ENGLISH: WHOSE REALITY

Enduring Love

Statement of Intention/ Written Explanation:

I have chosen to write an expository essay to explore the idea that all humans- not just the insane- are subject to error in judgment. My piece is suitable as an entry in a philosophical journal as many of the ideas explore are deep and perplexing. The purpose of this piece is primarily to open up to the big questions in life and challenge readers to form their own views of this prompt. Hence, the language used is not intended to provoke an emotional response in the reader. An authoritative voice is present to ensure a sense of confidence in my arguments: phrases such as 'it is an inevitable fact of life' and 'it is true that' are definitive statements. This measure tone and formal style is similar in line with Joe's own voice in Enduring Love.

The inspiration of this piece comes from Enduring Love, which offers some food for thought concerning the possibility that what we think we remember and what we believe to be the reality may not always be right.

Further evidence, as relevant to the supporting argument, have been drawn from the scientific world, such as Mendel's model of inheritance, Galileo's opposition, and the nature of memory. This further strengthens the authoritative feel to the prose. The target audience is generally those who share the belief that truth can be obtained from the natural sciences. However, anyone with an interest for debating may enjoy reading this.

Expository Essay:

'We are all susceptible to delusions. You do not have to be insane to have a mistaken perception of reality.'

'All truth is relative'. Whether or not this is the only absolute statement that we can ever be sure of has been a conundrum that has long perplexed mankind. Indeed we live in a 'mist of half-shared, unreliable realties' where 'believing is seeing', as Joe says in Enduring Love. The very fact that six and a half billion people all inhabit this one world surely is testament to the idea that there are at least as many perspectives of reality as there are sea stars in the ocean. Given this, many would agree that not every one of these realities is right. In fact, most of us are likely to have constructions of a reality that are erroneous and even prone to distortions. For one, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of all the details to *any* particular incident since our memory invariably fails us. Furthermore, our view of reality is often skewed to favour our own beliefs, causing us to create our own illusions of the world. Of course, for some, genuine medical conditions result in their perception of their surroundings being warped. However, for most of us, the problem we face is determining just how much of what we take for truth is actually real and how much is a product of our confabulations.

As human beings, it is an inevitable fact of life that, from time to time, we are prone to memory lapses that cause us to form images of reality that exist only in our minds. Unless we have eidetic memory, our visual short term memory will only allow recall for just a brief period of time (from several seconds to a minute as demonstrated by Mills). This memory is only the product of brief, transient patterns of neuronal connections that take place within our brain. Apart from this, there is no way of telling whether one remembers correctly about something or not unless hard evidence, or a second party is available to verify the assertion. Joe, in Enduring Love, demonstrates this point most clearly in his inability to form an accurate picture of the restaurant scene when he is interviewed by a detective. From the mistaken flavour of the sorbet ice cream and an incorrect account of the attacker's respective positions, it becomes apparent to the reader that his sense of memory is susceptible to delusion. This is so despite the fact that he has since carried the reader

with a sense of authenticity in his often scientific narration of events. Memory is not the only factor that compromises our version of reality. Apart from our forgetfulness, we are also given to misinterpreting pieces of data that we may pick up in retrospect of an incident. It is not always the case that we can make sense of what we remember in hindsight as part of the broader scheme of things. It is true then that, like eyewitnesses to a crime, we may never really know what is taking place around us.

Few people would dare contest the fact that our sense of reality is also unreliable because of its subjectivity. We have only to look at the religious institutions that have been set up all over the world to be convinced that belief forms the basis of many views of reality. Our value systems play a crucial role in our everyday decision-making process. For some people, as illustrated through the character Jed, who is uncompromisingly adamant that Joe has an infatuation for him (despite the evidence), there is a pathological explanation for this subjective belief. However, the most usual case is that we are simply fond of clinging on to our own convictions because of our innate need for an explanation for the seemingly inexplicable facts. For example, Jean Logan is consumed by her belief that her husband was having an affair before the accident with no other rationale other than because of her need for a reasonable explanation for his death. Such is her conviction that she can only seem to find more evidence to validate her hypothesis – from the car doors being open to the picnic in the car. 'The outlines of a theory' has justified her shutting her ears to any other alternative of reality. In this way, she establishes herself as being open to delusions.

It is also true in the scientific community that, when we are completely focused on a single mindset, we find ourselves believing in our own incontrovertibility and as such closing our eyes to everything else. History has shown this in biology from the response of Gregor Mendel's results of heredity. In the early 19th century, scientists had been so preoccupied in looking to Darwin's new theory of Evolution which explained for the differences between species, that they overlooked and even ignored the truth that had been uncovered by Mendel. Though Mendel's idea of a pair of factors being inherited from generation to generation was proved later to be accurate, it was largely dismissed by others who had simply set their minds on other things at the time. This shows that even the most educated of thinkers are liable to making errors of judgment. Furthermore, consider Galileo Galilei's view of a heliocentric model of the solar system. At that time, it was he who was considered to have an aberrant view of reality because he opposed the arguments of other great thinkers such as Aristotle (the generally accepted view was the heliocentric model that supposed the Earth to be central to space). However, when this perception was finally scrapped, it became obvious that, in this case, the majority- not the minority- was wrong. A consensus reality, therefore, does not necessarily equate to undeniable reality. Thus, when we consider this, it becomes even more likely that we do not have to be insane to be profoundly infallible.

Undoubtedly, every single one of us are the possessors of our own reality. Because of our human predisposition to subjectivity, we cannot help it when we are mistaken about something. It is not until later that we might realize our own errors and be sure that we are wrong. One thing that we can be certain is that a complete, total view of reality is inaccessible to any one person.