

ELIOT'S PERSONALITY AND HISTORICAL SENSE

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Abstract

Eliot has concentrated his ideas on human beings and their thought process. This depends upon the personality, sense of time and identifying the position and function of the persona in this matrix. This is essentially an interpretation of the ideas and interpretations given by Eliot. Although there are lots of contradictions and controversies about it, yet his ideas are no less deserving for a critical research upon itself. The idea of time from individualistic viewpoint is also interesting as it breaks many conventional methods of interpretation. Besides, intense spiritual involvement of psyche at the midst of dialectics of the realities of the world is also well nigh indisputable.

Keywords: personality, time, past, present, future, historical sense, ego, absolute

The chief four critical concepts in *The Sacred Wood* are Dissociation of Sensibility, Objective Correlative, Possessing the Historical Sense and the Impersonality of Poetry or the impersonal conception of art or to say according to the popular controversy, 'art being unromantic'. The last two are the areas that have given birth to various theoretical outlooks and many future critical perspectives. However, Freud and Groddeck in a way brought us in a more mystical view of things and led us dethrone the 'ego'. The Christian religion claims to transcend personality, but this is an aspect of things which has been lost sight of. The sacred books of the East revived the idea of the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought-of thinker; it was a reconstruction of the idea of personality by the aid of spirituality, a view that is nurtured by Tagore in his philosophical research in the fields of the problem of self and the connection between individual and the universe. Time and ego are the two centers of focus for all contemporary poets and the West has based the perception upon the 'ego' and the twists in personality. Eliot had highlighted this issue of personality in his own ways of understanding.

Our own or the poet's personality is truly a fiction that does not abide by the fact of experience. The 'I'-ness has been an issue of controversy for long and still we are not absolutely sure about the 'I' that we claim ourselves to be aware of or the nature of our personality about which we can claim to assert any ultimate definition. To go with Tagore's philosophy, this self

within us is an ever changing entity and we discover this dynamism of self always after it changes itself and therefore it remains ahead of us forever. Therefore whenever we discover this I in the process of our change in outer physical and inner mental or spiritual life, we start re-viewing it in a newer mystery which not only remains present during the changes in our persona but also initiates such changes in us remaining itself unchanged. Thus this I is not our body, neither mind, nor spiritual knowledge; this is a static idea that operates and changes the course of our life, this is a part of Absolute, a fragment of the entirety in us (Tagore) and thereby this is an Impersonal entity in our personality.

Tagore and Eliot are somewhere similar to search this I in all existing bodies and have asserted that it is the supreme spirit or the Indweller. We are seeking the Ideal in everything, to go according to the ideas given by Plato, and we consciously or unconsciously search it in all our activities. When we detach ourselves from all outer activities, when the senses are withdrawn from all sense objects, when the mind is withdrawn from all sense-movements, when the understanding by unifying the diverse records of sensitivities is withdrawn from the mind and when the soul is withdrawn from understanding- it is only then a true state of self-realisation that is attained. The self then exists in its own Being and this condition of the self may be named 'Bodhi' so to say, that may be reasserted as 'Atmanam Vidhi' (Know Thyself). This is where Eliot starts composing the idea of Ego and relates it to the values and capabilities of a poet, a seer and a spiritual man that which Tagore compared to the 'Rishis' by substantiating his point from *Upanishads*. Eliot's 'Ego' rises above the promptings of duality and oscillations, he amalgamates disparate experiences into an organic whole and makes it more creative, fruitful and in literary terms it becomes 'Esemplastic' to borrow from the romantic ideas. The ego or the self becomes the knower or the 'cogniser', which becomes related to the knowable through knowledge or cognition.

Through ignorance of the truth in our nature, we consider ourselves the 'knower' and become liable to 'dissociation of sensibility', surrendering thought and feeling. It is the ego which wrongly thinks being a part of the objective world, when it is the only subject and the entire universe being the object. Man's personality is not the factor of this triad of cogniser, cognition, and the object cognised, but Pure Intelligence upon which this triad depends. Pure consciousness constitutes the triad but in spite of looking like established they are not so, in reality. It is the self that even establishes ignorance, doubts and the flawed disarranged knowledge that constitute the world of objects. The Self is not limited by mind and body and is ever-established. Our moment of recognition of the eternally established nature of self makes us devoid of ignorance and turns us Seer or a poet. This teaches us to 'sit still' and obtain peace of mind and become a part of something greater than what we seem or are. This is what makes Eliot romantic, as it seems greatly similar to the ideas of Eternal spirit of Shelley or the meditating grotto of Wordsworth, Eliot gives a place to the macrocosmic existence of ourselves and says like Rabindranath Tagore about higher romanticism.

Every single work of art modifies the meaning of the preceding work and every work is an inseparable part of the past. This brings us into the discussion of the significance of time. Man's perception of time determines his idea of life and death as these all are bound with the concept of time and therefore, if our idea of time gets affected or changed then it would obviously disturb our notions of survival. In Eliot's *Four Quartets* we find the poet evaluating his life and its meaning in terms of the new vision that he has acquired- the new time which he has begun to experience. Here we see the poet being engaged in recapturing his old experiences and describing them in the light of the new time that life has brought him into. This is about a

timeless time that science and religion has brought where a newer form of past, present and future have been brought within the reach of any common man. The outset of *Burnt Norton* remind us about the idea of time as a physicist who has started understanding it in the way Bruno thought of it, always renewing itself yet standing quite still. In this modified awareness about 'new time', the past is no less than the future and the poet-seer starts his journey through memory, association and correlation to begin painting his old life with renewed sense of colours. This 'time' is a co-existence of all possible opposites and the poet here says,

*...neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. (The Four Quartets)*

This is how an area of the prophets and seers are being opened to all and romantically enough, religion, mysticism, visionary and scientific outlook are channelized into a single objective and by getting time into our hands we start rethinking the history and with the poet we can now set ourselves amid all the works of art of past and possess the historical sense in Eliot's terms. Eliot's solution may not be the ultimate observation, but it is indeed a truly romantic speculation bound to be accepted.

The elliptic pattern of the four poems with their resulting turns and twists is the example of different types of time. Time is placed as the mark of all private and worldly history and its ups and downs, yet time remains at the core to be the unmoving tranquil centre. The timelessness is when past, present and future does not remain different from one another and they amalgamate into one moment of vision. It is a state of negatives about which the poet utters,

*... to arrive at where you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not;
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own,
And where you are is where you are not. (The Four Quartets)*

The presence and absence, the positive and negative, the mortality and immortality here are not distinguishable from each other, they have all lost their individual identities only to be identified in the still centre of contemplation to reevaluate life of individual in terms historical and spiritual standpoint. Whether the mystical alchemical philosophy of Paracelsus or the theory of Relativity, everywhere we find that the spirit which appears to an observer is the same spirit that is found in the thing observed. This enables the scope of alternative time scales for the same set of events. Temporality and spatiality are interchangeable in geometry and epistemological observations. All creations are from the same creativity and the span and condition of time depend on the quality of observation and it is our psyche that generates past, present or future. By ignoring the Self we make imagination arise in our mind, we start viewing our presence and condition in different phases of time. When we start recollecting any memorable past event, the past incident appears in the present state mind and the varying of the re-judgment of that event depends upon different individual's differences to the same event. No creation ever recedes in the past; it is just within the sphere of the observability in the individual's present. Thus there is no ultimate end; one observation ended means another new beginning. The universe before us is not there before we observe it, but rather it exists because we observe it. An object can exist before our observation, but an event is born by our observation. Every event has its own spatial uniqueness.

Eliot gives a significant space to the metaphysics by asserting that this earth is only a kind of perception. The entire universe including its time frame is an illusion and physical identity is a false knowledge of the ego. The death of a man supposedly gives an experience of a new perception of being supported by a new body and that the person is identified to a particular mother or father etc. is all outcomes of false belief of the identification of the soul with the mind and body. The spirit is unrelated to body or relations. Here again Eliot is thinking like Tagore that life is equal to soul and that is the part of pure spirit. The same spirit that is an observer and also the thing observed. Man's false perception of the existence gives a false sense of distance where there is actually no distance as such. In a dream when a person is taken to be real, it is as real as a person in reality, in the perspective of time in dream. In the waking condition time and space also may be unreal. Relativity and consciousness are the parameters of experiences and if a man thinks that in the blink of an eye an age has passed, he finds the age to be lasting for that moment only. A suffering man finds the night so long because he thinks it to be so from his eyes of endurance. It is the mind that elaborates and decides truth or false, it is the method of observation that assumes a thing to be believed and the man believes in it. No object exists without its relative consciousness. As long as there is otherness or dualism, egoism will rise in mind, when the divine is realized and it becomes a submissive fact that there is no competition between those dilemmas, man will understand that there is no sense of creation, but only conditions that differentiate our common existence as simple individual fragments of the same root ended at the Absolute. Going out of the world of Eliot and Tagore, this relates the oriental philosophy of Brahma, which should not be confused with our traditional belief of God, but it is the Wise. If Huxley says that time must have an end, it is actually ending into eternity, which is where the floating ends and in other words man divides the same events into past, present or future in that flow and when eternity is attained, all three are blended into a supreme abstract.

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