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Oscar Wilde's aesthetic cynicism and humanistic liberalism in the picture of Dorian Gray: A post-modern assessment

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ABSTRACT

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde, regarding myriad aspects of life, comes up with commendable aesthetic notions just before he serves on the table, as to them, direly cynical views. Each of the appealing concepts gives one an intellectually euphoric realization as much as each of the cynic additions, instantly, renders one confused. Surprisingly, the seemingly deliberate twists added to the aesthetic considerations make them more beautiful and thought-provoking. Wilde's cynical parts characteristically offer an obvious liberalism which profoundly hinges upon humanity. This article intends to investigate into the narrative with the post-modern literary outlooks with the belief that such an appraisal might provide a scholastically apt understanding of Oscar Wilde.

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1. Introduction

Oscar Wilde succeeded in dealing with literature in an intellectually enticing manner stirring the popular notions about lived experiences through attaching to them striking definitions followed by some reversed but thought-provoking remarks. Both syntactically and semantically, what Wilde concludes about multifaceted phenomena of life sounds amazingly aesthetic stimulating intriguing cynicism. While Wilde redefines aestheticism that breaks its traditional code and aims to endorsing life at the expense of morality, he liberalizes individualism and provides one a passage to psychologi-

cal growth (Bailly, 2020). Wilde is the writer who believed inconsequentiality to be one of the celebrated virtues in a free individual, and the artist who proclaimed that art should be something which does never depend on society (Fhlathúin, 1999). Of late researchers studying Oscar Wilde have understood that he does have a remarkable liking for the intimate philosophic knowledge (Bennet, 2017). A careful consideration of the works Oscar Wilde has given birth to reveals that he is not just a depraved aesthete, rather a serious thinker too (Bennet, 2017). He developed a non-instrumental aesthetic which, by its nature, is most open to exploitation, and he upheld that literature, art and aesthetical phenomena occupy a distinct value which is outside of normal life and not subject to its limitations or its principles (Fhlathúin, 1999).

Regarding Wilde, Bennet (2017) finds it difficult to make a definitive statement, for he is seemingly limitlessly witty in his idiosyncrasy, self-indulgence, and in his distinctive literary creations, which altogether make a scholar feel puny in terms of critiquing him. What Wilde says appears to be meaning this while it really means otherwise, and this confusion works around quite for some time (Bennet, 2017). Wilde's theories of art and aesthetics are both unreliable and inconsistent. The early essays demand that the poet has a duty to society, and art should embellish the universe along with the things of everyday life whereas the later work instructs that art is insignificant (Fhlathúin, 1999). Wilde's treatment to aestheticism is with sharp demarcation line that swiftly sharpens the idea while abruptly trims it down to its limits. Wilde's philosophy of aestheticism is not limited to merely art, but it is extended to life itself, and its sole motto is to augment beauty and happiness in life (Duggan, 2008). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde makes a noticeable display of aesthetical expressions retaining intellectual, cynical and liberal identity and exposure. Let's just take one of the many such decisive remarks in the novel,

That is the reason why people who live out of town are so absolutely uncivilized. Civilization is not by any means an easy thing to attain to. There are only two ways by which man can reach it. One is by being cultured, the other by being corrupt. Country people have no opportunity of being either, so they stagnate. (316)

Oscar Wilde sets the base of the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, primarily on the detailed consideration of art, artist and their utilities, but, with a calculated observation, he reaches the conclusion that all sorts of arts are quite useless (Guggan, 2008). He puts on show mesmerizing motif that permeates the plot, dialogue and narrative of the novel (McCollister, 1995). More than three scores of times, Wilde makes use of the word, "Charming" in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to highlight more on a character's ability to manipulate the thoughts and deeds of others than on the connotation, "attractive" (McCollister, 1995). *The Picture of Dorian Gray* showcases, between art and life, numerous crossings-over one of which is the fact that Dorian woos, wins and afterward forsakes Sybil Vane when he finds his dream dramatic persona fails to live up to his imagination, or in other words, the chemistry collapses when Sybil betrays her affected theatrical life for a purely sincere one (Sheehan, 2006). To Wilde, the artist is to create things with beauty and the aim of art is to reveal itself while concealing the artist, and he considers those corrupt and charmless, who seek ugly meanings in beautiful things (Rudzki-Weise, 2010).

Wilde's stance on art signifies that art, in real sense, molds neither social identity nor the moral one; rather it should necessarily be beautiful and provide pleasure to its observers, and if it attempts to imply further, it will lose its essence (Duggan, 2008). Dorian Gray, the protagonist of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, once lifeless and passive, receives an awakening that revives him to life, which, as for individualism, extends humanity although it puts him into a moral conflict characterized by tradition and freedom (Bailly, 2020). In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde displays versions of both British and Irish segregational apprehensions as rigidly as the one pervading the vast European context (King, 2004). King (2004) regards Wilde, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, to be recognizing British and Irish people's connivance with the victories and traumas of the Anglo-Irish eerie fancies and deploying them to decode selfless dual and relativist standardization of identity diversified by gender, race, class or nation.

Meisel (1992) considers *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a story regarding moral decay versus moral upliftment since it portrays the wishful reverse of experience, in which a picture retains the displays, the effects of the virtues and vices of life on the body, the outcomes of action and experience, whereas the resulting transformations get activated on the same subject. Experience, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, assumes a couple of shapes; one is of sin and the other is of time (Meisel, 1992). Critics have often viewed *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's one and only novel, as an exposure to the escapist aestheticist notion of his critical essays and of his utopian doctrine presented in "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (Fritz, 2013). In the novel, Wilde held an absolute fictional experiment on his abstract utopianism which he found wanting as it omits social consequences of self-improvement by virtue of individualism (Fritz, 2013). Fritz (2013) observes that the fact that Oscar Wilde endorsed utopian idea is well-known. Many of Wilde's literary creations like letters, poetry, lectures and reviews preceding *The Picture of Dorian Gray* demonstrate heightened revelations of his nationalism and anti-imperialism (Kandola, 2016).

Ryan (1988) traces postmodernism in the literary movement titled "Modernism" marked by literary personalities like Pound, Yeats, Eliot and Woolf. Hofele (1999) states that Wilde, in fact, is more in similarity with the postmodernist idea of re-awakening from within, and its associated focus on eclecticism and historicism, i.e., with the radical disintegration from the past, which signifies the inception of the modernist struggle. Postmodernism if more correctly called will be "super-modernism" since it does not totally reject but expands the consideration and disappointments of modernism (Ryan, 1988). In comparison with modernism, postmodernism is a much more daring, more complete and more durable assault on major Western doctrines and values (Ryan, 1988).

Bashford (2017) reconstructs Wilde's view of argument, including his view of the place of argument in human life, and finds Wilde through his writings having a grasp of arguments about important intellectual issues of the day. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "It is only the intellectually lost who ever argue." Wilde is thoroughly modern in this respect: he regards living as an expressive process with the goal of full self-expression (Bashford, 2017). McCromack (2017) regards Oscar Wilde a Daoist sage who has a subtle sinew to evade any specific definition, and as such cannot be determined in any specific characteristic. With such a delicate intellectual form, Wilde thrives in the spaces between this and that, and he proves to be, as he himself confesses, a problem bereft of a breakthrough. Benson (2008) views Wilde's use of ample logic in his writing as *Kettle Logic* (any argument concur-

rently speaking for and against itself is called a *Kettle Logic*) which Benson explains from Freud who named the term, and it, in the first place, sounds logical on its claim while simultaneously, by itself, may sound otherwise.

Wilde's exposure of myriad literary beauties in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* induces more cognitive search into the novel on various telling considerations some of the pressing ones of which are his aesthetic caliber, implicit and explicit cynical views, and liberal stance positive to humanistic emancipation. These features, directly and/or indirectly, match with the components of post-modernism, a movement questioning and scrutinizing the essence of each and every ideological view in term of its worth basing humanity (Kelly et al., 1998).

While speaking of the positive historical legacy of the tradition of classical rhetoric and ancient cynics, Yoos (1985) defines rhetoric and cynicism in contemporary views as the former one being the art of persuasion and the latter one gracing literary texts with bright manifestations of lexical show and witticism. Cynical statements are very often succinct, rhetoric, wittily poetic, pejorative in sense and are quite often ironic in starkly unconventional ways; i.e. usually the readers fail to grasp where the author stands in his sarcasm (Yoos, 1985). Consequently, most of the cynical statements sound ambiguous in terms of what they mean and what assumption and attitudes they demonstrate; thus, cynical remarks are likely to be anatomized through multiple interpretations (Yoos, 1985). Another complication as to interpreting cynical remarks is, as Yoos (1985) explicates, that sometimes elucidations of certain cynical statements may vary from the original viewpoints of both the author and readers; sometimes readers may interpret a remark to be cynical considering the apparent look of the statement whereas the author may genuinely have totally different intentions. Platizky (2002) labels Dorian's obsession for satisfying his longing for novel likings, his cravings for exquisite specimens from home and abroad as equivalent to Great Britain's building of a realm full of the possessions of the world in Victorian period. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* epitomizes Wilde's most complicated, layered and astounding deliberation on the absurdity of present-day artistic creativity, especially on the charged relation between the body and the text (Gomel, 2004).

Post-Modernism

Postmodernity is, nowadays, understood as a myth, a periodization, a condition or situation, an experience, an historical perception, an idea, a climate, a crisis, an episteme, a discourse, a poetics, a retreat, a topos (Vlasselaers, 1988). It acts well in bringing out the latent conjectures which affect people's behavior unbeknownst to them, and thus exercises remarkable influence on academic thought (Kelly et al., 1998). Nevertheless, it offers little or no support to those attempting to find ways for progress, and thereby might encourage hopelessness and cynicism (Kelly et al., 1998). Post-modernism proclaims itself as a movement not devoid of social, political and literary paradigms, not as an eon of rational disorder, acceptance, and heterogeneity, but rather the initiation of an utterly new pattern vividly at odds with all those archetypal fragments of human affairs (Rosenau, 1990). The terminological practices relating to post-modernism, in different cultural and linguistic entities, have been demonstrated by a seemingly unending flow of proliferation, and nowadays, cover a lot of thoughts and understandings in the areas of aesthetics and arts, architecture, cultural sciences, phi-

losophy and theology, and simultaneously, the term seems to be productive as a catalyst for new discourses and discussions in a worldwide expansion, strongly supported and promoted by various mass media (Vlasselaers, 1988).

Postmodern Features in Oscar Wilde

Vries (2013) apprises Wilde from the perspective of postmodernism, and presents the argument that Wilde's thinking can be read as strikingly similar to various postmodern approaches by placing him as a 'proto-postmodernist': not as a forerunner of postmodernism, nor a full postmodernist, but rather someone who employs ideas and practices that would now commonly be regarded as postmodern, but who had those ideas and engaged in those practices before postmodernism arrived on the scene. Oscar Wilde, both as an individual and as an author, experienced as well as engendered multifaceted attributes which clearly reveals his association with the hallmarks of the Romantic and Post-Romantic legacy, simultaneously forestalls some major traits denoting Modernism and Postmodernism (Pestka, 2018). His notions, in one hand, manifests tenets of Keats' concept of impersonality and aesthetic evaluation grounded on sensations, at once marking a move from Coleridge and Keats to the Baudelairean inclination to both art and the artificial (Pestka, 2018). Likewise, in the manner of Modernism, Wilde's literary creations showcase his withdrawal from pecuniary society and eschews unspiritual and banal knowledge. Eventually, his works are mainly representative of the linguistic properties bridging Modernism with Postmodernism which is built on paradoxes, the comic device highlighting the theme of twofold temperament, and rustles the banalities the contemporary views to stimulate new meanings (Pestka, 2018).

O'Hara (1984), despite finding differences between Wilde and post-modern critics, hints a fundamental thread, a series of thread, a strong continuity between Wilde's time and that of the post-modernists. Wilde was the first figure to self-consciously articulate with absolute composure and witty forcefulness the discourse of critical romance. In aesthetics, he acts as a radical formalist, a dialectical idealist in his historical perspective, and a romantic enthusiast for genius in his ethics. His metaphysics or "final philosophy" is a vague mixture of American transcendentalism and continental obscurities (O'Hara, 1984). In Wilde, presence of the amalgamation of false and truth, both surface-level as well as depth-level reference to deconstructive notions, simulacra, hyperreality, and above all, post-modern facets is felt in a discernible form (Vries, 2013). Wilde was a man with deeply-held generous ideologies although the delightful froth and shallow frivolousness of his absurdities and axioms too easily façade the gravity of his resolution (Fryer, 2005). He was, after all, a social commentator, who scrutinizes and critically ridicules conservative Victorian values and hypocrisy while simultaneously defying social decorum and regulations in personal life. He champions women rights, campaigns vehemently against child abuse and liberalizes gay movement (Fryer, 2005).

Although Oscar Wilde, by political thinkers and scholars mostly, has been labelled as both a socialist and anarchist, but in truth, he was essentially a prominent liberal. Besides his plays and novel, his essays, like "The Soul of Man under Socialism", acts as a eulogy to individual freedom (Fryer, 2005). He, throughout his career, endorses the question regarding the existence of free will. His core ethical conviction champions that one's individuality should be let flourish unrestrictedly,

and that free will is feasible once individuals are free from political shackles (Selleri, 2021). Wilde used as a tool aestheticism in his vehement stance against the contemporary practices in the London society, demonstrating the distinction between the mundane and the divine, the upper class and the working one, and artistic creations and natural ones (Guan, 2018). Wilde's upbringing and lived experiences placed him among the super intellectuals of his time, simultaneously and remarkably showcasing taking into consideration his robust taste of style and fashion, his thought-provoking and iconic language, and his emphasis on artificial life, which altogether inserted into his everyday life and function an uplifted aura of life (Guan, 2018). The class Wilde succeeded in belonging to was, by default, concerned with pleasure sought from the consumption of the apparent and the real, enabling him develop a peerless aesthetic formula as to vice, which propelled him to seek the good and dandy in the obnoxious and the hideous (Guan, 2018).

Concurrently, Wilde disparaged the duplicity of bourgeois principles and mindsets, demonstrating the sheer obnoxious and malicious truth underneath bourgeois industrial society, and emphasizing rebellion and confrontation against the bourgeois world (Guan, 2018). He believed in a reciprocal affinity between fashion and literature, relating that the color of one's cloth should be symbolic, a part of the brilliant allegorical movement in modern art, and one's taste of apparel will expose if one admires poetry or not (Guan, 2018). Between art and morality, he, as an artist, prefers the former, for he thinks artists' task is to create beauty, not to bother about moralization or such things (Guan, 2018). Wilde has a well-thought judgement for almost everything; he would not call a book moral or immoral, rather he would call it well written or badly written; and as for ethical issues, he would not expect an artist to brood since he believes that aesthetics is way more inevitable for an artist to get engaged to (Guan, 2018).

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry Wotton, one of the major characters, offers a succinct evaluation of the principles he deems should administer human behavior, which is fittingly regarded as New Hedonism. At the first view, Wilde's statement sounds like a frivolous backing for a mean and decadent lifestyle, but, as a matter of fact, he prophesies the post-modern outlook of life which would come into existence within the span of the approaching fifty years (Gillespie, 2015). Through Lord Henry, Wilde offers his concept of materialism exceeding cliches to present an inflexible framework of his idea of reality. With Henry's stretched remarks adorned with frolicsome tones, Wilde demonstrates his deeply-nurtured skepticism which reveals the unusual view regarding the world he constructs (Gillespie, 2015). Wilde's skeptic notions devalue the principles of the society he represents, and entitle those who follow them as imbeciles. This starkly shows how ruthlessly his philosophy might act on individuals with established convictions and the community with practiced as well as valued traditions (Gillespie, 2015). Zhang (2016) psychoanalyzes the protagonist of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* through Jacques Lacan's Mirror Theory and surmises that the self-construction of a person is created under the stimulus of the other's mirror image. In the novel, being affected by all the elements, Dorian goes through the cognitive renovation and eventually reaches self-annihilation due to estranging from his self-identification. Though Wilde buttresses the movement "art for art's sake", he, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, demonstrates his aesthetic quest on life, art and society, and his literary creations, among other artistic considerations, strongly relate to social morality (Yang, 2018).

Oscar Wilde's Aesthetics and Humanism

According to the nineteenth-century French and English “aesthetes”, art should not be instructive, rather its motto should be to create a mood or a sensation and not to suggest moral propositions; art needs only to fulfill potentials of loveliness innate in any art form. In simple terms, art lives for its own sake, not for advancing teachings or evaluating ideological aspects of the world (Quintus, 1980). One must hold aestheticism defined in a limited magnitude, and exclude from it the definitions proposed by such figures as Ruskin and Arnold, whose keenness for art included utilitarian or a moral application of art (Quintus, 1980). One of the English literary proponents of the Aesthetic Movement was Oscar Wilde who was one of the first great personalities famous for being famous, being an already celebrated person before earning any mentionable literary achievements at all (Allitt, 2019). Wilde willingly debunked the seriousness and earnestness of the Victorian society, making a loud declaration of his cynical presence and liberal humanism (Allitt, 2019).

Wilde, while studying at university in Dublin, became attracted to the Aesthetic Movement which advocated that art, in its numerous shapes, should never intend to offer any ethical, emotional or didactic theme, but should provide sensory pleasure. Arts' focus should be to be “to exist beautifully”, to echo “Art for Art's Sake”, which continued prevailing from about 1860 to 1900 (Anderson, 2011). Wilde considered himself as a Professor of Aesthetics and a connoisseur of taste, subsequently, became an art critic, and an ever-great self-publicist; and well-recognized, his presence on the field adorned the movement of “art for art's sake” an accelerating pace of life (Anderson, 2011). An exploration of Wilde's ideas about art and art's relation to culture suggests that Wilde's aesthetic touches depths for which both aestheticism and Wilde are often not given credit. Oscar Wilde's aesthetic accomplishment is best expressed in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and in it he seems to advocate the evidence both of the novel and of several other of his creative pieces. Wilde, his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, writes, “No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style” (Quintus, 1980). Wilde's morality is that of the great man alias the great artist whose genius stands above and opposed to his age, beyond the traditional notions of good and evil, concerned only with the perfection of his chosen mode of expression (O'Hara, 1984). By such perfection, he helps to reconstruct the soul of humanity as it travels through history on its incessant expedition for the absolute perfection of all the possibilities of humankind (O'Hara, 1984; Clayworth, 2000).

2. Method

The study utilized the qualitative methodology consisting of content analysis, theoretical examination, textual interpretation and comparative scrutiny between the text and the literary criticism.

3. Results and discussion

Oscar Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has made a superb display of the deeply cynical understanding of human life in the light of his contemporary society textured with both triviality and

intellectual aura. He, through his protagonists in the novel, either vehemently attacks an established truth or pleads for a profound realization of an undiscovered fact of life. More often than not, his judgmental views hinge upon his inner self demonstrating, albeit in an abstract manner, liberal appreciation of the concerned issues and human existence altogether. However, Wilde's statements are neither unmixed good nor sheer bad. Rather, they prove to be more of practiced or tested fact, which makes the connotations of the verdicts more worth-discerning. Wilde portrays about every minute detail of human life a wholesale exhibition of his keen discernment which spares almost nothing one may experience. One of the most striking facts of Wilde's evaluation is that he can dig deep beyond the normally visible limit of cunning or integrity. His cynicism unveils the extent of the distance of comprehension he can reach which we common folk are not usually supposed to traverse.

Criticizing the superficiality of the so-called 'civilized', Wilde says, "With an evening coat and a white tie" "...anybody, even a stockbroker, can gain a reputation for being civilized" (180). Regarding conscience, he goes, "Conscience and cowardice are relay the same things.". "Conscience is the trade-name of the firm" (181). Thus, it is obvious in almost every page of the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde depicts a cynical view, a judgement and a reconciling statement for almost everything ranging from individual's idiosyncrasy to intellectual issues. He hurls penetrating remarks relating to his acquaintances in the society, the contemporary practices, the accumulated beliefs and ideologies, and any circumstantial phenomenon. Wilde, through his characters in the novel, spares no pressing issue of human life in terms of defining them idiosyncratically, enunciating a starkly blunt expressive beauty, and an unfeigned skepticism flowed by an intent revelation to human concern.

"But Lady Brandon treats her guests exactly as an auctioneer treats his goods. She either explains them entirely away, or tells one everything about them except what one wants to know" (181). This is just one of the many sweeping comments as to the people in the novel. The list of such judgments on the myriad of issues contemporary to Wilde as well as the ones ever present in human life keeps building. "Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship, and it is far the best ending for one" (181). "A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies" (182).

"The masses feel that drunkenness, stupidity, and immortality should be their own special property, and that if anyone of us makes an ass of himself he is poaching on their preserves" (182). "Now, the value of an idea has nothing whatsoever to do with the sincerity of the man who expresses it. Indeed, the probabilities are that the more insincere the man is, the more purely intellectual will the idea be" (182). "...but there is no doubt that genius lasts longer than beauty" (184). "The thoroughly well-informed man – that is the modern ideal. And the mind of the thoroughly well-informed man is a dreadful thing. It is like a bric-a-bac shop, all monsters and dust, with everything priced above its proper value" 184). "...the worst of having a romance of any kind is that it leaves on so unromantic" (184). "Those who are faithful know only the trivial side of love: it is the faithless who know love's tragedies" (184). "Each class would have preached the importance of those virtues, for whose exercise there was no necessity in their own lives. The rich would have spoken on the value of thrift, and idle grown eloquent over the dignity of labor" (185).

Wilde has so much to pass a decisive verdict on almost every phenomenon of life, and what he says strikes our brain vibrantly to engage us in deep thoughts which mostly provoke us to agree with him with all our senses. Each of his conclusions stirs our practiced conscience and lived experiences,

and more often than not, makes us feel guilty, or ashamed of ourselves, for either we have so far acted in the wrong way or we have been so naïve not to be able to discern the truth about ourselves. Wilde emerges as our priest, our sixth sense, our spiritual awakening to whom we feel like confessing. He continues, “There is no such thing as a good influence,.... All influence is immoral – immoral from the scientific point of view” (187).

People are afraid of themselves, nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to oneself. Of course they are charitable. They feed the hungry, and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked. Courage has gone out of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. (188)

“But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself” (188). “We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us” (188). “The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it” (188).

Wilde’s aphoristic statements on multifarious issues of life make him appear in our sense as if he is an omniscient philosopher having breakthroughs for seemingly all predicaments people traverse through. “Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul” (190). “The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible” (191). “Man is many things, but he is not rational” (195). “Sin is the only real colour element left in modern life” (196). “Young men want to be faithful, and are not; old men want to be faithless, and cannot: that is all one can say” (196). “If a man is a gentleman, he knows quite enough, and if he is not a gentleman, whatever he knows is bad for him” (198). “There is something terribly morbid in the modern sympathy with pain. One should sympathise with the colour, the beauty, the joy of life. The less said about life’s sores the better” (203). “Of all people in the world the English have the least sense of the beauty of literature” (205). “Nowadays people know the price of everything, and the value of nothing” (207). “Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because they are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed” (207). “...no woman is a genius. Women are a decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly” (208). “When one is in love, one always begins by deceiving oneself, and one always ends by deceiving others” (211). “.....it is personalities, not principles, that move the age” (213).

The phenomenological conclusions *The Picture of Dorian Gray* presents the readers with render a telling show of Wilde’s extravagant command on, either acquired or self-declared, approximately all lived-experiences of human life. The novel is brimming with maxim-like views. Let’s see some more: “Experience was of no ethical value. It was merely the name men gave to their mistakes” (215). “Whenever a man does a thoroughly stupid thing, it is always from the noblest motives” (225).

I never approve, or disapprove, of anything now. It is an absurd attitude to take towards life. We are not sent into the world to air our moral prejudices. I never take any notice of what common people say, and I never interfere with what charming people do. (225)

“The reason we all like to think so well of others is that we are all afraid for ourselves. The basis of optimism is sheer terror” (226). “Pleasure is nature’s test, her sign of approval. When we are happy we are always good, but when we are good we are not always happy” (228). “.....no civilised man ever regrets a pleasure, and no uncivilised man ever knows what a pleasure is” (228). “...that women

give to men the very gold of their lives" (229). "Women inspire us with the desire to do masterpieces, and always prevent us from carrying them out" (229). "...we live in an age when unnecessary things are our only necessities..." (238).

Wilde's flow of presenting his own philosophy regarding things of life is both brilliant and devastating in syntactical as well as connotative considerations. He begins like an all-permeating arrow signaling a gracious touch healing for humanity. His views on the phenomena of life leave the readers think in a ravenous manner. Wilde lingers, "There is a luxury in self-reproach. When we blame ourselves, we feel that no one else has a right to blame us. It is the confession, not the priest, that gives us absolution" (240). Dorian says, "I want to be good. I can't bear the idea of my soul being hideous" (240). "One should absorb the color of life, but one should never remember the details. Details are always vulgar" (243).

The one charm of the past is that it is the past. But women never know when the curtain has fallen. They always want a sixth act, and as soon as the interest of the play is entirely over they propose to continue it. If they were allowed their own way, every comedy would have a tragic ending, and every tragedy would culminate in a farce. They are charmingly artificial, but they have no sense of art. (244)

"The girl never really lived, and so she has never really died" (245). "The moment she touched actual life, she marred it, and it marred her, and so she passed away" (245). "We live in an age that reads too much to be wise, and that thinks too much to be beautiful" (245). If one does not talk about a thing, it has never happened. It is simply expression, as Harry says, that gives reality to things" (248).

4. Conclusion

The Picture of Dorian Gray, with its presentation of voraciousness and depravity adorned with the touches of liberalism and humanity, offers a picaresque life lesson to the world. The picture of Dorian, the protagonist of the novel, itself emerges as a scripture revealing humans' imperative code of life. Nassaar (1999) finds an intact bond between the lightness of the picture at the inception of the narrative and Dorian's impeccable innocence, and between the weight of the framed picture and Dorian's subsequent moral coarseness. In the end, the picture remains victorious as the embodiment of human conscience that wears lightness as it should be and hangs from up unlike its leaning against the wall when it represented Dorian's soul burdened with sins (Nassaar, 1999).

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