

Free comparison between the optimistic philosophy of pangloss and the pessimism o...

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Philosophical optimism is one of the major topics in Voltaire's *Candide*. Throughout the story, Voltaire's has employed satirical references to describe "the best of all possible worlds" as stated by Dr. Pangloss, contrasting them with the natural disasters and the evil that human beings engage in. Dr. Pangloss and Martin, major characters in the novel, have different views of the world. Dr. Pangloss is seen as an advocate of philosophical optimism, believing that everything is for the best and that evil exists as a means to the greater good (Mason 4). He sees everything as being for the best and further goes to the extent of denying the presence of the devil. Martin on the other hand, is philosophically pessimistic, and believes that man has always and will always be evil as that is part of human nature (Mason 5). Martin is hence seen as a spokesman of philosophical pessimism in believing that all is for the worst. This paper would attempt to compare the optimistic philosophy of Pangloss and the pessimistic philosophy of Martin.

Dr. Pangloss's optimistic philosophy was the main focus of Voltaire's satire. The philosopher teaches about the best of all worlds and that everything happens in absolute necessity. He views the world as being perfect and all the evil happening in the world is simply a means to achieve a greater good (Voltaire & Burton 21). Candide, a naïve and innocent character in the novel, grows up believing the optimistic philosophy of Dr. Pangloss. Dr. Pangloss's optimistic belief is that God created a world where everything is at the highpoint of goodness. He denies the existence of evil as they only exist as a means to achieve goodness in life. For every twist that happens to the story's plot, every disaster, disease, calamity or assault that happens in the

novel is intended to show that Dr. Pangloss's optimistic view is unrealistic and preposterous. With regards to his own personal sufferings and difficulties, he responds that they are a means of achieving goodness. As such, he appears to be completely blinded by his own experiences as well as the suffering and difficulties by his close friends including Candide. His philosophical optimism is utterly unrealistic and his life is impractical. He is so absorbed in theories to a point that he is unable to live his own life. Pangloss's optimistic view of life is Utopia as he is denying the realities of life.

Martin on the other hand, has had a difficult life and is extremely pessimistic about how things would turn out. Martin is of the view that the world is naturally evil and that any impression of good is a fallacy. Martin believes that even that that appears to be happy is undoubtedly not. His philosophical pessimism compels him to state that God abandoned the world and what remains is evil and suffering. Candide posed the question to Martin about what the purpose of creation of the world was, and his response was that the world was created so that people could die and suffer (Mason 12). His view of the world is extremely pessimistic, which is a sharp contrast to Dr.

Pangloss's optimistic view. Martin believes that there are two forces in the world, the good and the evil force. To him, the evil force is stronger and powerful than the good force. Just like Pangloss's optimism, Martin's pessimistic is also unrealistic. In as much as what he propounded was more reasonable, he was unrealistic to a great extent. Martin found things evil and wrong in every situation. A good example is his response to Candide's joy when he was glad that the ship captain who had fooled him had died far

away at sea (Voltaire 39). Martin's response was bitter, trying to inquire whether those who were on board also deserved to die. Martin seemed to find evil in everyone he encountered with and all the situations he was in. There is a sharp contrast between the Dr. Pangloss's philosophical optimism and Martin's pessimism. Whereas Pangloss is unrealistically optimistic about life, Martin on the other hand takes a negative outlook of life. Martin's world view is much stronger and believable than that of Dr. Pangloss although it is impossible to predict how people believe because his philosophy is extreme pessimism. Martin is less philosophical than Candide and Pangloss because of the hopelessness found in his worldview. Voltaire uses Martin's pessimism to offer a reality check to Pangloss and Candide's optimistic philosophy (Mason 9). Voltaire uses Dr. Pangloss to direct attacks at what he considers useless and impractical speculations of the unknown. He attacks the philosophers who talk more rather than act. This can be seen in the incident where Candide was close to his death and Dr. Pangloss talked rather than give him water. In the event of the earthquake, Dr. Pangloss comforted the people by talking. Through Pangloss' and Martin's philosophies, Voltaire was trying to show that we need to have flexible thoughts based on evidence in our live.

Works Cited

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