Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE THEORY OF POETRY: THE WESTERN HISTORY OF IDEAS

This chapter includes various western epistemological theories and theories of poetic process, beginning from the Greek philosophers to the Romantic philosophers and poets. The emphasis is upon the process of knowledge forming a substratum for the process of creativity. The fundamental inquiry is, what is reality and how can it be apprehended? The pertinent issues in literature are: the representation of reality in art, the role of imagination in creativity, the poet being a natural genius or a talented craftsman, language representing reality and the aim of literature. Each philosopher or poet either opposes a concept or builds upon an existing concept to formulate the history of ideas.

Plato’s views were partly a response to the Greek thinker, Heraclitus, who believed that the world is in a flux and all things come into being from change. Plato claims that physical existence cannot be consistently described because it is not consistent. The notion of the world being in a flux is taken up in the "Theatetus". Socrates, the chief spokesperson in Plato’s dialogues, states, “All the things we are pleased to say ‘are’, really are in process of becoming, as a result of movement and change and of blending one with another. We are wrong to speak of them as ‘being’, for none of them ever is; they are always becoming.”
If everything is in motion and always changing then what is reality? To answer this question Plato posits the theory of forms. The theory of forms is postulated by Plato to establish a stable reality. “The word ‘form’ is now the common rendering of the Greek eidos or idea. The older rendering, ‘idea’, is avoided because of its misleading suggestion of a purely subjective notion.” The forms are archetypes of the phenomenal world and their existence is not dependent upon the senses. The phenomenal world is only an image of these forms. What one perceives as objects are imitations of these paradigms which are grasped only by a few exceptional minds. In the “Parmenides”, Plato defines the form as a thought that can only exist in the mind. Things do not partake of forms by being like them, they are merely imperfect copies of these forms or aspire to be like them. Forms are the non-sensible realities which do not exist in the physical world. In Book IV of the “Republic”, Plato differentiates between the physical world and the forms as, “the one class of things we say can be seen but not thought, while the ideas can be thought but not seen.” The forms are universal and abstract as opposed to the phenomenal objects that are particular and concrete.

Aristotle’s ontology does not correspond to Plato’s ontology. Aristotle accords ontological status to the material realities of the world. For him, sensations, experiences, substances and their attributes partake of the process of knowledge. He does not subscribe to Plato’s dualism but maintains that universal forms and concrete substances conjoin to create a tangible reality. Plato’s ontology is based on the forms, the ultimate objects of knowledge which are disembodied, immaterial concepts, permanent and universal in
nature. Aristotle’s objects of knowledge are particular substances which lead to universal concepts and the two cannot exist apart.

Aristotle confers ontological status to the corporeal reality because he claims that the world is constituted of material objects or bodies that can be defined and their existence can be proved. In the “Categories” he states, “This is likewise the case with regard to perception: for the object of perception is, it appears, prior to the act of perception. If the perceptible is annihilated, perception will also cease to exist; but the annihilation of perception does not cancel the existence of the perceptible.” The objects of knowledge exist outside the mind in the actual world. If there are no objects, there can be no knowledge of them but if the knowledge of an object does not exist, the object might.

The next question that arises is, how can reality be apprehended? How does one acquire knowledge about the real world? For Plato, the knowledge gained through the senses is not real knowledge. The process of perception is delineated in the “Theatetus”. There are two entities – one has “the power of acting”, the other “of being acted upon”, the perceived, the subject and the object. The physical object gives rise to the sense perception by interacting with the senses. Perceptions are the result of the interplay between the moving particles of the external world and the sense organs.

Each percipient, coming in contact with the things of the outside world in motion, will have his own perception. Since perception is relative, one man’s perception may not be true for another. According to Protagoras,
"man is the measure of all things". His perception may be true for him but not for others. Protagoras states, "any given thing is to me such as it appears to me, and is to you such as it appears to you...." The percipient himself will experience different perceptions at different times. Plato claims that the senses do not lead us to true knowledge.

Plato exalts reason and understanding as higher faculties that lead to true knowledge. It is the mind that apprehends all the information provided by different sense organs. The fact that a rose looks red and beautiful, smells sweet and wonderful is judged by the mind on the basis of the impressions supplied by the eye and the nose. So, "knowledge does not reside in the impressions, but in our reflection upon them...." The mind judges by itself, by reason, not by experience. Senses can be deceptive but reason can lead to the truth. A thinking mind, according to Plato, is a mind talking to itself, asking questions and answering them. When it arrives at a decision, judgement takes place. But a mind can have false judgements about what is not true.

Plato holds that those who do not have the capacity to look beyond their senses, form opinions and those who have extraordinary insight to understand the truth behind the world of sense perceptions into the world of forms, acquire knowledge. One acquires belief when one grasps the image of reality, whereas knowledge can be acquired when one grasps reality itself. The distinction between episteme and doxa – knowledge and opinion - is elucidated in the "Republic" with the analogy of the "Divided Line". The purpose of the Divided Line is to distinctly mark the difference between the domain of episteme and that of doxa to prove that reason and understanding,
superior to sense perception, are the valid means of acquiring knowledge. The hypothetical line is divided disproportionately with the larger, upper portion of the line representing episteme and the smaller, lower portion representing doxa. These sections are further divided into two parts each – the episteme section incorporating intelligence or dialectic at the top and Mathematical reasoning at the second level. The lower section is divided by belief at the third level and illusion at the bottom level. Moving from the lowest level where there are images and shadows which are the illusions of the mind, one reaches the third level which includes the beliefs of the mind. Both these divisions belong to the physical domain which most people possess, believing that the external world is the ultimate truth. These are people who have opinions. At the third level is the reasoning power of the mind which is possessed by a few extraordinary people who can attain true knowledge with the help of the highest level of the line – intelligence. Through the dialectic method they can reach the intelligible realm of the knowledge of forms beyond the physical world of sense perception.

The simile of the cave, in the "Republic" gives the epistemology for the above concept. It paves the path to remove the shackles of illusions and beliefs to attain the freedom of truth and reality. Most people lead the lives of the prisoners chained to the physical world of everyday life, believing what they perceive to be true. They never question or doubt that the shadows they are surrounded by may only be the images of reality. To get up and see beyond the curtain is to look at reality in the bright light which may not be easy because of the darkness and the delusions of the caves of life. But once people get accustomed to looking at things in totality, in the light of truth, it will be difficult to go back to the life of illusions and
darkness. Every person possesses the ability to rise above the delusions but only a few are able to accomplish it.

On the other hand, Aristotle’s philosopher is the achiever of wisdom, not abstract wisdom but the knowledge of the sensibles. In fact, knowledge commences with the sense experience. Aristotle begins “Metaphysics” by stating:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.¹²

But sense perception is not the only required faculty to acquire knowledge. Aristotle explains that the sense organs and the objects of perception have some nexus. Sensation takes place when the object comes in contact with the sense organ. What happens in this process is that the sense organ becomes like the object perceived:

By a ‘sense’ is meant what has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter. This must be conceived of as taking pace in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet-ring without the iron or gold ....¹³

All animals have the faculty of sensation and some higher animals have memory but man is elevated from the rest due to his rational capacity. With this, he can organise his memories into experiences which lead to art and science. Aristotle’s view in the “Metaphysics” is, “Now art arises when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgement about a class of objects is produced.”¹⁴ Master workers are more knowledgeable
than the labourers because they know the causes of the things and can teach better than those who are unaware of the causes. Therefore, "we think art more truly knowledge than experience is; for artists can teach, and men of mere experience cannot."\(^{15}\)

In literature the issue is, does art represent reality? The cornerstone of the poetic process, for both Plato and Aristotle, is the term "mimesis". But the difference lies in the usage of the term by the two philosophers:

A term which meant for Plato removal from reality and distortion (at least when he applied the term to art) is manipulated by Aristotle to mean something apparently better than reality.\(^{16}\)

According to the Platonic theory of arts, the poetic representation or imitation is unreliable because it is thrice removed from the truth.\(^{17}\) It does not represent the truth, it only imitates the appearance of the truth. The first creator is God who created the absolute reality, the forms. The second creator is the craftsman who tries to copy the eternal realities. This second representation does not inhere the complete truth because it cannot capture all the aspects of reality. Just as a mirror cannot reflect all the dimensions of the objects reflected. The poet or the artist looks at the second hand copies and then represents them in his work, a representation three times removed from the real. Hence, the poet's words are nowhere near the eternal truth. He is a producer of illusions, not realities.

The fulcrum of Aristotle's theory of poetry is the word "imitation". The word has a resonance of Plato's "mimesis" but is actually a reaction against Plato's usage of the term. Imitation, which can mean resemblance, copy or representation, is the fundamental principle of all art, according to Aristotle.
In fact, it is the most natural propensity of human behaviour whereby man learns and delights:

Imitation is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation. And it is also natural for all to delight in work of imitation.\(^{18}\)

Artists use colour, form, rhythm, harmony and language to create works of art. The closer a work of art is to reality, the more it pleases even if it portrays something unpleasant and grotesque.

Literature, like other art forms, originates with the impulse to imitate. Throughout his discussion on tragedy, Aristotle’s emphasis is on imitation, be it of action, character or plot. He defines tragedy as “essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery.”\(^ {19}\) Tragedy is an imitation, though not literal, of life and action. It is a lifelike representation, true like the material world. This representation is not a thrice removed copy of the reality, as postulated by Plato but a different reality altogether. Aristotle’s claim does not lie in proving that art, especially poetry, is a literal representation of reality. For him, literature serves a different purpose altogether, which is - to portray reality and where it is required, to extend that reality to meet the poetic truth. He states:

The poet being an imitator just like the painter or other maker of likenesses, he must necessarily in all instances represent things in one or other of three aspects, either as they were or are, or as they are said or thought to be or to have been, or as they ought to be.\(^ {20}\)

He further goes on to say that literature should adhere to the truth but truth is not its aim. The poet can portray the reality as it was, is, or most important,
as it should be. The discretion to improve upon the existing nature is in the hands of the poet. Literal copying is not his purpose; the power to represent the world, as it ought to be, resides in him.

That is why Aristotle condones technical errors but not artistic failures. An impossibility described wittingly by the poet is justified to create an effect but if the poet fails to describe correctly what he intends to, whether it exists or not, it is a fault in his art. "For the purposes of poetry a convincing impossibility is preferable to an unconvincing possibility...." Therefore, poetry is not a veritable account, the truth can be stretched to some extent.

Imagination, in Aristotle’s view, corresponds to invention. Commenting on the role of imagination in “De Anima”, Aristotle states that imagination or phantasia is different from sensation and thinking though it cannot exist without sensation or judgement. It is within one’s power to bring up one’s imagination, like bringing up a picture to the mind at will but it does not affect a person like thoughts or sensations do. For example, a thought can produce an emotion but imagination only distances one from what is imagined. Imagination depends upon images which are not necessarily true. Sensations allow a person to discriminate between truth and error but imagination is mostly false.

Literature, for Aristotle, is a meticulously crafted art. He calls the poet a maker, a creator. Each component of a particular genre, like tragedy, has to be placed appropriately. The elements of tragedy are more like the components of a body, placed in position to make it complete. A tragedy is complete only when these elements integrate as a unified whole. "Creative
process, in this view, is a matter of craftsmanship, arrangement and order that achieves the desired effect by skilfully using all the rhetorical and linguistic devices. On the other hand, Plato's concept of poetry is not a craft but an inspiration or a frenzy which binds a poet under a spell. It is not a rational craft but an effusion of emotions. The poet is in a trance of inspiration without which he cannot compose poetry. The magnetic ring theory is delineated in the "Ion". The muse, like a magnet, infuses frenzy in the poet whose creations in turn magnetise the rhapsodist and then the public. The magnetic attraction is not the gaining of knowledge but a madness of emotional display.

Does language reflect reality? Plato considers whether words express knowledge adequately. The question put forth in the "Cratylus" is whether language is natural or a convention? Socrates argues that an image cannot be the real thing. If the image expresses the entire reality then it is not an image. Names can only represent the meanings. Just like a picture is only an image, not flesh and blood reality. An image has something more or less than the object it represents. It cannot represent the object in totality, only in parts. Moreover, if names are given to the objects of the phenomenal world which are in flux themselves, how can the names represent a stable reality? So, language is only a convention, a habit of the users. There is no concurrence between the words and the objects.

Language, for Aristotle, represents the outside reality. The words may not reflect the objects of knowledge but they do represent them. In "On Interpretation" he says, "Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words." In "The
Categories”, he stipulates that words maybe equivocal, univocal or derivative but they do represent, directly or indirectly, what they stand for.

What is the aim of literature? Plato’s objection to poetry is that it arouses unhealthy emotions which lead to the public display of shame and embarrassment. Aristotle, on the other hand, applauds the emotional element of tragedy which allows the spectators to purge themselves of the emotions aroused.

Horace continues the Aristotelian concept of literature representing reality in “The Art of Poetry”. Horace asserts that things represented should correspond to nature. The laws of nature forbid antipathy. A painter coupling a man’s head along with the horse’s on the animal’s body, a lovely woman with an ugly fish body instead of legs will only evoke laughter. Poetic licence does not extend, “so that harsh may mate with gentle, serpents be paired with birds, lambs with tigers.” Such figures are absolutely unbelievable. Literature portrays the existing reality, not the fantastic.

Art, according to Horace, is a result of genius supported by technique:

Whether a good poem be the work of nature or of art is a moot point. For my part I fail to see the use of study without wit, or of wit without training: so true is it that each requires the other’s aid in helpful union.

Plato’s concept of poetic frenzy and Aristotle’s concept of poetic craft combine to create poetry. Inspiration alone cannot lead to creativity; it needs the guidance of technique. Good poetry is a result of order and arrangement.
It is important for Horace that language should reveal the subject because words have the capacity to capture the truth. The words should be chosen with care and "you will have expressed yourself admirably if a clever setting gives a spice of novelty to a familiar word." Language needs to grow and change. New words replace the old like leaves on trees. "As forests suffer change of leaves with each declining year, so the earliest-invented words are the first to fall; an elder generation passes away and new-born words, like youth, flourish and grow."

The aim of poetry is to charm and teach. Horace claims that a poet tries to give advice or amuse, or he tries to do both. Horace's contributions to the poetic theory are appropriateness, propriety, good taste and fidelity in truthful representation.

Literature, according to Longinus, represents reality but he does not seek an exact copy of the objects represented. The difference between a poetic and an oratorical image is that while in the poetic image "a certain mythical exaggeration is allowable, transcending altogether mere logical credence", an oratorical image requires energy and reality. The fabulous is acceptable in poetry but an orator has to be vivid in description. In poetry, figures of speech appear more effective in disguise. Poetry transcends the realistic to encompass the grand and the majestic. At no time does Longinus forget that art and nature go hand in hand. "For art is then perfect when it seems to be nature, and nature, again, is most effective when pervaded by the unseen presence of art."

Longinus claims that it is natural for humans to admire sublimity. Nature implanted in human souls a yearning for all that is divine and majestic:
And this is why nature prompts us to admire, not the clearness and usefulness of a little stream, but the Nile, the Danube, the Rhine, and far beyond all the Ocean, not to turn our wandering eyes from the heavenly fires, though often darkened, to the little flame kindled by human hands, however pure and steady its light...

To sum the whole: whatever is useful or needful lies easily within man’s reach; but he keeps his homage for what is astounding.  

The sublime surpasses the common place and useful objects, it incorporates the extraordinary element. It is not just the colossal size of an object that embodies sublimity, the presence of sublimity in an object is its implicit majesty and loftiness.

In literature, the sublime is attained through:

- a certain loftiness and excellence of language, and that it is by this, and this only, that the greatest poets and prose-writers have gained eminence, and won themselves a lasting place in the Temple of Fame. A lofty passage does not convince the reason of the reader, but takes him out of himself. That which is admirable ever confounds our judgement, and eclipses that which is merely reasonable or agreeable. To believe or not is usually in our power; but the Sublime, acting with an imperious and irresistible force, sways every reader whether he will or not.

Reason and judgement are suspended in favour of wonder and awe. The objects described sometimes overwhelm perception, not because they are fantastic but because they are exalted. The emphasis shifts to the implied and inherent features of the external objects. These features cannot be perceptibly and logically comprehended, they are latent qualities that have to be inferred. Grandeur in literature is the quality that exalts the writing,
fascinates and lifts the souls of the readers by the compelling power of language.

Longinus’ quest for the sublime in the literary writers is also an inquiry into the fountainhead of creativity. According to him, natural talent, though majestic and passionate, needs to be restrained or it can become rash. Great passions need impulse as well as restraint. The native genius needs guidance from the techniques of art but “a writer can only learn from art when he is to abandon himself the direction of his genius.” Natural endowments of the poet refer to his innate genius which, allied with the acquired art, constitute the sublime. The first prerequisite of a poet is a “lofty cast of mind”. Therefore, “although this is a faculty rather natural than acquired, nevertheless it will be well for us in this instance also to train up our souls to sublimity, and make them as it were ever big with noble thoughts.” The training acquired will lead the poet to excellence.

Sir Philip Sidney follows the Aristotelian tradition of poetry being an art of imitation. “Poetry therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture – with this end, to teach and delight.” Poetry does not imitate the physical reality as it exists but as it ought to be according to the poet. Imitation, once again, is not an exact replica but an improved version of reality. Sidney asserts that the poet represents nature but in a better and improved manner. The poets portray richer and more beautiful colours, transforming the coarse world into a golden realm.
To prove that poetry is a valid source of knowledge, Sidney compares it to history and philosophy. He posits that knowledge lifts “the mind from the dungeon of the body to enjoy his own divine essence.” Knowledge leads the degenerated souls to perfection but all sciences do not have a noble aim. The forms of learning that aim at moral and virtuous ends are superior to others. Though philosophy and history aim to be noble yet philosophy gets entangled in the complex precepts of the abstract and general, whereas history is confined to the constraints of the particulars of the past. The poet is a moderator who is more particular than the philosopher and more general than the historian.

Sidney defends poetry against the accusations of untruthfulness. He exalts poetry to the highest seat of virtuous learning and declares that poetry is not an art of lying. The poet never promises to portray the absolute truth; his art is invention which does not mean departure from the truth but representation of things, as they ought to be. Poetic representation is moral and virtuous, “For I will not deny but that man’s wit may make Poesy, which should be eikastike, which some learned have defined, ‘figuring forth good things’, to be phantastike, which doth contrariwise infect the fancy with unworthy objects....” Phantastike, for Sidney, does not mean imaginative, it means unworthy.

Francis Bacon comments that poetry “doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things.” Bacon reiterates the idea that poetry provides knowledge and learning. He states:
Poesy is a part of learning in measure of words for the most part restrained, but in all other points extremely licensed, and doth truly refer to the imagination; which, being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join that which nature hath severed, and sever that which nature hath joined, and so make unlawful matches and divorces of things....39

Poetry is a means of learning but it does not always represent the external world, as it actually exists. With the help of imagination, it reshuffles and rearranges in order to create.

Sidney reflects the Renaissance spirit by making the human mind an object of study and emphasising the role of concept making in the process of literary composition. Sidney does not reject the theory of the poet having divine inspiration but he conforms to the idea of a poet being a craftsman. Sidney prefers the Greek name "poet", a maker, because the poet creates his own world. According to Sidney, all arts depend upon nature for their sources. "Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit."40 Sidney claims that the true ideas are invented by the poet himself. The contents of poetry are to be gathered from the mind of the poet. Poetry is the manifestation of the idea that is in the poet’s mind. It is the result of the poet’s wit, it is his invention and he creates another nature by describing things better than they appear or creating things that do not exist.
Sidney does not completely sweep away the role of God or natural talent for artistic creation. He stipulates that God bestows the gift of creativity to the poet to surpass nature by creating a second nature. Divine inspiration is the source of creativity but that is only a part of the process because “a poet no industry can make, if his own genius be not carried unto it... the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest flying wit have a Daedalus to guide him.” The mind of the poet might possess the ability to write poetry but without the hard work of craft, imitation and exercise he can hope for little achievement. Francis Bacon conforms to the idea in Book II of “The Advancement of Learning”:

The knowledge of man is as the waters, some descending from above, and some springing from beneath; the one informed by the light of nature, the other inspired by divine revelation. The light of nature consisteth in the notions of the mind and the reports of the senses: for as for knowledge which man receiveth by teaching, it is cumulative and not original; as in a water that besides his own spring-head is fed with other springs and streams.

Knowledge, like the talent for writing poetry, can also be natural or acquired.

Sidney upholds that the aim of poetry is to instruct and delight. He suggests that poetry teaches the highest truth and is the foundation of all other disciplines of learning. Poets can describe things and make them appear vividly in the minds of the readers who have never seen them before. Poetic examples can teach that virtue is to be welcomed and vice to be shunned. Thus, poetry can be a moral and an educative experience. At the same time, it should also provide pleasure for the readers. Besides instruction and
pleasure, poetry should also possess the ability to move – a characteristic essential for teaching and pleasing. Only then will it charm "with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner."43

Ben Jonson’s concept of knowledge is based upon reason. In the process of knowledge, the senses play their part only marginally:

Knowledge is the action of the soul; and is perfect without the senses, as having the seeds of all science, and virtue in itself; but not without the services of the senses: by those organs, the soul works: She is a perpetual agent, prompt and subtle; but often flexible, and erring; entangling herself like a silk worm: but her reason is a weapon with two edges, and cuts through.44

Knowledge bases its foundation upon reason which cuts and shapes the inputs of the sense organs.

Ben Jonson endorses the concept of poetry being a combination of natural wit, art, study, exercise and imitation in “Timbers” or “Discoveries”. Jonson’s emphasis is more on the craft in the creative process. He differentiates between the poet, the poem and the process of creating poetry:

A poem, as I have told you, is the work of the poet; the end, and fruit of his labour, and study. Poesy is his skill, or craft of making: the very fiction itself, the reason, or form of the work. And these three voices differ, as the thing done, the doing, and the doer; the thing fained, the faining, and the fainer: so the poem, the poesy, and the poet. Now, the poesy is the habit, or the art: nay, rather the queen of arts: which had her original from heaven, received thence from the Hebrews and had in prime estimation with the Greeks, transmitted to the Latins, and all nations, that professed civility.45

Jonson accepts the Greek translation of the poet, as the maker, and lists the requirements of this maker. The foremost trait a poet should possess is “a
goodness of natural wit. For, whereas all other arts consist of doctrine, and
precepts: the poet must be able by nature, and instinct, to pour out the
treasures of his mind...."  

"Natural wit" will not make a poet attain
perfection in his creativity, he will have to labour to equal the dignity of the
ancients. Study, effort and endeavour can help him to improve. Art can lead
to perfection. Poetry is the result of labour and diligence, states Jonson. It is
not unpremeditated or spontaneous.

The mirror of the rational mind is the language used by the poet. The words
used by a writer reflect the magnificence or meanness of the mind. Jonson
says, "Language most shows a man: speak that I may see you. It springs out
of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the image of the parent of
it, the mind. No glass renders a man's form, or likeness, so true as his
speech". He claims that the words and the meanings are like the body and
the soul. Words themselves are nothing without the sense which is the result
of knowledge and experience. Hence, a fool may talk but only wise men
speak. "The conceits of the mind are pictures of things, and the tongue is the
interpreter of those pictures... then he who could apprehend the
consequence of things in their truth, and utter his apprehensions as truly,
were the best writer or speaker".

In "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy", John Dryden proposes that literature is an
imitation of human nature. Lisideius, in the essay, defines a play as "a just
and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours,
and the changes of fortune to which it is subject; for the delight and
instruction of mankind." Neander concedes to Lisideius, "For the lively
imitation of nature being in the definition of a play, those which best fulfil
that law ought to be esteemed superior to the others." Imitation is not a photographic copy but a representation. Nature and life provide the raw materials which are moulded by the poets and dramatists to create literature. Since the poet does not represent an exact copy of nature, he adds to it something of his own and transforms it in the process. Literal representation is not good art. For example, a painter, copying the exact line and feature will not make a beautiful picture but an overall resemblance will give it excellence. Dryden states that art improves upon nature by heightening certain beautiful parts and hiding the shortcomings. He further elaborates in "A Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poetry":

'Tis true that to imitate well is a poet's work; but to affect the soul, and excite the passions, and above all to move admiration (which is the delight of serious plays) a bare imitation will not serve. The converse therefore which a poet is to imitate, must be heightened with all the arts and ornaments of poesy; and must be such, as, strictly considered, could never be supposed spoken by any without premeditation.

Art is not a spontaneous creation. It is premeditated and needs ornaments and rules to decorate and guide. The decorum and propriety will give it beauty and ability to instruct. Human nature is to be represented as general and ideal nature. The aim of literature is to delight and instruct. The moral strains become more intense with the neo-classicists.

Endowment of natural talent is not ignored by Dryden. He commends Shakespeare's natural gift. "All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally
learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there."

Imagination does not play a very significant role for the neo-classicists, in fact it is to be suspected. Yet it assists reason, when required. Dryden claims that to enjoy the pleasures of fictitious events imagination does not overtake reason but dupes it temporarily:

Fancy and reason go hand in hand, the first cannot leave the last behind; and though fancy, when it sees the wide gulf, would venture over, as the nimbler; yet it is withheld by reason, which will refuse to take the leap, when the distance over it appears too large.

Dryden, like most neo-classicists, uses the words fancy and imagination as synonyms. But he insists that the predominant feature in a play is neither fancy nor imagination but judgement. Profound and infallible judgement will make a great poet who will not need any more knowledge to achieve excellence.

In the preface to "Annus Mirabilis", he admits that it is "the faculty of imagination in the writer, which, like a nimble spaniel, beats over and ranges through the field of memory, till it springs the quarry it hunted after; or, without metaphor, which searches over all the memory for the species or ideas of those things which it designs to represent. Wit written, is that which is well defined, the happy result of thought, or product of that imagination." Wit is the result of thought and imagination which are dependent upon memory. Dryden takes this idea from Hobbes, who defines wit as "celerity of imagining (that is, swift succession of one thought to another); and steady direction to some approved end...." Hobbes explains
further, "those that observe their similitudes, in case they be such as are but rarely observed by others, are said to have a good wit; by which, in this occasion, is meant a good fancy. But they that observe their differences, and dissimilitudes, which is called distinguishing, and discerning and judging between thing and thing, in case such discerning be not easy, are said to have a good judgement...."56 Both, fancy and judgement, are required in poetic creation. Fancy pleases because of its extravagance and embellishment of style, whereas judgement is required for the representation of truth. "Judgement, therefore, without fancy is wit, but fancy without judgement, not."57 Fancy and imagination are, once again, terms that are interchangeable. Dryden too states that imagination is essential for writing poetry but it has to be curbed by judgement.

Hobbes' philosophy is based upon the conviction that all knowledge depends upon sense experience. He stipulates, "The original of them all is that which we call sense, (for there is no conception in a man's mind which hath not at first, totally or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense). The rest are derived from that original."58 There is an existing outside reality which we experience through motions in our sense organs. These motions are produced by the external objects. Sensation is the motion produced in the brain which makes us aware of the outside world. The memory of such sensations, for Hobbes, is imagination:

For, after the object is removed, or the eye shut, we still retain an image of the thing seen, though more obscure than when we see it. And this is it that Latins call imagination, from the image made in seeing, and apply the same, though improperly, to all the other senses. But the Greeks call it fancy, which signifies appearance, and is as proper to one sense as to another. Imagination, therefore, is nothing but decaying sense,
and is found in men, and many other living creatures, as well sleeping as waking.59

The outside world impinges upon the mind through the senses and forms images which are stored in the memory when the external objects are removed. Because the sensations in the memory become dimmer, they are called “decaying sense”. Memory initiates imagination and judgement. “Simple imagination”60 evokes single images from the memory. “Compound imagination”61 combines two or more images and conjoins them to create various images. Images follow one another in the mind and form a sequence of thoughts. This succession of thoughts can be regulated by desire or design and used for invention.

The neo-classicists determine poetry to be an art contrived by effort, rules, decorum, propriety, judgement and wit. Judgement is based upon learning by erudite minds. Wit is the expression of ideas in innovative words. Propriety and decorum have to be maintained in order to write serious literature. The prescriptive disposition of the neo-classical literature propounds the theory of creativity being an acquired art. Yet Dryden emphasises the need to be lively and work with fancy. Alexander Pope too refers to natural genius in “An Essay on Criticism”:

In Poets as true genius is but rare,
True Taste as seldom is the Critic’s share;
Both must alike from Heav’n derive their light,
These born to judge, as well as those to write.

(ll 11 - 14)62

References to the muses throughout the Essay (“trace the Muses”, “bright Muse”, “celestial fire”), reveal Pope’s acceptance of the inspiration theory and the natural talent of a writer.
Decorum in form and content is to be augmented by decorum in language. Pope shuns the glittery and ornamental diction but advocates appropriate language for appropriate subjects. Language, for him, is the dress of the idea:

Others for *Language* all their care express,
And value books, as women men, for *Dress*,
...
Expression is the dress of thought, and still
Appears more decent, as more suitable....
(II 305 - 6, ll 18 - 19)\(^{63}\)

He prefers lucid expression to false eloquence and disparages offensive and grandiose words. He advocates that language can reflect the phenomenal world, as it exists.

In the essays of “The Spectator”, Joseph Addison continues the theory that art improves upon nature. Art makes nature more beautiful by improving upon the imperfections. Emotion makes artistic imitation more enduring. Even unpleasant things give pleasure in art but imitation of pleasant things is better.

The natural genius is acclaimed by Addison to be the greatest artist who is not disciplined by the terse rules of art:

Among great Genius’s, those few draw the Admiration of all the World upon them, and stand up as the Prodigies of Mankind, who by the meer Strength of natural Parts, and without any Assistance of Art or Learning, have produced Works that were the Delight of their own Times and the Wonder of Posterity.\(^{64}\)
But according to him, natural genius without correctness and propriety cannot go far. He states that the Ancients failed in "the Nicety and Correctness of the Moderns". The second kind of genius is the one who achieves greatness by submitting natural talents to the restraints and correctness of art.

The difference between the two geniuses is in their manner:

The Genius in both these Classes of Authors may be equally great, but shews it self after a different Manner. In the first it is like a rich Soil in a happy Climate, that produces a whole Wilderness of noble Plants rising in a thousand beautiful Landskips without any certain Order or Regularity. In the other it is the same rich Soil under the same happy Climate, that has been laid out in Walks and Parterres, and cut into Shape and Beauty by the Skill of the Gardener.

The spontaneous, unbridled and straggling talent is comparable to that art which is disciplined, doctrined and regulated. Addison claims that a genius can excel in any field if he has perseverance and focuses his energies in a particular direction. Natural talent has to be guided in the right direction or else it will go waste.

The literary scene of England was dominated by the empiricist philosophers during the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. The impact of the philosophic theories of Locke, Hobbes and Hume is evident in the literary theories of Dryden, Pope and Johnson. The emphasis upon representation of external reality, the preoccupation with form, the notion of sense experience and its portrayal in art emanate from empiricism. Locke proclaims the mind to be a passive mental faculty in "An Essay Concerning Human
Understanding”. He states that human mind is like a blank paper upon which observation and reflection are impressed and formed into experience:

Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.67

Simple ideas are formed in the mind by the senses when the mind perceives objects or by reflection when the mind observes its own operations. In the process of the conception of simple ideas the mind is passive. During the conception of complex ideas, when it compounds several simple ideas into one or separates them from other ideas, the mind is not wholly passive but exerts itself. By its own power, it can conjoin or separate and create new variables. It can rearrange ideas but these ideas are based entirely upon the information supplied by the senses.

Joseph Addison owes his concept of imagination to Locke and Hobbes to some extent. He stipulates that the senses furnish the mind with ideas. The sense of sight is most potent in providing material to the mind. Visible objects as well as notions of the mind called up by memory lead to pleasures of imagination. He divides the pleasures of imagination as the pleasures that are acquired from the objects visible to the eyes and those that arise from the ideas of the visible objects conjured up by memory. “The Pleasures of the Imagination, taken in the full Extent, are not so gross as those of Sense, nor as refined as those of the Understanding. The last are, indeed, more preferable, because they are founded on some new Knowledge or Improvement in the Mind of Man; yet it must be confess, that those of the Imagination are as great and transporting as the other.”68
For Addison, a man with a refined imagination is one who can perceive the beauty of what he sees:

He can converse with a Picture, and find an unagreeable Companion in a Statue. He meets with a secret Refreshment in a Description, and often feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in the Possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated Parts of Nature administer to his Pleasures: So that he looks upon the World, as it were, in another Light, and discovers in it a Multitude of Charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of Mankind.\(^69\)

The persons with sensitive imagination can relate to the subtle beauty in the objects around them but everyone does not possess this ability. Keen observation, sensitive perception and the ability to co-relate different things are required for the refined imagination. But imagination for Addison does not form new realities. His concept of imagination is closer to Edmund Burke's views:

Besides the ideas, with their annexed pains and pleasures, which are presented by the sense; the mind of man possesses a sort of creative power of its own; either in representing at pleasure the images of things in the order and manner in which they were received by the senses, or in combining those images in a new manner, and according to a different order. This power is called imagination; and to this belongs whatever is called wit, fancy, invention, and the like. But it must be observed, that this power of the imagination is incapable of producing anything absolutely new; it can only vary the disposition of those ideas which it has received from the senses.\(^70\)

The faculty of imagination can only conjoin and rearrange the material provided by the senses, it cannot create anything new on its own. Such
pleasures can be therapeutic because they are more conducive to health. They can influence the mind and the body.

The objects that evoke the "Pleasures of Imagination" have to be great, uncommon or beautiful. By greatness, Addison refers to the expanse of the scene like the view of the horizon, in which the immensity and variety are pleasing. Newness in an object offers refreshment. For that reason even imperfections of nature, like a monster, please some people. But the most important factor of pleasure is beauty which offers joy and delight to the mind. Beauty, states Addison, can be found in symmetry, proportion and arrangement.

Samuel Johnson bases his literary theory upon reality and experience but does not go to the extent of approving fancy or imagination. Adherence to truth and suspicion of fiction are two edicts Johnson supports passionately. Literature should reflect phenomenal nature and human nature. He states that literature represents an exact copy of the existing world and not an improved version of reality. He asserts that nature as well as literature is "a just representation of things really existing and actions really performed" and not as they ought to be. Shakespeare is to be celebrated because his drama mirrors life, his characters are also lifelike and even where a supernatural agency is involved the dialogue is realistic:

Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would probably be such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shewn human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.
Johnson does not approve of mythological representations in literature because they are not exponents of verisimilitude. Yet the writer’s invention can render unfamiliar things as familiar and the known things as new. Pope’s “Rape of the Lock” presents plausible aerial beings and “the little guarded follies of the female sex” in a strikingly new manner.

Johnson claims that a work of art is based upon the experience of the writer. The writer has to feel the emotion before expressing it. He finds Shakespeare more passionate and moving than Milton. Metaphysical poets are criticised by him because they were observers not participants of experience. He states, “But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power.”

Johnson considers talent as a natural endowment. According to him, Shakespeare did not possess formal education, he was “a product of his own genius". He had the power of nature but that power can only provide the raw material because:

Nature gives no man knowledge, and when images are collected by study and experience, can only assist in combining or applying them. Shakespeare, however favoured by nature, could impart only what he had learned; and as he must increase his ideas, like other mortals, by gradual acquisition, he, like them, grew wiser as he grew older, could display life better, as he knew it more, as he grew older, could display life better, as he knew it more, and instruct with more efficacy, as he was himself more amply instructed.

The art of poetry is not spontaneous, for Johnson, it involves effort. But the effort should not show in the composition. Though Johnson places natural genius in one category and invention, restraint and reason in another, he often collates them to form a complete experience.
In the neo-classical tradition, Johnson exalts reason, not imagination. He defines reason as the analytical faculty of the mind that operates understanding, establishes order and moderates excess. Imagination, on the other hand, is "a licentious and vagrant Faculty, impatient of limitations, and unsusceptible of restraint, has always endeavoured to baffle the Logician, to perplex the Confines of Distinction, and burst the enclosures of Regularity." For Johnson, imagination is a power of imaging and not creating. David Hume also asserts, "though our thought seems to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find, upon a nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experiences." Memory juggles various impressions of the mind received at different times to constitute imagination.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, opened new vistas for English literature through Samuel Coleridge. (I shall discuss Coleridge's and Wordsworth's theories of the poetic process in the next chapter but here I shall take up the concepts that influenced the origin of the Romantic movement). Kant conforms to the empiricist view that the senses furnish the materials of knowledge. At the same time, he assigns the will the ability to arrange these materials. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he states:

There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. For how should our faculty of knowledge be awakened into action did not objects affecting our senses partly of themselves produce representations, partly arouse the activity of our understanding to compare these representations, and, by
combining or separating them, work up the raw material of the sensible impressions into that knowledge of objects which is entitled experience?"79

In the very next paragraph Kant qualifies his statement, "But though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience. For it may well be that even our empirical knowledge is made up of what we receive through impressions and of what our own faculty of knowledge (sensible impressions serving merely as the occasion) supplies from itself."80 Kant goes on to differentiate between a posteriori knowledge that is based on experience and a priori knowledge that is independent of experience. It is on these two concepts that the edifice of his epistemology is founded.

According to Kant, knowledge presupposes a mind and to think one needs something to think about. But the object of thought can be received only through the senses. Hence, the preconditions of knowledge are sensation and thinking. Intuitions of the outside reality are conveyed through the senses and the thoughts to form concepts with the help of understanding. Sensibility is receptive, i.e., passive, whereas understanding is spontaneous, i.e., active. Neither understanding nor sensation can complete the process of knowledge. The intermediate faculty required to bridge the gap between the two is imagination. Kant ascribes to imagination the power to synthesise sensations and understanding. The objects perceived must also be thought and understood as concepts:

For knowledge is [essentially] a whole in which representations stand compared and connected. As sense contains a manifold in its intuition, I ascribe to it a synopsis. But to such synopsis a synthesis must always correspond; receptivity can make knowledge possible only when combined with spontaneity. Now this spontaneity is the ground of a threefold synthesis
which must necessarily be found in all knowledge; namely, the apprehension of representations as modifications of the mind in intuition, their reproduction in imagination, and their recognition in a concept.  

The materials provided by the senses can only be turned into thoughts or concepts by the third faculty, i.e., imagination. This faculty is the mediator that bridges the gap between the outside world and the human mind. It fuses the manifold representations and at the same time, it also reproduces images in a creative manner.

Poetry, according to Kant, is the most significant form of all arts. It provides veritable possibilities for the human mind:

It expands the mind by giving freedom to the imagination and by offering, from among the boundless multiplicity of possible forms accordant with a given concept, to whose bounds it is restricted, that one which couples with the presentation of the concept a wealth of thought to which no verbal expression is completely adequate, and by thus rising aesthetically to ideas. It invigorates the mind by letting it feel its faculty – free, spontaneous, and independent of determination by nature – of regarding and estimating nature as phenomenon in the light of aspects which nature of itself does not afford us in experience, either for sense or understanding, and of employing it accordingly in behalf of, and as a sort of schema for, the supersensible.  

Kant subscribes that although imagination creates out of the materials provided by the senses yet it re-constructs them by surpassing the original and creating representations and images beyond the mere appearance of things. In the process of perception, imagination creates, or rather recreates, transforming the chaotic sense data into an organised scheme. The world of appearance or phenomena is interpreted by the mind which constructs its
own reality, looking at the world through subjective consciousness. Kant states that objects conform to one’s knowledge and not vice versa. Nature, as it is perceived, depends upon intelligence and not intelligence upon the phenomenal world. Though this awareness or knowledge of the outside reality is quite true for the mind yet it can never know the external objects completely. The gap between the percipient and the perceived cannot be completely bridged. Objects can only be perceived as they appear, not as they actually are. Kant propounds that ‘I’ cannot know myself as I am but only as I appear to myself. The role of the active mind assumes hegemony over passive reception.

Friedrich Schelling suggests a unity of spirit in the multitude of objects of the universe as well as the multitude of subjects. The conscious and the unconscious, the infinite and the finite are conjoined by the same energy. Art is the fusion of the conscious – the subject and the unconscious – the object. Imagination “is based on the identity of conscious and unconscious activity.” The essence of infinity is manifested in the finite work of art. The artist apprehends the idea of the infinite and represents it in the finite form with the help of imagination:

Through that productive faculty art, too, attains the impossible by overcoming an infinite opposition in a finite product. It is the poetic faculty, and this is, in its first potency, original perception. Conversely, it is simply productive perception repeating itself in its highest potency which we call poetic faculty. One and the same function characterizes both.

The creative perception and the poetic faculty are similar in nature. It is the unique perception of the poet that enables him to apprehend the infinite in the finite and create the form of art representing the essence of objects. “Art and natural objects are both ‘products of one and the same activity’.”
Friedrich Schiller categorises art into two realms – simple and sentimental. Simple art refers to the classical art and sentimental art refers to the modern art. These concepts are not just two aspects of art but they emerge from the human propensities. The simple denotes the epitome of civilization, when perfection is achieved through harmony with nature. The sentimental stage is when mankind has lost link with nature and looks back longingly to attain it once again. When the “poet is nature” he is a simple poet, whereas when “the poet seeks nature” he is a sentimental poet. 86

Sentimental art attempts to recapture the lost innocence. Living in an age of artifice, the artist reaches for the natural through his art. Schiller claims that when the harmony between man and nature disappears, man aspires to attain it:

The harmony that existed as a fact in the former state, the harmony of feeling and thought, only exists now in an ideal state. It is no longer in him, but out of him; it is a conception of thought which he must begin by realizing, in himself; it is no longer a fact, a reality of his life. 87

The sentimental artist makes an effort to create that ideal phase through his art. He is totally disillusioned and alienated from the present and pine for the past or the ideal. Wordsworth’s poetry is a good example of the sentimental poetry because in several poems the poet represents the child as the epoch of simplicity and harmony. “Ode to the Intimations of Immortality” is based on the theme of loss of innocence and harmony which the poet felt as a child. Coleridge’s “Frost at Midnight” follows in a similar tone. Schiller states, “Nature reconciles man with himself; art divides and disunites him; the ideal brings him back to unity.” 88
The sentimental poet does not imitate the world of objects but depicts the impressions those objects arouse in him. Therefore, his poetry can never be merely descriptive, it is primarily reflective:

we never see the object itself, but what the intelligence and reflection of the poet have made of the object; and even if this object be the person itself of the poet, even when he wishes to represent to us his own feelings, we are not informed of his state immediately or at first hand; we only see how this state is reflected in his mind, and what he has thought of it in the capacity of spectator himself.89

The external has to be imbibed internally and recreated as a new identity. Because art represents the idea and not the object, the concrete gives way to the abstract. The poet is always seeking what is lost and he can only find it in the inner recesses of his mind, away from the phenomenal reality. The objects do not appear as significant as the ideas they evoke. According to Schiller, the simple poet is dependent upon the world without but the sentimental poet needs the world within and “feeds his genius from his own fund, and purifies himself by himself”.90

Schiller also suggests a reconciliation of the classical and the modern, the simple and the sentimental. In fact, the sentimental cannot be divorced from the simple because it aspires for the latter. Without the stage of simplicity, sophistication would not be able to long for it. Return to the past or simple times is not possible because man has to progress. Art is a medium, through which the artist attempts to fuse the present and the past, the objective and the subjective, and the practical and the ideal.
Shelley accepts the Platonic notion of the divine madness of the poet in “A Defence of Poetry”. The simile of the Aeolian lyre refers to the poet as only an instrument affected by the internal and the external influences. Creation does not involve rigours of acquiring the right technique but is an effortless process stimulated by divine inspiration:

Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, ‘I will compose poetry’. The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.91

In fact, this magical power is most potent when it is only an idea in the mind. Once creation commences, the divine inspiration begins to diminish. Shelley states, “when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet.”92 Shelley exalts instinct and intuition over toil and labour in poetic creation. He claims that poetic creation comes as naturally to a poet as a song to a nightingale singing in darkness. This is an oversimplification of artistic creation but the emphasis is obviously on divine inspiration. Thus, it comes as no surprise when Shelley calls the poet, a prophet.

Shelley’s views on imagination are closer to those of Coleridge. Imagination and creativity are synonymous for them. Imagination is the mind’s ability to transform thoughts and ideas and compose new ones. Poetry, according to Shelley, is the creation of imagination. New ideas come into being by coadunations of the familiar and the unfamiliar:
Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists.93

Imagination transgresses familiar and accustomed ways of looking at things and reinterprets the known. "Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food."94

Shelley states that language itself is poetry but the poets speak in a metaphorical language. "Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension until the words which represent them become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse."95 Language, like the world and the mind, is organic. It grows and leaves behind the clichés, the redundant metaphors and adapts fresh usages. A poet's language is essentially metaphorical because it attempts to find new relations between different ideas. The old relations are abandoned to find new associations. Therefore, language evolves continuously.
The poet is blessed by magical and divine sources and hence, whatever is expressed in poetry attains immortality. What is best and most beautiful in the world is rendered to be immortal. "Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." It enhances the beauty of beautiful things and also accords beauty to deformed things. It records the potential of the greatest minds.

To sum up, the literary theory is influenced by the philosophical beliefs and to some extent; the literary tenets are variations of some philosophic views. The epistemological ideology influences the representational theory in literature. Broadly speaking, the poets and the philosophers follow either the Platonic concept of ideation or the Aristotelian doctrine of form. For the rationalists and the empiricists like Aristotle, Horace, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson, Dryden, Pope and Johnson the phenomenal world is as true as it is perceived. Imagination is a faculty that evokes memories, creates illusions and rearranges images in a novel way. The artist is a skilled craftsman who imitates or improves upon the external reality. Language represents the external truth and literature primarily instructs and delights. Plato, Longinus, Kant, Schelling, Shiller, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley accept the theory of the transcendental reality. They look for truth beyond the external form. Imagination is recognised as a faculty that initiates creative perception and creative art. The artist is an inspired genius who seeks the inner truth of the outer world and manifests the transcendental reality in art.