

Understanding human-nature's innate orientation towards resentment as depicted in "The Road not Taken" by Robert Frost

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research paper is to delve into the feelings of regret and remorse in relation to making a choice as depicted in the poem "The Road not Taken" by Robert Frost. Frost sets the tone for the theme of regret from the very beginning of the poem, with the speaker expressing remorse for not being able to traverse both the paths. Throughout the work, the speaker ponders over the road he chose and contemplates the possibilities of what could have been had he taken the other path. Frost employs powerful imagery to create a nostalgic tone that reinforces the speaker's feelings of discontentment. Frost acknowledges the challenge of making decisions and the natural sense of loss that accompanies any choice. As a deeply personal piece that speaks to the universal human experience.

Keywords - Discontentment, Longing, Regret, Choice and Consequence.

Introduction

Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" can be related to the idea that humans are innately oriented to be discontent with their present reality. The poem's narrator, faced with two paths in the woods, must make a choice between the two. Despite the fact that the two paths appear equally worn out and "about the same," the narrator expresses regret that he cannot take both the paths, suggesting a sense of dissatisfaction with his decision. The poem can be read as a metaphor for the human experience, in which we are

constantly faced with choices about which path to take in life. The idea that we can only choose one path, while the other path remains unexplored, creates a sense of longing for what might have been. Moreover, the idea that the narrator will "sigh" in the future about his decision suggests that he will continue to feel this discontentment long after he has made his choice. In this way, "The Road Not Taken" can be seen as a reflection of the human tendency to always wonder what might have been and accompanying feelings of regret about the choices we make. The poem encourages us to reflect on the choices we make and to recognize that we cannot always have it all, while also acknowledging the beauty and value of the paths we do choose.

Discussion

Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" is a powerful meditation on the theme of regret. Throughout the poem, the speaker reflects on a moment in his past when he had to make a choice and contemplates what might have been if he had made a different decision. This theme of regret is central to the poem's meaning and resonates deeply with readers, who grapple with the consequences of their own choices since time immemorial. The opening lines of the poem set the stage for its theme. The speaker describes coming to a fork in the road and being unable to decide which path to take, saying

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both" (Poetry Foundation)

The word "sorry" suggests a sense of regret or sorrow at having to choose between two equally attractive options. The speaker is immediately presented with a dilemma, one that will define the rest of his life. As the speaker continues down the path he has chosen, he reflects on the path he did not take and wonders what might have been. He says,

"And both that morning equally lay / In leaves no step had trodden black" (Poetry Foundation)

The word "both" emphasizes the idea that the two paths were equally attractive, while the phrase "leaves no step had trodden black" suggests that neither path had been taken before. This underscores the sense of uncertainty and potential regret that the speaker will experience. As the poem progresses, the speaker imagines himself looking back on this moment in the future and wonders how he will feel about the choice he made that day. He says,

"I shall be telling this with a sigh / Somewhere ages and ages hence" (Poetry Foundation)

The word "sigh" suggests a sense of wistfulness, as if the speaker will always wonder what might have happened if he had made a different choice. This is further emphasized by the phrase "ages and ages hence," which suggests that the speaker will be thinking about this moment for a long time.

Throughout the poem, Frost uses vivid imagery to convey the sense of longing and regret that the speaker feels. He describes the paths as "winding" and "grassy," suggesting a sense of beauty and potential that is present in both options. The use of color imagery is also significant, as the "yellow wood" and "leaves no step had trodden black" suggest a sense of newness and possibility. All of these elements contribute to the sense of regret that the speaker feels, as he contemplates what might have been if he had made a different choice. It is worth noting that the poem is not simply a meditation on regret, but also on the nature of choice itself. The speaker acknowledges that "way leads on to way" and that once a choice is made, it is unlikely that he will be able to go back and take the other path.

He says, "And sorry I could not travel both / And be one traveler" (Poetry Foundation)

This underscores the sense of loss and regret that the speaker feels, as he contemplates the paths not taken. It also suggests that the act of making a choice is inherently painful,

as it involves giving up something that could have been. One of the most powerful aspects of "The Road Not Taken" is that it is a deeply personal poem that speaks to the universal human experience. Frost's depiction of the speaker's sense of regret is something that everyone can relate to, as we all have moments in our lives when we wonder what might have been if we had made a different choice. The poem reminds us that our choices have consequences and that we must live with the choices we make, even if we come to regret them later in life.

One of the most striking aspects of the poem is how it captures the tension between the speaker's regret and his acceptance of his choices. While the speaker recognizes the value of the path he chose, he cannot help but wonder about the road not taken. This is captured in the poem's final lines, in which the speaker says,

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference" (Poetry Foundation)

The phrase "I took the one less traveled by" is often misinterpreted as a celebration of the speaker's individualism, but the poem's final lines are more nuanced than that. The phrase "I took the one less traveled by" is immediately followed by the words "And that has made all the difference," which suggest that the speaker recognizes that his choice has consequences. The line "I shall be telling this with a sigh / Somewhere ages and ages hence" underscores the sense of regret that the speaker feels, even as he accepts the path he chose.

"The Road Not Taken" is a powerful poem about the choices we make in life and the consequences that come with those choices, which are often irreversible (Alam and Mitu). It is a meditation on the nature of regret and the tension between the acceptance of one's choices and the sense of loss that comes with them. Frost captures the beauty and possibility of the paths not taken, while also recognizing the value of the path chosen. The poem speaks to that experience in a profound way. In life, we are constantly faced with choices, some big and some small. Sometimes, we make a choice that leads us down

a certain path, and we may wonder what might have happened if we had made a different decision. We may experience feelings of regret, sorrow, or even anger at ourselves for the choices we have made.

However, it is important to remember that regret is a natural part of the human experience. It is a sign that we are growing and learning from our mistakes, and that we are aware of the consequences of our actions. Regret can be a powerful motivator to make better choices in the future and to strive to live a life that is aligned with our values and goals. "The Road Not Taken" also reminds us that sometimes, there is no easy choice to make. The speaker in the poem is presented with two equally attractive paths, and he must choose one knowing that he will never be able to go back and take the other. This is a difficult decision to make, but it is also a reminder that sometimes, we must take risks and make difficult choices in order to grow and achieve our goals. Ultimately, "The Road Not Taken" is a powerful meditation on the human experience and the choices we make in life. It reminds us that our choices have consequences and that we must be aware of the potential for regret. However, it also encourages us to take risks, make difficult choices, and strive for life that is aligned with our values.

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