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SOCRATIC FOUNDATIONS IN A. CONAN DOYLE'S WRITINGS

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The article describes the role of Socratic foundations in Arthur Conan Doyle's writings and discusses the ethical questions of justice and virtue in his works.

Arthur Conan Doyle is known to be the founder of the British trend in detective writing. He didn't mean to be a detective author, but his life situation pushed him to accept an offer to write a detective story, which turned out to be a great success. Readers wanted to have more and more stories written by C. Doyle. What attracted them to his detective books? Obviously his way to follow the principle of justice in his presentation of all investigations carried out by Holmes. But the issue of justice goes back to Socrates's thinking.

Socrates lived from 469 to 399 bc. He was clearly a charismatic figure with a somewhat eccentric lifestyle. Accepting the poverty it entailed, he appears to have spent all his time in unpaid discussion with whomever would join with him which included many of the better off, hence more leisured, young men of Athens. These included Plato, whose admiration for Socrates motivated the career and writings which immortalized both of them.

Socrates concentrated on ethical questions about justice and virtue. "How should I live?" is sometimes called "the Socratic question". He constantly probed whether his fellow Athenians really understood what was involved in these matters. And very often he was not certain that they did. Nor was he always sure that he understood it himself – but then he didn't claim to [1].

The fact that Socrates spent all his life in endless discussions and hot conversations with his opponents is very important. Plato tried his best to follow the Socratic way of interpreting things. All his (Plato's) writings took the form of dialogues. Through him the wide audience of educational and school world became very well familiar with the form. Conan Doyle borrowed this form of Socratic penetration into the heart of the matter and used it in his books. Dr. Watson became a regular opponent and participant of Holmes' investigations helping not so much him but the readers to concentrate and understand all implications of each case carried out by Holmes.

They may not agree with everything Socrates says – for instance, many readers will feel that his view of the claims that the state can properly make on the individual are exaggerated – but virtually all the points made will be perfectly familiar to anyone who has ever had to think about a difficult decision.

Socrates used to say that the opinion of the majority was not important. We have to admit that so did Conan Doyle. Such a detective appears for the first time in the British literature. He carries out his investigations having the Socratic perspective of justice in his mind. This feature of Conan Doyle attracts readers.

Heather Worthington in the article "The Definitive Detective" says: «Doyle's detective is both an end point in the development of crime fiction and a starting point: crime fiction in the twentieth and twenty - first centuries would not be the same without him» [2, p. 26-27].

Conan Doyle, in his book "Through the Magic Door", named the writers who played an important role in his creative life. Among them are: V. Scott, R. L. Stevenson, Alexandre Dumas.

Walter Scott impressed Conan Doyle by his «brevity, expressiveness, simplicity»; From E. Poe Doyle borrowed expressiveness, novelty, brevity. He considered Poe «the supreme original short story writer of all time. To him must be ascribed the monstrous progeny of writers on the detection of crime» [3].

Here is what Conan Doyle said about Stevenson: «He wrote, in my judgment, two masterpieces in his life, and each of them is essentially a short story, though the one happened to be published as a volume. The one is "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde", which, whether you take it as a vivid narrative or as a wonderfully deep and true allegory, is a supremely fine bit of work. The other story of my choice would be "The Pavilion on the Links" – the very model of dramatic narrative. After all, however, the main characteristic of Stevenson is his curious instinct for saying in the briefest space just those few words which stamp the impression upon the reader's mind. He will make you see a thing more clearly than you would probably have done had your eyes actually rested upon it» [3].

Linguistics, literature, philology

Martin Priestman tried to answer the question of «Why detectives about Sherlock Holmes became so popular in comparison with other books of this genre?» in his article «Crime fiction»: «Why, then, was Sherlock Holmes so much more successful than other scientific detectives? There are certainly literary reasons. Conventional literary history, which views earlier detective fiction as a series of anticipations of Doyle, can be turned on its head to argue that the elements of the Sherlock Holmes character and stories are skilfully selected from tried and tested elements in earlier sensational novelists and story writers. But that is far from accounting for the nerve of Doyle's writing, the ingenuity of the stories and the skill and economy of their construction. The problem-setting and solving structure provides fundamental narrative satisfactions, but, as Stephen Knight has shown, at least in the two principal collections, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Doyle plays enough variation on the pattern to keep it constantly fresh» [4, p. 48].

Summing up what has been said above we claim that C. Doyle's writing became very popular for literary reasons of course..But our idea is that Socratic foundations also have a role to play in the immense popularity of Conan Doyle's writings. They came to the reader through ingenuity and the skill of the author.

Justice since Socrates has become point number one in all-Western philosophy. People of all groups and social standing started to respond to it as readily as they used to do it in antiquity at the time of Socrates. The constant debates about it between Holmes and Watson reflected the dialogical form of the famous representations of Socratic dialogues by Plato. That was the form through which the issue of justice became widely known to many generations of students and when it was restored in Conan Doyle's writings it helped decisively the readers of all ages and social groups to take in the ideas put forward by Holmes. They responded to Holmes and to the author as sincerely as the participants of Socratic debates had done many centuries ago.

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