

Name

Instructor

Course

Date

The Orrery and the Rotunda

Analysis of Philosopher's Lecture on the Orrery

The Orrery is a mechanical model that displays the motion of planets and their moons. James Ferguson who designed astronomical clocks and models of the Solar System used in his lectures named the orrery after the Earl of Orrery who was considered a genius inventor. It is apparent that Wright attended most of Ferguson's lectures and must have studied the orrery to find out more about how it operated. He had significant knowledge and experience gathered from the numerous visits he made to the museum where he gained an understanding of how astronomical models work. He also took note of the details of the tools and instruments used in astronomic scientific studies. These approaches are clearly shown in his splendid paintings (Pether and Joseph 5). The lecture is primarily about the lamp placed to illustrate the sun. It demonstrates the eclipses of the sun and the movements of planets around the sun. This visual representation helps in revealing the scientific utilization of lighting in the paintings.

The artist did not paint a specific meeting place and the characters are portrayed as having inanimate features. Isaac Newton dominates the audience, and he is the only character in the painting recognizable as an actual person. Wright focuses on Newton's physical features that can be easily seen by the audience. In the article *Principia*, Newton unified the celestial and terrestrial worlds by demonstrating that heavenly bodies fell freely on Earth (Pether and Joseph

5). He also observed that the heavenly bodies all obeyed the same order of universal gravity. The universe is then presented as an organized and harmonious system.

The Rotunda at the University of Virginia

The Rotunda is a crowning architectural achievement at the University of Virginia that embodies the spirit of an academic village. The structure and the statue of Thomas Jefferson can be seen in the northern part of the college. The Rotunda's image was inspired by the Pantheon in Rome based on its structural design that is similar to the building of the University. The Pantheon is a temple devoted to pagan Roman gods that demonstrates how the Roman architects utilized the ideas of the classical Greek philosophers (Patton and Sallie 6). This can be seen in how the Greek-inspired front of the building combined with spectacular modern elements makes it a pantheon (Pether and Joseph 7).

A unique feature of the Pantheon that is similar to the Rotunda is the dome of the building that has been neatly hidden away. It reveals the culture and traditions of the Romans to the travelers. The dome was made through inventions by the Romans and opened into an interior space in the building. The Rotunda serves no religious function, unlike the Pantheon, but it can be thought of as a "temple of learning." While the Pantheon was devoted to the gods, the Rotunda is devoted to learning. The Rotunda is a multistoried building illuminated by some windows and circumnavigating the dome (Patton and Sallie 8). It is mainly used for bringing in the aspect of religion into secular education in the university because Jefferson wanted to introduce his religious background in academia.

Works Cited

Patton, John Shelton, and Sallie J. Doswell. *The University of Virginia: Glimpses of Its Past and Present*. JP Bell Company, Printers, 1900.

Pether, William, and Joseph Wright. *A Philosopher Giving a Lecture on the Orrery*. 1768.