

Literary Criticism II M.A English (Literature and Linguistics) (Semester II)

Course Outline

Introduction to Romantic Age

Romanticists and Romanticism

1. William Wordsworth:

Theory of poetic diction

S.T Coleridge's Criticism on theory of diction

Understanding 'Preface to Lyrical Ballads'

Significant concepts in the Preface

2. S.T Coleridge

Biographia literaria

Imagination and fancy

Introduction to Victorian Criticism

3. Matthew Arnold

Reading Arnold's 'Study of Poetry'

Significant concepts in 'The Study of Poetry'

Introduction to 20th Century Criticism

4. T.S Eliot: The Critic

Understanding 'Tradition and Individual Talent'

Significant concepts in Eliot's writings

A manifesto of Eliot's critical creed

Recommended Readings

1. Barry, P. Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory.

Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995

2. Booker, Keith M. A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism. New York: Longman Publishers, 1996.
3. Kamran, Robina and Farrukh Zad. Ed. A Quintessence of Literary Criticism. National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.
4. Leitch, Vincent B. (General Editor). The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. New York & London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001 (or later editions)

Reference Books/Essays:

Preface to Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth

[https://faculty.csbsju.edu/dbeach/beautytruth/
Wordsworth-PrefaceLB.pdf](https://faculty.csbsju.edu/dbeach/beautytruth/Wordsworth-PrefaceLB.pdf)

Essays in Criticism: The Study of Poetry by Mathew Arnold

[https://archive.org/details/essaysincritic00arnouoft/
page/2/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/essaysincritic00arnouoft/page/2/mode/2up)

Metaphysical Poets by T.S Eliot

<https://www.usask.ca/english/prufrock/meta.htm>

Eliot's Tradition and Individual Talent:

[https://people.unica.it/fiorenzoiuliano/files/2017/05/
tradition-and-the-individual-talent.pdf](https://people.unica.it/fiorenzoiuliano/files/2017/05/tradition-and-the-individual-talent.pdf)

The aforementioned are the texts of the books/essays that are to be covered in this semester. Following are the links to the reference articles in accordance to the course outline given above.

Introduction to the Romantic Age:

<http://armytage.net/updata/>

[Introduction%20to%20the%20Romantic%20Period%20from%20Norton%20Anthology%20II\(the%208th%20edition\).pdf](#)

<https://www.skuola.net/letteratura-inglese-1800-1900/introduction-romantic-period.html>

Significant Concepts in Preface to Lyrical Ballads:

https://ecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1783&context=luc_theses

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/preface-to-the-lyrical-ballads/summary-and-analysis>

<https://www.kcesmjcollege.in/ICT/English/>

[Preface%20to%20Lyrical%20Ballads-WW%20pmc.pdf](#)

<https://www.studocu.com/en-us/document/studocuuniversity/studocu-summary-library-en/summaries/prefaceto-lyrical-ballads-analysiss/1042738/view>

Introduction to Victorian Criticism:

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/>

[273382855_VICTORIAN_CRITICS_AND_METACRITICS_ARNOLD_PATER_RUSKIN_AND_THE_INDEPENDENCE_OF_LITERARY_CRITICISM](#)

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/>

[273443020_A_Short_History_of_Literary_Criticism](#)

Mathew Arnold's Study of Poetry:

<https://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4148&context=etd>

[article=4148&context=etd](#)

<https://sites.google.com/site/naineducationcom/literarytheory-and-criticism/an-article-on-arnold-s-the-study-ofpoetry>

<https://www.literaturemini.com/2018/10/arnolds-viewof-poetry-as-criticism-of-life.html>

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/89185/9/09_chapter-iv.pdf

<https://neoenglish.wordpress.com/2010/12/16/what-is-thefunction-of-poetry-according-to-arnold/>

<http://www.literature-study-online.com/essays/arnold.html>

Introduction to 20th Century Literary Criticism:

https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/68841/6/06_chapter%201.pdf

Comprehending T.S Eliot:

<https://interestingliterature.com/2015/01/a-very-shortbiography-of-t-s-eliot/>

<http://garciala.blogia.com/2013/010501-modernistpoetry-and-criticism-t.-s.-eliot.php>

http://content.inflibnet.ac.in/data-server/eacharyadocuments/53e0c6cbe413016f234436f0_INFIEP_11/4/ET/11-4-ET-V1-S1__introduction.pdf

Tradition and Individual Talent Analysis:

<https://interestingliterature.com/2017/02/a-short-analysis-of-t-s-eliot-s-tradition-and-the-individual-talent/>

<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/english-literature/traditionindividual-talent-analysis-6077.php>

<http://janiriddhi1315.blogspot.com/2014/03/main-conceptsof-tradition-and.html>

<http://englishliteraturee.blogspot.com/2017/03/criticalanalysis-of-tradition-and.html>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324515537_Tradition_and_Depersonalization_--)

[324515537_Tradition_and_Depersonalization_--](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324515537_Tradition_and_Depersonalization_--)

[An_Interpretation_of_Tradition_and_the_Individual_Talent](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324515537_Tradition_and_Depersonalization_--)

Reading Material

Wordsworth theory of poetic diction

It has been generally supposed that Wordsworth's theory of poetic language is merely a reaction against, and a criticism of, 'the Pseudo Classical' theory of poetic diction. But such a view is partially true. His first impulse was less a revolt against Pseudo-classical diction, "than a desire to find a suitable language for the new territory of human life which he was conquering for poetic treatment". His aim was to deal in his poetry with rustic and humble life and to advocate simplicity of theme. Moreover, he believed that the poet is essentially a man speaking to men and so he must use such a language as is used by men. The pseudo classics advocated that the language of poetry is different from the language of prose while Wordsworth believes that there is no essential difference between them. The poet can communicate best in the language which is really used by men. He condemns the artificial language. Thus, William Wordsworth prefers the language really used by common men.

Wordsworth's purpose, as he tells in the Preface was, "to choose incidents and situations from common life", and quite naturally, he also intended to use, "a selection of language, really used by men". He was to deal with humble and rustic life and so he should also use the language of the rustics, farmers, shepherds who

were to be the subjects of his poetry. The language of these men was to be used but it was to be purified of all that is painful or disgusting, vulgar and coarse in that language. He was to use the language of real men because the aim of a poet is to give pleasure and such language without selection will cause disgust.

The use of such a simple language has a number of advantages. The rustic language in its simplicity is highly emotional and passionate. This is more so the case when these humble people are in a state of emotional excitement. It is charged with the emotions of the human heart. Such a language is the natural language of the passions. It comes from the heart, and thus goes direct to the heart. In other words, through the use of such a language essential truths about human life and nature can be more easily and clearly communicated. It is more 'philosophical' language inasmuch as its use can result in a better and clearer understanding of the basic truths. But in city life emotions are not openly expressed.

Wordsworth was going to write about simple life so he writes in simple language and for this he adds metre. In his opinion, the language of poetry must not be separated from the language of men in real life. Figures, metaphors and similes and other such decorations must not be used unnecessarily. In a state of emotional excitement, men naturally use a metaphorical language to express themselves forcefully. The earliest poets used only such metaphors and images as result naturally from powerful emotions. Later on, poets used a figurative language which was not the result of genuine passion. They merely imitated the manner of the earlier poets, and thus arose the artificial language and diction of Pseudo-classics. A stereotyped and mechanical phraseology thus became current. The poet must avoid the use of such artificial diction both when he speaks in his own person, or through his characters.

Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction is of immense value when considered as a corrective to the artificial, inane, and unnatural phraseology current at the time. But considered in itself it is full of a number of contradictions and suffers from a number of imitations. For one thing, Wordsworth does not state what he means by language. Language is a matter of words, as well as of arrangement of those words. It is the matter of the use of imagery, frequency of its use, and its nature, Wordsworth does not clarify what he exactly means by 'language'.

Coleridge was the first critic to pounce upon Wordsworth's theory of language and to expose its weaknesses. He pointed out, first, that a language so selected and purified, as Wordsworth suggests, would differ in no way from the language of any other men of commonsense. After such a selection there would be no difference between the rustic language and the language used by men in other walks of life.

Secondly, Wordsworth permits the use of metre, and this implies a particular order and arrangement of words. If metre is to be used, the order of words in poetry is bound to differ from that of prose. It does so differ in the poetry of Wordsworth himself. So Coleridge concludes that there is, and there ought to be, an essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.

Thirdly, the use of metre is as artificial as the use of poetic diction, and if one is allowed, it is absurd to forbid the use of the other. Both are equally good sources of poetic pleasure.

Fourthly, Coleridge objected to the use of the word real. He writes:

“Every man’s language varies, according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man’s language has, first, its individualities; secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use. For, ‘real’, therefore, we must substitute, ‘ordinary’ or lingua communis.”

Fifthly, Coleridge pointed out that it is not correct that the best parts of our language are derived from Nature. Language is letter-moulded. The best words are abstract nouns and concepts. If the poet wants to use the rustic language, he must think like the rustics whose language is curiously inexpressive. It would be putting the clock back. Instead of progression it would be retrogression.

Wordsworth's theory of language has strong weaknesses, but its significance is also far-reaching. O. Elton concludes his discussion of the subject with the following admirable words:

“Wordsworth, led by his dislike of, ‘glossy and unfeeling diction’ ... was led to proclaim that speech as the medium desired; that he guarded this chosen medium not indeed from his own misapplication of it, but ... proved its nobility in practice; that he did not clearly say what he meant by, ‘language’, or see the full effect upon the diction by the employment of metre; that he did not rule out other styles ... he did not touch on their theoretic basis; and that in many of his actual triumphs, won within that sphere of diction which he does vindicate.”

Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction

Wordsworth preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads, he sets forth his aims: The principal object proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout in a selection of the language really used by men and at the same time to know over them a

certain coloring of the imagination whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in unusual aspects. He goes on to say that humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil. In which they can attain their maturity, realism under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language, In the above statement we get some important points regarding Wordsworth's theory of [poetic](#) diction.

Firstly, in the choice of subjects or themes [Wordsworth](#) goes straight to common life and by preference to humble and rustic life.

Secondly, Wordsworth describes his themes taken from humble and rustic life as far as possible in a selection of language actually used by ordinary men. He does not look with favor upon the pompous and stilted circumlocution of the eighteenth century writers who delighted in using gaudy language.

Thirdly, [Wordsworth](#) says that while choosing his themes from common and rustic life and describing them in the language of the common people, his object to throw over them a certain coloring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect.

POETIC DICTION ACCORDING TO WORDSWORTH

The term diction refers to the kind of words, phrases, sentences, and sometimes figurative language that constitute any work of literature. When it comes to poetry writing, the question related to the diction always arises. The question of diction is considered as primary because the feelings of the poet must be easily conceived by the readers. The poets of all ages have used distinctive poetic diction.

The Neo-classical poetic diction was mainly derived from the classical poets such as Virgil, Spenser, and Milton. These poets used to write poetry by using embellished language and particular decorum. Other prominent features of that period were the extensive use of difficult words, allusions, the personification of abstracts, and avoidance of things considered as low or base. The poetry of that time was treated as something sacred. It was only subjected to the people with high intellect and of high status in the society.

Wordsworth's prime concern was to denounce such superficial and over-embellished language. Wordsworth's aim was to write poetry which symbolizes the life in its simple and rustic state. The poetry, for Wordsworth, must be like the part of daily life speech. It should be written in such language that anyone who wants to read it could comprehend it easily. Wordsworth believes that all such ornamented poetry clouds the genuine and passionate feelings of the poets. He only justifies the use of an embellished language of poetry when it is naturally suggested by the feelings or the subject matter of the poetry. The poetry, for Wordsworth, is the expression of natural feelings and these feelings cannot be communicated with the help of fake and version of upper-class speech but with the actual speech of "humble and rustic life".

He defines poetic diction as a language of common men. It is not the language of the poet as a class but the language of mankind. It is the simple expression of pure

passions by men living close to nature. The poetic language is the natural language; therefore, it must be spontaneous and instinctive. The real poetic diction, in the view of the Wordsworth, is the natural overflow of the feelings, therefore, it is immune to the deliberate decoration of the language.

Wordsworth also attributes the quality of giving pleasure to the natural poetic diction. It must not contain any vulgarity and disgusting element. The poet must, through his language, elevate the nature and human feelings.

COLERIDGE: FANCY AND IMAGINATIO

Over two hundred years later Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), defined what he called ‘primary Imagination’ in the following terms:

- The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.

Coleridge gives to the Imagination a status implicit in the sub-text of Theseus’s words. It is essentially a creative faculty, and when the poet or artist ‘imagines’ a work into being, he (or she) is repeating in the ‘finite’ mind that original act of creation in the mind of God. When God says ‘Let there be light’, ⁹and there is light, he is not imitating anything, but creating, from within himself, something out of nothing. It is in exactly these terms that Mary Wollstonecraft, echoing Theseus’s words, writes her own conjectures on original composition ^{CXXIV} in Letter 9 of her *Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796):

- How often do my feelings produce ideas that remind me of the origin of many poetical fictions. In solitude, the imagination bodies forth its conceptions unrestrained, and stops enraptured to adore the beings of its own creation. These are moments of bliss; and the memory recalls them with delight. ¹⁰

In *Nightmare Abbey* (see [Texts, Writers and Contexts: 'Romantic Fiction'](#)), Marionetta comes across Mr Flosky, Peacock's satirical version of Coleridge, who is made into the embodiment of Shakespeare's poet, 'sitting at his table by the light of a solitary candle, with a pen in one hand [...] with "his eye in a fine frenzy rolling"'. ¹¹Flosky announces (with its allusion by Peacock to 'Kubla Khan') ^{CXXV} that he has composed five hundred lines in his sleep and, echoing Bottom's words that a dream can only be communicated through some form of art, tells Marionetta, 'I am now officiating as my own Peter Quince, and making a ballad of my dream.' ¹²

In the final act of the *Dream*, Shakespeare makes the small audience of Theseus, Hippolyta and the four lovers apply a misguided rational intelligence to Bottom and his fellows' dramatic performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. A man with a dog, a bush and a lantern, meant to represent 'the man i' th' moon' (V.i.258) should, according to Demetrius, be 'in the lanthorn; for all these are in the moon' (V.ii.260– 1, my emphasis). Such a remark is comparable to an audience at an opera inappropriately querying the physical ability of a dying heroine to deliver a powerful aria. Coleridge, in *Biographia Literaria*, speaks of procuring, for what he calls the 'shadows of imagination', a 'willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith'. ¹³It is this 'poetic faith' which the audience for 'Pyramus and Thisbe' fails to exercise.

Although Theseus apparently concludes the play with his characteristically dismissive ‘Lovers, to bed,’tis almost fairy time’ (V.i.364), it is in fact those fairies, Coleridge’s ‘shadows of imagination’ who, in Puck’s line, ‘If we shadows have offended’ (V.i.423), are given the last word. Shakespeare, as a poet-dramatist himself, seems to be reinforcing, by putting his own weight behind it, the credibility of the Imagination in a context where its function is constantly being called into question.

Coleridge’s belief in the absolute centrality of the creative Imagination, anticipated so remarkably in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, seems to have been altogether lost in post-Renaissance literature, and it is well over two hundred years before it emerges again in its recognisably Romantic sense.

In the *Biographia*, Coleridge distinguishes clearly between Fancy and Imagination. He writes of Fancy being ‘a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space, and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will which we express by the word CHOICE’. The fancy receives its materials ‘ready made from the law of association’. In ‘Shakespeare: A Poet Generally’, Coleridge quotes a quatrain from *Venus and Adonis* as an example of Fancy at work:

- Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
A lily prisoned in a jail of snow,
Or ivory in an alabaster band:
So white a friend ingirts so white a foe. [14](#)

Here the fingers of pale clasped hands might suggest the bars of a jail. The bars, in turn, suggest the hard band of alabaster enclosing ivory, while the whiteness of both brings to mind the ‘lily’ and ‘snow’, indicating perhaps the softness of

the hands. In other words, the Fancy, which ‘has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites’, ¹⁵relies on a process of association as the verse is assembled.

As an example of the Imagination at work, Coleridge offers, by way of contrast, a couplet from the same poem: ‘Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky; / So glides he in the night from Venus’ eye!’:

- How many images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord, in the beauty of Adonis, the rapidity of his flight, the yearning, yet hopelessness, of the enamored gazer, while a shadowy ideal character is thrown over the whole.

Operating here is Coleridge’s conception of ‘secondary’ Imagination, which he distinguishes from the ‘primary’ in being exclusively the preserve of the creative artist. The secondary Imagination ‘dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate’. It struggles ‘to idealize and to unify’ and is ‘essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead’. ¹⁶Coleridge’s careful preservation of the difference between his two forms of Imagination (primary and secondary) and the Fancy, lies behind the humorous exchange between Marionetta and Mr Flosky when, in *Nightmare Abbey*, Flosky expresses surprise that she should be seeking him out for the purpose of obtaining information: ‘No one has ever sought me for such a purpose before.’ Marionetta replies hesitantly, ‘I think, Mr Flosky—that is, I believe—that is, I fancy—that is, I imagine—’.

To illustrate the different processes by which Imagination and Fancy work, Basil Willey suggests a chemical analogy. The materials of Fancy can be thought of as a mixture of grains of salt and iron filings which, although in close proximity to each other, nevertheless retain their own particular properties. On

the contrary, the Imagination at work resembles the reaction of two elements like sodium and chlorine which, in dissolving, diffusing and dissipating, produce a third element, entirely different from both. ¹⁷

S. T. Coleridge: Imagination and Fancy

In Chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge writes:

“The imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary”.

According to Coleridge, Imagination has two forms; primary and secondary. Primary imagination is merely the power of receiving impressions of the external world through the senses, the power of perceiving the objects of sense, both in their parts and as a whole. It is a spontaneous act of the mind; the human mind receives impressions and sensations from the outside world, unconsciously and involuntarily, imposes some sort of order on those impressions, reduces them to shape and size, so that the mind is able to form a clear image of the outside world. In this way clear and coherent perception becomes possible.

The primary imagination is universal, it is possessed by all. The secondary imagination may be possessed by others also, but it is the peculiar and typical trait of the artist. It is the secondary imagination which makes artistic creation possible. Secondary imagination is more active and conscious; it requires an effort of the will, volition and conscious effort. It works upon its raw material that are the sensations and impressions supplied to it by the primary imagination. By an effort of the will and the intellect the secondary imagination selects and orders the raw material and re-shapes and re-models it into objects of beauty. It is ‘esemplastic’,

i.e. “a shaping and modifying power”. Its ‘plastic stress’ re-shapes objects of the external world and steeps them with a glory and dream that never was on sea and land. It is an active agent which, “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to create”.

This secondary imagination is at the root of all poetic activity. It is the power which harmonizes and reconciles opposites. Coleridge calls it a magical, synthetic power. This unifying power is best seen in the fact that it synthesizes or fuses the various faculties of the soul – perception, intellect, will, emotion – and fuses the internal with the external, the subjective with the objective, the human mind with external nature, the spiritual with the physical. Through this unifying power nature is colored by the soul of the poet, and soul of the poet is steeped in nature. ‘The identity’ which the poet discovers in man and nature results from the synthesizing activity of the secondary imagination.

The primary and secondary imaginations do not differ from each other in kind. The difference between them is one of degree. The secondary imagination is more active, more a result of volition, more conscious and more voluntary than the primary one. The primary imagination is universal while the secondary is a peculiar privilege enjoyed by the artist.

Imagination and fancy, however, differs in kind. Fancy is not a creative power at all. It only combines what is perceives into beautiful shapes, but like the imagination it does not fuse and unify. The difference between the two is the same as the difference between a mechanical mixture and a chemical compound. In a mechanical mixture a number of ingredients are brought together. They are mixed up, but they do not lose their individual properties. In a chemical compound, the different ingredients combine to form something new. The different ingredients no

longer exist as separate identities. They lose their respective properties and fuse together to create something new and entirely different. A compound is an act of creation; while a mixture is merely a bringing together of a number of separate elements.

Thus imagination creates new shapes and forms of beauty by fusing and unifying the different impressions it receives from the external world. Fancy is not creative. It is a kind of memory; it randomly brings together images, and even when brought together, they continue to retain their separate and individual properties. They receive no coloring or modification from the mind. It is merely mechanical juxtaposition and not a chemical fusion. Coleridge explains the point by quoting two passages from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. The following lines from this poem serve to illustrate Fancy:

Full gently now she takes him by the hand.

A lily prisoned in a goal of snow

Or ivory in an alabaster band

So white a friend engirds so white a foe.

In these lines images are drawn from memory, but they do not interpenetrate into one another. The following lines from the same poem illustrate the power and function of Imagination:

Look! How a bright star shooteth from the sky

So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.

For Coleridge, Fancy is the drapery of poetic genius but imagination is its very

soul which forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

Coleridge owed his interest in the study of imagination to Wordsworth. But Wordsworth was interested only in the practice of poetry and he considered only the impact of imagination on poetry; Coleridge on the other hand, is interested in the theory of imagination. He is the first critic to study the nature of imagination and examine its role in creative activity. Secondly, while Wordsworth uses Fancy and Imagination almost as synonyms, Coleridge is the first critic to distinguish between them and define their respective roles. Thirdly, Wordsworth does not distinguish between primary and secondary imagination. Coleridge's treatment of the subject is, on the whole, characterized by greater depth, penetration and philosophical subtlety. It is his unique contribution to literary theory.

Critical Analysis of Coleridge's Imagination and Fancy

Posted on October 30, 2014 by kheralatika

Introduction

The Biographia Literaria an autobiography in discourse by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, which he published in 1817. It was one of Coleridge's main critical studies. In this work, he discussed the elements of writing. The work is long and seemingly loosely structured, and although there are autobiographical elements, it is not a straightforward autobiography. Although the work is not written from Coleridge's poetic mind, it is still written with the qualities and rhythm of the poetic. Through this discussion, he makes many value judgments, leaving his audience with a clear understand of his stance on certain issues. Some of the issues he tackles include politics, religion, social values, and human identity. He

expresses his own thoughts from a personal viewpoint.

Imagination

Imagination in its real sense denotes the working of poetic minds upon external objects or objects visible to the eyes. Imaginative process sometimes adds additional properties to an object or sometimes abstracts from it some of its properties. Therefore, imagination thus transforms the object into something new. It modifies and even creates new objects.

According to Coleridge, imagination has two types: Primary and Secondary.

- According to him the primary imagination is “the living power and prime agent of all human perception”. Primary is perceiving the impressions of the outer world through the senses. It is a spontaneous act of the human mind, the image so formed of the outside world unconsciously and involuntarily. It is universal and is possessed by all.
- According to him the secondary imagination is the poetic vision, the faculty that a poet has “to idealize and unify”. It is an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will. It works upon the raw materials that are sensations and impressions supplied the primary imagination. It is the secondary imagination which makes any artistic creation possible and root of all poetic activity. It is considered as shaping and modifying power.

Coleridge calls secondary imagination a magical power; it fuses various faculties of human soul- will, emotion, intellect, perception. It fuses internal and external, the subjective and objective.

The primary and the secondary imaginations do not differ from each other in kind. The difference between them is one of degree. The secondary imagination is more active, more conscious than the primary one. The primary imagination is universal while secondary is a peculiar privilege enjoyed by the artist.

The significance of the Imagination for Coleridge was that it represented the sole

faculty within man that was able to achieve the romantic ambition of reuniting the subject and the object; the world of the self and the world of nature. For him, the most important aspect of the imagination was that it was active to the highest degree.

Fancy

Coleridge regards fancy to be the inferior to imagination. It is according to him a creative power. It only combines different things into different shapes, not like imagination to fuse them into one. According to him, it is the process of “bringing together images dissimilar in the main, by source”. It has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. Fancy, in Coleridge’s eyes was employed for tasks that were “passive” and “mechanical”.

The distinction between Fancy and the Imagination

The distinction made by Coleridge between Fancy and the Imagination rested on the fact that fancy was concerned with the mechanical operations of the mind while imagination on the other hand is described the mysterious power. “The Primary Imagination” was for Coleridge, the “necessary imagination” as it makes images and impressions of what it receives through the senses. It represents man’s ability to learn from nature. The over arching property of the primary imagination was that it was common to all people. Whereas “The Secondary imagination” on the other hand, represents a superior faculty which could only be associated with artistic genius. A key and defining attribute of the secondary imagination was a free and deliberate will.

Thus imagination creates new shapes and forms of beauty by fusing and unifying the different impressions it receives from the external world. Whereas Fancy is a

kind of memory; it randomly brings together images, and even when brought together, they continue to retain their separate individual properties.

Conclusion

Critics have reacted strongly to the *Biographia Literaria*. But Coleridge delivers the *Biographia Literaria* without a second thought of whether or not there will be any disagreement from his audience. He does not cater to one audience; he just expresses his thoughts.

Coleridge owned his interest in study of theory of imagination. He is the first critic to study the nature of imagination and examine its role in creative activity. While most of the critics use Fancy and imagination almost as synonyms, Coleridge is the first critic to distinguish between them and define their respective roles. He distinguishes between primary and secondary imagination. Coleridge's treatment of the subject is characterized by greater depth, penetration and philosophical subtlety. It is his unique contribution to the literary theory.

S. T. Coleridge: Criticism on Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction

Wordsworth and Coleridge came together early in life and mutually arose various theories which Wordsworth embodied in his "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" and tried to put into practice in his poems. Coleridge claimed credit for these theories and said they were "half the child of his brain". But later on, his views underwent the change; he no longer agreed with Wordsworth's theories and so criticized them.

In his Preface, Wordsworth made three important statements all of which have been objects of Coleridge's censure.

First of all Wordsworth writes that he chose low and rustic life, where the essential passions of the heart find a better soil to attain their maturity. They are less under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language. In rustic life our basic feelings coexist in greater simplicity and more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated. The manners of rural life, sprang from those elementary feelings and from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily realized and are more durable. Lastly the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.

Secondly, that the language of these men is adopted because they hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived. Being less under social vanity, they convey their feelings and ideas in simple and outright expressions because of their rank in society and the equality and narrow circle of their intercourse.

Thirdly, he made a number of statements regarding the language and diction of poetry. Of these, Coleridge refutes the following parts: “a selection or the real language of men”; “the language of the men in low and rustic life”: and, “Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference”.

As regards the first statement, i.e. the choice of rustic characters and life, Coleridge points out, first, that not all Wordsworth characters are rustic. Characters in poems like *Ruth*, *Michael*, *The Brothers*, are not low and rustic. Secondly, their language and sentiments do not necessarily arise from their abode or occupation. They are attributable to causes of their similar sentiments and language, even if they have

different abode or occupation. These causes are mainly two: (a) independence which raises a man above bondage, and a frugal and industrious domestic life and (b) a solid, religious education which makes a man well-versed in the Bible and other holy books excluding other books. The admirable qualities in the language and sentiments of Wordsworth's characters result from these two causes. Even if they lived in the city away from Nature they would have similar sentiments and language. In the opinion of Coleridge, a man will not be benefited from a life in rural solitudes unless he has natural sensibility and suitable education. In the absence of these advantages, the mind hardens and a man grows, 'selfish, sensual, gross and hard hearted'.

As regards the second statement of Wordsworth, Coleridge objects to the view that the best part of language is derived from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates. First, communication with an object implies reflection on it and the richness of vocabulary arises from such reflection. Now the rural conditions of life do not require any reflection, hence the vocabulary of the rustics is poor. They can express only the barest facts of nature and not the ideas and thoughts which results from their reflection. Secondly, the best part of a man's language does not result merely from communication with nature, but from education, from the mind of noble thoughts and ideals. Whatever rustics use, are derived not from nature, but from The Bible and from the sermons of noble and inspired preachers.

Coleridge takes up his statements, one by one, and demonstrates that his views are not justified. Wordsworth asserts that the language of poetry is:

“A selection of the real language of men or the very language of men; and that there was no essential difference between the language of prose and that of

poetry”.

Coleridge retorts that,

“‘Every man’s language’ varies according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings”.

Every man’s language has, first, its individual peculiarities; secondly, the properties common to his class; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use.

“No two men of the same class or of different classes speak alike, although both use words and phrases common to them all, because in the one case their natures are different and on the other their classes are different”.

The language varies from person to person, class to class, place to place.

Coleridge objects to Wordsworth’s use of the words, ‘very’ or ‘real’ and suggests that ‘ordinary’ or ‘generally’ should have been used. Wordsworth’s addition of the words, “in a state of excitement”, is meaningless, for emotional excitement may result in a more intense expression, but it cannot create a noble and richer vocabulary.

To Wordsworth’s argument about having no essential difference between the language of poetry and prose, Coleridge replies that there is and there ought to be, an essential difference between both the languages and gives numerous reasons to support his view. First, language is both a matter and the arrangement of words. Words both in prose and poetry may be the same but their arrangement is different.

This difference arises from the fact that the poetry uses metre and metre requires a different arrangement of words. Metre is not a mere superficial decoration, but an essential organic part of a poem. Even the metaphors and similes used by a poet are different in quality and frequency from prose. Hence there is bound to be an ‘essential’ difference between the arrangement of words of poetry and prose. There is this difference even in those poems of Wordsworth’s which are considered most Wordsworthian.

Further, it cannot be confirmed that the language of prose and poetry are identical and so convertible. There may be certain lines or even passages which can be used both in prose and poetry, but not all. There are passages which will suit the one and not the other.

Thus does Coleridge refute Wordsworth’s views on the themes and language of poetry.

T. S. ELIOT “TRADITION AND THE INDIVIDUAL TALENT” This handout was prepared by Dr. William Tarvin, a retired professor of literature. Please visit my free website www.tarvinlit.com. Over 500 works of American and British literature are analyzed there for free. Text used: Charles Kaplan and William David Anderson, eds. *Criticism: Major Statements*, 4th ed. New York: Bedford, 2000. 1. In paragraph 1 on page 404, Kaplan and Anderson discuss Eliot’s contention in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” that a new literary work affects earlier works. Summarize this argument. Eliot contends that all great literary works have a “simultaneous existence” and a “simultaneous” order; therefore, “works of an earlier period are always being altered by the introduction of later works” (404). 2. In paragraph 2, page 404, they present the second importance of Eliot’s essay: The theory of the depersonalization of art. Summarize this position. Eliot declares that

Poetry is “only a medium and not a personality”; it is “not a turning loose of emotions, but an escape from emotion” (404). 3. In paragraph 3 (404-05), what is the third significance of Eliot’s article, according to the editors? In this essay Eliot states that the critic’s task is “to divert interest from the poet to the poetry.” He thus becomes the progenitor of the 20th century’s New Criticism, which believes in “the close examination of the poem as poem, without regard for biographical, social, ethical, or other frames of reference as sources of judgment” (404- 05). 4. On page 405, Eliot begins his essay by questioning whether individualism or tradition is typically more valued in a literary work. What is Eliot’s answer, and why? In English writing, Eliot says that “tradition” typically appears as a word of “censure” (405). Our tendency is “to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles any one else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet’s difference from his predecessors.” Thus, critics tend to praise a writer’s individuality—how he or she differs from other writers. 5. On page 406, Eliot asserts that tradition becomes a more important characteristic of a literary work than individualism when it encompasses “the historical sense” (406) and “simultaneous order” (406). Explain these concepts, citing specific sentences from Eliot. How does “the really new” (406) literary work alter previous literary pieces? (406) While Eliot concedes that “novelty [individualism] is better than repetition [a naïve use of tradition]” (405), he continues that a deeper consideration of tradition is needed by the successful poet. This sense of “tradition” can be obtained only “by great labour [study]” (406). Tradition, rightfully considered, “involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which . . . involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the

literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional” (406). Thus for Eliot the poet is a member of a tradition. What the poet writes or can write is greatly tied to what has gone before. A writer will be greatly affected by the ideas going on in his or her society. No poet or artist of any sort can be understood solely in terms of himself or herself. “The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them” (406). “The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past” (406). To sum up, Eliot contends that new literary works are affected by previous works, but they also change those works or how those works are perceived. 6. On page 407, Eliot deals with the Expressive approach, speaking of the “mind of his own country” (tradition) and the poet’s “own private mind” (individualism). What point is Eliot making about the poet’s education and “erudition (pedantry)” (407) What compliment is paid to Shakespeare in this paragraph? (407) The poet must be “aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—[tradition]” is “much more important than his own mind [individualism]” (407). Eliot anticipates one objection: that for the poet to become absorbed in tradition “requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry)” (407). He counters that “the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career” (407). Tarvin 3 For some this acquisition of tradition can come easily: “Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum” (407). In essence, Eliot contends, a poet must know what the tradition is within which he or she works. The poet has to be well-read and know what other poets have done

before him or her. 7. On page 407, in the third paragraph from the bottom, what does Eliot say a poet must strive to extinguish? “What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual selfsacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” (407). Keats’s idea Since the poet lives and writes within a tradition, he or she must be impersonal in poetry. Necessarily the poet has to surrender himself/herself to this tradition. 8. On page 407, at the beginning of section II, toward what should literary criticism be directed? “Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry” (406). 9. Eliot formulates his idea of the poetic process (how a poem is created) in the last sentence of the second paragraph from the bottom of page 408, beginning, “The poet’s mind is in fact” and continuing through the first two sentences of the next paragraph, ending “. . . the fusion takes place, that counts.” How and why does he attack Longinus’s theory of “sublimity” (408)? In its place, what does Eliot contend is involved in the poetic process? “The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. . . . For it is not the ‘greatness,’ the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts” (408). Eliot felt that Longinus’s definition of “sublimity” stressed the feeling or the intensity of the emotion with which a poem deals, not the artistic process of the poem. A poem is not an expression of the poet’s feelings or of her or his personality. Rather, a poem arises from a fusion of feelings, phrases, and images which the poet has gathered over time and chooses to connect while writing a poem. Tarvin 4 10. In the second paragraph of page 409, how does Eliot argue that literary criticism must separate the poet from the poem? The “poet has, not a ‘personality’ to express, but a

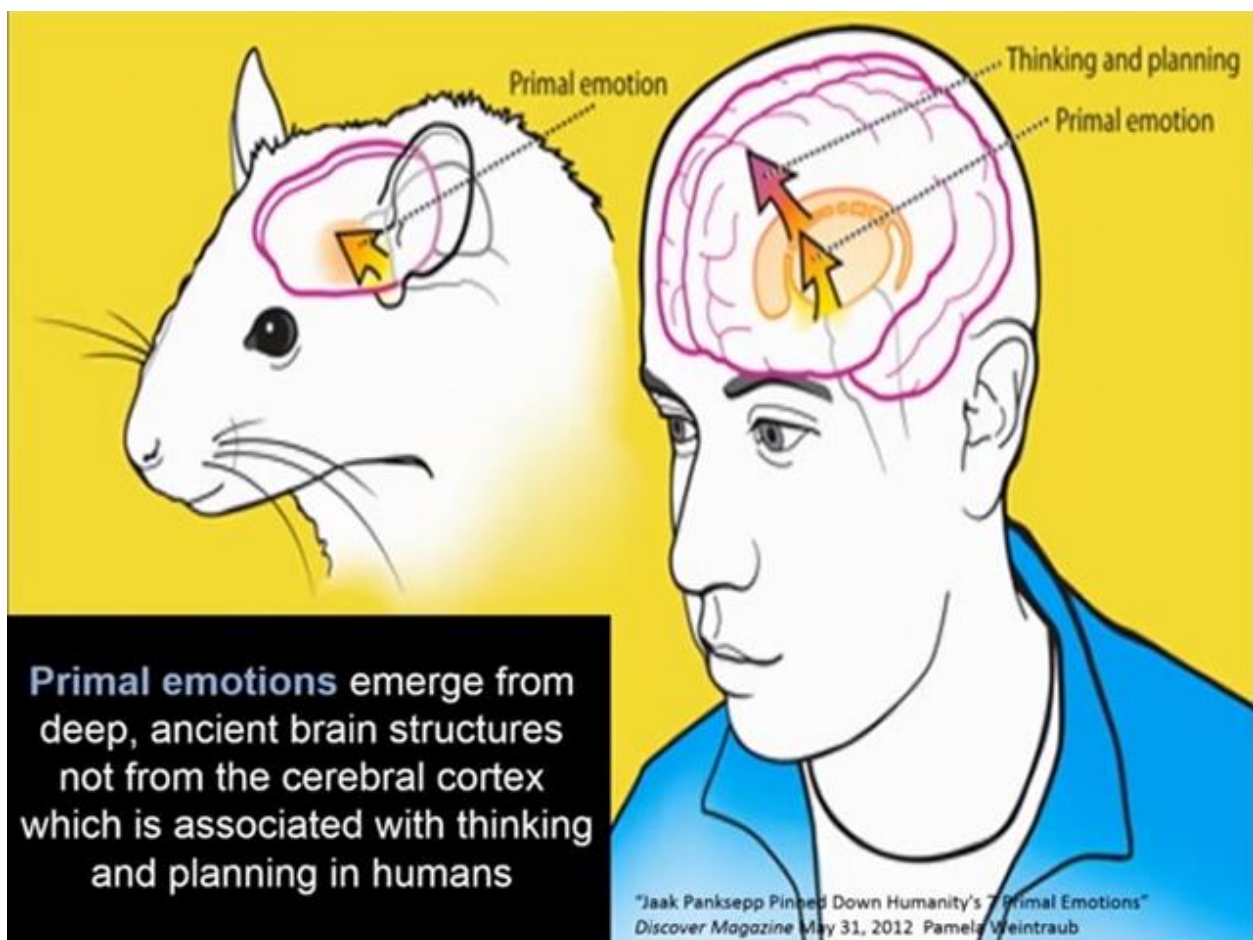
particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.” 11. On page 410, what types of emotions does Eliot say a poet should use? “One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all” (410). [Emotions=inward sensation; feeling=outward manifestation of emotion] 12. Whose theory or definition of poetry does Eliot attack on page 410, and how? Copy Eliot’s definition of poetry given in the next to last sentence of section II on page 410, beginning, “Poetry is not . . .” (410). Eliot attacks Wordsworth’s theory, writing that consequently, “we must believe that ‘emotion recollected in tranquility’ is an inexact formula [of the poetic process]. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquility. It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences . . .” (410). “Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality” (410). 13. How does section III, page 410, summarize the major points of Eliot’s essay? (1) Eliot says that criticism should concentrate on the poem, not the poet: “to divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim” (410). (2) Eliot says that the poetic process entails that the poet extinguish his or her own personality or individuality: The “poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work . . .” (410). (3) The poet must embrace the tradition in

which he or she writes: Thus the poet must live “in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past” (410).

Feelings and Emotions: The A – Z Guide

This article discusses the difference between feelings and emotions. Let's be honest: conveying internal feelings in words is not easy, and that explains a lot of the confusion on this topic. We tend to use the words **emotions**, **feelings** and **moods** interchangeably. Of course, they are closely related and yes this is a complex topic, but there is a fundamental difference and understanding it is important. At stake is the way you behave in this world.

What Are Emotions?



Essentially emotions are physical and instinctive. They have been programmed into our genes over many, many years of evolution and are hard-wired. While they are complex and involve a variety of physical and cognitive responses (many of which are not well understood), their general purpose is to produce a specific response to a stimulus. For example: You are on your own and on foot in the savanna wilderness, you see a lion, and you instantly get scared. Emotions can be measured objectively by blood flow, brain activity, facial expressions and body stance. Important note: Emotions are carried out by the limbic system, our emotional processing center. This means that they are illogical, irrational, and unreasonable because the limbic system is separate from – sitting literally behind – the neocortex, the part of our brain that deals with conscious thoughts, reasoning and decision making.

I'd like to give you a clear list of universally recognized emotions but unfortunately such a list does not exist. William James proposed four basic emotions: fear, grief, love, and rage, based on bodily involvement. Paul Ekman devised six basic emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise. Wallace V. Friesen and Phoebe C. Ellsworth worked with him and agreed on the same structure of emotions. In the book *Passion and Reason* Richard and Bernice Lazarus list fifteen different emotions: aesthetic experience, anger, anxiety, compassion, depression, envy, fright, gratitude, guilt, happiness, hope, jealousy, love, pride, relief, sadness, and shame. Psychologists identify twenty-seven categories of emotion: admiration, adoration, aesthetic appreciation, amusement, anger, anxiety, awe, awkwardness, boredom, calmness, confusion, contempt, craving, disappointment, disgust, empathic pain, entrancement, envy, excitement, fear, guilt, horror, interest, joy, nostalgia, pride, relief, romance, sadness, satisfaction, sexual desire, surprise, sympathy and triumph. This was

based on 2185 short videos intended to elicit a certain emotion. These were then modelled onto a “map” of emotions.

What Are Feelings?

Feelings on the other hand play out in our heads. They are mental associations and reactions to an emotion that are personal and acquired through experience. There are over 4,000 feelings listed in the English language. Most people can easily recognize at least 500 of those, but when asked to list emotions they can only list five to ten. The emotion comes first and is universal. What kind of feeling(s) it will then become varies enormously from person to person and from situation to situation because feelings are shaped by individual temperament and experience. Two people can feel the same emotion but label it under different names. For example: You are in a zoo on your own and on foot, you see a lion behind bars, and your feelings may range from curiosity to admiration or bitterness if you believe lions should never be caged.

What Are Moods?

In psychology, a mood is an emotional state. In contrast to emotions, feelings, or affects, moods are less specific, less intense and less likely to be provoked or instantiated by a particular stimulus or event. Moods are typically described as having either a positive or negative impact. In other words, people usually talk about being in a good mood or a bad mood.

One Viewpoint on The Basic Differences Between Emotions and Feelings

Emotions are event-driven, while feelings are learned behaviors that are usually in hibernation until triggered by an external event. Unlike happiness for example (a feeling), joy (an emotion) involves little cognitive awareness—we feel good

without consciously deciding to—and it’s longer lasting. Whereas happiness is usually induced by and dependent on outside conditions, joy is something we experience more deeply; it’s a state of being that’s not necessarily tied to external situations. While happiness is a state of mind based on circumstances, joy is an internal feeling that disregards circumstances.

Here are some examples of different feelings and emotions and how they differ one from another:

Feelings	Emotions
Feelings tell us “ how to live. ”	Emotions tell us what we “ like ” and “ dislike. ”
Feelings state: “There is a right and wrong way to be.”	Emotions state: “There are good and bad actions.”
Feelings state: “ Your emotions matter. “	Emotions state: “ The external world matters. “
Feelings establish our long term attitude toward reality.	Emotions establish our initial attitude toward reality.
Feelings alert us to anticipated dangers and prepares us for action.	Emotions alert us to immediate dangers and prepares us for action
Feelings ensure long-term survival of self. (body and mind.)	Emotions ensure immediate survival of self. (body and mind.)
Feelings are low-key but sustainable.	Emotions are intense but temporary.
Happiness is a feeling.	Joy is an emotion.
Worry is a feeling.	Fear is an emotion.

Contentment is a feeling.

Enthusiasm is an emotion.

Bitterness is a feeling.

Anger is an emotion.

Love is a feeling.

Attraction is an emotion.

So What?

The secret to knowing who you are and living well begins with knowing the difference between sustained feelings and temporary emotions. Think about it this way: Nothing you can ever experience in life, no matter how terrible, will ever be anything more than a bunch of thoughts, plus a few physical sensations. Can you handle that?

Being able to clearly identify how we are feeling has been shown to reduce the intensity of experience because it re-engages our rational mind. [Get a list of feelings words here.](#)

The most elegant way to identify the emotion behind a particular negative feeling is to simply ask “*What surprised you?*”

On Altering Your Perspective

Most people believe that their mood, attitude or the way they feel is based upon circumstances or other people. Ask anyone you know who is in a bad mood or depressed why they feel the way they do and virtually all of them will tell you about a circumstance or an encounter with someone else.

The truth of the matter, however, is that feelings are caused by the thoughts about circumstances and people. People or circumstances in and of themselves cannot directly impact your feelings. Being crystal clear about this concept will give you a

great sense of empowerment and freedom. The following story exemplifies this idea.

Two shoe salesmen travel to a distant island to open up a new market for their shoe line. Once they arrive, they canvass the area to evaluate its potential. Shortly thereafter, the first salesman in a very downtrodden mood calls back to the home office and says, “bad news, no one here wears shoes,” and took the next plane home. The other sales person, could hardly contain himself and when he called the home office he said, “great news, no one here wears shoes and we have no competition, we better have a lot of product on hand.”

In Conclusion

Learn to feel and embrace all of your emotions fully without labelling them, and work on expressing them constructively. Remove the narrative as much and as often as possible, and focus on the actions that you believe will give you results that serve you best. If and when you want to change your emotions know that you can do so easily and safely within minutes with wellness modalities such as Laughter Wellness or Laughter Yoga that invite people to engage through the motions of laughter, joy and empowerment in an effort to jump start those very emotions. I’m not saying it’s always easy, but it is worth it.

I have written in-depth on this topic in our online training *Laughter For Self-Help* that’s included in the LOU Library Pro membership. If you are serious about not just deepening your understanding on how to live a better life but also learning **how** to unlock the many benefits of laughter (healing can be fun!) then buy it now or ask it as a gift for your birthday or Christmas. 30 days money back guarantee!

How Eliot Refutes Wordsworth's Concept of "emotion recollected in Tranquility"

Eliot expresses his anti-romantic view of creative process in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." He disapproves of the romantic view of poetry as a sentimental expression of subjective feelings. Accordingly he rejects the emotive statement of Wordsworth-"emotion recollected in tranquility." Wordsworth's formula involves three components for poetic composition- emotion, recollection and tranquility. Regarding the first component, Eliot puts forward his own theory of emotion and feelings. He distinguishes between emotion and feeling. He says that emotion arises out of personal incident or situation of a poet's life. It is closely associated with a poet's private life.

Feelings, on the contrary are only remotely or thinly associated with personal situation. Feelings can be aroused by an image, a word or a phrase. For example, the Ode of Keats contains a cluster of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the Nightingale, but which the Nightingale partly perhaps because of its evocative name and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together.

On the contrary, Coleridge's 'Dejection' is composed with the direct use of emotion rooted in personal incident. The emotion of gloomy despair conveyed in Coleridge's poem is a working up of the poet's similar emotion evident in a phase of his personal life. Eliot asserts that a poem can be composed either with emotion or with feelings. It is not always necessary that poetry must originate from emotion. In this way Eliot rejects the subjective emotionalism of Wordsworth's theory.

He further states that it is not for the emotions generated by particular events of a poet's life that a poet earns distinction. Rather personal emotions are distilled,

processed and transmuted into what Eliot calls structural or art emotion, for which a poet deserves consideration. And emotion achieves some degree of impersonality. Thus Eliot depersonalizes the romantic magnification of personal emotion in poetry. Poetry is not a medium to unleash raw emotion in an artless, uncontrolled and undisciplined way. Hence Eliot maintains that poetry is not a turning loose of emotion. Rather it is a controlled, selective, patterned expression of emotion. It demands some kind of some kind of masking and distancing of personal emotion- a kind of artistic detachment, a sort of decorum, some sort of veiling. This is what Eliot means by “an escape from emotion.”

Eliot does not accept that poetry has always something to do with “recollection”. In other words, recollection is not an indispensable material for poetry. Earlier Eliot observes that “the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates.” This statement implies that poetry is not completely candid (frank) expression of the total personality of a poet. Rather it is an expression of a significant aspect of life. And in creative process, there is a great deal which is conscious and deliberate. Thus, Eliot attaches importance to intellect and rational faculty in addition to emotion and feelings.

In one of his influential essays *The Metaphysical Poets* – Eliot praises the metaphysical poets for their unified sensibility, which results from a fusion of emotion and intellect. Here too he recommends a unified sensibility- a synthesis of emotion and intellect.

Then he refuses Wordsworth’s requirement of tranquility in creative activity. He implies that the moment of composition is a heightened moment of psychic activity

and introspection. It is a moment of excitement and concerted effort when the total mind strains to attain the desired height. It is a stimulated state of mind when an intense, purposive intellect brings feelings or emotions into new order. It cannot be a relaxed, serene, tension-free state. Wordsworth's reference to "tranquility" implies a kind of passive effortlessness. As Eliot says – it is not "a passive attending upon the event".

It is a moment or act of concentration- when all mental and emotional faculties are intently occupied in performing a creative feat. Thus, Eliot refutes Wordsworth's formula of creative process. In this way, he manifests his anti-romantic, modern, classical standpoint.

Tradition and The Individual Talent - CRITICAL SUMMARY

A Manifesto of Eliot's Critical Creed

The essay Tradition and Individual Talent was first published in 1919, in the Times Literary Supplement, as a critical article. The essay may be regarded as an unofficial manifesto of Eliot's critical creed, for it contains all those critical principles from which his criticism has been derived ever since. The seeds which have been sown here come to fruition in his subsequent essays. It is a declaration of Eliot's critical creed, and these principles are the basis of all his subsequent criticism.

Its Three Parts

The essay is divided into three parts. The first part gives us Eliot's concept of tradition, and in the second part is developed his theory of the impersonality of poetry. The short, third part is in the nature of a conclusion, or summing up of the whole discussion.

Traditional Elements: Their Significance

Eliot begins the essay by pointing out that the word 'tradition' is generally regarded as a word of censure. It is a word disagreeable to the English ears. When the English praise a poet, they praise him for those-aspects of his work which are 'individual' and original. It is supposed that his chief merit lies in such parts. This undue stress on individuality shows that the English have an uncritical turn of mind. They praise the poet for the wrong thing. If they examine the matter critically with an unprejudiced mind, they will realize that the best and the most individual part of a poet's work is that which shows the maximum influence of the writers of the past. To quote his own words: "Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice, we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual part of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.'

The Literary Tradition: Ways in Which It Can Be Acquired

This brings Eliot to a consideration of the value and significance of tradition. Tradition does not mean a blind adherence to the ways of the previous generation or generations. This would be mere slavish imitation, a mere repetition of what has already been achieved, and "novelty is better than repetition." Tradition in the sense of passive repetition is to be discouraged. For Eliot, Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. Tradition in the true sense of the term cannot be inherited, it can only be obtained by hard labour. This labour is the labour of knowing the past writers. It is the critical labour of sifting the good from the bad, and of knowing what is good and useful. Tradition can be obtained only by those who have the historical sense. The historical sense involves a perception, "not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence: One who has the historic sense feels that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer down to his own day, including the literature of his own country, forms one continuous literary tradition"

He realizes that the past exists in the present, and that the past and the present form one simultaneous order. This historical sense is the sense of the timeless and the temporal, as well as of the timeless and the temporal together. It is this historic sense which makes a writer traditional. A writer with the sense of tradition is fully conscious of his own generation, of his place in the present, but he is also acutely conscious of his relationship with the writers of the past. In brief, the sense of tradition implies (a) a recognition of the continuity of literature, (b) a critical judgment as to which of the writers of the past continue to be significant in the present, and (c) a knowledge of these significant writers obtained through painstaking effort. Tradition represents the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages, and so its knowledge is essential for really great and noble achievements.

Dynamic Conception of Tradition: Its Value

Emphasizing further the value of tradition, Eliot points out that no writer has his value and significance in isolation. To judge the work of a poet or an artist, we must compare and contrast his work with the works of poets and artist in the past. Such comparison and contrast is essential for forming an idea of the real worth and significance of a new writer and his work. Eliot's conception of tradition is a dynamic one. According to his view, tradition is not anything fixed and static; it is constantly changing, growing, and becoming different from what it is. A writer in the present must seek guidance from the past, he must conform to the literary tradition. But just as the past directs and guides the present, so the present alters and modifies the past. When a new work of art is created, if it is really new and original, the whole literary tradition is modified, though ever so slightly. The relationship between the past and the present is not one-sided; it is a reciprocal relationship. The past directs the present, and is itself modified and altered by the present. To quote the words of Eliot himself: "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new

(really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered.” Every great poet like Virgil, Dante, or Shakespeare, adds something to the literary tradition out of which the future poetry will be written.

The Function of Tradition

The work of a poet in the present is to be compared and contrasted with works of the past, and judged by the standards of the past. But this judgment does not mean determining good or bad. It does not mean deciding whether the present work is better or worse than works of the past. An author in the present is certainly not to be judged by the principles and the standards of the past. The comparison is to be made for knowing the facts, all the facts, about the new work of art. The comparison is made for the purposes of analysis, and for forming a better understanding of the new. Moreover, this comparison is reciprocal. The past helps us to understand the present, and the present throws light on the past. It is in this way alone that we can form an idea of what is really individual and new. It is by comparison alone that we can sift the traditional from the individual elements in a given work of art.

Sense of Tradition: Its Real Meaning

Eliot now explains further what he means by a sense of tradition. The sense of tradition does not mean that the poet should try to know the past as a whole, take it to be a lump or mass without any discrimination. Such a course is impossible as well as undesirable. The past must be examined critically and only the significant in it should be acquired. The sense of tradition does not also mean that the poet should know only a few poets whom he admires. This is a sign of immaturity and inexperience. Neither should a poet be content merely to know some particular age or period which he likes. This may be pleasant and delightful, but it will not

constitute a sense of tradition. A sense of tradition in the real sense means a consciousness, “of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations”. In other words, to know the tradition, the poet must judge critically what are the main trends and what are not. He must confine himself to the main trends to the exclusion of all that is incidental or topical. The poet must possess the critical gift in ample measure. He must also realise that the main literary trends are not determined by the great poets alone. Smaller poets also are significant. They are not to be ignored.

Works of Art: Their Permanence

The poet must also realize that art never improves, though its material is never the same. The mind of Europe may change, but this change does not mean that great writers like Shakespeare and Homer have grown outdated and lost their significance. The great works of art never lose their significance, for there is no qualitative improvement in art. There may be refinement, there may be development, but from the point of view of the artist there is no improvement. (For example, it will not be correct to say that the art of Shakespeare is better and higher than that of Eliot. Their works are of different kinds, for the material on which they worked was different.)

Awareness of the Past: The Poet's Duty to Acquire It

T.S. Eliot is conscious of the criticism that will be made of his theory of tradition. His view of tradition requires, it will be said, a ridiculous amount of erudition. It will be pointed out that there have been great poets who were not learned, and further that too much learning kills sensibility. However, knowledge does not merely mean bookish knowledge, and the capacity for acquiring knowledge differs from person to person. Some can absorb knowledge easily, while others must sweat for it. Shakespeare, for example, could know more of Roman history from Plutarch than most men can from the British Museum. It is the duty of every poet

to acquire, to the best of his ability, this knowledge of the past, and he must continue to acquire this consciousness throughout his career. Such awareness of tradition, sharpens poetic creation.

Impersonality of Poetry: Extinction of Personality

The artist must continually surrender himself to something which is more valuable than himself, i.e. the literary tradition. He must allow his poetic sensibility to be shaped and modified by the past. He must continue to acquire the sense of tradition throughout his career. In the beginning, his self, his individuality, may assert itself, but as his powers mature there must be greater and greater extinction of personality. He must acquire greater and greater objectivity. His emotions and passions must be depersonalized; he must be as impersonal and objective as a scientist. The personality of the artist is not important; the important thing is his sense of tradition. A good poem is a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. He must forget his personal joys and sorrows, and be absorbed in acquiring a sense of tradition and expressing it in his poetry. Thus, the poet's personality is merely a medium, having the same significance as a catalytic agent, or a receptacle in which chemical reactions take place. That is why Eliot holds that, "Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry."

The Poetic Process: The Analogy of the Catalyst

In the second part of the essay, Eliot develops further his theory of the impersonality of poetry. He compares the mind of the poet to a catalyst and the process of poetic creation to the process of a chemical reaction. Just as chemical reactions take place in the presence of a catalyst alone, so also the poet's mind is the catalytic agent for combining different emotions into something new. Suppose there is a jar containing oxygen and Sulphur dioxide. These two gases combine to form sulphurous acid when a fine filament of platinum is introduced into the jar.

The combination takes place only in the presence of the piece of platinum, but the metal itself does not undergo any change. It remains inert, neutral and unaffected. The mind of the poet is like the catalytic agent. It is necessary for new combinations of emotions and experiences to take place, but it itself does not undergo any change during the process of poetic combination. The mind of the poet is constantly forming emotions and experiences into new wholes, but the new combination does not contain even a trace of the poet's mind, just as the newly formed sulphurous acid does not contain any trace of platinum. In the case of a young and immature poet, his mind, his personal emotions and experiences, may find some expression in his composition, but, says Eliot, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him "will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates." The test of the maturity of an artist is the completeness with which his mind digests and transmutes the passions which form the substance of his poetry. The man suffers, i.e. has experiences, but it is his mind which transforms his experiences into something new and different. The personality of the poet does not find expression in his poetry; it acts like a catalytic agent in the process of poetic composition.

Emotions and Feelings

The experiences which enter the poetic process, says Eliot, may be of two kinds. They are emotions and feelings. Poetry may be composed out of emotions only or out of feelings only, or out of both. T.S. Eliot here distinguishes between emotions and feelings, but he does not state what this difference is, "Nowhere else in his writings", says A.G. George, "is this distinction maintained", neither does he adequately distinguish between the meaning of the two words". The distinction should, therefore, be ignored, more so as it has no bearing on his impersonal theory of poetry.

Poetry as Organization: Intensity of the Poetic Process

Eliot next compares the poet's mind to a jar or receptacle in which are stored numberless feelings, emotions, etc., which remain there in an unorganized and chaotic form till, "all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together." Thus poetry is organization rather than inspiration. And the greatness of a poem does not depend upon the greatness or even the intensity of the emotions, which are the components of the poem, but upon the intensity of the process of poetic composition. Just as a chemical reaction takes place under pressure, so also intensity is needed for the fusion of emotions. The more intense the poetic process, the greater the poem. There is always a difference between the artistic emotion and the personal emotions of the poet. For example, the famous Ode to Nightingale of Keats contains a number of emotions which have nothing to do with the Nightingale. "The difference between art and the event is always absolute." The poet has no personality to express, he is merely a medium in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may find no place in his poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may have no significance for the man. Eliot thus rejects romantic subjectivism.

Artistic Emotion: The Value of Concentration

The emotion of poetry is different from the personal emotions of the poet. His personal emotions may be simple or crude, but the emotion of his poetry may be complex and refined. It is the mistaken notion that the poet must express new emotions that results in much eccentricity in poetry. It is not the business of the poet to find new emotions. He may express only ordinary emotions, but he must impart to them a new significance and a new meaning. And it is not necessary that they should be his personal emotions. Even emotions which he has never personally experienced can serve the purpose of poetry. (For example, emotions which result from the reading of books can serve his turn.) Eliot rejects

Wordsworth's theory of poetry having, "its origin in emotions recollected in tranquility", and points out that in the process of poetic composition there is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor tranquility. In the poetic process, there is only concentration of a number of experiences, and a new thing results from this concentration. And this process of concentration is neither conscious nor deliberate; it is a passive one. There is, no doubt, that there are elements in the poetic process which are conscious and deliberate. The difference between a good and a bad poet is that a bad poet is conscious where he should be unconscious and unconscious where he should be conscious. It is this consciousness of the wrong kind which makes a poem personal, whereas mature art must be impersonal. But Eliot does not tell us when a poet should be conscious, and when not. The point has been left vague and indeterminate.

Poetry, an Escape from Personality and Personal Emotions

The poet concludes: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."

Thus Eliot does not deny personality or emotion to the poet. Only, he must depersonalize his emotions. There should be an extinction of his personality. This impersonality can be achieved only when poet surrenders himself completely to the work that is to be done. And the poet can know what is to be done, only if he acquires a sense of tradition, the historic sense, which makes him conscious, not only of the present, but also of the present moment of the past, not only of what is dead, but of what is already living.

Tradition and the Individual Talent (1919) by T. S. Eliot

In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its

absence. We cannot refer to "the tradition" or to "a tradition"; at most, we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of So-and-so is "traditional" or even "too traditional." Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure. If otherwise, it is vaguely approbative, with the implication, as to the work approved, of some pleasing archæological reconstruction. You can hardly make the word agreeable to English ears without this comfortable reference to the reassuring science of archæology.

Certainly the word is not likely to appear in our appreciations of living or dead writers. Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius. We know, or think we know, from the enormous mass of critical writing that has appeared in the French language the critical method or habit of the French; we only conclude (we are such unconscious people) that the French are "more critical" than we, and sometimes even plume ourselves a little with the fact, as if the French were the less spontaneous. Perhaps they are; but we might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a

book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism. One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity. Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone

who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the

new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.

In a peculiar sense he will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. I say judged, not amputated, by them; not judged to be as good as, or worse or better than, the dead; and certainly not judged by the canons of dead critics. It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art. And we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value—a test, it is true, which can only be slowly and cautiously applied, for we are none of us infallible judges of conformity. We say: it appears to conform, and is

perhaps individual, or it appears individual, and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other.

To proceed to a more intelligible exposition of the relation of the poet to the past: he can neither take the past as a lump, an indiscriminate bolus, nor can he form himself wholly on one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred period. The first course is inadmissible, the second is an important experience of youth, and the third is a pleasant and highly desirable supplement. The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either [Shakespeare](#), or [Homer](#), or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen. That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist or not to the extent which we

imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery. But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.

Some one said: "The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did."

Precisely, and they are that which we know.

I am alive to a usual objection to what is clearly part of my programme for the *métier* of poetry. The objection

is that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry), a claim which can be rejected by

appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon. It will even be affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts

poetic sensibility. While, however, we persist in believing that a poet ought to know as much as will not

encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to

whatever can be put into a useful shape for examinations, drawing-rooms, or the still more pretentious

modes of publicity. Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it.

Shakespeare acquired

more essential history from [Plutarch](#) than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be

insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should

continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more

valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this

depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I shall, therefore, invite you to

consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is

introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

II

Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to

the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the susurrus of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear

the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and

ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. In the last article I tried to point out the importance of the relation of

the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all

the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of

the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the

immature one not precisely in any valuation of "personality," not being necessarily more interesting, or having "more to say," but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images,

may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely. *Canto XV* of the *Inferno* (Brunetto Latini) is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation; but the effect, though single as that of any work of art, is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which "came," which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to. The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together. If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of "sublimity" misses the mark. For it is not the "greatness," the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts. The episode of Paolo and Francesca employs a definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of. It is no more intense,

furthermore, than *Canto XXVI*, the voyage of Ulysses, which has not the direct dependence upon an emotion. Great variety is possible in the process of transmutation of emotion: the murder of Agamemnon, or the agony of Othello, gives an artistic effect apparently closer to a possible original than the scenes from Dante. In the *Agamemnon*, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator; in *Othello* to the emotion of the protagonist himself. But the difference between art and the event is always absolute; the combination which is the murder of Agamemnon is probably as complex as that which is the voyage of Ulysses. In either case there has been a fusion of elements. The ode of Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the nightingale, partly, perhaps, because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together.

The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man

may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.

I will quote a passage which is unfamiliar enough to be regarded with fresh attention in the light—or darkness—of these observations:

And now methinks I could e'en chide myself
For doating on her beauty, though her death
Shall be revenged after no common action.

Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
For thee? For thee does she undo herself?

Are lordships sold to maintain ladyships
For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute?

Why does yon fellow falsify highways,
And put his life between the judge's lips,
To refine such a thing—keeps horse and men

To beat their valours for her?... (Cyril Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, 1606-7)

In this passage (as is evident if it is taken in its context) there is a combination of positive and negative

emotions: an intensely strong attraction toward beauty and an equally intense fascination by the ugliness

which is contrasted with it and which destroys it. This balance of contrasted emotion is in the dramatic

situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it. This is, so to speak, the

structural emotion, provided by the drama. But the whole effect, the dominant tone, is due to the fact that a

number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any

way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his

poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very

complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human

emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The

business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into

poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never

experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that "emotion

recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without

distortion of meaning, tranquillity. It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a

very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences

at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation.

These experiences are not

"recollected," and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is "tranquil" only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him "personal."

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

III

ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἴσως θεϊότερόν τι καὶ ἀπαθὲς ἐστίν

([Aristotle](#), *De Anima*: "While the intellect is doubtless a thing more divine and is impassive.")

This essay proposes to halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry. To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad.

There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is expression

of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

2. Tradition and Individual Talent by T.S Eliot

Introduction:

As a critic T. S. Eliot was very practical. He called himself “a classicist in literature”. According to Eliot, a critic must obey the objective standards to analyze any work. He thought criticism as a science. Eliot’s criticism became revolutionary at that time. 20th century got ‘metaphysical revival’ because of Eliot. He first recognized or accepted the uniqueness of ‘metaphysical poets’ of 17th century. Eliot came with new ideas in criticism’s world in 19th century. Eliot believed that when the old and new will become readjusted, it will be the end of criticism. He says:

“From time to time it is desirable, that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature and set the poets and the poems in a new order.”

Eliot demands, from any critic, ability for judgment and powerful liberty of mind to identify and to interpret. Eliot planned numerous critical concepts that gained wide currency and had a broad influence on criticism. ‘Objective co-relative’, ‘Dissociation of sensibility’, ‘Unification of sensibility’, ‘Theory of Depersonalization’ are few of Eliot’s theories, which becomes ‘cliché’ now. He emphasizes on ‘a highly developed sense of fact’. He gave new direction and new tools of criticism. George Watson writes about Eliot:

“Eliot made English criticism look different, but not in a simple sense. He offered it a new range of rhetorical possibilities, confirmed it in its increasing contempt for historical process, and yet reshaped its notion of period by a handful of brilliant institutions.”

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Main Concepts of the Essay:

This essay is divided into three parts:

1. The concept of tradition
2. The theory of impersonal poetry
3. The conclusion with a gist that “the poet’s sense of tradition and the impersonality of poetry are complimentary things.”

1. The concept of tradition

Eliot begins the essay by pointing out that the word ‘tradition’ is generally regarded as a word of censure. It is a word disagreeable to the English ears. When the English praise a poet, they praise him for those-aspects of his work which are ‘individual’ and original. It is supposed that his chief merit lies in such parts. This undue stress on individuality shows that the English have an uncritical turn of mind. They praise the poet for the wrong thing. If they examine the matter critically with an unprejudiced mind, they will realise that the best and the most

individual part of a poet's work is that which shows the maximum influence of the writers of the past. To quote his own words: "Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice, we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual part of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.'

The Literary Tradition: Ways in Which It Can Be Acquired

This brings Eliot to a consideration of the value and significance of tradition. Tradition does not mean a blind adherence to the ways of the previous generation or generations. This would be mere slavish imitation, a mere repetition of what has already been achieved, and “novelty is better than repetition.” Tradition in the sense of passive repetition is to be discouraged. For Eliot, Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. Tradition in the true sense of the term cannot be inherited, it can only be obtained by hard labour. This labour is the labour of knowing the past writers. It is the critical labour of sifting the good from the bad, and of knowing what is good and useful. Tradition can be obtained only by those who have the historical sense. The historical sense involves a perception, “not only of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence: One who has the historic sense feels that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer down to his own day, including the literature of his own country, forms one continuous literary tradition” He realises that the past exists in the present, and that the past and the present form one simultaneous order. This historical sense is the sense of the timeless and the temporal, as well as of the timeless and the temporal together. It is this historic sense which makes a writer traditional. A writer with the sense of tradition is fully conscious of his own generation, of his place in the present, but he is also acutely conscious of his relationship with the writers of the past. In brief, the sense of tradition implies (a) a recognition of the continuity of literature, (b) a critical judgment as to which of the writers of the past continue to be significant in the present, and (c) a knowledge of these significant writers obtained through painstaking effort. Tradition represents the accumulated wisdom and experience of ages, and so its knowledge is essential for really great and noble achievements.

Dynamic Conception of Tradition: Its Value

Emphasising further the value of tradition, Eliot points out that no writer has his value and significance in isolation. To judge the work of a poet or an artist, we

must compare and contrast his work with the works of poets and artist in the past. Such comparison and contrast is essential for forming an idea of the real worth and significance of a new writer

and his work. Eliot's conception of tradition is a dynamic one. According to his view, tradition is not anything fixed and static; it is constantly changing, growing, and becoming different from what it is. A writer in the present must seek guidance from the past, he must conform to the literary tradition. But just as the past directs and guides the present, so the present alters and modifies the past. When a new work of art is created, if it is really new and original, the whole literary tradition is modified, though ever so slightly. The relationship between the past and the present is not one-sided; it is a reciprocal relationship. The past directs the present, and is itself modified and altered by the present. To quote the words of Eliot himself: "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered." Every great poet like Virgil, Dante, or Shakespeare, adds something to the literary tradition out of which the future poetry will be written.

The Function of Tradition

The work of a poet in the present is to be compared and contrasted with works of the past, and judged by the standards of the past. But this judgment does not mean determining good or bad. It does not mean deciding whether the present work is better or worse than works of the past. An author in the present is certainly not to be judged by the principles and the standards of the past. The comparison is to be made for knowing the facts, all the facts, about the new work of art. The comparison is made for the purposes of analysis, and for forming a better understanding of the new. Moreover, this comparison is reciprocal. The past helps us to understand the present, and the present throws light on the past. It is in this way alone that we can form an idea of what is really individual and new. It is by

comparison alone that we can sift the traditional from the individual elements in a given work of art.

Sense of Tradition: Its Real Meaning

Eliot now explains further what he means by a sense of tradition. The sense of tradition does not mean that the poet should try to know the past as a whole, take it to be a lump or mass without any discrimination. Such a course is impossible as well as undesirable. The past must be examined critically and only the significant in it should be acquired. The sense of tradition does not also mean that the poet should know only a few poets whom he admires. This is a sign of immaturity and inexperience. Neither should a poet be content merely to know some particular age or period which he likes. This may be pleasant and delightful, but it will not constitute a sense of tradition. A sense of tradition in the real sense means a consciousness, “of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations”. In other words, to know the tradition, the poet must judge critically what are the main trends and what are not. He must confine himself to the main trends to the exclusion of all that is incidental or topical. The poet must possess the critical gift in ample measure. He must also realise that the main literary trends are not determined by the great poets alone. Smaller poets also are significant. They are not to be ignored.

2. Theory of impersonal poetry

In this second part Eliot tries to define the process of ‘depersonalization’ and its relation with the sense of tradition. The main aspect of this theory is the relation of poetry with the poet. Eliot says:

“Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry.”

Eliot says that in most of the criticisms, we find the name & the creativity of poet, but when we seek for enjoyment of poetry we seldom get it. In this part Eliot says that the difference between mature and immature poets can be found out by liberty of special and very varied feelings that can enter into new combinations.

Eliot gives illustration from science-chemistry. In the process of being sulfurous acid; there are two gases needed: oxygen and sulfur dioxide. And also they must have the presence of filament 'platinum'. He compares this platinum with the poet. In this whole process filament of platinum plays vital and inevitable role. But yet that role is indirect. In the process platinum remains quite unaffected by any gases. It remains inert, neutral and unchanged. Similarly the result (sulfurous acid) that comes out from the process has no any trace of platinum. Eliot insists that the mind of the poet should be like that shred of platinum. It should give its total contribution in creating poetry, then also it should remain unaffected and separate when poetry has come out.

According to Eliot the poet's mind is like a tare or utensil in which numerous feelings, phrases & images can be stored or seized. When a poet wants them he utilizes them and unites them. It doesn't mean that the poem created by the poet shows his personality or nature.

Eliot explains very basic thing of his point that, what is expressed by the poet is merely a medium, not a personality. He says:

"...the poet has not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality..."

In this medium, the impressions and experiences come together in unusual and unexpected ways. And other thing is some impressions and experiences seem valuable for a person, yet they may not be important for poetry. Same way some trivial experiences & impressions can become so important for poetry. Then Eliot says about context that without context nothing can be understood. He says:

"This balance of constructed emotion is in the dramatic situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it." He gives example from "The Revenger's Tragedy" (by Thomas Middleton). He puts some line from that without context to explain this point. Then he says that emotion in poetry

remains very complex thing, and poet's own personal emotion may be simple or flat. So every time poet's own emotion cannot be taken place in poem. And if the poet is always looking for new emotion in poem, then it will be perverse. A poet has not to find new emotions but he has to use ordinary emotions. He has to deal with every known/unknown emotion. Eliot here twists 'emotion recollected in tranquility'. He says it 'an inexact formula'. To write poetry is a great deal. When a poet becomes personal while writing poetry, he will be considered as a 'bad poet'. Because he becomes unconscious, where he should be conscious and he becomes conscious where he must be unconscious. When a poet escapes from his personality, then & then the great poem comes out. A poet must not show his emotion in poetry. Eliot says:

"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality."

The function of criticism at the present time: Matthew Arnold

It was in Arnold's first collection of critical writings, 'Essays in Criticism' in 1865, that his essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" was published. Criticism ought to be a 'dissemination of ideas, an unprejudiced and impartial effort to study and spread the best that is known and thought in the world', is what Matthew Arnold says in his essay- The Function of Criticism at the Present Time (1864).

He writes that when assessing a particular work, the goal is 'to see the object as in itself it really is'. Psychological, historical and sociological backgrounds are immaterial. This attitude was very influential and particularly noteworthy with later critics.

Fundamental argument in function of criticism

The fundamental argument of the essay describes what Matthew Arnold felt to be the existing attitude that the constructive, creative capacity was much more important than the critical faculty. His extensive definition of criticism, however-"the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is"-causes to be criticism a necessary pre-requirement for a valuable creation.

In his pursuit for the best, a critic Arnold believed that it should not only restrict or limit himself to the literature works of his own country but should draw significantly on foreign literature and ideas to a large extent, because the spreading of ideas should be an objective venture.

At a particular point in his career, Matthew Arnold was well-liked and a much-accepted poet. But later in his life, his interest turned with vigor to criticism of both literary works and forms and the social fabric of society. According to Matthew Arnold, Criticism, in his essay, The Function of Criticism at the Present Time, functions as an attempt or an effort that is not necessarily dependent upon any creative art form; rather criticism is intrinsically valuable in itself, whether its value sprouts from bringing joy to the writer of it or whether that value roots from making sure that the paramount ideas reach society. He connects criticism with creative power right through the essay and terminates with an idea that links to the earlier one above when he emphasize that that writing criticism may actually produce in its practitioner a sense of ecstatic creative joy just like someone engaging in what we normally think of creative writing feels.

Arnold makes an effort to demonstrate that criticism in and of itself has several significant functions and should be observed as an art form that is as high and important as any creative art form.

The Study of Poetry by Matthew Arnold

Arnold's most famous piece of literary criticism is his essay "The Study of Poetry." In this work, Arnold is fundamentally concerned with poetry's "high destiny;" he believes that "mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us" as science and philosophy will eventually prove flimsy and unstable. Arnold's essay thus concerns itself with articulating a "high standard" and "strict judgment" in order to avoid the fallacy of valuing certain poems (and poets) too highly, and lays out a method for discerning only the best and therefore "classic" poets (as distinct from the description of writers of the ancient world). Arnold's classic poets include Milton, Shakespeare, Dante, and Homer; and the passages he presents from each are intended to show how their poetry is timeless and moving. For Arnold, feeling and sincerity are paramount, as is the seriousness of subject: "The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner." An example of an indispensable poet who falls short of Arnold's "classic" designation is Geoffrey Chaucer, who, Arnold states, ultimately lacks the "high seriousness" of classic poets.

At the root of Arnold's argument is his desire to illuminate and preserve the poets he believes to be the touchstones of literature, and to ask questions about the moral value of poetry that does not champion truth, beauty, valor, and clarity. Arnold's belief that poetry should both uplift and console drives the essay's logic and its conclusions.

"The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its

emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry.”

Let me be permitted to quote these words of my own [from *The Hundred Greatest Men*—ed.], as uttering the thought which should, in my opinion, go with us and govern us in all our study of poetry. In the present work [*The English Poets*—ed.] it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world-river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought should be the same. We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry “the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science”; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry “the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge”; our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows

of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize “the breath and finer spirit of knowledge” offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry, we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte-Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said, when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan: “Charlatan as much as you please; but where is there not charlatanism?”—“Yes” answers Sainte-Beuve, “in politics, in the art of governing mankind, that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man’s being” [Les Cahiers—ed.]. It is admirably said, and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry, as in criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of

power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true.

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection such as the present. And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be, and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it before our minds at the outset, and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes; constantly in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically, they may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to overrate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again, a poet or poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities, likings

and circumstances, have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance. Here also we overrate the object of our interest, and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated.

Sample questions answers.

Questions related to Matthew Arnold

i. How does Arnold finally define criticism?

ii. What is the nature of the "critical effort", and what, according to Arnold, is the "highest function of man"? How do we know this to be so? Can criticism fulfil this highest function, or is it the case that only art can do so?

iii. What is the relationship between the "critical power" and the "creative power" (1516)? Why can't there be a truly great period of literary creation without criticism? What, for instance, was the problem with the romantics' exercise of their creative genius? (1517-18)

iv. Throughout the essay, what value is given to the notions or terms: "high standard," "best," "poetic truth," the power of "criticism of life," consolation and stay, excellent rather than inferior? The study of poetry

v. What is Arnold's touchstone theory?

Questions related to individual talent and tradition

I. What does he mean by "tradition"? How can we tell what is traditional? What relationship should the writer have to the writings of the past?

II. What does it mean to say that the author should not be personal, and that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates"? What should take the place of these personal or autobiographical emotions?

III. Why might poets wish to escape from personality? What does it mean to say, "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things"?

IV. Give your views about the impersonal nature of poetry?