

Essay on woolf, pirandello and elliot on the essence of human beings

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



What makes an individual? Is it a construct of one's identity or is it the perception formed by others. Well, these are some of the questions deep thinkers have been asking themselves over the years, and there are no signs that the debate will come to an end any time soon. Despite the side of the debate we might choose to support, one thing is for sure: describing the essence of human beings is largely a complex affair. Confounded by this dilemma, several classical writers have tried to explain their opinions on the subject, and put the matter to rest once and for all. Among such writers are Virginia Woolf, Luigi Pirandello, and T. S. Elliot. Such writers belong to a non-conventional group of writers who Pirandello calls "philosophical writers" because their portrayal of characters is something out of the ordinary.

Anyone who has keenly read literary works by Woolf, Pirandello and Eliot will agree that the writers reveal the existence of an inner being that is rarely explored in literature; instead, many literature writers "tailor" their characters to meet the expectations of the audience.

Literature, as a form of art, knows no boundaries. It is meant to be an unhindered exploration of the mind. This is the essence of human beings. "One's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does". What Woolf does here, in her book, *A Sketch of the Past*, is to challenge the popular belief that individuals should be judged on what they say and do. This is because "every day includes more non-being than being." What people see from the outside is not the real representation of the individual. There is more than that. Unfortunately, this is not immediately apparent to other people. The non-being can only be brought out through recollection; yes through one's memory. Memory brings the "real things behind

appearances". This is for Woolf the tragic reality because human beings and the world "are works of art" and nothing can change that. In fact, this is brought into reality in Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway.

In Mrs. Dalloway, the story moves back and forth with the characters trying to build Clarissa's life. In one moment, Clarissa is preparing her party, while the next moment she is fixated thinking about whether she made the right choice to marry her husband. Nevertheless, Clarissa had a theory that "the unseen part of us could be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death". Clarissa is resigned to the duality of human beings, and she appreciates that the unseen part is as important as the part of us which is explicitly expressed. Clarissa also believes that "nothing exists outside us except a state of mind a desire for solace, for relief". In this sense, what really constitutes one's identity is not what other people perceive of them, but what the individual think of themselves. This is because perception is not objective, and "human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment". Therefore, perception cannot be a good measure of an individual's identity as it is subject to biases of the observer. Such thoughts mirror what Luigi Pirandello talks about in the preface to Six Characters in Search of an Author.

Pirandello was a firm believer that we are in a "fantasy world", and it is the drive of fantasy which pushes writers to speak their mind out. In an attempt to break away from conventional routine, Pirandello came up with six characters whom he calls "Creatures of my spirit, these six were already living a life which was their own and not mine any more, a life which it was

not in my power any more to deny them" (Pirandello 2). By letting the characters speak for themselves instead of conveying his thoughts through the characters, Pirandello introduces another angle to the essence of human beings. He confirms that language is essential in conveying one's identity. This is similar to what T. S. Eliot describes in his poem. When it comes to conveying one's identity through language, no one brings this close to reality than T. S. Eliot in the poem *The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock*.

Figuratively, the author conveys Prufrock's unattained carnal love and his frustrations with life. Prufrock's feelings of regret, frustration and embarrassment bring out his inner being and this begins the revelation of his identity. Nevertheless, he longs for the time with his lover. "Let us go then, you and I, when the evening is spread out against the sky" (Eliot 1). It is this revelation of Prufrock's life which demystifies the absurdities of human beings.

In conclusion, what Woolf, Pirandello and Eliot bring to light is that there is always an inner being which is not acknowledged in literature. Nonetheless, this part exists and should not be suppressed. Instead, it should be explored because it brings out a myriad of realities about humanity. An individual's identity cannot be confined to the limitations of our minds, and the horizons for constructing identity should be broadened. What would happen if the mind is boxed into a certain line of thinking?

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