

Brief Questions Tradition and Individual Talent

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Brief Questions: Tradition and Individual Talent

- What do critics usually do regarding tradition when judging a poet's work?

Ans:

They simply call poetry "traditional" without truly understanding what tradition means.

- What does every nation and race have?

Ans:

Each has its own creative and critical spirit.

- What is tradition broader than?

Ans:

Tradition is broader than merely copying one's immediate predecessors.

- What does the historical sense compel a writer to do?

Ans:

It makes him write with awareness of both his own time and all past literature.

- What is the historical sense?

Ans:

It is the sense of the timeless and the temporal existing together.

- Where does the importance of a poet lie?

Ans:

It lies in his relationship with past poets and artists.

- What happens when a new work of art is created?

Ans:

It subtly changes the meaning of all previous works of art.

- **How should value judgments be made?**

Ans:

They should be applied carefully and slowly.

- **What do we usually say about a new work?**

Ans:

We say it either fits with the past or appears too different from it.

- **What must the poet be conscious of?**

Ans:

He must be aware of the true current of artistic tradition, not just famous names.

- **What must the poet be aware of about art?**

Ans:

That art does not improve, but its material and human mind evolve constantly.

- **What is honest criticism directed toward?**

Ans:

Toward the poem itself, not the poet.

- **What conception of poetry does Eliot suggest?**

Ans:

Poetry as a living whole that includes all past and present works.

- **What does Eliot call this theory?**

Ans:

He calls it the "impersonal theory of poetry."

- **What is the impersonal theory of poetry?**

Ans:

Poetry should be judged apart from the poet's personality or emotions.

- **How does a mature poet differ from an immature one?**

Ans:

A mature poet can act as a medium for expression, not as a self-centered creator.

- **What example of a catalyst does Eliot give?**

Ans:

Platinum in a chemical reaction that causes change but remains unaffected.

- **What is the poet's mind like?**

Ans:

It is a receptacle storing countless feelings and images until they combine to form poetry.

- **How does Eliot compare Agamemnon and Othello?**

Ans:

In Agamemnon, emotion belongs to the spectator; in Othello, to the hero himself.

- **What does Eliot say about Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"?**

Ans:

It unites many feelings unrelated to the bird but linked through its fame.

- **What kind of emotions can a poet have?**

Ans:

They may be simple, crude, or flat.

- **Whose poetic theory is "emotions recollected in tranquillity"?**

Ans:

It is Wordsworth's theory from the Romantic Age.

- **What does Eliot say about a bad poet?**

Ans:

He is conscious where he should not be, and unconscious where he should be.

- **What do these errors make a bad poet?**

Ans:

They make him personal instead of impersonal.

- **How does Eliot define poetry creation?**

Ans:

Poetry is not emotion released, but an escape from emotion and personality.

- **What is a laudable aim?**

Ans:

To shift attention from the poet to the poem.

- **What does progress of an artist mean?**

Ans:

A continual self-sacrifice and extinction of personal ego.

- **How is the emotion of art according to Eliot?**

Ans:

It is impersonal and universal.

- **What is the impersonal theory of poetry?**

Ans:

The poet's personal feelings must not appear in his poems.

- **What is a catalyst?**

Ans:

A substance that speeds a reaction but remains unchanged afterward.

- **What does "a continual extinction of personality" mean?**

Ans:

It means depersonalization of the poet in the creative process.

- **What does the historical sense involve?**

Ans:

Awareness of both the presence of the past and the pastness of the present.

- **When should tradition be discouraged?**

Ans:

When it means blind imitation of immediate predecessors.

- **How is the poet's mind like a catalyst?**

Ans:

It collects emotions and ideas and transforms them into new poetic compounds.

- **How can tradition be obtained?**

Ans:

Only by hard labour and deep study, not by inheritance.

- **What does Eliot mean by "tradition"?**

Ans:

It is a historical sense linking past and present literature in one living continuum.

- **What is the business of the poet?**

Ans:

Not to find new emotions, but to use ordinary ones creatively in his poetry.