

# Persons and others essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The essay *Persons and Others* written by Lorraine Code reviews and responds to specific issues and details in the novel *As We Are Now* by May Sarton. *As We Are Now* is a novel about the struggles the elderly face when that time comes. The story is told from Miss Caro Spencer's point of view, beginning when she is brought and left at a mediocre nursing home for the elderly. She tells about hardships of growing old from the mental, emotional and physical troubles. Caro is forced to stay at Twin Elms nursing home by her older brother John and his much younger wife Ginny, this is her only family and she feels some what betrayed by them.

Her caretakers at Twin Elm are awful and treat her horribly as she explains through out the novel. Caro feels that they are trying to strip her of her pride and steal her soul as well as everything that makes her who she is. Lorraine Code writes *Persons and Others* from a rather sympathetic point of view as she tells us in the first page and explains that her response may be extremely different if she had read *As We Are Now* from a different characters perspective.

She states, “ My reading is a partial one in that I take the protagonist, the first person narrator, at her word about how things are for her; hence I work from a presumption of the veracity of her experiential reports. Were I to reread the novel from the position of a different character, my take on it might be quit different. But my purpose here is to try, from the standpoint of someone who is disempowered, to understand the moral requirements of situations where people have others in their care who are extraordinarily vulnerable to assaults upon their sense of self. I believe this is Lorraine Code's thesis, everything she covers in her essay can be related back to

those three sentences. I agree with just about everything Code says in her response to the novel. She makes good points about how it is unjust that this elderly woman is having trouble maintaining her sense of self and these two women who are supposed to be helping her are just making it worse by trying to make Caro think that she is crazy and losing it.

The women refer to the people in their care as nothing more than “poor things”, as if they aren’t people but merely objects; and Code recognizes that by objectifying these old people the caretakers saying that they are worth nothing. As stated by Code on page 4 “Treating a person as little more than an object, in its cognitive dimension, implies acknowledging no significant differences between such a person and an ordinary, everyday object”, what I get from this is that the women who run the nursing home and those who objectify any person are completely ignorant.

Before you can judge and objectify, though you really should never objectify people, you need to truly know a person and understand who they are and where they came from; a treatment that Caro’s caretakers never gave her or any other “guest” in their nursing home. Code explains through Kantian’s formulation that “one must always treat with humanity” and that there are different levels of knowing other people.

It takes time to truly know someone and if we just give time to understand people we could treat them much better and more appropriately. These two women who run Twin Elms have put themselves in this position and portray themselves as responsible women who can be trusted with old, senile, and overall vulnerable people. Code believes the best way to care for these type

of old people is sympathetically and compassionately; as we would want to be treated if we were in their situation, because believe it or not we all will be one day.

I also appreciate how Code points out in her response that for some of those reading *As We Are Now* there is a nothing wrong with the treatment given to Caro Spencer from those running the home. The women are fulfilling their duties to their guest, their obligations are to simply provide shelter, food and medical attention need be; which is exactly what Caro Spencer has purchased by staying there. She just wants more though, and who can blame her. It is an awful situation and all one could hope for is that the people around can understand what you are going through and treat you accordingly.