

THE FORMATION OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC VIEWS OF THEODORE DREISER, A PROMINENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NATURALISM

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Abstract

This article examines the key factors that played a major role in shaping the philosophical and aesthetic views of Theodore Dreiser, an American writer and journalist, and one of the leading representatives of naturalism in American literature. The article also analyzes the main mechanisms through which Dreiser not only critiques the social and economic structures that contribute to inequality but also mocks the naive belief in unlimited opportunities for individual growth within such a system. His irony is aimed at exposing the myths that uphold the status quo and calls for a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be successful and what values should be at the center of public attention.

Keywords: philosophy, naturalism, reality, illusion, heredity, injustice, critique, material success, society, irony.

Аннотация:

В данной статье рассматриваются ключевые факторы сыгравшие основную роль в формировании философско-эстетических взглядов Теодора Драйзера американского писателя и журналиста, одного из ведущих представителей натурализма в американской литературе. Также в данной статье будут проанализированы основные механизмы посредством которых Драйзер не просто критикует социальные и экономические структуры, способствующие неравенству; но также высмеивает наивность веры в неограниченные возможности индивидуального роста в такой системе. Его ирония направлена на разоблачение мифов, которые поддерживают статус-кво, и призывает к более глубокому осмыслению того, что на самом деле значит быть успешным и какие ценности должны быть в центре общественного внимания.

Ключевые

философия, натурализм, реальность, иллюзия, наследственность, несправедливость, критика, материальный успех, общество, ирония.

слова:

Annotatsiya:

Ushbu maqolada amerikalik yozuvchi va jurnalist Teodor Drayzerning falsafiy-estetik qarashlarini shakllantirishda asosiy rol o'ynagan omillar ko'rib chiqiladi. Shuningdek, ushbu maqolada Drayzerning nafaqat tengsizlikka olib keluvchi ijtimoiy va iqtisodiy tuzilmalarni tanqid qilish mexanizmlari tahlil qilinadi, balki cheksiz individual o'sish imkoniyatlariga



bo'lgan sodda ishonchni ham kulgi ostiga oladi. Uning istehzosi status-kvoni qo'llab-quvvatlaydigan afsonalarni fosh qilishga va muvaffaqiyatli bo'lishning asl ma'nosini chuqurroq anglashga chaqiradi hamda jamiyatning markazida qanday qadriyatlar bo'lishi kerakligini qayta ko'rib chiqishga undaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: falsafa, naturalizm, haqiqat, illyuziya, meros, adolatsizlik, tanqid, moddiy muvaffaqiyat, jamiyat, kinoya.

Introduction.

The irony of Theodore Dreiser in his views and attitude towards early 20th-century American society is expressed through the sharp contrast between the idealism of the American dream and the harsh reality of the life he observed around him. This irony is not merely a literary device but a philosophical stance that allows Dreiser to critically analyze and reflect on the social contradictions of his time. Dreiser illustrates how a society obsessed with wealth and status actually undermines the moral and ethical foundations upon which it supposedly stands. His characters often find themselves trapped by circumstances, demonstrating that human will and the pursuit of happiness are frequently powerless against social and economic forces. One manifestation of the irony in his views is the debunking of the myth of self-sufficiency and independence of the individual in American society. Dreiser shows how, in a capitalist economy, personal successes and failures are often determined not so much by personal qualities and efforts but by social and economic circumstances that are largely beyond one's control. Dreiser emphasizes that in a capitalist economy, where the dominant values are money and success, people's fates are significantly shaped not by their personal qualities, talents, or efforts but by external circumstances. These circumstances include economic conditions, social status, access to education and resources, as well as heredity and chance [1, pp.452-455]

Main Part.

Dreiser began his career as a journalist, working for various newspapers and magazines, which allowed him to observe many aspects of American life and solidify his naturalistic views. Naturalism in literature seeks to present life unfiltered, emphasizing determinism—the idea that environment, heredity, and social conditions determine human fate. Dreiser saw this realism as a way to depict the true nature of American capitalism and its impact on individuals. He aimed for the most accurate and impartial depiction of reality in his works, studying the social, economic, and personal factors influencing human life, forming the basis of his naturalistic method [2, p.514]. The main themes in his works are social injustice, survival, the power of money, and sexual relationships as determinants of human destiny. His key works, such as “Sister Carrie” (1900) and the trilogy “The Financier,” “The Titan,” and “The Stoic,” explore American values, materialism, and the pursuit of success, as well as their impact on personality and morality. In “Sister Carrie,” Dreiser portrays the protagonist's journey from a simple provincial girl to a successful actress, highlighting the irony and duality of the American Dream, where material success comes at the cost of personal and moral compromises. The novel demonstrates the illusion and price of such success. Regarding “The Financier” and “The Titan,” these works narrate the life and career of Frank Cowperwood, a businessman whose life illustrates the cruelty and callousness of American capitalism, and the influence of personal ambition and the pursuit of power. His last novel, “An American Tragedy,” based on a real court case, explores the theme of social mobility and the ethical dilemmas faced by a young man striving for success at any cost [3, pp.511-512].

Economic dependence. Dreiser shows how economic fluctuations and crises can nullify an individual's efforts and ambitions, making their successes and failures dependent on external



factors. An example can be a sudden economic downturn, which can destroy a business and deprive a person of their livelihood, regardless of their enterprise or diligence.

Social Status and Class. According to Dreiser, a person's initial social position significantly impacts their life prospects. People from poor families face greater obstacles to success, while those from higher social strata have far more opportunities to achieve their goals.

Education and Access to Resources. Access to quality education and other resources, such as capital or social connections, is often determined by the family's social and economic status. Dreiser criticizes a system where such crucial factors for success depend on the accidents of birth.

Heredity and Chance. In some of his works, Dreiser also highlights the role of heredity and chance in a person's life, emphasizing that many aspects of existence are beyond individual control.

By exposing these mechanisms, Dreiser aims to show that the American dream of self-made success through personal effort and talent is an illusion for most people. Instead, he believes society should recognize the significant influence of external circumstances on individual lives and strive to create fairer conditions that allow everyone to realize their potential regardless of their social and economic status.

Another aspect of his irony lies in the critique of materialism and consumer society. Dreiser satirizes the societal pursuit of wealth and success, which often leads to moral emptiness and the loss of human values. This irony is expressed in showing how society places material success above personal virtues and human relationships [4, pp.290-293].

1. Selective Social Mobility. Dreiser shows that despite common assertions of opportunities for all, the social elevator actually works for only a limited number of people. These "chosen" often have pre-existing advantages such as access to resources, social connections, education, or simply being in the right place at the right time. The irony lies in the promise of accessible success for everyone, which conceals the harsh reality of unequal opportunities.

2. High Cost of Success. Even when Dreiser's characters achieve outward success, it often comes with moral compromises and a loss of personal identity. The irony is that in the pursuit of success and social recognition, characters lose what makes them unique and valuable as individuals. This underscores the problem of a value system where material success and social status are rated higher than personal virtues and moral integrity.

3. Illusion of Meritocracy. Dreiser mocks the idea of meritocracy, which posits that social status and success are the results of personal merit and hard work. By showing how external factors such as economic class, race, gender, and chance play a decisive role in determining one's chances of success, he highlights the irony of a situation where the myth of a "fair chance for all" conceals structural inequality.

4. Double Standards of Society. Dreiser's irony also lies in how society praises the idea of success achieved through hard work while simultaneously maintaining and reinforcing barriers that make such success unattainable for many. This demonstrates the double standards in the perception of success and social mobility [5, p.247].

The central ironic perspective present in Dreiser's stories is aimed at social mobility. He questions the idea that anyone can achieve success through sheer effort. In his view, the social elevator in American society does not work for everyone but only for a select few, often at the cost of losing personal identity and moral bearings. Dreiser highlights this theme with irony, emphasizing the gap between the idealized notion of social structure and the harsh reality faced by many [6,p.241].



Conclusion.

Through his works, Dreiser not only criticizes the social and economic structures that contribute to inequality and the erosion of human values and moral decay but also mocks the naive belief in unlimited opportunities for individual growth within such a system. His writings aim to expose the myths that uphold the status quo and call for a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be successful and what values should be at the center of public attention. Through his penetrating analysis and keen observation, Dreiser unveils the disparity between societal ideals and lived realities, challenging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the nature of success and social mobility. By debunking the myth of individual self-sufficiency and highlighting the pervasive influence of external factors on personal destinies, Dreiser underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of societal progress and human fulfillment. His works compel us to reevaluate our values and priorities, urging us to strive for a more equitable and compassionate society. In essence, Dreiser's ironic perspective serves as a catalyst for social awareness and change, inspiring us to dismantle oppressive systems and champion justice and empathy in our collective pursuit of a better future.

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