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The Role of Honesty in The Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* play became a highlight of falsity in upper-class society. Although the times of Queen Victoria passed long ago, this major theme is still relevant even today. Honesty is worth more than lies, which is what the author proves in his play.

To begin with, keeping up the false facade is an incredibly complicated task. Jack and Algernon confirm the complexity of being a "bunburyist" to deceive Lady Bracknell, Gwendolen Fairfax, and others. Initially, both gentlemen started this scam to avoid the burden of duties. However, the joke went too far when noble ladies fell in love with the fake personas. At this point, even the tricksters realized that getting away with lies was no longer possible.

Secondly, the hypocritical tendencies displayed in the play connect to the problem of lying to yourself. Paradoxically, the main characters behaved as if they originated from the lower classes. In reality, their wealth was enough to live comfortably without a masquerade. The image of a respectable, serious person was just an empty shell, called to fight men's insecurities. This way, Wilde makes fun of strict societal rules.

Next, the writer brings up the role of honesty in romantic relationships. Even if a scammer puts up with lying to themselves, receiving love from others for non-existent traits is a burden. For instance, Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew confessed their feelings to fictional people, so true Algernon and Jack were unknown to them. Luckily for the dandies, both ladies



eventually accepted their real personas. Nonetheless, the relationships started with blatant lies, and they could fall apart in the nick of time.

Finally, the role of honesty in the play has a lot to do with a reputation in society. While characters like Lady Bracknell and Miss Prism maintained their image through exemplary behavior, Jack or Algernon only pretended to act properly. The “bunburyists” walked on thin ice the whole time because the disclosure would be a catastrophe for their names. Their name was hardly spotless before the scam, but such pretense could only add to their notoriety. Indeed, for an aristocratic person, a scandal of this kind is detrimental.

In the long run, the main characters failed to hide their falsity: they were ready to risk everything to keep a good image in other people’s eyes. Via Wilde’s witty writing style, the audience gets proof that honesty is worth more than deception. A noble person dares to open up their real selves to others, even if facing criticism. This sincere and studied triviality passes like a red thread through the play. The main characters learn this universal truth by trial and error and finally reach their happy endings.



Work Cited

Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance Of Being Earnest*. ICON Group, 2006.

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