able to integrate and understand other people’s culture and their social setting before labeling them in any way. They themselves have not achieved civilization; they live in houses made of tree barks, women perform the domestic chores as men go hunting for animals and believe in prophets and priests.

Montaigne describes experience as the way to gain knowledge. The more you live the more knowledgeable you become. Use of reason is unreliable because we apply knowledge in different situations. Experience comes with patient as with patient, people are able to gain wisdom and knowledge. Self knowledge is mostly acquired through experience. He gives the example of a doctor; for a physician to be able to diagnose and treat ailments they must have lived long enough and treated illnesses of different kinds. They are qualified professionals in their own field out of experience gained from working for many years. He encourages people to know and evaluate themselves, know whom they are , what they hate or like , their capabilities

and their varying moods in order to understand life and the world around them.

We can know the truth by use of self knowledge. In his work he refers mostly to the works of Cicero, Plato and Seneca who were great philosophers in their own making. They derived their work from accumulated human experience. Experiences guide us on how to live according to nature. Montaigne asserts that we should enjoy what we have around us and not indulge in the problems of the outside world like religious and political conflicts. There is no need to put our attention on circumstances of uncertainty as this leads to unhappiness in life. He advises we obey our culture in the public domain even though we do not agree with the laws of the culture because it is important in maintaining order in our private life. The works of Michel Montaigne are derived from his own personal judgment on which he tries to offer a philosophy on life. He ties his thought very well with the text making him very coherent in his work. He offered remedies to real life situation. He makes inferences to the works and ideas of great philosophers like Cicero and Plato making his work very rich.

Work Cited

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