

CSS 2022 Precis and Composition:

Precis:

The fear of human beings when faced with the mysteries of life and their weakness by comparison with the vastness of nature created in them a need to communicate with the divine, with the superior powers which they believed regulated the universe and determined their own fates. Knowledge of wishes of the gods was always a sure guide for human behavior. In ancient Greece, the precise nature of these wishes was 'decoded' by the art of giving oracles, practiced by soothsayers who had the gift of understanding the signs or signals sent by the gods.

The soothsayers uttered their oracles by interpreting flashes of lightning, rolls of thunder or the flights of certain birds of prey (omens); alternatively, they might observe the direction in which the fire burned when a sacrifice was made, examine the entrails of animals which had just been sacrificed, or base judgments on the sacrificial beast's willingness to approach the altar. The interpretation of dreams was popular too, and so was palmistry. The most notable soothsayers of ancient Greece were Tiresias, Calchas, Helenus, Amphiaraus and Cassandra.

However, there were abundant instances in which the gods did not manifest themselves to the faithful in the forms of signs but spoke directly to an intermediate who for a short time was overcome by a 'divine mania' and transcended his own human essence. Here the prophet- or more usually the prophetess- entered a state of ecstasy in which he or she delivered the message from the gods to the suppliants.

These practices for foreseeing the future were the basis on which the ancient Greek oracles operated. Each oracle was located within a properly-organized sanctuary and was directly associated with one or other of the gods. Apollo was the archetypal soothsayer for the Greeks, the god who was responsible for conveying to mortals the decisions pronounced by Zeus. The most important of all the oracles, that at the Delphi, delivered the messages with the intervention of Apollo, while the oldest that of Dodona, functioned with the assistance of Zeus.

Title: Understanding Divine's Will: Oracles in Ancient Greece

Human beings feel the need to turn to divine for guidance when faced with difficulties of life. In ancient Greece, the soothsayers decoded the knowledge of gods' wishes for people through giving oracles. During the oracles, the soothsayers interpreted gods' signals by examining the flashes of light, wind direction and behaviour of sacrificed animal. At times, gods spoke directly through intermediaries in a state of divine ~~es~~ ecstasy. Apollo, the archetypal soothsayer, conveyed Zeus' decisions to people. The oracle at Delphi, the most renowned, ~~function~~ worked with Apollo's intervention, and oldest oracle at Dodona was connected with Zeus. These organised ~~see~~ sanctuaries formed the core of ancient Greek practices to foresee the future.

Word Count: 115

Comprehension:

Civil society refers to all of the places where individuals gather together to have conversations, pursue common interests and, occasionally, try to influence public opinion or public policy. In many respects, civil society is where people spend their time when they are not at work or at home. For example, a group of people gather at a local park every Thursday afternoon for a game of football. Most of them arrive well before the game begins and stay for some time after it ends. Some of them go out for dinner or a drink after the game. In the course of their meetings they talk about a wide range of topics, including football but also extending to include issues such as work, family, relationships, community events, racial issues and politics. This kind of solidarity can be found in a variety of other places in civil society – such as sports clubs, bowling leagues, reading groups and social movements – where individuals get together to associate on the basis of some shared interest fostering more effective forms of citizenship.

Even though people may come together on the basis of an interest they all share in common, they eventually have to develop productive strategies for dealing with conflicts and differences that emerge within the association. Team mates in a bowling league discover, on certain issues, significant differences of opinion. And yet, because they value the association and look forward to participating in its activities, they do not respond to these differences by exiting the scene. Instead, they search for the ways of interacting that will not threaten the solidarity of the group. In the process, they learn to appreciate and to tolerate social differences, a valuable skill to have in an increasingly multicultural nation. They also develop a general sense of social trust and mutual obligation, which makes society function more efficiently (this is what political scientists and sociologists are talking about when they refer to the importance of social capital). Gathering together in an association, people begin to think about their shared private interest as a collective public interest, and they try to make sure that this public interest is safe and secured. For example, the group that gets together for a weekly football game begins to talk about the park as an important community resource; if they feel that the park is being mistreated or mismanaged, they will organize a 'save the park' campaign to try to influence their local politicians and the other residents of the community. Recently, there has been growing concern that civil society is weaker than it used to be, because people are losing interest in joining associations. As citizens become increasingly disconnected from voluntary associations, they will experience less trust and less social connection, and as a result political institutions will function less efficiently. However, some scholars opine that many people are simply choosing to participate in different kinds of associations with fewer face-to-face meetings but supplemented with 'virtual' interactions facilitated by resources.

Ans 1:

The author characterizes civil society as place where meet each other apart from their homes and workspace. These spaces provides a platform where people share their ideas, discuss common interests, and often influence public policy or public opinion. The example includes local parks where ^{people} engage with others, and enjoy games. Moreover, people discuss on wide range of topics in those space and share social bonds. Hence, the civil society is described as a shared space of public where ~~some~~ ideas are discussed and common interests are pursued.

Ans 2:

The civil society strive towards better socialisation because when people connect with each other in the civil society, they eventually have to look ~~to~~ for strategies to settle their conflicts. People value their association to that society or place and this leads to increase in acceptance of difference among people. This approach results in better socialisation which is driven by tolerance. Therefore, civil society strive towards better socialisation.

Ans 3:

The term 'social capital' used in the passage refers to connection of people based on the grouped solidarity or the sense of belongingness to a common source. The people meeting ~~with~~ each other, appreciating, and ignoring the social differences because of their shared association. ~~and~~ This

shared connections leads to more ~~for~~ acceptance and openness to social ~~en~~ differences.

Ans 4:

The civil society assumes the role of a public stakeholder, because people in civil society try to safeguard their collective public interests. Individuals start thinking about their personal interests as collective social interests. When sensing any harm to their collective social interest, people unite and protect them by raising voice and reaching out to the local politician. That is how civil society plays the role of public stakeholder.

Ans 5:

According to the author, the weakening ~~of~~ state of civil society will result in less trust and less social connection. Consequently the political institution will experience less efficiency as compared to their efficiency in the presence of strong civil society. Strong civil societies protect public interest and influence politicians to serve. However, weak civil societies lead to disintegration of people ultimately leading towards less efficient political institutions.