

“Poetry is the criticism of life, governed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.” Discuss.

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“Poetry is the criticism of life, governed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.” Discuss. [NU: 2017, 21] ★★ Or, Do you agree with Matthew Arnold that poetry is the criticism of life? Give reasons for your answer. [NU: 2019]

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was an important Victorian poet and critic. His essay "The Study of Poetry" was published in 1880. Arnold believes poetry is not just for enjoyment. He says poetry helps people judge and understand life. For him, poetry must follow the laws of truth and beauty. He thinks poetry is a guide for people to see life clearly. Let us now discuss how poetry criticizes life.

Poetry as Criticism of Life: Good poetry always has a strong idea or message. These ideas come from real human experiences in society. Poetry is made from thoughts, feelings, and lessons in life. It helps people judge and understand what is going on around them. Poetry does not exist outside of life; it grows from it. To prove this, Arnold says,

“For poetry the idea is everything.”

This shows that the value of poetry comes from the real ideas. Specifically, it comes from life.

Truth and Seriousness in Poetry: Good poetry shows honest ideas from life. Arnold thinks the poem's subject must matter. The poem should be about real things. Readers learn right and wrong from it. The truth in poetry makes it wise. Seriousness in the message gives poetry strength. A poem should show what matters most. Arnold says,

“The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable....”

This means poetry's value comes from its truth.

High Seriousness and Poetic Beauty: Arnold says the poet's attitude is very important. The poet must care about the topic and write with respect. It should touch the reader's heart and make them feel deeply. High seriousness means the poet writes with true, deep feelings. But Arnold also says poetry must be beautiful. The words in a poem should sound sweet and noble. The poem's style, movement, and language add to its value. This beauty makes poetry attractive. It helps its message stay in the reader's mind. Beautiful words and a graceful style work together with truth.

Poetry's Role in Human Life: Poetry is very important in everyone's life. It is not just for pleasure or entertainment. Poetry helps people find comfort in sad times and gives hope when life is hard. It helps us understand the world better. Poetry is more than any simple story. It is a guide for facing emotions and problems. Arnold shows this by saying,

"We have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us."

This means poetry will always help people in their lives.

Poetry's Future and Lasting Value: Poetry will remain important for all time. It gives support, wisdom, and comfort to every generation. Science and religion may change. However, poetry will always have value and a place in human progress. Lessons from poetry never end. Arnold proves his belief by saying,

"The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry... our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay."

This means that people in the future will depend on poetry even more.

In conclusion, Arnold believed poetry is a deep criticism of life. Poetry grows from real life and gives honest and serious lessons. It guides, comforts, and helps people of every age. Its value and truth will always last. Arnold's ideas show poetry's special power in every society.