FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

2ND SEMESTER 2020

ASSIGNMENT 1 and 2

LITERARY CRITICISM (LRC621S)
Dear Students

I have just finished marking your assignments. Allow me to give you feedback with regards to Assignment 1 for Semester 2, 2020 and especially pointing out where you need to improve so that you can excel. Although it is rather worrying that some of you cannot write essays at this level, some of the essays were well researched and well written. I also hope that you will work extra hard in the next assignment and perform better.

The major problem I wish to address is the adequacy of answers. Please note that at university level we expect you to write adequately as determined by the mark allocation – some of the answers I received were inadequate and skeletal. This is attributable to lack of information, though of course I am not saying that you must just write a lot of rubbish just to have a long essay.

You also need to write a proper essay where you are required to do so. This means that there must be an introduction, body and conclusion in each essay. Then on each paragraph please write a very clear thesis statement – the opening line must contain a distinct point, then you explain it fully, giving examples where necessary.

Coming to the questions themselves, the following were the common mistakes observed:
1. Ungrammatical and poorly constructed sentences
2. Copying and pasting information from the internet and study guide
3. Failure to acknowledge sources
4. Failure to respond to the question
5. Skeletal responses

However, let me emphasise from the onset that for the majority of you there still is a lot that needs to be done, especially for those with marks in the region of 40 and 30. There is nothing that is impossible in this course and there is also a lot of room for you to improve; what is called for is a determination and desire to do better. Only a few assignments were above expectations and these students’ scores are in the 60’s and 70’s. What is most striking about the assignments which scored low marks is that the question demands were not understood, and the answers followed no clear pattern or order and they were very skeletal. However, what was most worrying was the plagiarism from the internet. Chunks were lifted in verbatim and planted in the assignments in no specific order. Unfortunately, such responses showed no understanding of the question and lacked cohesion and focus.

Question analysis

Question 1

Write a short essay in which you explain Aristotle’s theory of catharsis and the function of tragedy. To what extent is the theory relevant to your studies in literature? Illustrate with one novel or play.

Your essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion.

The following could be considered:

Aristotle’s theory of catharsis and the function of tragedy.

• Theory of Catharsis emerges as the function of tragedy.
• Catharsis is purgation or purification.
• The function of tragedy is arouse pity and fear in spectators.
• The function of tragedy is to shake up in the soul the impulse of pity and fear.
• Emotions of pity and fear find a full and free out-let in tragedy.
• Tragedy also has a salubrious effect.
• Aristotle’s theory of Catharsis has moral and ennobling function.
• Poetry makes an immediate appeal to the emotions. For example, tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear – pity at the undeserved suffering and fear for the worst that may befall the hero.
• According to him these emotions are aroused with a view to their purgation or catharsis. Thereby they relieve the soul of their excess. We are lifted of ourselves and emerge nobler than before.
• Tragedy therefore arouses not only pity but also fear, because the audience can envision themselves within this cause-and-effect chain.
• Thus, tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear in order to purge away their excess, to reduce these passions to a healthy, balanced proportion.

QUESTION 2

What is Romanticism? Read the poem "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth and then explain the romantic elements of Nature in this poem.

The second question was badly attempted by many of you. In response to question 2 you had to first provide a thorough background of romanticism – why did it arise, when did it arise etc., and especially include William Wordsworth. There is absolutely no way you can talk about romanticism without talking about this important writer. It is therefore very important that you use the poem by Wordsworth to explain your views. It is also not enough to simply list the tenets without explaining them fully and linking them to the poem. Some of the Wordsworth’s poems which you can relate to Romanticism are, “London” and “Composed upon Westminster Bridge”. Please get hold of them and study them and see how the poems’ subject link with the romantic ideas.
These are some of the important ideas on Wordsworth:

**Wordsworth**
- Wordsworth says that poetry should express common human feelings and there should be no restriction in the expression of the experiences of the senses and sensibilities.
- Poetry gives pleasure to readers by presenting the incidents and situations of their lives in a fascinating and unusual way with a colour of imagination.
- Wordsworth establishes a relation between man and nature in his poetry. Therefore, poetry is the image of man and nature. It’s an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe.
- Poetry, to Wordsworth, is a powerful media of supplying knowledge and pleasure to mankind. He considers that man and nature are essentially adapted to each other.
- Therefore, man has emotional, philosophical, moral and spiritual connection to nature.
- The poet’s business is to describe human life in its very form and to establish a relationship between man and universe. So, Wordsworth says that poetry is the first and last of all knowledge – it is as immortal as the heart of man.

Then, proceed to define Romanticism:

**What Is Romanticism?**

It was a conscious reaction to the rationalism, classicism, deism, and the emphasis placed on rigid systems of the Enlightenment and the early developments of industrialisation:

- To the Romanticist, rationalism had been too concerned with reason; classicism, with old forms; deism, with a cold, uninspired, impersonal approach to God.
- Romanticism rejected the concept that natural law could be found through human reason.
- It further rejected the Enlightenment notion that society should be reformed by scientific methods.
- The concept of rigid forms was contrary to Romanticist individualism, and natural law was divine, available more through feeling than reasoning. Pleasure could come from the less organised and irrational things in life as well as the organised and rational.
What Is Romanticism in Literature?

Popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Romanticism was a literary movement that emphasised nature and the importance of emotion and artistic freedom. The writers of this era were rebelling against the attempt to explain the world and human nature through science and the lens of the Industrial Revolution. In Romanticism, emotion is much more powerful than rational thought.

Thus, we can say the following about Romanticism:

- Romanticism was a revolt against the stereotyped works of art; the diction and content of the neoclassical period.
- Wordsworth denounced the ‘poetic diction of the poets of the preceding 18th century neo-classical writers and dealt with materials taken from ‘common life’ in a ‘selection of language really used by men’.
- The romantics also wrote about the supernatural. To the poets of the period, poetry was visionary.
- The romantic writers conceived feelings as important in literature.
- Wordsworth defined poetry as “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings which takes its origin from emotions recollected from tranquillity”.
- The romantic poets democratised poetry.
- According to Wordsworth, ‘a poet is a man speaking to men” and hence should relate incidents and situations taken from ordinary life in a language really used by men.
- The subject of poetry is nature. Nature provides an impetus for the poets to think. The romantic poems are poems of meditation which is concerned with the central problems of human life.

What Are the Major Tenets or Characteristics of Romanticism in Literature?

Although literary Romanticism occurred from about 1790 through 1850, not all writers of this period worked in this style. There are certain characteristics that make a piece of literature part
of the Romantic movement. **You won’t find every characteristic present in every piece of Romantic literature;** however, you will usually find that writing from this period has several of the key characteristics.

To answer the question, you must identify only the Romantic elements of Nature that are evident in the poem and explain them. Start by describing the characteristic first, which is:

**Glorification and idealisation of nature:**
Romanticism places a strong emphasis on a wildness or the dreamlike qualities of nature although these were idealised. Nature, in all its unbound glory, plays a huge role in Romantic literature. Nature, sometimes seen as the opposite of the rational, is a powerful symbol in work from this era. Romantic poets and writers give personal, deep descriptions of nature and its wild and powerful qualities.

The Nature admired by romanticism was not a realistic one. Romanticism rejected the Enlightenment view of nature as a precise, harmonious whole. Nature to the Romanticist is alive, changing, and filled with the divine spirit.

**Then, discuss the examples from the poem:**
For example: The poet has artistically presented a beautiful landscape with daffodils, waves in the lake, the trees, and the breeze. The comparisons to the clouds and the stars in the Milky Way enhances the beauty of this landscape.

For example: The poet was very much touched by this beautiful scenery and was staring at the daffodils in awe for quite a long time and even after leaving the place, the flowers left an everlasting impression upon his mind.

The poet’s reaction to such beauty of nature is reflected throughout the poem:

- He was so happy at the sight of the daffodils that they seemed to him to be dancing in joy.
- He personified the flowers and compared their joy with that of the waves beside them.
- The poet was so overwhelmed that he exaggerated the scene by saying “Ten thousand saw I at a glance”.

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• The poet also repeats the word ‘gazed’ to indicate what charming impact the flowers left upon him — “I gazed and gazed but little thought”.

• Wordsworth even says that the flowers “flash upon that inward eye/ Which is the bliss of solitude. (Nimesh n.d.)

More relevant examples can be cited from the poem.

Some of the major tenets are as follows:

**Individualism:**
Each individual was a law unto himself, responsible to God alone for his behaviour. The emphasis was on the "hero", the individual who is willing to stand alone and will die for a cause he believes in. This individualism permitted rebellion against authority and existing rules if the rebellion could be justified by a higher authority. Romanticism emphasised the humanitarian commitment to helping others. To the Romantic hero, it was not as important to win as it was to have fought for a noble cause. Victory was in the fight itself, not in the winning.

**Emphasis on emotionalism, intuition, faith, and metaphysical perception:**
Romanticism promoted anti rationalism and rebellion against the strict forms and the emphasis placed on reason during the Enlightenment. Hence, focus on emotion is a key characteristic of nearly all writing from the Romantic period. When you read work of this period, you’ll see feelings described in all forms, including romantic and filial love, fear, sorrow, loneliness, and more. This focus on emotion offered a counterpoint to the rational, and it also made Romantic poetry and prose extremely readable and relatable.

The Romanticist belief was that virtue and truth can be found just as easily, if not better, by the “heart” than by the “head”. Truth could be found within oneself or perceived through one’s inner feelings and intuition.

**Primitivism:**
A belief in the goodness and value of the unspoiled, naturally created state of individuals and groups. For example, children and savages were regarded as heroic and admirable in the
Romantic world view. Also, the artistic productions of the "uncivilised" population, the folklore and folk art of the peasantry, were highly esteemed for their natural, unspoiled quality.

Glorification of nationalism, patriotism:
Romanticism held that there was a belief in a mystical link with national origins and national history. Romanticism emphasized folk tales, traditional costumes, country and village life, and national histories, although the history promoted was an idealistic, not a realistic one. Romanticism rejected the Enlightenment’s analytic view of the past as counterproductive. Instead, Romanticism viewed the world as a growing organism changing with each nation's unique history. Romanticists expressed a vital optimism about life and the future. Romantic nationalists were fanatical patriots and passionate revolutionaries. The Romantic hero played an important part in the nationalist rebellions of the early nineteenth century. Remember, the Romantic often had no hope of winning his struggle but fought anyway.

Art and the Artist:
A belief that the artist should be viewed as a special individual, a genius. Neoclassicism regarded art as a craft and the artist as a craftsman; Romanticism regarded the work of art as a largely inexplicable phenomenon, the product of a person with a mysterious gift or talent. Art was regarded as one of the highest stages of human culture and a means of accessing and expressing the sources of wisdom. Given the uniqueness of the artist, it follows that each of the artist's productions will be unique. Therefore, Romanticism insists on novelty and originality in art, in contrast to the Neoclassical view that the measure of artistic excellence is to be found in the conformation of particular works to known, established-in-the-past standards of artistic goodness.

Gothicism:
Romanticists had a fascination and preoccupation with the supernatural, death, the mysterious, the dark, the grotesque, and with horror. Romanticists saw such things as natural and felt there was an unappreciated beauty in such things. The existence of these proved that there were
things that humans could never know, something that romanticists believed in contrary to the rationalists. A new appreciation for the Gothic Era, the Medieval Period was discovered.

However, note that these are not relevant to the question, since its focus is Nature.

**Conclusion**

Marking your assignments was quite a pleasure. I am hoping that in the next assignment you will score even better, and this can only be achieved if you work harder. You are encouraged to research widely – the Study Guide on its own is not enough so please consider other sources of information.

I am confident that the next assignment will be better presented and well researched. Bear in mind that marks are not given but awarded and where there is evidence of hard work it is rewarded handsomely.

For those of you with a mediocre average mark; I would like to urge you to work harder. Success comes with hard work.

Also, what is important in this course is to see how the different periods overlap – for example Aristotle built up from Plato and then John Dryden took it up from there. If you struggle, please let me know. I will not do the assignment for you, but I will assist you to see the light. I trust that you will do excellently in assignment two.

Please do not hesitate to call or email us if you have any query concerning any of the course topics.

I wish you all the best in your preparations for the second assignment.

Your Tutor
Dr Juliet Pasi
Dear Student

The marking of Assignment 2 is done and preparation for the end of semester tests has to be embarked upon in all earnestness. It is my pleasure to write you this letter aimed at updating and giving you feedback with regards to the general comments I have about Assignment 2 and especially pointing out where you need to improve so that you can excel.

Sadly though, the assignments were not so pleasing – many of you did not perform so well. The highest mark was 76%, followed by 2 students with 70% and there were a few in the 60s. Some of the challenges included:

i. Irrelevant introductions which did not focus on the topic.

ii. Inadequate and skeletal discussions.

iii. Essays with a 0% similarity, but not original. These were mostly copied from internet sources.

iv. Expression and sentence construction are below standard. Note that a sentence begins with a capital letter and should be grammatical and meaningful. Some of the sentences were long and ungrammatical, with ideas mixed up. Below are examples I picked from some of the essays:
**Example 1:** “Eliot seem to have a different idea of what tradition is, he claims despite people constantly claiming that art evolve over time and it is an ever changing concept, in reality people do not appreciate one’s individual talent when it comes to any sort of art, they are more accommodating and more accepting and comfortable with patterns they are used to, they expect writers and poets to follow a certain pattern, lean towards the tradition when crafting their arts.”

**Example 2:** “Eliot argues that traditions is not just something that is passed on from generation to generation, contrary to what many believe he insists that traditions is a broader aspect, it cannot just be handed on a silver platter, it is something that should be earned, it involves historical sense and when you possess this historical sense you should be able to be very aware of how things worked in the past and how the past is still part of the present.”

**Example 3:** “He advises that it is important for the poet to understand that art does not evolve, but then again it is never the same, one must not strive to create better content then what already exists but rather be aware of the past and create his own work based on his individual talent, he went on to say the poet must be aware of everything that concerns his audience, because overtime the audience’s mind becomes more important than one’s own mind.”

**Example 4:** “This assignment based more on T.S. Eliot about his thought on traditional and individual talent, Plus depersonalization his thought was good for him to describe more to readers and critics on how they should understand the terms, Eliot himself was a critic on these terms, beside that’s why he took these points to talk more on it because authors tent to forget, value it less and do their own things without counting on the past.”

I’m sure you will agree with me that each of the above run-on sentences can be broken down into shorter and meaningful sentences. Also, note that sentences should never be separated with commas; use a full-stop or semi-colon instead.

v. **Essays with a high similarity rate, e.g. (60%, 71%, 80%, 91%)**

With such a high similarity %, most of the ideas are copied. You must acknowledge sources, and most importantly, your input is valuable. Mere copying and pasting is academic dishonesty and NUST does not condone such. NUST requires students to always do their own assignments and to produce their own
academic work. In fact, all forms of academic dishonesty are viewed as misconduct under NUST Student Rules and Regulations. Hence, such students were penalised.

vi. Essays with one quotation after the other. This is not acceptable. Your input is what determines the quality of your discussion. Your voice should be heard. Remember that quotations do not reflect what you think, rather use them to support your ideas. Refer to the below example:

"He gives an example of a carpenter and a chair. The idea of 'chair' first came in the mind of carpenter. He gave physical shape to his idea and created a chair. The painter imitated the chair of the carpenter in his picture of chair. Thus, the painter's chair is twice removed from reality. Hence, he believed that art is twice removed from reality. "Anonymous (2019)

"He gives first importance to philosophy as philosophy deals with idea, whereas poetry deals with illusion things which are twice removed from reality. So too Plato, philosophy is better than poetry. This view of mimesis is pretty deflationary, for it implies that mimetic art drama, fiction, and representational painting does not itself have an important role to play in increasing our understanding of human beings and the human world. We note that Plato's view of art is closely related to his theory of ideas. Ideas, he says are the ultimate reality and things are conceived as ideas before they take practical shape as things." Anonymous (2019).

In addition, in 'The Republic, 'Plato objected to poetry on three grounds. "Education, Philosophical and moral viewpoint. Plato's objection to Poetry from the point of view of Education: a. In 'The Republic' Book II. He condemns poetry as fostering evil habits and vices in children. Homer's epics were part of studies. Heroes of epics were not examples of sound or ideal morality. They were lusty, cunning, and cruel war mongers. Even Gods were no better." Anonymous (2019)

An essay structured this way cannot pass because there is no input from the student.

I will emphasise that it is important to show that your essay follows a clear structure. Note the example from student (218064659) below for first part of the question.
To begin with in his essay Eliot basically discusses his views on poetry and the importance of tradition. The essay is divided into three parts. In the first part of the essay he looked at the concept of tradition, in the second part he looked at the theory of interpersonal poetry and lastly, he concluded his essay.

In the first part of the essay which is the concept of tradition Eliot ......

Then, the student clearly indicates that she is proceeding to the second part of the question:

Moving on to the second part of Eliot’s essay which is the theory of impersonal poetry, he stated that to create a great poem one should sacrifice oneself....

Such an essay is easy to read and the argument is easy to follow. The essay follows the acceptable format with ideas well developed and presented in a logical manner. Such writing is encouraged and is assured of higher rewards – for it is a pleasure to mark.

Coming to the questions, what I encourage you is to look at each question many times and underline the key words which you think that your answer needs to address. These are words which will guide you in interpreting the question.

I have also written some comments in the body of each assignment and these are the comments which apply specifically to you. I encourage you to seriously look at the comments and try to make sense of them. View them positively and apply them. My goal is to assist you to attain the best possible level of excellence. If you do not understand anything with regards to the comments, please contact me and get clarification.

Question analysis

Once again, I advise you to examine the question closely and underline the key words which you think that your answer needs to address. These are words which will guide you in interpreting the question.

Question 1

Write an essay of about 500 words in which you give a detailed description of the concepts and concerns raised by T.S. Eliot in his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” and his theory of depersonalisation.

Your essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion.
Below are some ideas that you can use and sample essays from some students that you might find helpful.

- In his essay, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T.S. Eliot explains the concept of tradition as that part of living culture inherited from the past and functioning in the formation of the present.

- He makes the overall case that the individual talent of a given poet, or artist of any kind, must always be measured in relationship to a tradition of poets and artists.

- He also adds: His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.

- You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.”

- He makes the overall case that the individual talent of a given poet, or artist of any kind, must always be measured in relationship to a tradition of poets and artists.

- According to Eliot tradition and individual talent are not separate entity. They are inseparable and hence go together.

- Eliot states that knowledge of tradition plays vital role in the development of personal talent. He writes, “Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves the historical sense.”

- In fact, Eliot maintains that a contemporary poet or artist should actually strive to earn his or her way into this preceding tradition. New works must first take into account this tradition and build on it, and they will be judged critically in relation to this tradition.

- Individual literary and artistic production, then, relies heavily on tradition. The poet or artist must have a keen awareness of and respect for the past. Even more, the poet has to work hard to engage with this tradition.

- The poet is not a passive recipient of tradition but actively engages with tradition to develop new work.

The historical sense

- This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.

- And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.
The term "tradition" can represent a "simultaneous order", by which Eliot means an historical timelessness—a fusion of past and present—while it also includes the actual living moment of a poet’s composition.

A poet’s greatness and individuality is not determined by how he/she has brought something new to the subject or the literary form. Eliot argues that “the most individual parts of his (the poet’s) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.”

Eliot’s theory of depersonalisation
- The poet must allow his poetic sensibility to be shaped and modified by the past.
- His personality should not be more important than his sense of tradition.
- He must forget his personal joys and sorrows, and he absorbed in acquiring a sense of tradition and expressing it in his poetry.
- His emotions and passions must be depersonalised; he must be as impersonal and objective as a scientist.
- The personality of the artist is not important; the important thing is his sense of tradition.
- Thus, a good poem is a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The poet’s personality is merely a medium, having the same significance as a catalytic agent, or a receptacle in which chemical reactions take place.

Below are samples answers to the questions that you might find useful:

Assignment 2
Question 1
According to T. S. Eliot, there is an interdependent relationship between tradition and individual talent. Tradition is defined in the dictionary as the transmission of customs or beliefs from one generation to the next. In literary criticism, tradition according to Eliot, refers to literary works of the past. Eliot says that tradition includes the historical sense. It includes the social, historical, economic and cultural factors that have influenced literary works. These literary works of the past go on to influence works of the present.

Individual talent Eliot says is the originality in the works of a writer. If a writer comes up with new and original ideas, such writer is said to have individual talent. Eliot suggests that an audience usually praises an artist for the aspects of his works, which does not resemble anyone else’s. That people derive
pleasure from works that are different from works that they have seen before and they always attempt to find “something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed.” (Eliot, 1919).

Eliot reconciles these two seemingly different concepts, i.e. tradition and individual, in his essay. Although artists are encouraged to nurture their talent and produce works that are unique, they may also have to rely on existing literary works for inspiration and structure. In doing this, they must still avoid imitating works of the past, they must maintain their originality.

Eliot says that there is a simultaneous conformity that happens between new and old works. He says that existing works are already complete before new work arrives and these works maintain order, even after fresh and new works are introduced. This order of traditional works, is however always slightly altered by the novelty of new work. Eliot says that the past should be transformed by the present as much as the present is guided by the past.

This is why in literary criticism, works are compared and contrasted against works of the past. Artists are judged by the standards of the past, although the originality and uniqueness of their work is appreciated at the same time. It is therefore good for an artist to reflect on similar works of the past, as he creates his own.

Eliot says that in this mission to balance tradition and individual talent, an artist must obtain this knowledge which includes the historical sense, through great labour as it cannot be inherited. Historical sense he says is indispensable to anyone who continues as a writer and this is what compels a man to write with the consciousness of all literature that has existed before his time.

Eliot further states the historical sense is the “sense of the timeless as well as the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together” and this is what makes a writer traditional. This also makes the writer acutely aware of his place in time and the contemporariness of his works.

We can thus see that although tradition must be positively discouraged as said by Eliot, it still influences new works, as much as new works alter and change it.

Student: 21207887

Below is another sample response that you may find useful:

**Question 1**

The essay “Tradition and Individual Talent” by Elliot defines the term tradition as “a part of living culture inherited from the past and functioning in the formation of the present”, and individual talent as “novelty or newness that the writer brings in his or her writings...” (Pasi, 2018, p.162). According to Elliot the two terms work together, they are inseparable; they have a relationship that enable them to work together.
Elliot states that, “No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone.” Dead poets and artists are the ones that started the work of art and poetry although they do not give a complete meaning alone. Individual talent is developed from tradition, meaning that every poet makes research on the works of a dead poet to make a meaning of his own. It is against this background that we say that tradition provides for individual talent, it allow the continuity of the work even though the author or poet is dead. He continues to say that, “His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artist.” It is not only the individual that need to be praised; the dead poet is also of outmost importance because his the foundation on which individual talent is established.

The other relationship is that the two are interdependent. What happens in the past influences the present and vice versa. The work that the current poets or artist continues exploring modifies the work of past poets. According to Pasi (2018), a new work of art cannot be evaluated in isolation without reference to past literature and tradition. No wonder Eliot states that, “Tradition is a matter of much wider significance”, the work that the present poet or artist obtain through hard work shapes the present work. The present work though adjusted and modified is referenced to the past literature. We can therefore conclude by saying that the past and present poet are interdependent; the past poets are the source while the present poets are modifiers of old literature.

Present poets or artist compare or contrast the work of dead poets to come up with their own work. In his essay, Eliot states that every poet or artist must strive to find “his or her way into this preceding tradition.” This can only be achieved when an individual obtain the knowledge and work of the past poet through great labour, because it is not given on a silver plate or inherited. This knowledge then enables the poet to seek his new meaning by finding differences and similarities. This is done so that no one imitates or copies the work of other poets or artist though they are dead. It is the existence of tradition and individual talent that makes this possible, without tradition present poet would find it hard to come up with something new in the world of literature today.

Student: 218097786

QUESTION 2

Write an essay of about 500 words in which you give a detailed description of Plato’s views on the imitative nature of poetry (theory of mimesis) and his objections to poetry.

Your essay should have an introduction, body and conclusion.
Theory of Mimesis

- All art is mimetic by nature.
- Art is an imitation of life.
- ‘Idea’ is ultimate reality.
- Art imitates idea and so it is imitation of reality.
- Plato gives an example of a carpenter and a chair. The idea of ‘chair’ first came in the mind of carpenter. He gave physical shape to his idea and created a chair. The painter imitated the chair of the carpenter in his picture of chair. Thus, painter’s chair is twice removed from reality.
- Art is twice removed from reality. He gives first importance to philosophy as philosophy deals with idea. Whereas poetry deals with illusion – things which are twice removed from reality. So to Plato, philosophy is better than poetry.

Plato’s objection to poetry

- Plato’s objection to Poetry from the point of view of Education:
  In ‘The Republic’ Book II – He condemns poetry as fostering evil habits and vices in children. Homer’s epics were part of studies. Heroes of epics were not examples of sound or ideal morality. They were lusty, cunning, and cruel – war mongers. Even Gods were no better.

  - Objection from Philosophical point of view:
    Poetry does not lead to, but drives us away from the realisation of the ultimate reality – the Truth. Philosophy is better than poetry because Philosophy deals with idea and poetry is twice removed from original idea.

  - Objection from the Moral point of view:
    The soul of man has higher principles of reason (which is the essence of its being) as well as lower constituted of baser impulses and emotions. Whatever encourages and strengthens the rational principle is good, and emotional is bad. Poetry waters and nourishes the baser impulses of men - emotional, sentimental and sorrowful.

Suggestions for future assignments and examinations

Finally, as you prepare for the end of semester test, please check out the major critics and major critical epochs. Also, note that there is a sense of continuity between them all so make sure that you see how they all relate. In other words, be very clear with regards to how each of the critics/periods were similar and dissimilar. That is a very important dimension in this course! Know exactly how they differ and how
they agree. It is therefore important to know the key facts relating to each of the periods. You also need to be able to apply the different views using works of literature as a way of focussing and concretising the different views. This can be from works of poetry, prose or drama – therefore have clear examples at hand.

Hard work in this course will always yield results. Be encouraged to go through your assignments, your study guide and your additional notes thoroughly. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

**Conclusion**

Marking your assignments was such an enlightening experience. The overall performance was quite discouraging, especially in this course which most students find difficult. Try to improve in the test; read the study guide and the recommended texts and study them. Remember that you cannot say you are studying literature when you have not read any texts on second language acquisition. Most of these are available in the library. Remember to make your own notes as you read.

I wish you all the best in the test. Read the Study Guide and the notes on the E-Learning platform thoroughly; make use of it exhaustively, as well as any other reading materials you can find.

I hope that these comments will be put into effect. I thank you very much for conscientiously working through your assignments.

I wish you all the best in your studies and I am looking forward to well-prepared and exhaustive responses in the test.

Please check the e-platform for extra notes. I have already registered you so that you can have access to the notes.

Please do not hesitate to call or email us if you have any query concerning assignments.

Your Tutor

Dr Juliet Pasi