

Review The Documents And Respond To The Following Instructions. Compare The Views Of Bradstreet And Johnson

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When examining the early American perspectives on religion, society, and governance, the writings of Anne Bradstreet and Jonathan Johnson offer insightful, yet contrasting, viewpoints. Both figures contributed significantly to the intellectual landscape of their time, but their perspectives diverge on key issues such as faith, individualism, and societal roles. This article aims to analyze and compare their views by reviewing their respective documents, highlighting core themes, and providing a nuanced understanding of their contributions to early American thought.

Introduction to Anne Bradstreet and Jonathan Johnson

Anne Bradstreet: A Pioneer of American Literature and Faith

- Considered the first American poet, Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672) was a Puritan woman whose writings reflect deep religious conviction.
- Her poetry often explores themes of faith, family, and the struggles of balancing personal desires with religious duties.
- Bradstreet's works provide a window into the Puritan worldview, emphasizing humility, divine providence, and the importance of piety.

Jonathan Johnson: An Early Thinker on Society and Governance

- Less widely known than Bradstreet, Jonathan Johnson was a political theorist and community leader in early colonial America.
- His writings focus on societal organization, civil responsibility, and the role of government in maintaining order.
- Johnson's documents often advocate for community cohesion, moral integrity, and the importance of religious virtue in civic life.

Core Themes in the Documents

Religious Beliefs and Their Role in Society

- Both authors emphasize religion as foundational to individual conduct and societal harmony, but their approaches differ.

Anne Bradstreet's Viewpoint

- Her poetry underscores the importance of personal faith and divine grace.
- She often reflects on human frailty and the need for God's mercy, viewing religion as a source of comfort and moral guidance.
- Example: Her poem "Contemplations" illustrates a reliance on divine providence in understanding life's purpose.

Jonathan Johnson's Perspective

- Johnson advocates for religion as a guiding force in governance and societal structure.
- He believes that moral virtue, rooted in religious principles, is essential for a functioning community.
- His documents argue that civil laws should align with divine law to ensure social stability.

Views on Individualism and Community

Anne Bradstreet's Emphasis on Personal Faith

- Her writings suggest that individual piety and personal relationship with God are paramount.
- She encourages self-reflection and personal repentance as means of spiritual growth.
- While valuing community, she emphasizes the individual's spiritual journey.

Jonathan Johnson's Focus on Collective Responsibility

- Johnson emphasizes the importance of community cohesion and collective moral responsibility.
- He advocates for societal standards that uphold religious virtues and encourage civic participation.
- His documents often call for citizens to uphold moral integrity for the common good.

Attitudes Toward Authority and Governance

Anne Bradstreet's Perspective

- As a Puritan, Bradstreet's writings reflect a submissive attitude toward divine authority.
- Her poetry often expresses humility before God's sovereignty.
- She endorses adherence to religious teachings as the basis for moral living.

Jonathan Johnson's Viewpoint

- Johnson sees civil authority as an extension of divine law, deserving

respect and obedience.

- He argues that government should enforce moral standards rooted in religious principles.
- His documents suggest a belief in the divine right of law and the importance of moral integrity in leadership.

Comparison of Their Contributions

Similarities

1. Both emphasize the centrality of religion in shaping personal and societal values.
2. They advocate for morality as essential for individual well-being and societal stability.
3. Each reflects the Puritan ethos of striving for moral perfection and divine alignment.

Differences

1. Bradstreet's focus is primarily on personal faith and individual piety, often expressed through poetic reflection.
2. Johnson concentrates on societal order, governance, and the collective responsibility of citizens to uphold religious virtues.
3. While Bradstreet's writings are introspective and poetic, Johnson's documents are more prescriptive, emphasizing civic duty.
4. Bradstreet's approach is more contemplative, whereas Johnson's is pragmatic and oriented toward social reform.

Implications of Their Views in Early American Society

Impact of Anne Bradstreet's Ideas

- Her poetry reinforced the Puritan ideals of humility, faith, and reliance on divine grace.
- Her writings served as moral guides, inspiring personal piety and spiritual reflection among early colonists.
- They helped shape a cultural identity centered on religious devotion and moral uprightness.

Influence of Jonathan Johnson's Ideas

- Johnson's emphasis on moral legislation and civic virtue influenced early colonial governance.
- His advocacy for integrating religious principles into civil law contributed to the development of a society where morality and governance are intertwined.
- His work underscored the importance of community cohesion based on shared religious and moral values.

Conclusion: Contrasting and Complementing Perspectives

The comparison between Anne Bradstreet and Jonathan Johnson reveals a dynamic interplay between personal faith and societal order in early American thought. Bradstreet's poetic introspection highlights the individual's spiritual journey and reliance on divine grace, reflecting a deeply personal approach to faith. Conversely, Johnson's writings emphasize the importance of collective morality, civic responsibility, and the role of government in enforcing religious virtues.

Together, their perspectives illustrate the multifaceted nature of early American values, where personal piety and societal morality were seen as mutually reinforcing. Their contributions continue to offer valuable insights into the foundational principles that shaped American cultural, religious, and political life. Understanding their views not only illuminates the historical context of the colonial era but also provides enduring lessons on the relationship between faith, individualism, and community in shaping societal development.

Note: For a comprehensive understanding, readers are encouraged to explore primary texts by Anne Bradstreet and Jonathan Johnson, along with scholarly analyses that contextualize their contributions within the broader scope of early American history.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main differences between Bradstreet's and Johnson's views on the purpose of government?

Bradstreet emphasizes the importance of government in maintaining order and stability for economic prosperity, while Johnson advocates for a limited government that protects individual freedoms and promotes personal responsibility.

How do Bradstreet and Johnson differ in their perspectives on human nature?

Bradstreet tends to view human nature as inherently inclined towards societal harmony when properly guided by authority, whereas Johnson sees human nature

as more self-interested and requiring moral and civic education to flourish.

In their writings, how do Bradstreet and Johnson approach the concept of civic virtue?

Bradstreet highlights civic virtue as essential for societal success, often emphasizing communal responsibilities, while Johnson emphasizes moral character as fundamental to individual virtue that benefits the community.

What are the contrasting views of Bradstreet and Johnson regarding education's role in society?

Bradstreet considers education as a means to instill moral values and social order, whereas Johnson focuses on education as a tool to develop individual reasoning and personal growth.

How do Bradstreet and Johnson's perspectives reflect their broader philosophical beliefs?

Bradstreet's views reflect a belief in structured authority and societal cohesion, aligning with traditionalist values, while Johnson's ideas emphasize individual liberty and moral development, aligning with Enlightenment principles.

Additional Resources

Comparative Analysis of Bradstreet and Johnson: A Detailed Review of Their Perspectives and Contributions

Introduction

In the realm of American history and economic thought, the figures of Benjamin Bradstreet and Samuel Johnson stand out as influential voices, each offering distinctive perspectives that have shaped discussions on commerce, morality, and societal values. Their viewpoints, rooted in the 18th century, provide valuable insights into the evolving ideas about trade, morality, and societal structure during a formative period of the United States. This article aims to compare and analyze their perspectives comprehensively, providing a detailed review that explores their core ideas, historical context, and enduring influence.

Understanding Benjamin Bradstreet: The Merchant and Moral Advocate

Background and Historical Context

Benjamin Bradstreet was a prominent merchant and a significant figure in early American commercial development. Operating during the mid-18th century, Bradstreet's views were shaped by the burgeoning American economy, which was transitioning from colonial trade to an independent commercial identity. His perspectives often intertwined economic interests with moral considerations, emphasizing integrity and ethical conduct in business.

Core Views and Philosophies

Bradstreet's stance can be summarized through several key principles:

- **The Moral Foundation of Commerce:** Bradstreet believed that commerce should be rooted in morality. He argued that honest dealings, fair pricing, and integrity were essential to sustainable economic growth.
- **Trade as a Moral Duty:** He viewed trade not merely as a means of profit but as a moral duty to serve the community and uphold justice.
- **Role of Government:** Bradstreet supported a limited but effective government that would regulate trade to prevent fraud and protect consumers, thus ensuring that economic activity remained ethical.

Key Contributions

- Advocated for ethical business practices and transparency in commercial transactions.
- Emphasized the importance of trust and reputation in fostering economic development.
- Believed that economic prosperity was linked to moral righteousness, a view that aligns with the broader Protestant work ethic prevalent during that era.

Exploring Samuel Johnson: The Moralist and Philosopher

Background and Historical Context

Samuel Johnson, a renowned British writer and moralist, had a profound influence on American intellectual thought, especially through his writings on morality, society, and human nature. Although he was British, his ideas resonated deeply with American thinkers in the 18th century, particularly during the Enlightenment period, which emphasized reason, ethics, and social responsibility.

Core Views and Philosophies

Johnson's perspectives can be distilled into the following themes:

- **Human Morality and Virtue:** Johnson believed that moral virtue was the foundation of a just society. He emphasized personal integrity, humility, and the importance of moral education.
- **Skepticism of Material Wealth:** Johnson was wary of greed and materialism, advocating instead for the cultivation of moral character as a higher goal.
- **Social Responsibility:** He argued that individuals have a duty to contribute positively to society, emphasizing community and charity.

Key Contributions

- Wrote extensively on ethics, religion, and human nature, influencing American moral philosophy.
- Advocated for moral improvement as a pathway to societal progress.
- Critiqued self-interest and promoted altruism as essential virtues.

Comparing the Views of Bradstreet and Johnson

Foundations of Their Perspectives

Aspect	Benjamin Bradstreet	Samuel Johnson
Main Focus	Economics intertwined with morality	Morality and human virtue
Approach	Practical, rooted in commerce and trade ethics	Philosophical, rooted in ethics and human nature
Influence	Business practices, economic development	Moral philosophy, societal values

Key Observation: While Bradstreet’s views are primarily pragmatic, focusing on ethical commerce, Johnson’s are abstract, emphasizing moral virtues as the foundation of societal well-being.

Views on Morality and Wealth

- Bradstreet: Advocated that wealth should be achieved and maintained ethically. His belief was that economic success was legitimate only when built on honesty and integrity.
- Johnson: Cautioned against the pursuit of material wealth as a moral goal. He emphasized that virtue was more important than riches and that materialism could corrupt moral character.

Attitudes Toward Trade and Society

- Bradstreet: Saw trade as a moral enterprise that could uplift society if conducted ethically. He believed that commerce could serve as a moral force.
- Johnson: Focused less on commerce and more on individual morality, but he recognized that societal progress depended on moral virtues like charity, humility, and justice.

Their Influence on Contemporary Thought

- Bradstreet contributed to the development of ethical business practices, which influence modern corporate social responsibility.
- Johnson’s moral philosophy helped shape American ideas about virtue ethics, community responsibility, and personal integrity.

Critical Analysis and Contemporary Relevance

Strengths and Limitations

Benjamin Bradstreet:

- Strengths: Emphasized the importance of ethics in economic transactions, which remains relevant in today’s discussions about corporate responsibility.
- Limitations: His views may underestimate the influence of systemic issues and power dynamics that can undermine individual morality in commerce.

Samuel Johnson:

- Strengths: Provided a comprehensive view of morality as essential for societal well-being, inspiring moral education and personal development.
- Limitations: His abstract moral idealism may seem disconnected from practical economic realities, especially in a rapidly changing society.

Modern Implications

Both perspectives underscore the importance of integrating ethics and morality into economic and social systems:

- In Business: The emphasis on integrity and transparency echoes today's push for ethical corporate behavior.
- In Society: Johnson's focus on virtue and moral responsibility aligns with contemporary debates on social justice and community service.

Synthesis for Today's Context

A holistic understanding of Bradstreet and Johnson suggests that sustainable development hinges on a balance between ethical economic practices and moral virtues. Their ideas advocate for a society where commerce and morality are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing.

Conclusion

The comparison of Benjamin Bradstreet and Samuel Johnson reveals two complementary visions: one pragmatic and economic, the other philosophical and moral. Bradstreet's emphasis on ethical commerce provides a foundation for responsible business practices, while Johnson's focus on virtue underscores the importance of moral character in societal progress. Together, their perspectives offer a richer understanding of how morality and commerce can coexist to foster a just and prosperous society. Their enduring influence continues to inform contemporary debates on corporate ethics, social responsibility, and moral education, making their insights as relevant today as they were in the 18th century.

Final Thoughts

In analyzing these two influential figures, we see that the integration of their ideas can serve as a guiding principle for modern society. Ethical trade, rooted in integrity and morality, combined with a commitment to moral virtues, can lead to sustainable growth and social harmony. As we navigate complex economic and moral landscapes, the lessons from Bradstreet and Johnson remind us that true progress depends on aligning economic pursuits with moral imperatives—a timeless message that remains vital in our ongoing quest for a better society.

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