

The Concept of Human Nature in Robinson Crusoe and Gullivers Travels

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Abstract: This article attempts to focus on the issue of human nature in different political stages in Robinson Crusoe with some comparative examples from Gulliver's Travels and studies individualism and human nature. Moreover, Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, which was written as a satire on human nature in the same period with Robinson Crusoe, also points out and criticizes different emotions in human psychology.

Keywords: Individualism, human nature, human psychology, social society, character.

Introduction. The concept of human nature is a common theme explored in **Robinson Crusoe and Gullivers Travels** across various genres and time periods. Author often uses characters, settings, and plot developments to delve into the complexities of human behavior, beliefs, and motivations. Here are some ways in which the concept of human nature is depicted in literature:

1. **Characterization:** Author creates characters that embody different aspects of human nature, such as ambition, love, jealousy, or greed. Through the actions, thoughts, and interactions of these characters, author can explore the depths of human emotions and behaviors.
2. **Conflict:** Many literary works use conflict as a means to examine human nature. Whether it's internal conflict within a character or external conflict between characters or societies, these clashes often reveal underlying truths about human desires, fears, and values.
3. **Morality:** Literature often grapples with questions of morality and ethics, shedding light on the moral dilemmas faced by individuals in various situations. Characters' moral choices and their consequences can offer insights into the complexities of human nature.
4. **Social Commentary:** Some literary works serve as social commentary, critiquing societal norms, values, and institutions through the lens of human nature. Authors may highlight the impact of societal expectations on individual behavior or explore how power dynamics shape human interactions.
5. **Psychological Exploration:** Psychological themes are prevalent in literature, with authors delving into the depths of human consciousness, motivations, and emotions. Works of literature may explore psychological concepts such as identity, memory, trauma, or mental illness to illuminate aspects of human nature.
6. **Symbolism and Allegory:** Symbolism and allegory are frequently used in literature to convey deeper meanings about human nature. Metaphorical elements in a story can represent universal truths about human experiences, beliefs, or struggles.

Overall, the concept of human nature is a rich and multifaceted theme that has been explored in countless literary works. Through nuanced characterizations, compelling narratives, and thought-provoking themes, literature offers readers a window into the complexities of what it means to be human.

Human nature has always been analyzed because of its complexity and incoherence. It is generally regarded as being egoist, self-centered, and thinking of his own profit more than anything. Besides these negative sides, many rights were believed to be bestowed to humanity, as people are different from animals and they have reason. Reason is one of the merits that make people free and the judges of their own conditions. Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, are known for their political philosophies on human nature and the development of social societies. Their concern is on the evolution of the modern societies from the nature in relation to the psychology and the mind of human beings. These features can be seen in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* clearly and they can be scrutinized in this respect, for Defoe's views on human nature are similar to Jonathan Swift's thoughts. We see the human condition in different political stages in the process of creation of governmental societies. We can recognize both the individualism and egocentricity in *Robinson Crusoe*'s character, and his fears and doubts that depict human nature perfectly. Moreover, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which was written as a satire on human nature in the same period with *Robinson Crusoe*, also points out and criticizes different emotions in human psychology.

Daniel Defoe is generally known as being more close to Jonathan Swift in terms of his political philosophy. Defoe's political philosophy can be seen in *Robinson Crusoe*, beginning with the emphasis on his individualism, then the depiction of political societies' development from the smallest units such as families. As Novak [1962: 11] explains, Defoe would think that human nature was governed by self-love and vanity, and it was open to corruption. He can also be considered as a conservative in his religious identity, for he attributes many things to God and religious dogmas. He does not give such a great importance to reason, he sees reason as deficient to question and judge religion. Law and government are significant for him, as he thinks that they provide actual freedom for humanity. All these views can be found in *Robinson Crusoe*, as it is the representation of Defoe's political philosophy. We see the depiction of development of political societies and human nature through the character of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Individualism. In the beginning of the text, we see *Robinson Crusoe* in the family and society, and in an unobtrusive rebellious and individualist situation. The individualism of human nature is shown through him perfectly. He wants to be free saying that "I should certainly run away from my master before my time was out, and go to sea ;..." [1, p. 3]. He always thinks of going away, going abroad, expanding his business and property from the very beginning. The narrative level of the novel, the first-person narration, also reveals the individualist approach. He tells everything from his side, being partial to himself like all the people. He manages to go abroad by ship, but changes his mind when he is afraid of a strong storm in the sea. He thinks of going back to his family in the time of storm, and then he changes his mind again when it abates. He cannot stop thinking of going away that shows the obstinate and obsessed human nature. All this egoism of *Robinson Crusoe* can be regarded as criticism of egocentricity of people. His habitation in Brazil is the beginning of a political society. He has his own life, job, neighbors which form a small community. He is very ambitious about expanding his business and plantation, and he goes to Africa for slave trade. He feels himself alone and isolated in Brazil and in England when he goes back there from the island after a long time. The fact that he feels himself isolated in the society demonstrates his strong sense of individualism. *Gulliver's Travels* may also be evaluated as representation of individualism through the character and travels of Gulliver. Although Gulliver does not have a rebellious nature and obsession to go away unlike *Crusoe*, his hatred of man and being different in the places that he goes makes him individualist. Especially the part in which he goes to Lilliput and the fact that he is bigger than the citizens of this place symbolizes the inclination of people to see themselves superior to other people. That *Robinson Crusoe* survives and falls onto the island is the completion of his freedom that he has always wished. It is the place that he can realize whatever he wants. "On his island *Crusoe* enjoys the absolute freedom from social restrictions for which Rousseau yearned- there are no family ties or civil authorities to interfere with his individual autonomy" [Watt, 1957: 96]. When he reaches the shore, he ruins himself in vain instead of praying for having survived. That denotes the ungrateful nature of human beings. Then, he starts to enjoy the solitude compulsorily and the fact

that he is the owner of the island. As soon as he starts to live in the island, he focuses on preserving his life just like men do in the state of nature. Defense and resistance are the key concepts in Daniel Defoe's and Jonathan Swift's political philosophy. He gets the food and other necessary things from the shipwreck, and he makes a shelter for himself and extends it day by day. He begins to have a permanent settlement in the island and creates a life on his own.

Crusoe shows many features of human nature that were analyzed by Locke and Hobbes. "Although most modern critics have regarded Crusoe as an embodiment of enterprising, fearless economic man, ... he is always afraid, always cautious" [Novak, 1962: 23]. He is scared so much by the natural happenings like earthquake, and strong storms. He is afraid of the footprint that he sees on the shore that he can not even sleep for days. He thinks of several possibilities about to which it may belong. He has been so individualist that he looks like he is afraid of people. We generally see him afraid throughout the novel that depicts the psychology of human beings in the pure state of nature. It may be the implication to show that people are not fit to be solitude without people in nature. Moreover, the brutal nature of humanity causes people to distrust each other. He always debates on his condition and decides what to do very carefully. He uses his reason which is vital for human nature and removal of violence. "I consulted several things in my situation, which I found would be proper for me" [1, p. 44]. He keeps book and writes a diary that is the merit of civilized man to read and write, and use his logic. He makes a division of good and evil sides of his condition that shows his reasonable wit. He tries to be as logical as possible, considering his situation. As Crusoe settles the island more, he becomes the owner of it with his properties, plantation, and home which he calls 'my castle'. He sees himself rightful to own the things in the island, as he works hard to have them. Crusoe says that: "...this was all my own; that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly and had a right of possession and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance as completely as any lord of a manor in England." [1, p. 76]. He always mentions about his property by listing them eagerly. Hence, we understand that his property is of great importance to him for his life in the island. He is so impatient that he wants to get immediate results from his work. Besides Crusoe's egoism in the novel, we may see the criticism of human nature by Defoe when Crusoe says "I was removed from all the wickedness of the world here. I had neither the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life" [1, p. 98]. The selfishness of humanity is criticized once more through the character of Robinson Crusoe. He is not aware of his own nature while criticizing the society; this shows the arbitrariness in his identity. The criticism of human nature can be clearly recognized in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, because it is one of the main themes in this work. The genre of this work is regarded as a satire that criticizes and satirizes the human condition in general. It criticizes the corruption of human being in the beginning with the presentation of the utopian country, Lilliput. The fact that all the people in these four different worlds to which Gulliver traveled lack some emotions of human nature, and it shows this criticism of humanity because of their defected personalities. He faces with the corruption and deformity of human reason and pride through his visit to Houyhnhnms. Swift's criticism of men reaches its climax at the end of the text when Gulliver can not touch even his wife because of his hatred of men. The giants may be said to represent governments of European countries, while Laputas represent philosophy without practical application.

Robinson Crusoe is a very appropriate work to explore this nature of human being, for it is based on the story of one main character by which the psychology of human beings can be presented thoroughly. We can see almost all the theories of Hobbes and Locke on political societies in relation to individualist perspectives. The presence of Robinson Crusoe personally in all parts of the novel is useful to present human nature and psychology in different circumstances. In this respect, it can be realized how literature and social life are interrelated to each other. The process which started with Renaissance and Humanism brings us to the issue of individualism and the rise of the novel. Ian Watt postulates that the rise of the novel coincides with the birth of a new economic system and social philosophy, suggesting that Robinson's "travels, like his freedom from social ties ... by making the pursuit of gain a primary motive, economic individualism has

much increased the mobility of the individual” [7, p 67]. As the social incidents shapes literary activities, literature also affects society in different ways.

The objects of Swift’s satire in *Gulliver’s Travels* are numerous and disparate, ranging from the follies of natural philosophers to the varieties of human pride, English politics under Queen Anne and King George, Walpole and ministerial government, and of course the genre of travel writing as a whole with its dubious attempt to establish the veracity of improbable observations. But among the most devastating satires is Swift’s portrait of human nature itself, an implicit topic in the first three books and an overt one in the fourth where Gulliver encounters the infamous Yahoos and their masters, the morally and socially superior Houyhnhnms. By addressing the theme of human nature, Swift entered a debate that had attracted the attention of the most distinguished philosophers of his day. Figures such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Bernard Mandeville, and Francis Hutcheson had outlined rival and incommensurable visions of human nature, by turns characterizing mankind as subject only to motives of self-interest and as a sociable creature, enlivened by fellow-feeling and moral instincts.

Conclusion. Both *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe and *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift explore the concept of human nature in different ways. In *Robinson Crusoe*, the protagonist, Robinson Crusoe, is portrayed as a resourceful and self-reliant individual who is able to survive and thrive on a deserted island through his ingenuity and hard work. This novel reflects the belief in the inherent goodness and capability of human beings to overcome challenges and adapt to their environment. It also emphasizes the importance of self-reliance and perseverance in the face of adversity.

On the other hand, *Gulliver’s Travels* presents a more satirical and cynical view of human nature. Through the protagonist Lemuel Gulliver’s encounters with different societies in his travels, Swift highlights the flaws and absurdities of human behavior, such as greed, corruption, and cruelty. The novel critiques the vices and follies of humanity, suggesting that humans are inherently flawed and prone to moral failings.

Overall, while *Robinson Crusoe* portrays a more optimistic view of human nature as capable and resilient, *Gulliver’s Travels* offers a more critical and satirical perspective on the darker aspects of human behavior. Both novels provide thought-provoking insights into the complexities of human nature and the ways in which individuals navigate their place in the world.

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