

ESSAY ON POPE  
OR GEMS ARE WHERE YOU FIND THEM.

**Epistle I**

Steffel said, "Who will do Pope's *Essay on Man*?"  
Like a fool I jumped up and said, "I think I can!"  
Much to my horror when I got home  
The "essay" assigned was really a poem.  
Pope's 'sposed to be an Enlightenment thinker  
But as an essay writer he's really a stinker.  
Now I'm assigned on Pope, to write an "essay"  
So if I wrote a poem, then what could Vlad say?

Pope was spokesman in verse for the Age of Reason  
While his Roman religion was practically treason  
An Englishman poet from seventeen thirty four  
Modern people might think that sounds like a bore  
But people loved his paradox, satire, and wit  
So much that he made a living off it.  
Pope wanted to go back to classical times  
Combined with current philosophical beliefs in  
rhymes.<sup>1</sup>  
Nature and God- How could man fit in?  
This problem Pope wanted to try to spin.

While writing 'bout weeds, trees, gardens, and  
flow'rs  
Reading all this could go on for hours.  
Pope thought of man's place in the whole universe  
The Presumptuous Man! What could be worse?  
To know everything, man never will do  
And why in the world should God want us to?<sup>2</sup>  
A natural religion was Pope's theism  
Commonly referred to as a statement of deism<sup>3</sup>  
Which tells us that man, and nature, and God  
Go together as one, like peas in a pod.

**Epistle II**

We are part of a system we cannot comprehend  
Are we simply part of God's means to and end?  
Among creatures on earth we suppose we are wise  
But we know not our purpose in God's perfect eyes.  
Nature includes all living things, planets, stars, and  
seasons

But man alone has been blessed with reason.<sup>4</sup>  
Pope says, "All are parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul."  
Regarding nature we should learn as much as we can  
Pope says, "The proper study of Mankind is Man."<sup>5</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pope admired the ancient classical thinkers and wanted to take their approach and incorporate it with all of the new discoveries and ideas of his time.

<sup>2</sup> It is clear that Pope firmly believed in God. He saw no conflict between man's belief in God and his pursuit of knowledge as long as man realized that there are things that man is not supposed to know. This is very much in the spirit of the dualism of Descartes.

<sup>3</sup> According to the introduction, another name for deism is natural religion. Pope felt that man was a part of God's plan and only God knew what the plan was. He says "Man's as perfect as he ought." We are the way God made us because this is how God wants us to be.

<sup>4</sup> Pope admires the new ideas of the Enlightenment, but at the same time wonders if man would be better off in a totally natural state without science or religion.

<sup>5</sup> The student/poet/author of this assignment hopes that he has gotten away with his feeble attempt at creativity and begs the instructor's indulgence for not following the format of this assignment.

—Gary Buechel