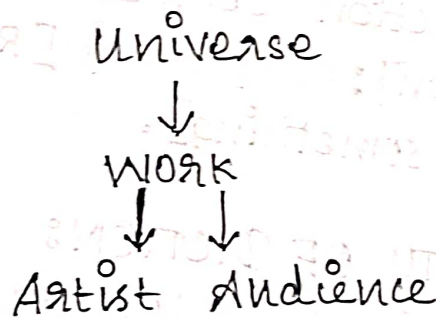


ORIENTATION OF CRITICAL THEORIES

INTRODUCTION:

The various critical theories, though often apparently contradictory to one another, have been greatly effective in shaping the activities of creative artists, as working conceptions.

Abrams classifies the work of art, the universe, the audience and the artist as the four coordinates of art criticism, suggesting a triangle with the work of art at the centre.



The four coordinates are not constants, but variables and the nature of a theory depends on the variable and accordingly the theories are grouped as mimetic theories, pragmatic theories, expressive theories and objective theories.

*PRAGMATIC THEORIES:

Towards the end of 19th century, pragmatism became the furthermore vital school of thought within American philosophy.

pragmatic theories emphasize on the reader's relation to the work. The work is treated as something that is constructed to achieve certain effects on the audience. Effects may be for the aesthetic pleasure, instruction or any kind of emotion. Despite the fact that pragmatic criticism originated in the Roman times, Philip Sidney, poetry has a clear-cut purpose to achieve certain effect in an audience. Good poets are those who write both to delight and teach, or in other words, for delightful instruction.

* MIMETIC THEORIES:

The word "mimetic" comes from the Greek word "mimesis," the act of imitation. The mimetic theory of literary criticism places primary importance on how well a literary work imitates life. In practice, mimetic critical theory often asks how well the literary work conveys universal truths and teaches the reader positive moral values and modes of personal conduct.

* EXPRESSIVE THEORIES:

Expressive literary theory emphasizes the ways in which the author's personal concerns. Pragmatic theory emphasizes the utility of the art - how reader may positively affect the reader.

* OBJECTIVE THEORIES:

The objective theory of literary criticism asserts that the work's value has no necessary dependence.

On any external factors, but rises from its own formal structure. In the objective literary sense, for example, a novel about the civil right activism of the great American musician Nat King Cole is acceptable even though Cole, in reality, avoided involvement in civil rights issues.

* SIDNEY'S AN APOLOGIE FOR POETRY:

Wimsatt and Brooks are of the view that "An Apologie for Poetry" is a kind of formal beginning of literary theorizing.

* INTRODUCTION:

Sidney was concerned to defend poetry by which term he meant all imaginative literature against the charges brought against it by the puritans that it was immoral, lying and provocative of debauchery.

Sidney proceeds to consider the significance of the title given to the poets by the Greek and Romans. The Roman called him *vates* "which is as much as a Diviner, Fore seer or prophet." That poetry can be divine is shown by the psalms of David. When he comes to the name of the Greeks gave to the poet, *poietes*, maker, Sidney finds a new justification for poetry. The poet is indeed a "maker", and this distinguishes him from the practitioners of other arts and sciences.

The poet does not imitate or represent things which already exist. He invents new things by drawing on "his own wit" Sidney says that the world invented or created by the poet is a better world than the real one. The real world is brassy, the poets only deliver a golden.

* IDEAL WORLD OF THE POET:

For Sidney, the ideal world of the poet is of value because it is both a better world than the real one, and it is presented in such a way that the reader is stimulated to try and imitate in his own practice. Thus, the Aristotelian notion of imitation is transferred from the poet to the reader. The poet does not imitate but creates; the poet then, teaches by presenting an ideal world for the imitation of the reader. In the poet's world, the good always prosper and the wicked are never left unpunished.

* MORAL IMPROVEMENT:

Sidney admits that unless poetry leads to moral improvement in its readers, it cannot be really justified. Moral philosophy teaches virtue by abstract precept and the theoretical argument. Whereas the historian claims to do better since he teaches by concrete examples drawn from history. But according to Sidney, both are inadequate and inferior. The philosopher is too abstract to be persuasive while the historian is restricted to "the particular truth of things".

poetry then, Sidney claims, is superior as a moral teacher to both philosophy and history. Poetry does not deal with mere abstract proposition as philosophy does, but with concrete examples.

* TRUE NATURE:

The true nature of virtue is painted vividly and attractively, while vice with equal vividness is made to appear always ugly and unattractive. For Sidney, the poet is the creator of a world which leads those who view it to follow virtue and shun vice. The poet not only exceeds the philosopher in his ability to create the perfect example, but also in his ability to move the reader to follow that exam

* CONCLUSION:

By this theory of moving, Sidney a way of including the purely aesthetic qualities of form and style in his criteria of the good work of literary art. Sidney's view the literature should be instructive and morally edifying.

DRYDEN: → Father of English literary criticism.

* INTRODUCTION:

Dryden was the first critic to offer rules for works of art. Practical criticism and its formal structure, originates from Dryden.

* DRYDEN'S POETRY:

Dryden's "ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESIE" [1668] is in the form of a dialogue. It is a discussion on the nature of poetic drama and the respective merits of classical, modern, French, Elizabethan and Restoration plays.

* THE DEFINITION OF A PLAY:

The definition of a play:
"A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours and the changes of fortune, to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind."

* ILLUMINATION CONCEPT:

For example, if Othello had not married Desdemona, or if Othello had not promoted Cassio, Iago would not have reacted in the way he does and Othello would never have been driven to exhibit the true image of the nature. It is the testing circumstances that illuminate character.

The essay is in the form of a dialogue where different people, each representing a different point of view, are allowed their full say. The centre of interest, however, lies in the important question, which playwright produced better plays.

* ILLUMINATE CHARACTERS:

Dryden himself is Neander, Crites, Wimsatt and Brooks

Suggest that critics could be Dryden's brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, advocates the extreme view that the Greeks and Romans are the perfect masters who discovered and demonstrated the rules for drama.

* RULES FOR DRAMA:

The modern drama can at best only conform to these rules. It is only after making this seminal statement, Dryden proceeds to talk about the rules and the unities. He is of the view that human nature can be most adequately represented on the stage when the time taken during the actual performance corresponds most closely to the length of time which action could be supposed to take in real life. Regarding, unity of place, Dryden makes critics observe that the less people move from place to place on stage, the more persuasive and satisfying the play will be. The third unity, that of action, goes beyond the question of visual illusion, to touch on the much more fundamental matter of the nature of aesthetic unity.

* ART AND NATURE:

Dryden equates it with the relationship between

Art and nature. Art and Nature are different; but art imitates or represents Nature in some sense. A play, to be like Nature, is to be above it. After praising the ancient writers for observing the unities in drama more strictly than the moderns, Dryden argues that if their plots were good, their style was even better.

*EUGENIUS:

Then, Another member of the group (perhaps echoing Dryden's friend Charles Sackville) takes up the defence of the moderns. He makes the simple, but effective point that if art is representational, the artist will profit more by keeping his eye on the object to be represented than by looking only at previous representations. This, however, does not mean that he should not benefit by getting technical hints from his predecessors. Art can progress as science can.

Eugenius defends the moderns saying that they really stick to the rules of the ancient writers better than even the ancient writers did themselves. He also attacks the classical writers for their use of the threadbare plots in drama. He attacks ancient tragedy for basing its plots on known myths.

*LISIDIUS:

Lisidius (Sir Charles Sedley) undertakes to prove that French neo-classic drama of the seventeenth

is superior to all others. Their plots are single and unified, the development of the action well contrived. The exposition-speeches serve the conventional role of the Chorus. Lisidius raises the question of not only unity of action but unity of tone. Though, in plays like Macbeth the comic scenes might be said to be a welcome relief, the blending of humour and pathos in most of the Elizabethan plays is not in the right proportion. Again, Lisidius praises the French plays for having been grounded upon some well-known history.

*NEANDER:

Dryden/Neander answers the arguments raised by Lisidius in favour of French plays. While he admits that the French plays have well-contrived plots and follow the law of comedy, he argues that this quality alone does not make them superior. He is of the view that excessive regularity and formality destroy the necessary liveliness in a play. He defends the complexity of English plots against the singleness of the French. Variety, if well-ordered, is welcome for Dryden.

What follows is a critical

evaluation of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson. The genius of Dryden is revealed here in the form of his technique of comparison. Dryden has the capacity to have in mind the qualities of all the dramatists under comparison. He illustrates one by comparing and contrasting with another. This, ultimately, enables him to say something illuminating about both the dramatist at once. Consider, for example, his observation on Shakespeare and Ben Jonson: "I admire Ben Jonson; But I love Shakespeare".

* CONCLUSION:

The final argument in the "Essay of Dramatic Poesie" concerns the suitability of rhyme for drama. Dryden defends rhyme in drama. For him, a play is "the work of the poet".

DR. JOHNSON:

* INTRODUCTION:

The general principles were more strictly maintained, his application of them being determined by a narrow taste. But what is significant is, it is always strong, clear and well-argued. One major shortcoming in Johnson as a critic is that he treats art as life.

* FIRST ATTACK:

Johnson's defence against the attacks of Dennis, Rymer and Voltaire is quite significant. Dennis

and Rhymer found Shakespeare's Roman not sufficiently Roman, Strog, dignified and just. Dennis could not accept Shakespeare's presentation of Claudius in Hamlet. But Johnson argues that Claudius, the king is a usurper and a murderer and making him a drunkard is only just. Johnson finds Shakespeare's greatest merits in his characterization. According to Johnson, Shakespeare's characters are clearly and convincingly drawn, successfully combining the particular with the universal.

* SECOND ATTACK:

Johnson's defence of Shakespeare's tragicomedy is equally important. Johnson argues that "all pleasure consists in variety." The fact is according to Johnson, Shakespeare's plays were neither tragedies nor comedies in the ancient sense. The aim of all poetry is to instruct by pleasing and Shakespeare's "mingled dramas" did this effectively.

Similar is Johnson's defence against Shakespeare's non-observance of the unities of time and place. As he points out, Shakespeare, in general, had preserved the unity of action in accordance with Aristotle's requirements, his plots having a beginning,

a middle and an end, with events linked together and conclusions resulting from what had gone before. Johnson argues that unities of time and place are unnecessary, the play-goer realizes from the first that the whole dramatic business is one of make-believe.

*MORALITY:

He dislikes Milton's "Lycidas" for many reasons, but the most important reason was "insincerity of emotion" as he argues "where there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief". The second great principle of Johnson's criticism is "moral truth". He preferred Richardson to Fielding for moral reasons. He condemned Tom Jones as a "vicious book" and Fielding a "barren rascal".

*CONCLUSION:

In spite of his admiration for Swift, he also had moral reservations against him. It is only in this moral attitude he accuses Shakespeare also of lacking in morality. The fact is that Johnson is firmly rooted in the taste of his own aesthetics and cosmopolitanism has not affected him.