
A Modest Proposal: Pamphlet As A Way To Express Author's Political Position

Swift has a unique way of expressing his thoughts onto the pamphlet that was anonymously/not under his name (by a fictional persona) presented to the public as a real proposal to receive a shock/jolt reaction. Swift wanted people to read this piece literally, therefore, it was not published under his name. As Swift was known for his satirical pieces at the time. Satire has existed for a long period however it reached its peak during the eighteenth century in England.

Satirists like Jonathan Swift, use laughter at a particular human vice or folly and thereby correct said vice/folly. Satire is a distortion or exaggeration of something familiar - an invitation to see something very familiar so it becomes both ridiculous and yet funny, and something in which no reasonable person would engage (Lecture Slide 4, 2019). Paradoxically, A Modest Proposal reveals Swift's critical view of his kind as he writes during the age of reason. He challenges and critiques the progress of science with caution. The rational argument in the proposal is a problem to our moral understandings of life as he introduces an option of cannibalism. His satire is an argument of how us as individuals can progress without reason/enlightenment. Swift uses satire, to bring light into the issues of poverty in Ireland by mocking the views of the wealthy towards the poor during the era of the famine. He demonstrates how heartless and the cruel attitudes the rich hold, while calling attention on the problems of the Irish government with tools of political and economic satire. His text implies an ethnic nationalism towards the English people, showing English people have favouritism and social norms towards certain topics, characteristics such as history, or the way of life the Irish people are living. Swift also gives us readers the essence of classicism, notice how he chooses to reach one specific class and the class was mocked but also was trying to persuade them to help so many poor Irish people living in evidently unchanging, unjustifiable standards of living condition.

Swift's A Modest Proposal is written for preventing the children of poor people in Ireland, from being a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the publick (public). This satirical attempt to find out a 'fair, cheap and easy method' to convert the starving children of Ireland into 'sound and useful members of the commonwealth.' That a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust (Swift, 1729). This is effective to get his point across because Swift uses rational ideas and reasoning such as the mathematical benefits to eating children and how it benefits the economy;

There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question, therefore, is, How this number shall be reared, and provided for? which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed (Swift, 1729).

The logical reasoning on how much or how many are needed to benefit the population. For the prevention of abortion and save the population problem and economy as 'The constant breeders, besides the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.' poor families should breed (raise)

their children as food for the wealthy and sold to meat markets. This will end the future consequences of overpopulation and increase employment opportunities. As the sacrificing the kids will open more doors and are not an 'expenditure'. Since the parent has already been devoured by the landlords (in this case the English/ the wealthy) it now time for the children, 'I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children'. Swift is suggesting that the landlords are the ones that are causing the Irish to be in poverty and misery. This proposal of eating babies, having the poor to sell their babies gives them something to value for. As families do not have the money to pay rent and drowned in debt which they cannot pay for.

This gives them more income to stay stable allowing them to produce more babies this is another benefit to the society. It prevents miscarriages; It would increase the care and tenderness of mothers towards their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the publick, to their annual profit instead of expenditure (Swift, 1729). This will allow the poor to have as many babies as they wish and it will be their duty to serve their country by providing for the wealthy while making money.

Swift's "Modest Proposal" is not so modest, but a crazy one, his satire especially for his time could/can be influential to convince the people to start consuming babies. At one point Swift/fictional persona states; I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal unless it should be urged, that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom (Swift, 1729). This means if you are against this proposal you are not a true lover of your country. This puts guilt on people's shoulders by making them think as if they are not being patriotic enough to care for their country and urges the citizens of Ireland to understand the severity of the situation, to take action for Ireland to rise above from poverty. To wake up the current situation and the Irish politicians.

Swift's use of extreme irony, satire, and cynicism. As said before Swift's/fictional persona's pamphlets were handed out to the citizen in which were capable of reading. Although the citizen who was able to read this were rich, English colonizers, and Anglo-Irish. Consequently, like the writer, the readers are not offended nor have the reason to be worried for themselves. Which is ironic because why does the proposed interest the English when it has nothing to do with them? In reality, it isn't related to the rich, the wealthy and the English, however, it concerns them due to the benefit they will gain rather than what happens to the Irish. The fictional persona indicates in the final paragraph of the text that it doesn't benefit him at all.

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing (Swift, 1729).

The fictional character in the last line emphasizes that he will not gain anything since he has no children that suits what he says. The tone of this text is cold - chilling as he is not affected by his own proposal, there is a separation, a division. It is reasoned and rationed, -immune to what is said for the sole purpose of benefiting the economy. Nevertheless whatever benefits the economy also benefits him. The fictional character writing on an issue that doesn't even concern him is another example of irony. Would he be writing this if it was concerning his

children? Even though the proposal addresses the Irish people. Swift's audience is like for the people just like him, for the wealthy English.

All in all, Swift is clear and makes fun of the greed of the wealthy, the value of human life, and the corruption of the government in Ireland. His goal to get a reaction from the readers was successful. His proposal is completely ironic that tries to make cannibalism look reasonable -normalize by providing mathematical claims, balanced justifications on the economy, and social influences. His satire approach breaks down the seriousness of the social matter of the poor Irish in Ireland. Swift is not trying to make parents raise their kids for food. Rather he is trying to use his satire to criticize the flaws of the government and the society towards the poor people of Ireland. He proposes this theory so that the English could agree with the lack of morality and injustice they were responsible for in social, political and economic problems.