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## RELATION OF LITERATURE TO LIFE

There is an intimate, deep, connection between literature and life. It is, in fact, life which is the subject matter of literature. Life provides the raw material on which literature imposes, establishes, an artistic form. Literature, as we defined in the previous section, is the communication of the writer's experience of life. But this connection between literature and life is not so simple as it seems. This problem has been discussed by some of the greatest literary critics of the world, and their conclusions have been sometimes contradictory.

Plato, the great Greek philosopher, was the first to give a serious thought to this problem—the relation of literature to life. In his discussions he referred mainly to poetry, but what he said about poetry can be equally applied to literature as a whole. He regarded poetry as a mere, small, "imitation" of life, and thus he condemned, disapproved, the poets. His opposition to poetry was based on his theory of knowledge. According to him, true reality consists, in the *Ideas* of things, of which individual objects are but reflections or imitations. For example, when we say a *black dog, a good dog, a lame dog* etc., we are comparing the dog which we actually see with the *ideal* dog, our *idea* of the dog, which is the true, unchanging reality, while the dogs which we name as *black, good, lame* etc. are mere reflections and imitations of that reality. Thus the poet, who imitates those objects which are themselves imitations of reality, is obviously producing something, which is still farther removed from ultimate reality. Plato developed this argument first with reference to the painter. Painting is an imitation of a specific object or group of objects, and if it is nothing but that, if reality lies not in individual objects but in general ideas or forms, then, from the point of view of the philosopher, whose main interest is in apprehending reality, the painter is not doing anything particularly valuable. Just as the painter only imitates what he sees and does not know how to make or to use what he sees (he could paint a bed, but not make it), so the poet imitates reality without necessarily understanding it. Poetry or literature as a whole is an imitation of imitation and thus twice removed from truth.

There is an obvious error in Plato's reasoning. Being too much of a philosopher and moralist, he could not see clearly the relation between literature and life. He is right when he says that the poet produces something which is less than reality it purports to represent, but he does not perceive that he also, creates something more than reality. This error was corrected by Plato's pupil, Aristotle. In his *Poetics* he undertook, took a charge, to examine the nature and qualities of imaginative literature with a view to demonstrating that it is true, and not false as Plato had shown it. He agreed with Plato that poetry is an imitation of reality, but according to him, this imitation is the objective representation of life in literature or, in other words, the imaginative reconstruction of life. Poetry is thus not connected with the outside world in the simple and direct fashion, form, supposed by Plato. The poet first derives an inspiration from the world by the power of his imagination; the art of poetry then imitates this imaginative inspiration in language. The art of poetry or literature as a whole exists to give shape and substance to a certain kind of imaginative impulse, thought; the existence of the art implies, signifies, the existence of the impulse. Now it is just possible to imagine life exactly as it is; but the exciting thing is to imagine life as it might be, and it is then that imagination becomes an impulse capable of inspiring poetry.

# The Relation Of Literature To Life

**TD Snyder**



## **The Relation Of Literature To Life:**

## **The Relation Of Literature To Life** Book Review: Unveiling the Power of Words

In a global driven by information and connectivity, the power of words has be much more evident than ever. They have the ability to inspire, provoke, and ignite change. Such may be the essence of the book **The Relation Of Literature To Life**, a literary masterpiece that delves deep in to the significance of words and their effect on our lives. Written by a renowned author, this captivating work takes readers on a transformative journey, unraveling the secrets and potential behind every word. In this review, we shall explore the book is key themes, examine its writing style, and analyze its overall affect readers.

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