

Review of the voltaire's novel "candide"

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The conclusion to Voltaire's novel *Candide* is rather interesting as it depicts how humans can develop throughout their life, some might even see themselves through *Candide*'s story. What makes his journey so interesting is the fact that *Candide* has lived the life of a satire, he suffered tremendously as he sails around Europe, crosses the Atlantic Ocean and travels all the way down to Argentina.

Throughout his journey he is abused and almost executed while in Hollande, his mentor Pangloss becomes a beggar who has contracted syphilis, he survives a shipwreck as well as an earthquake, *Candide* then murders two men to whom Cunégonde serves as a mistress in addition to stabbing her brother, following those events he sends his servant to Buenos Aires to buy Cunégonde so they can reunite in Venice. Much more happens to *Candide* succeeding these events but what is beyond comprehension is the fact that his philosophy of optimism remains intact until the very end of the novel up until when the dervish man tells their group, "When his highness sends a ship to Egypt, does he trouble his head whether the mice on board are at their ease or not?" to which he comes to the conclusion that "we must cultivate our garden" as he works land on his farm. Voltaire does not advocate that retreat from society is the solution when he writes "we must cultivate our garden". What he conveys is that the philosophy of "living in the best of all possible worlds" is an ideology which isn't applicable as this ideology is contrary to the journey that *Candide* has lived in the couple months preceding his settlement at the farm.

One may ask "is murdering individuals and fleeing countries because they are wanted dead truly a world which one can depict as perfect?" That is very

unlikely. What Voltaire advocates instead is for individuals to take care of themselves and their immediate surroundings as well as the fact that one gets what one puts in. When taking care of a garden the fruit of one's labor is equal to the amount of time and effort one has spent on it, therefore, it is more advisable to focus on the immediate surrounding rather than on irrelevant factors which don't directly affect their lives. Over the course of the novel Candide learns that his ideology of "living in the best of all possible worlds" cannot be sustained. As the novel progresses through his journey, Candide grows to become a different man and he begins to doubt this ideology which Pangloss had taught him in the past and which he had applied for the majority of his life. After living through poverty and riches he finally comes to the conclusion that cultivating one's garden is the best way to live life and even if living on the farm is a life of labor, all of the individuals are now happy. In addition, one could argue that Candide grew to become his own individual. Living with the philosophy of optimism Candide was restrained, in a sense, as what he believed in really were the ideologies of Pangloss.

As the novel progresses, he comes to realize that everyone is responsible for their own destinies and that everyone is responsible for the way they live their lives. It took him awhile, but Candide finally realized that the world is cold, and that life is unfair to everyone. In practice, the phrase "we must cultivate our garden" essentially encourages individuals to take responsibility for their actions and consequences, that they should expect to put effort in order to receive something. The garden symbolizes an element that one has built from beginning to end and to which one has taken care of

in order for it to be successful. The philosophy of optimism which appears in the very first chapter of the book quickly becomes one of the major themes throughout the novel. This philosophy relies on the belief that the characters live in "the best of all possible worlds" but the book quickly goes against everything this philosophy stands for as Candide lives his journey. In a sense, the philosophy of optimism relies on believing that God will take care of you, that a superior force is looking over the world and is trying its best to make it a better place. Cultivating one's own garden, on the other hand, argues that the correct way to live life is to take it into one's own hands.

As mentioned earlier, the garden is a symbolic representation for something one has to take care of on their own, life for example could symbolically be represented by the garden mentioned at the very end of the novel. The proper course of action for society or individuals given Candide's point of view evolved throughout the novel as he at first believes in the perfect world philosophy but the reader quickly understands that he is a naïve individual and that the philosophy of optimism isn't necessarily the best course to follow. Towards the end of the novel Candide would recommend the reader to take their lives in their own hands and therefore, completely contradict his initial beliefs. The analogy of the garden properly depicts his change in belief which becomes more realistic to believe in and to follow.

The novel Candide properly depicts the evolution of the human mind throughout the course of one's life. At first, he acts in a childish fashion refusing to believe in anything but positivity which, like mentioned previously, doesn't apply properly to the life of a responsible individual who

has to take care of themselves. His persistence in this specific belief depicts him as an individual who doesn't learn from his mistakes and portraits, but by the end of the novel he acts more like an adult who understands life and the meaning of learning from one's mistakes as well as others'. Seeing this evolution can be inspiring to certain individuals who can relate to his character and beliefs. Voltaire seems to have written the novel in a fashion which depicts not only the mentality of Candide but also every mentality out in the world through the other major characters present.