CHAPTER IV

CREATION AND CRITICISM:
THE TWIN ASPECTS OF ORWELLIAN PHENOMENON:
(PART - A)

"When a man writes a poem, he has performed an act of creation. When another man reads the poem and puts down his impression of it is the light of certain well known standards or in the light of his own tastes, he has written a piece of criticism." ¹

This is what should, plainly speaking, distinguish creation from criticism even though a major fact remains that both are twin literary activities. Creation comes out of someone's fertile imagination. In criticism, some comments and discussion come out of a material which is already available. Creation, whether it is of a person or of the world itself, is a manifestation of originality. In the first book of Moses called Genesis, it is written about creation as:

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light: and there was light.'" ²

¹ Lall Ramji, T.S. Elliot, The Critic (Surjeet Publications, 7-1C. Kolhapur Road, Kamla Nagar, Delhi - 110007) 1992 p. 205.
On the other hand, in ‘The Function of Criticism,’ T.S. Eliot states that creation is an autoletic activity.\(^3\)

Creation may be said to serve certain ends beyond itself, but the creator is not required to be aware of these ends, and may well transcend the theories of value. Criticism, on the other hand, must always profess an end in view which roughly speaking, appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of tastes.\(^4\)

Again, in another essay, Eliot observes:

‘...it would be fatuous to say that criticism is for the sake of creation or creation for the sake of criticism. It is also foolish to assume that there are ages of criticism and ages of creativeness.’ \(^5\)

The two directions of sensibility are rare, unpopular, and desirable and perhaps it is expected that the critic and the creative artist should frequently be the same person. Similarly, in the introduction to ‘The Sacred Wood,’ he makes another apt remark:

‘it would be irrelevant to maintain that creative gift is higher than the original gift. When one creative mind is better than another, the reason often is that the better is the more critical. But the great bulk of work of criticism could be done by the minds of the second order, and it is just these minds of the second order that are difficult to find. Such minds are necessary for that current of ideas, for that society permeated by fresh thoughts,’ of which Arnold speaks.

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4. Ibid. P. 24
5. Eliot T.S. *The Sacred Wood* (Methuen & CO. Ltd. 1920) p-16
According to Eliot, Arnold's distinction between critical and creative is rather too blunt. In his opinion, Arnold overlooks the great importance of criticism in the work of creation. "Indeed the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour," says Eliot. Now this in itself is an outstanding observation and is of immense significance apart from being highly provoking. Surely, Eliot's point has to be studied very carefully and in all its ramifications. Just how much of critical activity is implicit in creative work and in what way? But to follow Eliot's arguments further:

"the author's labour of shifting, combining, constructing, correcting, and testing is as much critical as creative. According to Eliot, the criticism employed by a trained and skilled writer on his own work is the most vital, the highest kind of criticism; some creative writers are superior to other solely because their critical faculty is superior."  

There is an unfortunate tendency to underestimate this critical labour of an author and to say that the great author is an unconscious author. An author has a conscience which urges him to do the best he can and reminds him that his work should be as free from faults as possible. Indeed critical labour goes on all the time in the minds of the creative writers. In fact, what Eliot has been upto in his above-mentioned remarks can be borne out by several examples of other creation. Why, we may take up the greatest examples in this regard - Shakespeare himself. True, he wrote not a single word of criticism and left nothing of the kind in an explicit form. But any sensitive reading of Shakespeare's plays, his comedies or tragedies, would
suggest without fail that there is an important link between one great work of creation and another, between say, *Hamlet* and *Othello* and *Othello* and *King Lear*, and *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, to take out the formidable four. And surely, this link reflects the high quality of self criticism inherent in the making of Shakespeare, the creative artist. It must have been a very fine ingrained critical sense in him that probably led him see that in *Hamlet* he had gone a bit far towards subjectivity, so that in *Othello* he became too much objective.

One cannot fuse creation with criticism as one can fuse criticism with creation. The critical activity finds its highest, its truest fulfilment in a kind of union with creation in the labour of the artist. But no writer is completely self-sufficient, and many creative writers have a critical activity which is not all discharged into their work. Some seem to require to keep their critical powers in condition for the real work by exercising them in miscellaneous manners; while others, on completing a work, need to continue the critical activity by commenting on it. There is no general or binding rule. Eliot says that the critics worth reading were the critics who practised, and practised well, the art which they wrote. But afterwards he had to stretch their frame to make some important inclusions. The most important qualification which he found was that a critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact. The sense of fact is neither a trifling nor a common gift, it is something very slow to develop, and its complete development means perhaps the very peak of civilization. Only the critic who has a very highly developed sense of fact can offer an authentic interpretation of an author or a work.
A large part of creation consists in criticism; but it cannot be said that
the large part of critical writing consists in creation. Among the critics who
are worth reading must be included those who were artists of excellence. But
in addition to them, the really competent critics are those who have a very
highly developed sense of fact. George Watson warns that criticism should
not be regarded as a secondary parasitic activity, inferior to creation. But we
cannot deny that creation is a superior activity as compared with criticism. At
the same time we cannot deny also the fact that much of the labour of
creation consists in the exercise of the critical faculty. However, it would be
unfair not to acknowledge that the good critic also exhibits a certain degree
of creative power. All the same, the difference between the creator and the
critic is no doubt very significant. The creator takes his material directly from
life, from the universe around him. His work is an embodiment of his vision
and the universe. He gives a concrete shape to his apprehension of life in the
form of a poem or painting or any other work of art. God, the Almighty, the
Omnipotent, the Omniscient said:

“Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light,
that it was good: and God divided the light from darkness........
And God said, Let there be a firmament, the water under the
heaven be gathered unto one place, the dry land appear, the
everth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree
yielding fruit after the kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the
everth: and it was so. So God created man in His own image, in
the image of God created he him; male and female created he
them. And God saw everything that he had made (created), and,
behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning
were the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:3,7 & 27-31) 7

7. The Holy Bible, A Regency Bible 1990 by Thomas Nelson, p. 1
While this is the story of creation in a nutshell, a critic on the other hand, deals with the work produced by the creative artist, though in dealing with this work the critic too needs a wide and deep knowledge of life and the universe around him.

Although the critic’s intellectual equipment must also be of a high order, yet his work is not original in the sense the creative artist’s work is original. But the critic too becomes the creator sometimes; he becomes a creator when he finds in a work of art more than what the artist himself intended or was conscious of. The creator of Adam and Eve said:

“... of every tree of the garden thou mayest eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

The arch enemy, Satan criticised the creation of God. In the book of Job, Satan is mentioned as a busy-body, going to and fro, criticising the creation of God:

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before God the Lord and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down on it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Has thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the

3. Ibid p. 3
Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his home, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”

We have gone to this extent only to compare creation and criticism as fully as possible. God created and blessed the earth. And the criticism of Satan caused desolation of the earth. As man becomes the ally of Satan, sickness, suffering and death come upon the human beings.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord had made. And he said unto the woman, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? and the woman said to the serpent, we may eat of every tree of the garden. But the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.”

Satan entered into the serpent and interpreted God’s decree in his own words and criticised the perfect creation of the Almighty. God wondered what had happened to His two friends as he could not see them. Because they hide from God as they had eaten the forbidden fruit and became conscious of

9. Ibid. pp. 697 verses 6-11
10. Ibid. p. 3 verses 1-5
their nakedness. Shakespeare too created dramas and poems. And it is often said that, if Shakespeare were to come back to life, he would be astonished to read the numerous interpretations of his plays which have been offered by critics. Their interpretations represent the originality of the critics, or their creative quality. It is in this sense that men like Goethe and Coleridge are creative critics, even though Eliot is pleased to call them ‘Corrupters of taste.’ Matthew Arnold, discussing the function of criticism, had already pointed out that the poet, with all his creative gifts, needed to make a great critical effort before being able to create anything worthwhile. Both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe’s productive power was nourished by a great critical effort, while Byron’s was not. That is why Byron’s poetry does not have the enduring qualities of Goethe’s. Indeed, Arnold found a deficiency of critical effort behind the poetry of the romantic poets, and in this respect, Arnold and Eliot seem to be in agreement. Yet, as for the comparative merits of criticism and creation, Arnold offers a sound suggestion when he says that criticism of an excellent quality is more valuable than creation of an inferior quality. The critical faculty, Arnold agrees, is lower than the creative. But Dr. Johnson would have been wrong if he had gone on producing original composition like his Irene instead of writing a critical work like Lives of the Poets. And this explains the point at issue clearly.

The question that now arises is whether a large part of criticism also consists of creation. In other words, is critical writing largely creative also? The answer is that the creation of a work of art is an autoletic activity as God has created all things out of nothing. But criticism is always about something
other than itself. Thus criticism is not creation, though creation involves a lot of criticism. The critical activity finds its true fulfilment in its union with creation in the labour of a writer. There are many creative writers whose critical activity is not exhausted by their creative work. The result is that their surplus critical energy finds expression in miscellaneous work. A creative writing may, for instance, continue his critical activity by commenting on the creative work which he himself has completed. These comments may prove useful to other writers, or they may prove useful even to non-writers. Now criticism means the comments and expositions of works of art by means of written words and it is not an autotelic activity. Criticism must always have an end in view as said earlier. It aims at the elucidation of taste. Middleton Murry believes that there are definite positions to be taken in the field of literary criticism and that now and then we must actually reject something and select something else. It is quite appreciable and commendable in Murry's view that there are at least two attitudes towards literature and towards everything, and that one cannot hold both attitudes.

Creation is a work of art and autotelic, having its own justification, existing for its own intrinsic value. But criticism, by definition is about something other than itself. Hence one cannot fuse creation with criticism as one can fuse criticism with creation.

There is transformation of literary criticism in the twentieth century. The main reason for it is the development of social sciences and the study of language and semantics. The next reason also for the transformation of literacy criticism is a different public of the 20th century. This reason has not
been fully recognised. Today many literary critics are teachers in universities, and many university teachers are literary critics. Most of the really interesting criticism of our time is the work of men of letters who have found their way into universities, with the result that the critic today has perhaps a somewhat different audience from that of his predecessors. Serious criticism now is being written for a different, a more limited though not necessarily a smaller, public than was the case in the nineteenth century. There is some uncertainty in our time as to the purpose of literary criticism, and this uncertainty accounts for the weakness of modern criticism. The very richness and variety of modern criticism seems to have rendered its ultimate purpose vague. The individual critic may have a definite role in his mind and may be engaged in a task which needs justification, and yet criticism itself may be lost as to its aims. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the sciences and even the humanities have today reached a point in development at which there is so much to know that no student has the time to learn much about all or even most of them. This is the reason why it has become necessary to arrive at a curriculum which shall combine specialized study with some general education at the universities. Now, the question that needs to be constantly asked is this: When is criticism not literary criticism but something else? Even essays or plays or poems may be called literary criticism. These essays may be a by-product of a continuation of the thinking that went into the writing of one’s own essay or verse. This kind of literary criticism is also called workshop criticism and has one obvious limitation. What has no relation to the poet’s own work, or what is unacceptable to him in a poetic
sense, is outside his competence. Another limitation of workshop criticism is that the critic's judgement may be unsound outside his own art. When one talks about literary criticism poetry is the most convenient branch of literature to have in mind. The reason is that the formal qualities of poetry lend themselves most readily to generalisation. In poetry the feeling that here we come nearer to a purely aesthetic experience makes poetry the most convenient form of literature to keep in mind when we discuss literary criticism.

Again, there is a form of criticism that is called 'critical biography.' In this form of criticism, there can be serious danger when the biographer adds to the external facts his own psychological conjectures about the inner experience of the poet whose biography he is writing. The personality and the private life of a dead poet are surely no sacred ground from which the critical biographer should keep away, but the critical biography of a poet is a delicate task and its author is likely to confuse the issues by indulging in psychological conjectures about the dead poet.

In all great poetry, something which remains unaccountable, however, complete, might be our knowledge of the poetry, and it is that matters most. When a poem has been written, something new has taken place, something that cannot be wholly explained by anything that went before. This is what we mean by 'Creation,' speaking exclusively.
In contemporary criticism, however, one comes with other methods as well. All the contemporary criticism, however, does not consist in the explanation of poetry by an examination of its source. There are other methods too, such as that is represented by Professor Richard’s investigation of the problems of how the appreciation of poetry can be taught or by the verbal subtleties of Professor Empson. Another method has been followed in a book called ‘Interpretations.’ This book is a series of essays by twelve English Critics, each analyzing one poem of his own choice. The method is to consider a well-known poem without reference to the author or to his other work, analyse it stanza by stanza and line by line, and extract and squeeze every drop of meaning out of it. It might be called the lemon-squeezer school of criticism. This method has its own limitations and dangers. The first danger of this method is that of assuming that there must be just one correct interpretation of the poem as a whole. The second danger is that of assuming that the interpretation of a poem, if valid, is necessarily an account of what the author consciously or unconsciously was trying to do. The general tendency is to think that any explanation of a poem should also be an account of how it was written. Thirdly, this method should be applied to some new poem that was previously unknown to the reader so that the reader may find out whether this method of analysing the poem enables the reader to enjoy the poem.

Thus the essential function of literary criticism was the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste. It will promote the understanding and enjoyment of literature. At the same time literary criticism has to perform the negative task of what should not be enjoyed. The critic may be called
upon to condemn what is second-rate literature and expose what is fraudulent, though this duty is secondary. His primary duty is to give discriminating praise of what is praiseworthy.

Then, just who is a literary critic? A literary critic is one whose primary interest, in writing criticism, is to help the readers to understand and enjoy literary works. But the literary critic must have other interests as much as the writer or the poet himself has. The literary critic is not merely a technical expert knowing the rules to be observed by writers. The critic must be a whole man, a man with convictions and principles, a man with knowledge and experience of life.

A piece of literary criticism is aimed towards understanding and enjoyment. If it is not, it may still be a legitimate and useful activity, but it is not literary criticism. Thus biography is not literary criticism. Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and *Such, Such were the Joys* are not literary criticism. Biography is ordinarily useful in providing explanation. It may help the understanding, but it may also lead us away from the poetry of the man. Similarly, factual information about a poet's or writer's period about the conditions of the society in which he lived, about the state of the language in his time, does not necessarily imply an understanding of his poetry. Such knowledge may be necessary preparation for understanding the poetry; such knowledge has a value of its own as history. But for the appreciation of the poetry, such knowledge can only leads us to the door; we must find our own way in. When we read poetry, we should try to get the direct experience of it,
it is not necessary that we should be able to project ourselves into the period when that poetry was written or that we should be able to think and feel as a contemporary of the poet might have thought and felt, even though such experience has its own value. What matters is the experience in the poetry, the experience which is the same for all human beings of different centuries and different languages. The true literary critic performs his true function when he can make us look at something which we have never looked at before or looked at with prejudiced eyes. The true critic sets us face to face with something and then leaves us alone with it. From this point of view, we must rely on our own sensibility, intelligence, and capacity for wisdom.

In literary criticism, we should not place all the emphasis upon understanding, because then we are in the danger of shifting from understanding to mere explanation. At the same time we should not over-emphasize enjoyment, because there we generally tend to fall into the subjective and impressionistic; and our enjoyment will be reduced to mere amusement and pastime. All kinds of criticism such as the explanation by origins, of biographical criticism of the analytical method or the lemon squeezer school of criticism are valuable. The value of the biographical and the historical kind of criticism is evident from the work of Dr. Johnson and Matthew Arnold. The lemon squeezer school of criticism has its own value in focusing attention upon a particular work and in giving us a deeper look into it than other methods of criticism provide. Indeed, not only is there room for all these kinds of criticism but we really need all these kinds. Let a critic write with complete abandon, and if he strays too far from his legitimate territory, he will automatically stand self-condemned. In other words, there is hardly
any need to define the frontiers of criticism, nor is there any need to define the frontiers of literature. It is better that a critic or a creator should take a few liberties and go beyond his proper domain than that he should work under restraints imposed upon by the theoreticians or by practitioners.

Among the twentieth century critics, Middleton Murry advocates the place of the inner voice in literary criticism. T.S. Eliot, however, cannot accept the claims of the inner voice. He says that to bow to the inner voice would mean doing as one likes. Thus Eliot represents classical attitude and Middleton Murry represents a romantic attitude in literary criticism. In order to perform his task satisfactorily, the critic must discipline his personal cranks; he must compose his difference with other critics in the common pursuit of true judgement. Middleton Murry believes that there are definite positions to be taken in the field of literary criticism, and that now and then one must actually reject and select something. there are at least two attitudes towards literature and towards everything and one cannot hold both attitudes. For the critic a very highly developed sense of fact is a must.

In '20th Century Literary Criticism,' "A Reader," edited by David Lodge, it is stated that:

"Works of literature have their meaning, and their very existence, in a continual stream of human conversation about them, which at its most formalized and articulate we called literary criticism." 11

In criticism of any work of art four elements are involved. First there is the work, the product of the artist or the artistic product. The second is the artist, the artificer and the third element consists of people and actions, ideas and feelings, material things and events, or super-sensible essences. And in a comprehensive term it can be called the Universe. The fourth and final element is the audience: the listeners, spectators, or readers to whom the work is addressed, or to whose attention at any rate becomes available. A triangle may represent these four coordinates of the art of criticism, the ‘Work or Art’ in the middle, with ‘Universe’ on the top and, the ‘Artist’ and the ‘Audience’ as the base.

“Criticism is ordered towards the audience, a ‘pragmatic theory’ since it looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim.”  

Dryden said that Dr. Johnson may be properly considered as father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Dryden’s method of establishing those principles was to point out that poetry, like painting, has an end, which is to please; that imitation of nature is the general means for attaining this end; and that rules serve to specify the means for accomplishing this end in detail:

“Having thus shown that imitation pleases, and why it pleases in both these arts, it follows, that some rules of imitation are necessary to obtain the end, for without rules there can be no art, any more than there can be a house without a door to conduct you into it.”

12. Ibid. pp. 11-12
13. Ibid. p. 13
Samuel Johnson is a practical critic who distrusts rigid and abstract theorising. He applies the method of criticism with a constant appeal to specific literary examples, deference to the opinions of other readers, but ultimately, reliance on his own expects responses to the text. Therefore repeatedly Johnson maintains that “this therefore in the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life” and of inanimate nature as well: “He was an exact surveyor of the inanimate world, ‘Shakespeare,’ whether life or nature be his subject, shows plainly that he has seen with his own eyes.”

But Johnson also claims:

“The end of writing is to instruct, the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing.”

One may fully agree with Johnson’s view of Shakespeare’s drama as ‘the mirror of life’ and may perceive even from a popular folk lore of the ethnic Chin, Kukis and Mizos- the attempt to instruct through a common story. In this story there is a reflection of the tribals’ naive way of life. The story in my opinion is the one and only classic for the above mentioned tribals, which goes almost parallel to ‘Romeo and Juliet’ by the great Shakespeare. In this tribal classic, a girl Khup Cing and a poor boy in rags, called Ngambawm were deeply in love. The possessive mother of Khup Cing did not allow them to marry - only because Ngambawm, the lover-boy was too poor. In the end KhupCing died without marrying her lover, who was left heart broken. In this story, the folks since time immemorial or whoever has passed the story from mouth to mouth like a torch which was passed on
from generation to generation - wanted to instruct the naïve young tribals what was the hallmark or trademark of the naïve young tribals is poverty. Why was Ngambawm poor? Because he was lazy bones. Instead of clearing the jungle and felling trees for growing cotton for a decent dress, he kept on harping his unfulfilled love by playing flute, sitting on the top of the trees all day. Instead, he could have hunted deers and could have trapped porcupines for meat. And he should have gifted or bribed his way into the heart of Khup Cing’s mother with the heart, livers and kidneys which are tribal delicacies. He could have grown cotton and should have asked Khup Cing, his heartthrob, to yearn, weave and stitch a new dress for her and for himself. Khup Cing’s mother would be impressed with Ngambawms’ industry. The meats - if Ngambawm had hunted and had presented to his fiancee’s mother, the latter would be more than willing to give the hand of her daughter in marriage to Ngambawm. Boys love girls naturally. But mothers love their girls far more than boys do. Girls need security. If Ngambawm had proved his worth by providing, himself first and had shared to Khup Cing’s family like cotton, meats etc, Khup Cing’s mother might have said to her darling daughter, “I’ll kill you if you don’t marry that bright and promising and providing boy!” For the Bible says,

“A gift is as precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it, whithersoever, it turneth, it prospereth (Proverbe 17:8)

“A man’s gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men” (proverbs 18:16)

“A gift in secret pacifieth anger and a reward in the bosom strong wrath” (Proverbs 21:14) ¹⁵

A gift or gifts could have earned the all important nod from KhupCing’s mother for Ngambawm to marry her. One can see, if one attempts to criticise in the light of Dr. Johnson’s claim of ‘writing is to instruct’ could be squeezed out in their way from their tribal classic and I fully agree with it.

Again in another comedy of the tribals, a hen-pecked so-foolish and so wise husband called Penglam required a mythun for paying the head of her bride, which was tribal custom. He intelligently could swap a mythun with a millet. He came home proudly with his mythun. But he left his mythun in the middle of the road because the mythun had a hole at the bottom. He suddenly realised that his wife used to throw away pots with holes at the bottom. Therefore he left the animal on the way. This can be compared to children who throw away parents fortune at stock markets or shares in company or through gambling in casinos, lotteries etc. One may believe this story also exposes, questions and instructs the simple folk’s intelligence.

As for ‘poetry instructing by pleasing,’ it is therefore easy to appreciate Dr. Johnson view. I take the liberty to quote from the nursery rhyme which is so popular:

“Johny, Johny,”
“Yes, Papa,
“Eating Sugar ?”
“No Papa”
“Telling a lie”
“No Papa”
“Open your mouth,”
Ha ! Ha ! Ha !
Here, pleasantly, the innocent simple lie of a child is revealed. The American dream can be expressed in the following beautiful fantasy poem:

"Oh my! my!
Tell me Why?
Birdies fly, in the sky?"

I for one believe that this had pleasantly instructed and inspired the Wright Brothers to continue to write and made the following poems realistic:

"Why! Oh Why! ?
Birdies fly,
I can't fly, Let me fly!
I must fly!"

Hence the aeroplane! But the tribal's nursery rhyme is quite the opposite. It goes:

"Oh, come on, You Moon, Moon The Moon,
Come and fall down, fall down."

Will the moon ever fall? But the Americans have entered into the moon. And the tribals are waiting for ages and ages for the moon to fall down. While people jump to get the stars, leave alone the moon - the tribals' nursery rhyme tells that the simple folks prayed for the moon to fall down. This shows the passive naive nature of the tribals. They don't usually go after their dreams, but simply wish them to happen to them and wait without pursuing or acting.
Now to resume the main argument, the point at issue here in this momentous section: Eliot says,

"Criticism however, may be separated from the beginning not into two kinds, but according to two tendencies, I assume that criticism is that department of thought which either seeks to find out what poetry is, what its use is, what desires it satisfied, why it is written and why read or recited; or which, making some conscious or unconscious assumption that we do know these things assesses actual poetry. We may find that good criticism has other designs than these; but these are the ones which it is allowed to profess. Criticism, of course, never does find out what poetry is, in the sense of arriving at adequate definition; but I do not know of what use such a definition would be if it were found. Nor can criticism ever arrive at any final appraisal of poetry."  

Eliot continues that:

"The rudiment of criticism is the ability to select a good poem and reject a bad poem; and its most severe test is of its ability to select a good new poem and reject a bad poem to respond properly to a new situation."  

A history of criticism could be written solely on the basis of successive interpretations of salient passages from Aristotle’s Poetics. For convenience we may name criticism that it is ordered towards the audience, a ‘pragmatic theory,’ since it looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to end, an instrument for getting something done and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim.

16 Eliot T.S. The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (Faber and Faber ltd, London. 1933) p. 16
17 Ibid. p. 18
18 Edited by David Lodge 20th Century Literary Criticism, Reader (Longman, London & New York)
In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800, Wordsworth announced that ‘Poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions.’ This view displaces the mimetic and pragmatic view and the ‘Experience theory’ becomes the view of arts in English criticism. The experience theory may be summed up in this way:

A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feelings, and embodying the combined product of the poet’s perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet’s own mind; or if aspects of the external world, then these only as they are converted from fact to poetry by the feelings and operations of the poet’s mind. Thus the poetry Wordsworth wrote,

‘proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of Men, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world.’

There is another kind of literary criticism which point of view has been comparatively rare in literary criticism and that is called ‘Objective Theories.’ This procedure,

“on principle regards the work of art in isolation from all these external points of reference, analyses it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations, and sets out to judge it solely by criteria intrinsic to its own being.”

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20. Ibid. p. 21
With differing emphasis and adequacy, and in a great variety of theoretical contexts, the objective approach to poetry has become one of the most prominent elements in the innovative criticism of the last two or three decades. "In America, at least some form of the objective point of view has already gone far to displace its rivals as the reigning mode of criticism." 21

Criticism must always profess an end in view, which roughly speaking, appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste. The critics' task, therefore, appears to be quite clearly cut out for him; and it ought to be comparatively easy to decide whether he performs it satisfactorily, and in general, what kinds of criticism are useful and what are otiose. But on giving the matter a little attention, we perceive that criticism, far from being a simple and orderly field of beneficent activity, from which impostors can easily be ejected, is no better than a Sunday park of contending, and contentious orators, who have not even arrived at the articulation of their differences. Here, one would suppose, was a place for quite co-operative labour. The critic, one would suppose, if he is to justify his existence, should endeavour to discipline his personal prejudice to which we are all subject- and compose his differences with as many of his fellows as possible, in the common pursuit of true judgement. When we find that quite the contrary prevails, we begin to suspect that the critic owes his livelihood to the violence and extremity of his opposition to other critics, or else to some trifling oddities of his own with which he contrives to reason the opinions which men already hold, which out of vanity or sloth they prefer to maintain. We are tempted to expel the lost.

22. Ibid. p. 22
For the function of criticism to be properly served the media must be created in which individuals can carry on 'the common pursuit of true judgement.' But there must, too, be distinguished critics ready to use the occasion to its best advantages. Eliot had so notably an influence in the spreading abroad of literary ideas that his inconsistencies and looseness of thought may be historically as significant as his more assured successes. F.R. Leavis was the most actively and continuously concerned for the creation of a worthy and stimulating critical environment, as well as providing in his own work a body of criticism of the most utmost consistency and distinction. Andore Gomme says,

'A sense of relevance' not only leads Leavis' to see in a continuous of Arnold's spirit the critic's business in the world, to see criticism as essentially practical and theory subservient and secondary to practice, but also to find in values stemming from a fine sense of the whole breath of life the standards by which literature must be judged. 23

Again according to F.R. Leavis himself :

"Never had criticism a more decisive influence. The intimate connection between Eliot's poetry and criticism was what drew attention to the truly classical statements that his early essays contain. The Perfect Critic, which came out first of all in The Athenaeum and reprinted in The Sacred Wood, Eliot noted the livelihood that the critic and the creative artist should frequently be the same person. And more recently he rightly said of his own best criticism that it consists of essays on poets and poetic dramatists who had influenced him. The essay on Marvell, for

23. Quoted by Andore Gomme, in his essay Criticism and The Reading Public, included in The Modern Age Pelican Publication, ed. by Boris Ford 1961) p. 401
example, is a model of critical consciousness, accuracy, and suggestiveness—evaluating (with a little helpful practical analysis by the way) Marvell's own personal distinction, generalizing to prove the nature of the quality (wit) which he shared with the earlier metaphysical and with Dryden and Pope, then back again to isolate the precise tone of its appearance in Marvell. No better introduction to a poet could be found; it leaves most reader himself, while making clear the lines which can profitably be followed up. And so doing it makes generalizations which open up new ways of approach to English poetry as a whole. Eliot's best—his lasting-criticism, then is 'a by-product of his poetry workshop.' It is a sense that codified the 'change of expression' which his poetry had made to correspond with the change of sensibility that he had found. It was the poetry, as Leavis has said, that drew attention to the criticism, and not the other way round; inevitably the poetic achievement, with its notably new distinction, lent speciousness to much in the criticism that has since seemed hollow or arbitrary.  

The same qualifications do not need to be made about the two other great practitioner-critics, in whom none the less a close link between the two sides of their work is always apparent: Henry James and D.H. Lawrence. Both wrote much about the fiction of their own and earlier periods, and related it to the problems, opportunities, and challenges which confronted them as novelists; but both also have produced judgement on novelists and novels which achieve classical rank for their accuracy and the keenness of their understanding as well of the particular concerns of their subject as of the general conditions under which the novel can be met, and against which it is to be judged. James's book on Hawthorne, his essays on Flaubert,

24. Ibid. pp. 415-416
Maupassant, and Zola, and on Arnold, Lawrence of Galsworthy, and Verge, his Morality and the Novel, and his Study of Thomas Hardy are classics of criticism which should have far more recognition than they have received so far.

Now the parallel can be interestingly extended. Both did much practical criticism in the form of reviewing: for James and Lawrence at least, a review was an occasion for delicate and precise judgement, and the valuations they then directly made have remained astonishingly secure. James's review of 'Our Mutual Friend' is in its way a master piece, a model of accurate and refined judgement, excellent in its tone, in the seriousness with which it treats its subject, in the way in which, condemning Dickens's work, it enables one to see by what high standards it is being, and must be, judged. James's poise at the age of twenty-two is amazing:

"Insight perhaps too strong a word (for Dickens); for we are convinced that it is one of the chief conditions of his genius not to see beneath the surface of things. If we might hazard a definition of his literary characters, we should, accordingly, call him the greatest of superficial novelists. We are aware that this definition confines him to an inferior rank in the department of letters which he adorns; but we accept the consequence of our preposition. If were, in our opinion, an offence against humanity to place Mr. Dickens among the greatest novelists. For, to repeat what we have already intimated, he has created nothing but figures. He has added nothing to our understanding of human character."25

25. Ibid. p. 418
Like Lawrence's, James's competence as a reviewer extends over an extraordinarily wide field: his essays on Arnold remain one of the finest broad assessments we have, as well as being itself a model of taste and discretion. But it is for his work on the novel that one returns to him with most profit, and this again links him to Lawrence, in whose work too the importance of the novel is central. For James the novel must 'represent life,' its province is 'all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision,' the essence of its 'moral energy' is to 'survey the whole field.' And so for Lawrence the novel is 'the one bright book of life,' which 'can make the whole man tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do.' In these terms, the novel was a course more than just prose fiction:

The Bible but all the Bible - and Homer, and Shakespeare, these are the supreme old novels. These are all things to all men. Which means that in their wholeness they affect the whole men alive, which is the man himself, beyond any part of him. They set the whole tree trembling with a new access of life, they do not just stimulate growth in one direction. 26

(Why the Novel Matters)

For Lawrence 'the business of art is to reveal the relationship between men and his circumambient universe, at the living moment.' It is the living moment that is all important: in the novel everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and untrue outside of its own place, time circumstances. If you try to nail anything down in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the

26. Ibid. p. 420
novel gets up and walks away with the nail. Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance true to the ever-changing relationships between men and between men and the universe, never fixed in one place or one attitude. As the relations change, so the living novel changes, informing and leading 'into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness and (leading) our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead.' 27

This clearly is something very different from the poor conventional accounts which even quite distinguished critics give of the business of the novel, and its relation to the life it celebrates or describes. The acuteness and originality of Lawrence's criticism, so much a piece with his actual practice of the novel, are natural products of his deep feelings (a religious feeling, he would have called it) of the need to be fully alive, which means not being 'nailed down,' not reacting by convention or out of part of oneself, but with one's whole being, seeing the living moment as is really is in all its changing aspects. And the novel will be true to this only if it presents life whole and openly: so its morality is never a fixed counter, but always draws its validity from the conditions of the time and place. Or when the novelist denies this and forgets the demand of honesty and has an axe to grind, 'when the novelist has his thumb in the pan, the novel becomes an unparalleled perverter of men and women.' 28
The relevance of these passages to Lawrence's own work is very clear. But the insight they show—the insight of a novelist of supreme moral openness and integrity—acts also as a marvellous sure foundation for criticism of other novelists, and enables him to go to the heart, for instance, of the fatal weakness which makes Galsworthy so palpably second-rate, while it also accounts for his continuing popularity:

"Why do we feel so instinctively that (the Forsytes) are inferior? It is because they seem to us to have lost caste as human beings, and to have sunk to the level of the social being, that peculiar creature that takes the place in our civilization of the slave in the old civilizations. The human individual is a queer animal, always changing. But the fatal change to-day is the collapse from the psychology of the free human individual into the psychology of the social being just as the fatal change in the past was a collapse from the freeman's psyche to the psyche of the slave. The free moral and the social moral: these are the abiding antithesis." 29

Lawrence's genius as a critic is one with his genius as novelist; there is in him no division of personality: everything he deals with his approaches as 'whole man alive.' It is this which enabled him to write the finest brief statements on the nature of criticism that we have:

" Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising. Criticism can never be a science: it is, in the first place, much too personal and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. The touchstone is emotion, not

29. Ibid. pp. 421-422
reason. We judge a work of art by its effects on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all the pseudo-scientific classifying and analysing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is a mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon. A critic must be able to 'feel' the impact of a work of art in all its complexity and force. To do so, he must be a man of force and complexity himself which few critics are. More than this, even an artistically and emotionally educated man must be a man of good faith. He must have the courage to admit what he feels, as well as the flexibility to 'know' what he feels. So Saints - Beuve remains, to me a great critic. And a man like Macaulay, brilliant as he is, is unsatisfactory, because he is not honest. He is emotionally very alive, but he juggles his feelings. He prefers a fine effect to the sincere statement of the aesthetic and emotional reaction. He is quite intellectually capable of giving us a true account of what he feels. But not morally. A critic must be emotionally alive in every fibre, intellectually capable and skilful in essential logic, and then morally very honest.  

T.S. Eliot in The Function of Criticism, says that: "The larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour, the labour of shifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing; this frightful toil is as much critical as creative. I maintain that even that the criticism employed by a trained and skilled writer on his work is the most vital, the highest kind of criticism, and (as I think I have said before) that some creative writers are superior to others solely because their critical faculty is superior."  

30. Ibid. p. 422  
John Crowe Ramsom says,

“Criticism is the attempt to define and enjoy the aesthetic or characteristic values of literature. It is not anybody who can do criticism. And for example, the more eminent (as historical scholar) the professor of English, the less apt he is to be able to write decent criticism, unless it is about another professor’s work of historical scholarship, in which case it is not literary criticism. The professor may not be without aesthetic judgements respecting an old works especially if it is ‘in his period,’ since it must often have been judged by authorities whom he respects. Confronted with a new work, I am afraid it is very rare that he finds anything particular to say.”

Hitherto, we have discussed enough what criticism is. And now we might as well move on to discuss what criticism is not. Professor Crane excludes from criticism works of historical scholarship and of Neo-Humanism. John Crowe Ransom who was educated at Vanderbilt (Tennessee) and Oxford Universities had more exclusions. He wishes to exclude:

1. Personal Registrations, which are declarations of the effect of the artwork upon the critic as reader. The first law to be prescribed to criticism, if we may assume such authority, is that it shall be objective, shall cite the nature of the object rather than its effect upon the subject. Therefore it is hardly criticism to assert that the proper literary work is one that we can read twice; or one that causes in us some remarkable psychological effect, such as oblivion of the outer world, the flowing of tears, visual or laryngeal sensations, and such like; or one that

32. Ibid. p. 231
induces perfect illusion, or brings us into a spiritual ecstasy; or even one that produces a catharsis of our emotions. Aristotle concerned himself with this last in making up his definition of tragedy—though he did not fail to make some acute analysis of the objective features of the work also. I have read that some modern Broadway producers of comedy require a reliable person to seat himself in a trial audience and count the laughs; this method of testing is not so subtle as Aristotle’s, but both are concerned with the effects. Such concern seems to reflect the view that art comes into being because the artist, or the employer behind him, has design upon the public, whether high moral designs or box-office ones. It is in odious view in either case, because it denies the autonomy of the artist as one who interests himself in the artistic object in his own right, and likewise the autonomy of the work itself as existing for its own sake. (We may define a chemical as something which can effect a certain cure, but that is not its meaning to the chemist; and we may define toys, if we are weary parents, as things which we keep our children quiet, but that is not what they are to engineers). Furthermore, we must regard as uncritical the use of an extensive vocabulary which ascribes to the object properties really discovered in the subject, as: moving, exciting, entertaining, pitiful, great, if I am not mistaken, and admirable, on a slightly different ground; and in strictness, beautiful itself.
2. Synopsis and paraphrase. The high-school classes and the women’s clubs delight in procedures, which are easiest of all the systematic exercises possible in the discussion of literary objects. I do not mean that the critic never uses them in his analysis of fiction and poetry, but he does not consider plot or story as identical with the real content. Plot is an abstract form of content.

3. Historical studies. These have a wide range, and include studies of the general literary background; author’s biography, of course with special reference to the autobiographical evidences in the work itself; bibliographical items; the citation of literary original and analogues, and therefore what, in general, is called comparative literature. But it may be conducted only superficially, if the comparisons are perfunctory and mechanical, or if the scholar is content with merely making the parallel citations.

4. Linguistic studies. Under this head come those studies which define the meaning of unusual words and idioms, including the foreign and archaic ones and identify the allusions. The total benefit of linguistics for criticism would be the same assurance that the latter was based on perfect logical understanding of the content, or interpretation. Acquaintance with all the language and literature’s in the world would not necessarily produce a critic, though it might save one from damaging errors.
5. Moral studies. The moral standard applied is the one appropriate to the reviewer; it may be Christian ethic, or the Aristotelian one, or the new proletarian gospel. But the moral content is not the whole content, which should never be relinquished.

6. Any other special studies which deal with some abstract or prose content may be taken out of the work. Nearly all departments of knowledge may conceivably find their own materials in literature, and take them out. Studies have been made of Chaucer’s command of medieval sciences, of Spencer’s view of the Irish question, of Shakespeare’s understanding of the law, of Milton’s geography, of Hardy’s place-names. The critic may well inform himself of the materials as possessed by the artist, but his business as critic is to discuss the literary assimilation of them. 33

In Criticism as Language, Roland Barthes says that:

“Criticism is something other than making correct statements in the light of ‘true’ principles. It follows that the major sin in criticism is not to have an ideology but to keep quiet about it. There is a name for this kind of guilty silence; it is self-deception or bad faith. How can anyone believe that a given work is an object independent of the psyche and personal history of the critic studying it, with regards to which he enjoys a sort of extra territorial status? It would be very much remarkable thing if the profound relationship that most critics

33. Ibid. pp. 235-236
postulate between the author they are dealing with and his works were non-existent in the case of their own works and their own situations in time. It is inconceivable that the creative laws governing the writer should not also be valid for the critic. All criticism must include (although it may do so in the most indirect and discreet way) an implicit comment on itself; all criticism is criticism both of the work under consideration and of the critic; to quote Clandel’s poem, it is knowledge (cognisance) of the other and co-birth (cognisance) of oneself to the world. Or to express the same thing in still another way, criticism is not in any sense a table of results or a body of judgements; it is essentially an activity, that is to say a series of intellectually acts inextricably involved with the historical and subjective (the two terms are synonyms) existence of the person who carries them out and has to assume responsibility for them. It is pointless to ask whether or not an activity is ‘true’; the imperatives governing it are quite different.”  

In *The Adventure of Criticism*, K.R. Srinivas Iyenger says pointedly:

“Literary or art criticism is not quite the same thing as criticism of budget or of legislative enactment, and literary criticism has its own unique problems as distinct from art criticism. But all criticism, to be worth the name, should be reared upon the twin foundation of knowledge and integrity.”

It is thus obvious that the question that Orwell’s work requires us to ask are not merely internal. There are important questions about the method and substance of his books, and some of them can be answered by the ordinary methods of literary study. But all his books, equally, pose social and

34. Ibid pp. 648-649
political questions, most of them quite direct. *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Inside the Whale* lead us inevitably to questions about English society and politics, and to more general questions about European and North American political thought and practice. *Homage to Catalonia* leads us inevitably to the tangled and controversial history of the Russian Revolution and its consequences, and to the politics of cold war, but because of this, they are more than merely books that raise questions—indeed, they are themselves political events, and the controversies surrounding them are part of our political history.

To conclude this chapter before we go to the major critical essays in the next chapter, let us go back to the definition of criticism. It is defined by a popular dictionary as 'the art or act of estimating the quality of literary or artistic work by an analysis of its merits and defects.' To quote from T.S. Eliot again at this final point:

“Criticism .... must always profess an end in view, which roughly speaking, appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste. We hear criticism of the administration, a certain policies of politicians and their panaceas. It is natural and even necessary that there should be criticism, for without the vigilance that criticism implies things may go wrong. However, as a writer has pointed out in Britain Today, Criticism is healthy and good and is to be welcomed only when it is informed criticism. If it is not, it is dishonest, it is in the nature of sabotage; it is likely to put spokes in the wheels of any disinterested endeavour.... Literary of art criticism has its own unique problems as distinct from art criticism. But all criticism, to be worth the name, should be reared upon the twin foundation of knowledge and integrity.”

In his Anatomy of Criticism, Professor Northrop Frye describes:

"the whole work of scholarship and taste concerned with literature which is a part of what is variously called liberal education, culture, or the study of the humanities, and criticism is not simply a part of this larger activity, but an 'essential' part of it." 37

And the ‘types’ of criticism are historical, ethical, archetype, rhetorical. The critical function, in whatever field or at whatever level it might be brought into play, could always be discharged in the true spirit of adventure, labour, and a discipline that is also an athletic exercise and a sport, a mounting of tension that should bring with its own release and satisfaction. Criticism, again, involves the use of various knowledges (history, sociology, philosophy, linguistic) and diverse techniques (analysis, explication, interpretation, compassion). But, of course, to be able to achieve the proper response - to make the right discriminations - to articulate the valid judgements is the real crux of the matter.