

Voltaire's satire on optimism

Literature



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The paper "Voltaire's Satire on Optimism" is a great example of a book review on literature. In the novella "Candide" Voltaire deals with a series of themes such as the 'folly of Optimism', 'bitterness of stern reality', 'futility of philosophical speculation', 'the corrupting effect of money', 'hypocrisy of the religious system', etc that are stitched together with the common thread that Leibniz's optimistic philosophy simply failed to perceive the reality. Yet Pangloss's optimism can be defended on the ground that the best possible world does not necessarily mean that there is no evil in this world like 'the Garden' that Voltaire takes for the embodiment of Leibniz's optimistic world. Even in the worst circumstance if anything bad has the option to be compared with the worst, then the bad can be attributed as good in reverse. Indeed in some episodes, especially in that of the happy couple, he attempts to focus on the point that the statement "everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds" is devoid of reality (Voltaire 7). In the novella, he portrays some characters that directly symbolically oppose to the character of Pangloss who himself signifies the philosophy of Leibniz. After experiencing the horrors such as maladies, floggings, robberies, natural disasters, unjust executions, rapes, betrayals etc of the real world, Pangloss is forced to quit his optimism and declares that he doesn't "believe a word of" (Voltaire 121) that he previously holds for his optimistic conclusions. But the fact whether the world is full of pessimism –as Voltaire attempts to uphold through the portrayal of the real world- may engender an array of controversies. Voltaire's argument appears to be one-eyed. It is barred from viewing the positive sides of the world or simply it does not want to view them. Voltaire's nihilistic view is insufficient within itself, as Pangloss's optimism is. In the same, the happy moment of the couple that Martin

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wagers on the matter that they are not happy may be the happiest in their unhappy life. But Voltaire tends to ignore this possibility.