Aristotle's Concept of 'imitation'

Plato, an idealist, believed that 'Ideas' alone are true and real, and the earthly things are mere types or copies of the ideal. Plato, therefore, regarded 'imitation' as mere mimesis or representation of these 'Ideal Forms'; and not creative expression. But Aristotle, his disciple, does not consider poetic imitation to be mere act of servile copying. According to him, 'imitation' is an act of imaginative creation by which the poet drawing his materials from the phenomenal world makes something new out of it.

Aristotle, by his theory of 'imitation', answers the charge of Plato that poetry is an imitation of shadows thrice removed from reality, and that the poet beguiles us with lies. Aristotle asserts that art imitates not the mere shadow of things, but the ideal reality embodied in the very object of the world. The poet does not copy the external world but creates according to his idea of it. Poetry is a creative process giving us the poet's conception of truth. The real and the ideal, from Aristotle's point of view, are not opposites — the ideal is the real, shorn of chance and accidents, a purified form of reality. And it is this 'higher reality' which is the object of poetic creation.

Thus, Aristotle successfully refuted the charge of Plato, and provided a defense of poetry which has ever since been used by the lovers of poetry in justification of their Muse. Aristotle breathed a new life and soul into the concept of poetic imitation, enlarged its scope and showed that it is, in reality, a creative process.

Aristotle's Six Elements of Tragedy

Tragedy is the "imitation of an action" (*mimesis*) according to "the law of probability or necessity." Aristotle indicates that the medium of tragedy is drama, not narrative; tragedy "shows" rather than "tells." According to Aristotle, every Tragedy must have six parts — namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, and Melody.

Plot is the "first principle," the most important feature of tragedy. Aristotle defines plot as "the arrangement of the incidents": i.e., not the story itself but the way the incidents are presented to the audience, the structure of the play. According to Aristotle, tragedies where the outcome depends on a tightly constructed cause-and-effect chain of actions are superior to those that depend primarily on the character and personality of the protagonist. Plots that meet this criterion will have the following qualities:

(i) The plot must be "a whole," with a beginning, middle, and end.
(ii) The plot must be "complete," having "unity of action."
(iii) The plot must be "of a certain magnitude," both quantitatively (length, complexity) and qualitatively ("seriousness" and universal significance).
(iv) The plot may be either simple or complex, although complex is better. Simple plots have only a "change of fortune" (*catastrophe*). Complex plots have both "reversal of intention" (*peripeteia*) and "recognition" (*anagnorisis*) connected with the catastrophe.

Character has the second place in importance. In a perfect tragedy, character will support plot, i.e., personal motivations will be intricately connected parts of the cause-and-effect chain of actions producing pity and fear in the audience. The protagonist should be renowned and prosperous, so his change of fortune can be from good to bad. This change "should come about as the result, not of vice, but of some great error or frailty in a character." Characters in tragedy should have the following qualities: "good or fine"; "fitness of character," (true to type); "true to life" (realistic); "consistency" (true to themselves); "necessary or probable" and "true to life and yet more beautiful" (idealized, ennobled).

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Thought is third in importance, and is found "where something is proved to be or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated." Aristotle says little about thought, and most of what he has to say is associated with how speeches should reveal character. Diction is fourth, and is "the expression of the meaning in words" which is proper and appropriate to the plot, characters, and end of the tragedy. In this category, Aristotle discusses the stylistic elements of tragedy; he is particularly interested in metaphors. Song, or melody, is fifth, and is the musical element of the chorus. Aristotle argues that the Chorus should be fully integrated into the play like an actor; choral odes should not be "mere interludes," but should contribute to the unity of the plot. Spectacle is last, for it is least connected with literature; "the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet."

Aristotle's Concept of 'plot'

Aristotle devotes considerable attention to an examination of the nature, structure and constituent elements of the ideal tragic plot. Tragedy is the representation of action, and action consists of incidents and events. Plot is the arrangement of these incidents and events. Plot, thus, contains the kernel of the action; hence, plot is the first principle, the soul of tragedy.

Aristotle lays down that the tragic plot must be a complete whole. By 'complete' he means that the plot must have a beginning, a middle, and en end. So, artistic wholeness implies logical link-up of the various incidents, events and situations that form the plot. The plot, according to Aristotle, must have a certain magnitude. Magnitude here means 'size', that is, it should be neither too small nor too large. Magnitude also implies that the plot must have order, logic, symmetry and perspicuity.

Aristotle conceives of the plot of a tragedy as an organic whole, and also as having organic unity in its action. Further, Aristotle couples organic unity of plot with probability and necessity. So, Aristotle emphasizes the Unity of Action but has little to say about the Unity of Time and Unity of Place. Moreover, Aristotle is of the view that the plot of a tragedy must be a 'fatal' one and therefore, rules out 'fortunate' plots for tragedy.

Again, according to Aristotle, tragic plots may be of three kinds: simple, complex, and plots based on or depicting incidents of suffering, and depending for their effect on such depiction. However, a tragic ideal plot must be a complex one having 'perepeteia' (reversal of intention) and 'anagnorisis' (recognition of truth). Last, but not the least, in making their plots, the poets should take care to make their denouements or resolutions effective and successful where unraveling of the plot should be done naturally and logically, and not by the use of arbitrary devices like chance, supernatural intervention, etc.

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Aristotle's Concept of 'character'

According to Aristotle**,** tragedy idealizes or imitates men as better or higher. In Chapter XV of Poetics, Aristotle deals with the art of characterization on an extended scale. He lists four essentials of successful characterization: 'goodness,' 'appropriateness,' 'likeness,' and 'consistency'. All these words have been variously interpreted by various critics.

While some critics have interpreted 'goodness,' in the sense of general moral quality revealed in action, others emphasize that it means 'fine' or 'noble'. Some critics have also interpreted the term keeping in mind the Greek sense, and not the Christian sense of the word 'goodness'. By

‘appropriateness’ Aristotle meant that the characters must be true to ‘type’ or ‘status’ — true and appropriate representatives of the class or group to which they belong. Again, ‘Likeness’ means that the characters must be like ourselves or true to life, that is, intermediate sort, mixtures of good and evil, virtues and weaknesses. And ‘consistency’ means that the characters must be true to their natures, and should be no sudden changes in character.

Having examined the art of characterization in general, Aristotle proceeds to examine the qualities which the ideal tragic hero must have. Rejecting perfection as well as utter depravity and villainy, Aristotle points out that the ideal tragic hero must be an intermediate kind of person, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgement. The Greek word used here is ‘hamartia’, which means ‘missing the mark’. Moreover, Aristotle lays down another qualification for the tragic hero — he must be a person who occupies a position of lofty eminence in society. However, the concept of tragic hero has undergone a sea change with the passage of time.

Aristotle’s Concept of ‘catharsis’

While defining tragedy, Aristotle writes that the function of tragedy is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear, and in this way to affect ‘catharsis’ of these or such-like emotions. The Greek word for ‘catharsis’ has three meanings, ‘purgation’, purification’ and ‘clarification’, and each critic has used the word in one or the other of these varied senses, and has reached accordingly at a different conclusion.

Catharsis has been taken to be a medical metaphor, ‘purgation’ denoting a pathological effect on the soul analogous to the effect of medicine on the body. By some the process has been likened to homeopathic treatment with the like curing the like, while in the neo-Classical era, it was taken to be an allopathic treatment with the unlike curing unlike.

However, some of the critics reject the medical metaphor; rather they regard it as a kind of safety valve where impulses like pity and terror are harmonized and blended in tragedy, and this balance brings relief and repose. Again, some consider the tragic process as a kind of lustration of the soul, an inner illumination resulting in a more balanced attitude to life and its suffering.

Moreover, some critics advocate the ‘purification’ theory which involves the idea of moral instruction and moral learning. They consider it as a kind of ‘moral conditioning’, which the spectators undergo. But according to the ‘clarification’ theory catharsis means clarification of the essential and universal significance of the incidents depicted, leading to an enhanced understanding of the universal law which governs human life and destiny, and such an understanding, even when the incidents depicted are ugly or repellent, leads to pleasure, the proper of tragedy. So, to conclude, catharsis is a process of learning and therefore, pleasurable.

Longinus on ‘Sublime’

Longinus uses the word ‘sublime’ not in its modern, narrow, and limited sense. What Longinus means by the word ‘sublime’ is ‘elevation’ or ‘loftiness’, all that raises style above the ordinary, and gives to it distinction in its widest and truest sense. Thus, by sublimity Longinus means, ‘a certain distinction and excellence in composition.’ The effect of this quality is not mere persuasion or pleasure, but ‘transport’; that is to say it works like a charm carrying irresistibly away with it, all

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readers and hearers. The effect is as immediate as it is subtle; it does not result from a painstaking, observance of the rules of rhetoric.

In order to explain further the nature of the sublime, Longinus compares the true sublime with the false sublime. The false sublime is characterized, first, by timidity or bombast of language, which is as great an evil as swelling in the body: 'It is drier than dropsy.' Secondly, the false sublime is characterized by puerility, which is a parade and pomp of language, tawdry and affected, and so frigid. Thirdly, the false sublime results when there is a cheap display of passion, when it is not justified by the occasion, and so is wearisome. According to Longinus, all contemporary literature was falsely sublime. True sublime, on the other hand, 'pleases all, and pleases always,' for it expresses thoughts of universal validity – thoughts common to men of all ages and countries – in a language which instinctively uplifts our souls.

Longinus examines how this true sublimity can be acquired, and points out that both Nature and Art are equally necessary. However, the course of discussion shows that in truth he considers that such skill is inborn, it does not come by teaching, 'and that indeed genius itself shrivels up at the touch of the rules.' Nevertheless, art has its own place and its function is twofold. In the first place, it provides a safeguard against undue license, and it explains to men Nature's method of expression: Fine writing needs the curb, as well as the spur.'

According to Longinus, there are five sources of this distinction, loftiness, or sublimity. First and most important source is grandeur of conception or lofty and awe-inspiring thoughts. Second, there should be vehement and inspired passion. Third, use of figures is the next source of sublimity, which are of two kinds, figures of thought and figures of language. Fourth, noble diction, which is the result of choice and arrangement of words, use of images, and metaphors and similes and comparisons is the next source of sublimity. And fifth, dignified, elevated and elaborate composition is also a source of sublimity. The first two sources are innate or natural, while the remaining three are the products of art. Thus, Art and Nature both contribute to the sublime or loftiness of style.

Wordsworth's Definition of Poetry

The 'Preface' to the Lyrical Ballads is a revolutionary critical statement from a poet, William Wordsworth, deeply imbued with the sense of a mission to free poetry from a hackneyed and artificial style of writing and take it nearer to life as it is actually lived and make it authentic expression of sincere feeling and mode of experience.

According to Wordsworth, '… all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of power feelings.' As is obvious, the emphasis in this statement is on spontaneous expression but the role of the rational mind, of premeditation, of getting accustomed to a particular mode of thinking and feeling, is duly recognized. Poetry is not the turning loose of emotions and feelings. Feelings are continuously directed by thoughts or, in Eliot's words, the poet thinks his feelings and feels his thoughts.

Wordsworth himself modifies his definition of poetry in a later passage of the 'Preface': 'I have said poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.' Thus poetry is not lifeless artistry or mere craftsmanship as the imitative-rationalist aesthetic of the eighteenth century generally pre-supposed. It originates from and is sustained by a genuine and sincere personal feeling and, paradoxically, in this lies its universal appeal.

Wordsworth wrote in his 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface', poetry is 'the reflection of the wisdom of the heart and the grandeur of the imagination.' Such poetry touches the deepest chords in man and has a humanizing and sensitizing effect. Wordsworth elaborates: 'Poetry is the image of

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man and nature.' Therefore, we need to modify 'spontaneity' and 'feeling' to maintain that these tendencies point to a new universalized 'diction'.

Wordsworth, therefore, sticks to the basic Romantic belief that sincere feeling and passionate expression alone can redeem poetry but he simultaneously reconciles it with his faith in universal human nature.

Wordsworth's Theory of Poetic Diction

It has been generally supposed that Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction is merely a reaction against and a criticism of the 'Pseudo-Classical' theory of poetic diction. But such a view is true only partially. 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.

Wordsworth's aim was to deal in his poetry with rustic and humble life, and it is quite natural that he should also advocate simplicity of language to suit the simplicity of theme. As he tells us in the 'Preface,' his purpose was 'to choose incidents and situations from common life,' and therefore, quite naturally, he also intended to use 'a selection of language, really used by men.' It was in the fitness of things that he should also use the language of the rustics, farmers, shepherds, who were to be the subjects of is poetry. The language of these men was to be used but it was to be purified of all that is painful of disgusting in that language. It was to be purified of all that is vulgar and coarse in such language. Only a judicious selection of such a language can give pleasure.

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 the language of prose and metrical composition. Moreover he believed that the poet is essentially a man speaking to men, and so, he must make use of such a language as is used by men The poet has to communicate, and he can communicate best in the language which is really used by men. He condemns the artificial language, such as that of the school of Pope as a 'masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas.'

Coleridge's 'Willing Suspension of Disbelief'

No phrase in the English language has acquired such a wide and universal popularity, and has had such a profound impact on subsequent literary theory as Coleridge's phrase, 'willing suspension of disbelief,' which he used to indicate the nature of poetic-dramatic illusion. All through the Neo-classical era the question of dramatic illusion and credibility had exercised the mind of critics, but it was Coleridge who said the last word on the subject, and finally put the controversy at rest.

Coleridge uses the phrase in connection with his account in Chapter XIV of the Biographia Literaria of the origin and genesis of the Lyrical Ballads. However, in Chapter XXIII of the same book he explains himself further and writes: 'The poet does not require us to be awake and believe; he solicits us only to yield ourselves to a dream; and this, too, with our eyes open, and with our judgment per due behind the curtain, really to awaken us at the first motion of our will: and meantime, only, not to disbelieve.'

The poet sends our judgment to sleep for as long as we are reading his work or watching his play in the theatre. He does not ask us to believe in what is presented, he only requires that we should not disbelieve. Only a momentary suspension of disbelief is required for an enjoyment of imaginative

literature. Our reason or rational judgment, our consciousness, is in voluntary suspension, and this suspension of judgment enables us to enjoy what in our waking moments when the spell is broken we would condemn as incredible. Distancing in time and place, humanizing of the marvelous and the supernatural, etc. are some of the devices used to procure such willing suspension of disbelief.

Fancy and Imagination (Primary and Secondary) / Esemplastic Imagination

Coleridge's whole aesthetic — his definition of poetry, his idea of the poet, and his poetical criticism — revolve around his theory of creative imagination which is to be found in Biographia Literaria.

Coleridge uses the term 'Fancy' for the eighteenth century view of imagination which was essentially mechanical and determined by the law of association. It is not a creative power at all, and only combines what it perceives into beautiful shapes, but does fuse and unify. Fancy is a kind of memory: it arbitrarily 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 and so, for Coleridge, Fancy is the drapery of poetic genius.

In contrast to Fancy, Imagination is essentially creative and the soul of poetic genius. Coleridge subdivides it into the Primary and the Secondary Imagination. According to Coleridge, the Primary Imagination is 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception'. The Primary Imagination is the elemental power of basic human perception which enables us to identify, to discriminate, to synthesize and thus to produce order out of disorder. In this it is analogous to the eternal act of creation in the infinite 'I AM'.

The Secondary or artistic Imagination co-exists with the conscious will and is different in degree and mode of operation from the Primary Imagination. First, it is active and projective in nature and has a life-bestowing capacity which informs the world of objective phenomena with attributes which make it responsive and hospitable to man. Secondly, it dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, it struggles to idealize and to unify.

In other words, the creative imagination, through a process of dissolution, diffusion and dissipation creates a chaos and then sets out to create a universe from it. It is a coadunating and esemplastic power which reconciles opposites, unifies disparate elements and synthesizes dialectically opposed forces. It idealizes and reshapes the data of experience to create a new reality out of them and this reality has the prime attribute of organic unity in it.

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Arnold's View on Criticism

It is in his essay on 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' prefixed to the first series of his Essays in Criticism, that Matthew Arnold defines criticism, elaborates its function, and also lays down the essentials of a competent critic. According to Arnold, criticism is not merely 'judgment in literature'; its function is much more noble, exalted and catholic.

Arnold defines criticism as, 'A Disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas.' The task of the critic is threefold in nature. First, it is the critic's duty to learn and understand — he must 'see things as they really are.' Thus equipped, his second task is to hand on his idea to others to convert the world to 'make the best ideas prevail.' And thirdly, by doing this, he is also preparing an atmosphere

favorable for the creative genius of the future by promoting a current of ideas. Thus, the function of Arnold's critic in the broadest sense of the term is to promote culture.

The critic being cultured helps others to become cultured, thereby making literary activity possible by establishing current of noble ideas. The critic also rouses men out of their self-satisfaction and complacency, and raises them above practical consideration by making them contemplate the ideally perfect. Moreover, a critic should possess the quality of disinterestedness and should remain uninfluenced by the coarser appeals. Thus, in analyzing the pernicious influences which beset the critic, Arnold has made a great advance, and has rendered a service to criticism.

Arnold's Definition of Poetry

Arnold in his 'The Study of Poetry' defines poetry as 'a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for that criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty.' Arnold himself explains 'criticism of life' as 'the noble and profound application of ideas to life.' According to Arnold, 'laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty' has 'truth and seriousness of substance and matter,' and 'felicity and perfection of diction and manner.'

Arnold has a high conception about poetry and he is confident that good poetry has an immense future. He goes on to state that poetry is capable of 'higher uses', interpreting life for us, consoling and sustaining us. He firmly declares that it is in poetry that the spirit of English race will find its last source of consolation and stay.

Arnold believes that poetry does not present life as it is, rather the poet adds something to it from his own noble nature, and this something contributes to his criticism of life. Poetry makes men moral, better and nobler. But it does so not through direct teaching, or by appealing to reason like science, but by appealing the soul, to the whole of man. The poet gives in his poetry what he really and seriously believes in; he speaks from the depth of his soul, and speaks it so beautifully that he creates a thing of beauty, which is a perennial source of joy. Such high poetry makes life richer and has the power of 'sustaining and delighting us.' Poetry conforms to the ideals of truth and goodness, and thus, uplifts and ennobles the soul.

Arnold's 'Touchstone Method'

Touchstone is hard stone used to determine, by the streak left on it when rubbed by a piece of gold, whether the metal is pure gold, and if not, the degree to which it contains an alloy. The word was introduced into literary criticism by Matthew Arnold in 'The Study of Poetry' to denote short but distinctive passages, selected from the writings of great poets, which he used to determine the excellence of passages or poems which are compared to them.

Arnold proposed this method of evaluation as a corrective for what he called the 'fallacious' estimates of poems according to their 'historic importance in the development of literature, or else according to their 'personal' appeal to an individual critic. As Arnold put it: 'There can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent … than to have in one's mind lines and expression of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry.'

The touchstones he proposed are passages from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, ranging in length from one to four lines. Two of his best known touchstones are also the shortest: Dante's 'In la

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sua volontade è nostra pace' ('In His will is our peace'; Paradiso, III. 85), and the close of Milton's description in Paradise Lost, IV, 271-2, of the loss to Ceres of her daughter Proserpine, '… which cost Ceres all that pain / To seek her through the world.'

Eliot's Concept of 'Objective Correlative'

The term, 'objective correlative', which had been coined by the American painter and poet Washington Allston, was introduced by T.S.Eliot, rather casually, into his essay 'Hamlet and His Problems' to refer to an image, action, or situation — that somehow evokes a particular emotion from the reader without expressly stating what that emotion should be.

As Eliot wrote, 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.'

According to Eliot, when writers fail to find objective correlative for the emotions they wish to convey, readers or audiences are left unconvinced, unmoved, or even confused. Eliot applied his theory to William Shakespeare's play Hamlet, arguing that it is an 'artistic failure' because occurrences in the play do not justify Hamlet's depth of feeling and thus fail to provide convincing motivation.

The phrase has been discussed by a number of critics — for Cleanth Brooks it is 'organic metaphor,' for Elises Vevos a 'vehicle of expression for the poet's emotion,' and for Austin, 'the poetic content to be conveyed by verbal expressions.' However, Eliot's formulation has also been criticized for falsifying the way a poet actually composes, since no object or situation is in itself a 'formula' for an emotion, but depends for its emotional significance and effect on the way it is rendered and used by a particular poet. The vogue of Eliot's concept of an outer correlative for inner feelings was due in part to its accord with the reaction of the New Criticism against vagueness of description and the direct statement of feelings in poetry, and in favour of definiteness, impersonality, and descriptive concreteness.

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Eliot's Theory of Poetry

According to T.S. Eliot, the artist must continually surrender himself to something which is more valuable than himself, that is, the literary tradition. A poet 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. A poet must also acquire greater objectivity where his emotions and passion are to be depersonalized. Thus, the personality of the artist is not important. He must forget his personal joys and sorrows, and be absorbed in acquiring a sense of tradition to express it in his poetry. The poet's personality is merely a medium having the same significance as a catalectic agent.

Eliot 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 catalectic agent for combining different emotions into something new. 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.'

Eliot also 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. So, Eliot rejects Wordsworth's theory of poetry, 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. Thus, T.S. Eliot 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.'

Dissociation of sensibility

'Dissociation of sensibility' is a phrase that T. S. Eliot popularized in critical circles via his 1921 essay 'The Metaphysical Poets.' By 'dissociation of sensibility,' Eliot referred to a divergence of thought and feeling that he claimed emerged in seventeenth-century literature, particularly poetry, after the era of the metaphysical poets and that supposedly persisted in the writings of subsequent authors such as Robert Browning and Alfred Lord Tennyson. For Eliot, earlier writers, John Donne in particular, possessed a 'direct sensuous apprehension of thought'; their ideas, conversely, were played out in a range of emotions. The result was a unified poetic sensibility, which Eliot explains as follows:

> When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary.

Writers coming after John Milton and John Dryden, who in Eliot's view were among those responsible for dissociating thought from feeling, never quite managed to recover and attain that unity of perception characteristic of the metaphysical poets and their predecessors.

The New Critics borrowed this term from Eliot and used it widely, but since the 1950s, this notion has come under attack. Those who still agree with Eliot's ideas point not to Milton and Dryden but, rather, to the advent of scientific rationalism as the culprit that caused the dissociation of sensibility. Less sympathetic critics claim that the doctrine was largely contrived by Eliot to justify his own poetic preferences and to support his own political and social views. Some critics also point to Eliot's vagueness and historical inaccuracy, arguing that dissociation of sensibility can be found in the works of poets who wrote long before the so-called metaphysical poets — and that plenty of unified sensibility have existed since their time.

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