

Critical analysis of leonardo da vincis last supper argumentative essay

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Leonardo Da Vinci was an Italian painter who was born on 1452 and passed on in 1519. Da Vinci is often described as the face of a renaissance man. He is most famous for the painting Monalisa and the Last Supper. As famous as he was as an artist, Leonardo Di Vinci was also famed in the areas of science, philosophy, and literature. Contemporarily, Leonardo Da Vinci's has been a subject of debate among scholars. Leonardo was born as an illegitimate son in a north Italian village to a successful Florentine and a peasant woman. Leonardo grew up with both his father and mother in different times of his life. He was self-taught home where he specialized in music and art. Around 1467, Leonardo became an apprentice of Andrea Del Verrocchio who was notable artist in the province of Florentine. Verrocchio was a painter, sculptor and a goldsmith. After a successful apprenticeship period with Verrocchio, Leonardo was incorporated into the society of Florentine painters. In the following years, Leonardo became one of the most famous artists in the province of Florentine.

Because of his love for science and technology, Leonardo joined the military where he studied civil engineering. He particularly worked for Ludovico Sforza who was the Duke of Milan. During this time, Leonardo painted his masterpiece The Last Supper. The Last Supper is a 15th century wall painting that was arguably the most famous painting done by Leonardo. The painting represents the scene of the last supper during the final days of Jesus as told in the gospel of John. It was during the last supper that Jesus announced that one of his twelve disciples would betray him. The painting Last Supper has been a target of literary discussions amongst different scholars. Historical revisionists argue that the painting has hidden messages

that go beyond what people perceive. This paper presents literary criticism of the painting while highlighting the influence of the Di Vinci's masterpiece in the contemporary popular culture.

For an effective analysis of the painting, one has to delve into the original look of the painting. The painting was made from experimental sketches directed on a dry plaster wall. Even though the painting has stood the test of time, it has faced problems of flaking of paints from the wall. It said that Leonardo had to repair the painting himself often since it was getting old. The painting has crumbled, vandalized, and bombed. The present painting is not the original. Jean Crowther (1987) writes that the notebooks and sketched that Leonardo kept are the only resources that one can deduce the actual look alike of the painting. Crowther accounts that The Last Supper was drawn directly upon the prepared wall. The figures, half as large as life size were drawn first and the rest were drawn later. The painting was designed with Christ as the central figure and the apostles in the groups of six on both sides. One can also view the apostles as divided into groups of three disciples aside. The glass is linen and silver are similar to those used by the monks of that time. It seemed as if the disciples at the meals they were joined by the Christians and his apostles. The painting measures about 14' x 30'.

Literary criticism has argued for several interpretations of Leonardo's The Last Supper. Michael Ladwein (2004) writes that Leonardo da Vinci painted The Last Supper during a period of excessive turmoil in the Christian world. It is during this time that Christopher Columbus arrived in America, slavery was at its height, and capitalism was extending beyond the shores of Europe.

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Under the leadership of Pope Alexander VI, the Roman Church had sunk to the level highest level of decadence and corruption. Although the church was still united at this time, the reformist movement was threatening the unity of the Catholic Church. Leonardo's painting is thus a representation of the uncertainty of the period. On one hand, the painting reinforces the influence of Christianity in the 15th century. On the other hand, it depicts the uncertainty of whether Christianity would survive the onslaught of impending divisions and its extension to new worlds (p. 9).

Martin Kemp (2006) argues that the narrative seriousness of Leonardo's Last Supper is incomparable to any of the paintings he made during the same period. In the view of Dante, The last Supper would be classified as "alta fantasia" that means elevated fantasy. (p. 47). Leonardo's mentor in art Ludovico thought about the painting as one that had a personal connection with him. The painting not only depicted an unusual demonstration of piety but also a real sense of joy. This makes the painting an exposition of a worthy subject of analysis. Although the painting was a biblical narrative, it provided a discourse on human characteristics and body language.

Leonardo's notebook hinted that Giotto's Navicella influenced the painting. In Navicella, Giotto had painted Christ and Peter walking on water as the rest of the disciples remained perturbed and confused on what they saw. Leonardo transferred Giotto's depiction of emotions to the last supper. According to Kemp, "the Last Supper is the outward effect of inner causes of emotions and movement" (p. 83). The individual movement of each disciple speaks the bodily language of their individual minds. The impulsive surge of the shock expressed by Peter's angular motion, as he elbows towards Jesus is

comparable in paradox to sleepy curves of the young John, and Judas' contracting tendons that shows a high level of tension and emotional uneasiness.

Jack Wassermann (2004) has argued that there is a sacramental component in the painting the Last Supper. When observing the right hand of the Christ's entire right arm forms a rigorous line that leads to the eye of the beholder of the wine glass that in turn blocks the hand from accessing the dish. Christ's gaze is also averted from the dish to the left hand that indicates the bread. This indicates that Christ body language pointed to the bread as symbolic to the sacrament. The Eucharistic essence of the painting is further manifested by the by Christ's hands that extends through the wine glass instead of the chalice and water. The hands affirm the breads sacramental and Eucharistic importance. " Leonardo depicts Christ's involvement with the bread in naturalistic terms turning transcendental, consistent with the gospel accounts. This way, he eased the prescription against including a Eucharistic iconography in the Last Supper intended for refectories" (Wassermann, 2004, p. 25). Christ total immersion into the sacramental dimension of Leonardo painting is inconvertible.

Snider and Davidson (1867) wrote that while analyzing the Last Supper Painting, one must point out the Italian influence in Leonardo's attitude and thought process. In the painting, it is arguable to make the case that Leonardo's principles enlivened the painting. The motion of the hand and the rest of the body is commonplace in the Italian language. These motions are self-evident in the painting. In Italian, the whole body is full of animations and every limb participates in the expression of feeling, passion, and

thought. In painting, every movement is unique and stands for some unspoken words. For example, the figures on both sides of Jesus may be considered in threes, and each of these may be either in unity for some particular reason while sending one coherent message. On the right side of Jesus are John, Judas, and Peter. Peter is distanced from the rest of two. The distance of Peter from the others reflects Peter's violent character according to the biblical accounts. John leans towards Christ expressing love and solace at the same time. Judas is tensed and nervous at the same time. It is noticeable that Peter holds a knife handle that is indicative of his desire to be violent to anyone who harms Christ. In this particular scene, this would be Judas.

In the second group of three comprises of James, Thomas, and Philip. This group is characterized with a limited degree of motion. James, the elder brother bends back from fear, extends his arms, and stares heads down. Thomas peers from behind his shoulder and raises the index finger of his right hand to his forehead. Philip, lays his hands on his chest as if claiming, "It is not I". On the other side of the table, little motions occur. Mathew talks to the others as if questioning what he just heard. Simon sits at the table full of dignity and emotional calm characteristic of his old age and affluence. Bartholomew stands up with his right foot showing excitement. Using the emotions depicted by the disciple's Leonardo gives the painting an Italian lense that would have been different had the painting been done with some French or even English. The gestures and emotions is perhaps Leonardo's depiction of the Last Supper formidable and intriguing at the same time.

Like most paintings, Leonardo's the Last Supper has not escaped controversy. Daniel Brown (2010) records that in the painting the last supper, Thomas' pointing finger suggests the hand of mystery. According to Brown, in the ancient world, the gesture of the pointing finger suggested an invitation to the special world of secrets that are unknown to many people of the world. The one who had the hand directed to had a hidden tattoo written in hands that stood for something special. This was a secret message that no one could understand except the few elites. In this way, Daniel Brown makes the case that Leonardo's painting the Last Supper had more than meet the eye and has been influential even in the United States history. The mystical hand that points to the some unknown things is visible Leonardo's painting St. John the Baptist, and George Washington has sculpted as Zeus in Horation at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D. C (chapter 21). Perhaps that argument that Brown makes is that the mystical hands is one of major connections that Leonardo's painting has left in the American society today.

Perhaps the biggest controversy from the book arose from Dan Brown's bestselling book The Da Vinci Code. The book was translated into the movie with the same name. The 2003 movie was a mystery and thriller movie that was based on the Da Vinci's code which had, amongst many other evidence, the painting Last Supper as evidence to prove that Jesus was married to the biblical Mary Magdalene. Although the relationship between the two was open to the public as disciple and master, the two had a hidden love connection that led to an offspring that was the lineage of Merovingian kings of France. Many Christians the Roman Catholic being the most vocal critic

have denounced Dan Brown's book.

In the book *Da Vinci code*, Leigh Tebbing explains to Sophie Neveu who is from Jesus' lineage that the disciple leaning towards Jesus is not John but really Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene was the Holy Gail who was the holder of Jesus' blood. The differences between Jesus' body and Mary Magdalene's body form a V-shape. This shape symbolizes sacred feminism. According to the book, the absence of Apostle John is the explanation that John was the code for Mary Magdalene. In the bible, John is often referred to, as Jesus most loved disciple. The book also records that the color of the robes that Jesus is wearing is contrasted to those that Mary Magdalene is wearing. While Jesus wears a red tunic with royal blue oak, John Magdalene wears the exact opposite. While depiction is true is a subject of debate for another day.

Dan Brown is not alone in popularizing the idea of the last supper in the media. In the popular culture, the lasts supper parodies is commonplace. Copies have been made on the piece as well as pictures, photo shop inscriptions and many other things. For example, nr- next round has listed the top ten pop-culture last supper parodies. The list includes the torantino last supper, the justice league last supper, the clowns of pop culture last supper, the battle star galactic last supper, the soprano last supper among others (NextRound, 2012).

Clearly, the contemporary debate surrounding Da Vinci's work in the painting the Last Supper diverges the piece of art from being an honest depiction of Christ's Last Supper to an issue of controversy on whether Christ lived a human life was a God and thus did not marry or fall love as claimed by Dan

Brown. Still, the controversy surrounding this painting makes it the epitome of its relevance to popular culture. The 2003 movie *Da Vinci Code* hit the theaters with a bang and received massive viewing resurging the inquest into the mystery of the painting. It is not yet clear to know what is exactly true or not true. Like any other piece of art, it is open for the viewer to have his or her own interpretations. For Christians, it is best to view the painting as a work of art and not a judgment on the character of Christ or the practice of Christianity.

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