

Mathew Arnold Poetry Explication

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With the progression in human history, many people believed the transformation of spiritual faith shifted the human perception of faith and removed the existence of Jesus Christ from history. The decline in religious faithfulness has converted into an element of uncertainty for the believers. The poet Mathew Arnold pinpointed the Victorian era for the uncertain faithfulness as the first era and alienation of himself from human beings and nature.

The poet starts the poem with a short and simple line, such as *"the sea is calm"* Moving on, the poet creates momentum about the geography by casting moonlight on the coast of France in the town of Dove. The writer told the audience about his location on the English Channel in England. The narrator used the enjambment to narrate the poem. The slow and gradual movement from line to line is beautiful and explicit. The use of a "tranquil bay" predicts the image of the dove cliff on the coast, which gives the image of calmness in the dark. The author shifted the scene of calm and peace with a word *"grating roar"* compelling the reader to observe the difference in the scene of the bay. The pebbles of the shore transformed the granting sound of the beach into a *"tremulous cadence"* or shaky rhythm of the ocean that hit with pebbles repeatedly. The end of the stanza cleared the picture of tranquillity into an eternal view of sadness with the built sound of sorrow.

From the stanza,

Come to the window; sweet is the night-air!

Only, from the long line of spray

The poet used the symbol in the stanza as "night:" The night at the beginning of the stanza is used to represent the calm and peace that later on shifted into the form of sadness and constant gloominess. [3]

Arnold found that the emptiness and isolation of humans from God and from human beings in the Victorian era needed to be resolved. He used the elements of union and companionship as the solution to remove the emotional emptiness and compensate for the faith in God that every human lacks. In his poem, he said,

"Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
... Hath neither joy, nor love, nor light."

Love is the only solace in a world of the baffle. The bareness and uncertainty can be lightened by indulging in companionship or a relationship with another human, which is analogous to the love of God. The only way in the world of unfaithfulness is to rediscover yourself to connect to god, the only revival of god in the modern age. [1]

Arnold has explored the themes of love and fidelity over conflict. The poet used the metaphor of a "sea of faith" as the connotation of the problems of human life from birth to death and to symbolize human existence in a liminal place. The sea of faith is a gesture of Arnold's perception of the constructed image of a female body, feelings of longings and loss and the purposeless existence of a human in the world. From the lines,

"The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd."

The sea of faith represents the level of trust that the world had, which is equal to the level of the ocean. The hope has moved and declined to the level of fuddle. Arnold made "the sea of faith" an important point to reflect the religious faith of the people, which was most important to them, and described its intensity with the high tide of the ocean. Here, he used the word. "Bright girdle furled," Arnold is comparing the metaphor with the use of a simile that denotes the ocean of faith as a beautiful belt surrounding the whole world at a point in time. The author explained the carefree and beautiful image of the human away from misery.

But now I only hear

"Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.”

In the above lines, the poet shifts the point towards the decline of faith, the faith that was wide at the beginning, like the ocean is not taking high tide and is declining in its waves. Faith is retreating from the world. Faith is pulling away and now producing the sound of desolation. The image of the desolated land is expressed with the use of imagery as “naked shrines” that are small pebbles left on an isolated and devastated beach. Arnold uses it to represent the loss of faith in God and its impact, which is merely a desolation. [2]

From the explanation of the stanza, we can also extract that faith has gone from the world, and it can never get the pace, the tides can never be high, and there is not any hope of faith to get back to its normal stage.

“Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery.”

Arnold used allusion to create the link between the past and the famous Sophocles playwright on the Mediterranean Sea. The poet used the past reference to instigate the reader’s mind to think about humanity while observing the sea. The author creates the illusion of misery through Sophocles and tries to tell that the ebbs and flows of the ocean make him think about the misery of humans. Another perspective of Arnold to draw a comparison with Sophocles is to bring the audience back to the time of ancient Greeks, where Sophocles used to write plays while analyzing the Aegean Sea. That time of human misery has transformed into Arnold’s poetry as the decline of religion and faith among people in the modern world. [3]

The poem altogether is a blend of metaphors, symbols, and similes. The poet projected the perception of the religious faith of people, especially in England, that was strong once and sharply declined. The development of the poem shows the positive comparison of faith to the “sea.” Then, the tide roaring

sound that explained the reality of the faith receding from the world. The poet added the reaction of nature to the human perception regarding tide, pebbles and desolated beach. The use of visual scenes in the form of ebbs and flows of the ocean tides represents the passage of time and adds the beauty of the melancholy. The reference of Sophocles is convincing in the form of allusion. [4]

On the other hand, it is engraved with a message that faith in the divine power is important and losing it would affect humanity. Arnold used the sound of faith retreat as “melancholy” to convey the message. With faith, you cannot feel alone, but without faith, there would be isolation and uncertainty in the world.

References

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