

"the lost of the
creature" by walker
percy essay sample



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“ The Lost of The Creature” by Walker Percy Essay Sample

In this essay by Walker Percy, entitled “ The Loss of the Creature” the notions of perception, appreciation, and sovereignty are strongly analyzed. The essay brings to our attention some of the most common things around; which are biases of likeness and manufactured conditioning, en vogue today. It is often said, “ perception is reality.” Reality to us is the way we look at things, see them, or perceive them. In this decade however, with the fast growing technological innovations and the rapid commercialization (of products and idea, etc...) what we see or perceive and even come to like and appreciate are for the most part someone else’s reality, pre-determined, and pre-package ideas; ready to be consume by our pre-condition minds. Our appreciation for thing become dependent upon some expert’s or some other stranger’s likes or dislikes.

It is exactly this event that renders the object of our desire or place of admiration less genuine and meaningful. We have become so dependent upon the approval of others, that we become less able to decide what’s good or bad. Percy provides many examples proving of such happening. To begin, his example of the Grand Canyon with the experience of the Spanish explorer, Garcia Lopez De Cardenas, in comparison with these of today’s sightseers on a tour are two immensely different things. He said,

The thing is no longer the thing as it confronted the Spaniards; it is rather that which has already been formulated- by picture postcard, geography, books, tourist folders, and the words Grand Canyons. As a result of this pre-formulation, The source of the sightseer’s pleasure undergoes a shift. Where

the wonder and delight of the Spaniards arose from his penetration of the things itself, from a progressive discovery of depths, patterns, colors, shadows, etc., now the sightseer measures his satisfactions by the degree to which the Canyon conforms to the performed complex (512).

The quote clearly explains and proves the lack of appreciation due to the processing and packaging that goes on. Here we find two totally distinct experiences. The first, being that Garcia with wonder, admiration, and amazement VS. that of the individual on a tour shows a smile, approval and satisfaction. The idea of the lost is real and present all around us. We believe so much in specialty of skills or authority that we need the seal of approval of an expert for even pleasure. The lost of the sovereignty of the knower is a tremendously important concept. Percy isn't the only one showing concern on this subject.

John Berger in his essay, "Ways of Seeing" showed disapproval on this same issue. His essay revealed how commercialization can reduce the appreciation and likeness of an object. Sovereignty of the knower is what we can refer to as a "right". It is the right of each individual to freely digest, admire, discover and appreciate things and objects, without the intrusion of outside forces, to manipulate his or her feelings for that particular thing. Berger states, "The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it" (Berger 68). This shows the conditioning that goes on in order to push people to like or admire certain things. Seers no longer assume control; he or she is being coached and guided and therefore loses control.

A perfect example in Berger's essay is the Van Gogh painting with the two different sentences below. One simply reads "wheat field with crows by Van Gogh 1853-1890, while the other sentence below the same painting reads, "this is the last picture that Van Gogh painted before he killed himself" (68). These prove the point that Berger made when he said, "It is hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image, but undoubtedly they have. The image now illustrates the sentence"(Berger 67). Psychologically, the sentences automatically shift the way our brains process the pictures. Somehow in our minds the picture will look different as we try to match them with the different events.

The commercialization of material or man-made elements is at an all-time high. Different people present different things according to their views; based on their motives, and what they are trying to accomplish. No one should be fouled by anyone else's assumed meanings of things. Percy and Berger have brought to our attention the growing business of manipulation. Their writings and researches are made in order for us to reclaim our right of sovereignty and to be free of the many bias which we face. They are enlightening us with their knowledge in order for us to reclaim the reality and to be the judge and rightful owners of the ideas or realities which we process. At the same time, however, Percy and Berger somehow fit in the bin of experts or people who help shape our ideas. Although they fit in a different category all together, we cannot help but to think about one or two advantageous points we can gain from the other expert's manipulation of things. These pre-formulated ideas somehow affect us psychologically.

Psychologically, people feel that somehow they are sinked with the rest of the world, especially those whose opinions matter as they simply go with the flow by agreeing with other's ideas. It makes people feel good and important to be right. It reassures them of their good-taste as they agree with an expert's opinion.

Many individuals on the lower social echelons of society do not have access by means of money and time to visit nature's wonders or museums. For these individuals, the only mean of knowledge and perhaps desire to see these things and places are through the eyes of others. Their experiences many times come from someone else's, which is great for the fact that it can inspire or motivate them to go out, see and discover for themselves the item presented to them in pictures. The loss of novelty is what is lost from the Grand Canyon and the Mona Lisa. It is the lack of interest (inspirations) and drive, which simply allow people to accept what others are presenting as facts. Like Percy said,

It may be recovered by leaving the beaten tracks. The tourist leaves the tour, camps in the back country. He arises before dawn and approaches the south Rim through a wild terrain where there are no trails and no railed-in lookout points. In other words, he sees the canyon by avoiding all the facilities for seeing the canyon (512-3). Get off the beaten tracks, do what everybody else isn't doing, see it your way, from your eyes, based on your ideas, knowledge, likes and dislike is what makes the difference.