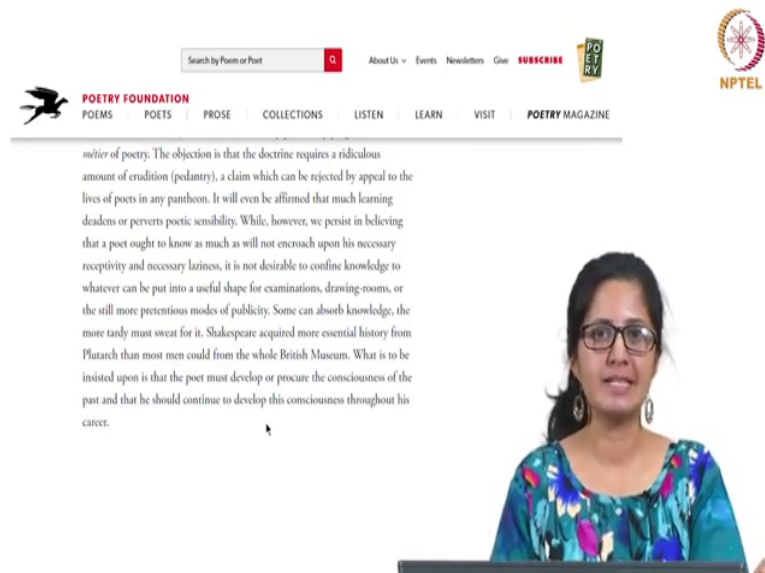


**Literary Criticism**  
**Professor Merin Simi Raj**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**T.S. Elliot's Tradition and Individual Talent (Season 2)**  
**Lecture 36**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:16)



Search by Poem or Poet

About Us Events Newsletters Give **SUBSCRIBE**

**POETRY FOUNDATION**  
POEMS POETS PROSE COLLECTIONS LISTEN LEARN VISIT POETRY MAGAZINE

*métier* of poetry. The objection is that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry), a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon. It will even be affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts poetic sensibility. While, however, we persist in believing that a poet ought to know as much as will not encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to whatever can be put into a useful shape for examinations, drawing-rooms, or the still more pretentious modes of publicity. Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

NPTEL

Hello, and welcome to today's session, we continue to look at Eliot's much celebrated essay Tradition and the Individual Talent. It is a 1919 essay and incidentally 2019, this year also marks the centenary of this much celebrated Modernist essay.

Though Eliot has not used the term Modernism in his work, we begin to realize that his critical writings his attitude towards criticism and critical tradition is in stark contrast, it is almost a significant departure from the Romantic ideas. He is not without stating that directly, he is insinuating that Romanticism is almost dead and that Modernism is the new king.

So this is evident almost throughout his works in this particular essay that we are taking a look at, Tradition and Individual Talent, the Metaphysical Poets and Hamlet and his Problems when he highlighted the idea of the 'objective correlative'. So we find that this idea of the need to move away from Romanticism and to focus on the Modernist ideas, it is very, very clear in most of his critical writings.

And in the first section of this essay, where he argues for the need to talk about tradition, to make it palatable for the English ears, he begins to argue that there is a way in which tradition cannot be, need not be seen as a blind imitation, it is a result of hard labour, it does not get

automatically inherited, and that it is something which is continually in the state of flux. It is not something that stays static, but it continues to change.

And towards the end of this first section, he is also aware of the many criticisms that such a doctrine might entail. In fact, he very directly states, 'the objection that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition, pedantry, a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any Pantheon, it will be even affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts poetic sensibility.

Why? However we persist in believing that a poet ought to know, as much as well not encroach upon his necessary receptivity, and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to whatever can be put into useful shape for examinations, drawing rooms, or the still more pretentious modes of publicity, some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it.

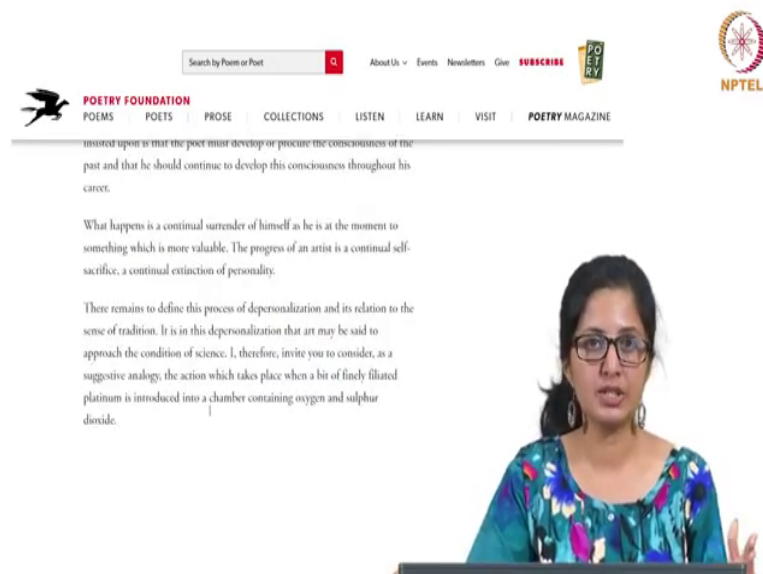
Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum. What else to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past, and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

Ofcourse, Eliot in the first half of this essay, in the first part of the essay focuses on the need of hard labour, about how hard work, engagement with the past will also lead to the absorption of the past which in turn will heavily influence the individual work, but he is also very much aware of the pedantic nature of such an exercise, which is why he says he gives this example of Shakespeare who acquired much from his reading of other works and not necessarily from a very direct kind of knowledge consumption.

So, he is also alerting us to the possibility that there could be different ways in which you absorb the past, but the most important thing is to develop this consciousness of the past, which becomes extremely important in asserting the individual character of the poet as well.

And as we have noticed, this is a very significant move away from the Romantic notion where the poet's personality was of utmost important. Here, Eliot is over and again telling us that the poet's personality is only secondary, what is more important is the way in which the past works with the present and produces something very radically different, which is a mix of both the tradition as well as individual talent.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:02)

The image shows a screenshot of the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", and "Give" with a "SUBSCRIBE" button. The Poetry Foundation logo, featuring a stylized bird, is on the left. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area displays a quote: "insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career." Below this is another quote: "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." A third quote follows: "There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide." In the foreground, a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a colorful patterned top, is speaking and gesturing with her hands.

In the next short passage, he clarifies this with a lot of directness. What happens is a continual surrender of himself. He is talking about the poet, as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. So, the self, the poet's self, needs to be surrendered to something which is above which is much much elevated than his own mind.

In the previous passage, we also saw how Eliot refers to the mind of Europe, the mind of the country as being greater, bigger than the mind of the poet himself. So here he again says the poet has to continually surrender his own self, to this consciousness of the past to this greater mind which continues to influence his individual talent.

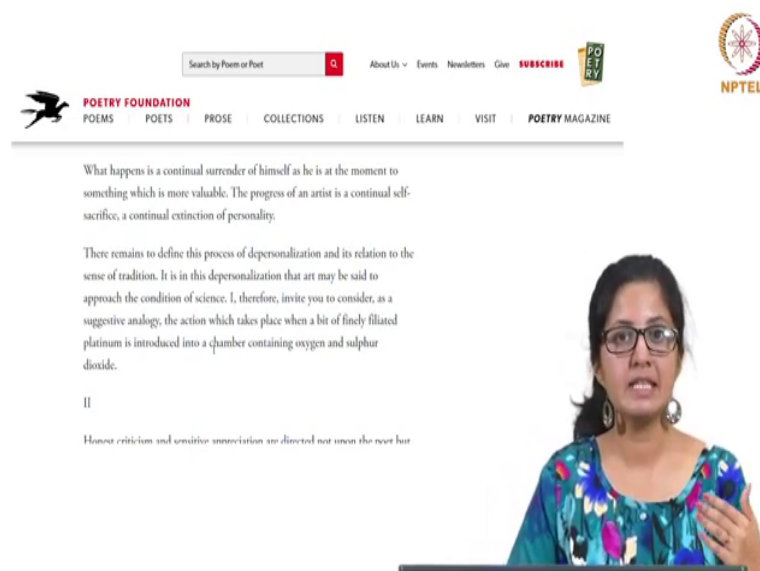
The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, continual extinction of personality. This is in very, very stark contrast to what romantics believed in that the poetry should be an expression, should be an extension of the poet's own personality, it should be a letting loose of emotions, it should be the spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, we will very soon see how Eliot very directly contradicts and challenges these notions which were put forward from Wordsworth onwards.

There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition and this depersonalization, that art may be is set to approach the condition of science. And this sort of a comparison is very-very important, especially in the Modernist period, we know that a lot of modern science is developing at a fast pace in the early 20th century.

And we also realize that most of these Modernist writers, they continue to be in endless fascination with these newer technology which are emerging with modern science. And of course, there are certain things which they entirely disapprove of, like the War which is also the result of all these advancements. But at the same time, they are in endless, continuous fascination of what modern science has to offer.

So, here we find Eliot trying to bring in an interdisciplinary kind of a comparison where he compares the poetic principles with the scientific principles like he says, I therefore invite you to consider a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:24)

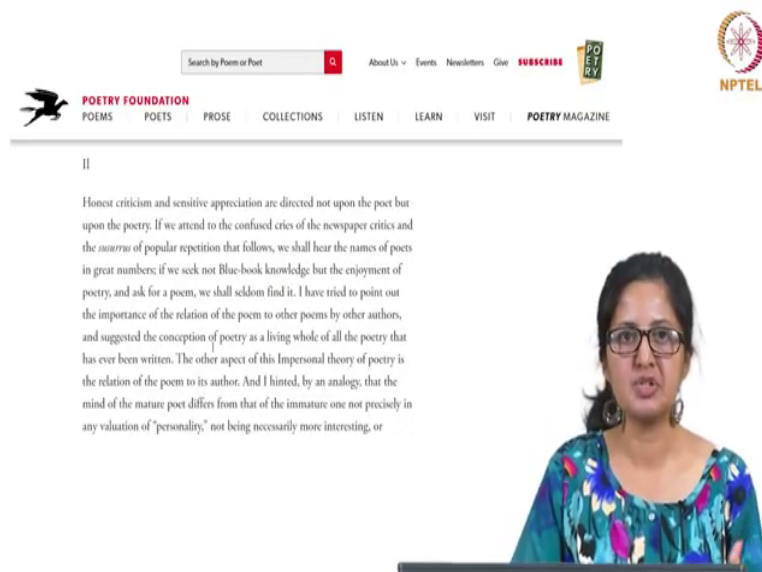


The image shows a screenshot of the Poetry Foundation website. The header includes a search bar, navigation links (About Us, Events, Newsletters, Give, SUBSCRIBE), and the NPTEL logo. The main content area displays a quote by T.S. Eliot: "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." Below this, another quote begins: "There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide." The text is partially obscured by a video overlay of a woman with glasses and a colorful top, who appears to be presenting the content.

So here when he is giving this scientific analogy, he is referring to platinum as a catalyst and that remains unchanged. So, that is what happens to the poet as well, he says the poet should remain unchanged, the poet's personality should remain unchanged, he should only be an agent, which will initiate these actions which will expedite these actions and accelerate these actions. Otherwise, poet like platinum in this chemical reaction will remain entirely unchanged.

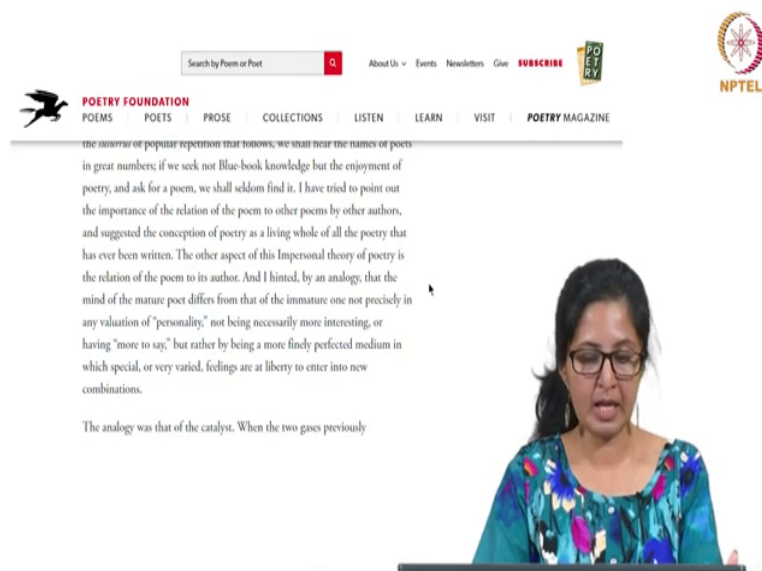
The poet's personality will not undergo any significant change in this entire process of creative production.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:00)



The screenshot shows the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", and "Give" with a "SUBSCRIBE" button. The Poetry Foundation logo is on the left, and the NPTEL logo is on the right. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area displays the text of an essay, with a video overlay of a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top speaking. The text visible in the screenshot is:

Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the *marzari* of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of "personality," not being necessarily more interesting, or



This screenshot is a continuation of the previous one, showing the same website layout and video overlay. The text visible in the screenshot is:

the *marzari* or popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of "personality," not being necessarily more interesting, or having "more to say," but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously

In the second part of this essay, he begins to talk about the impersonal theory of poetry. Eliot's entire critical tradition if we analyse it, impersonality and objectivity where the highlights of his work, we could say. So he talks about the impersonal theory of poetry in such terms, 'I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written'.

So here he is seeing poetry not as a provincial thing, not as something authored by individual writers. He is seeing it as a whole, he is seeing the entire set of poetry written as a single homogeneous tradition. But this is also a very Eurocentric kind of tradition we would see at a

later point, and this is also one of the criticisms against Modernist particularly Eliot's criticism that it was very White.

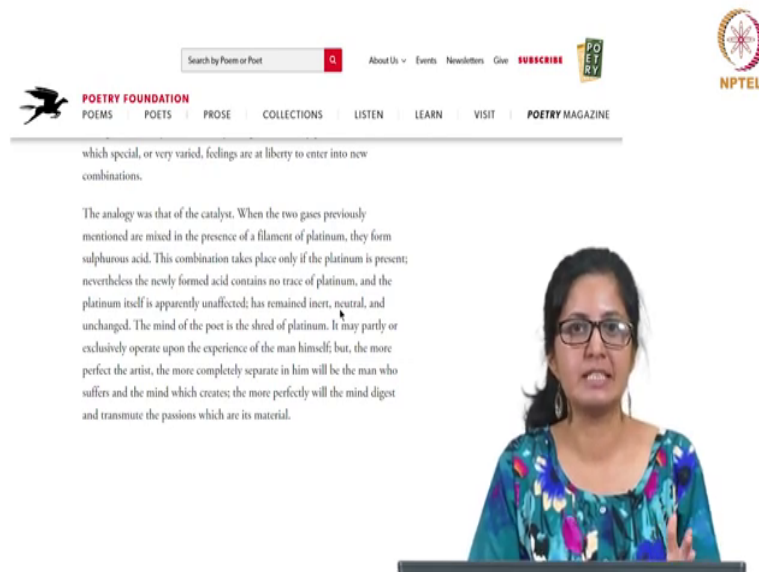
It was very Eurocentric, and it was very male, and there was not any other kind of inclusiveness that he was able to talk about. 'And I hinted by an analogy that the mind of the mature poet differs from that the immature one, not precisely in any evaluation of personality, not being necessarily more interesting or having more to say, but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special or very varied feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

So, what is the poet's mind being seen as over here? The poet's mind, a mature poet's mind is seen as a perfect medium, nothing more, nothing less, which is why he clarifies, he talks about when he refers to the mature poet, it is not necessarily because they are more interesting, or they have more to say, by virtue of their maturity, but it is because they begin to work as a perfect medium and that is what maturity does to a good poet, Eliot believes.

Maturity helps this poet to stay as a good medium and stay unaffected and stay unchanged throughout this entire process of creative production. This is again, I reiterate, this is in stark contrast to what the Romantics believed in, that the personality gets poured out into the creative work.

Eliot says, it is an escape from the personality, it is a moving away, it is a detachment, it is an impersonality that is at work more than the personality being poured out into the creative work.

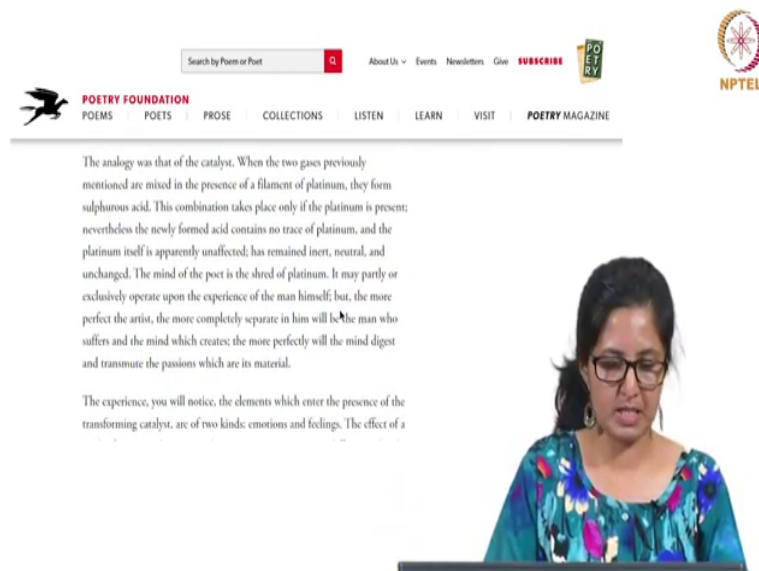
(Refer Slide Time: 09:28)



The screenshot shows a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top speaking. The background is a webpage for the Poetry Foundation. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", and "Give SUBSCRIBE". Below the search bar is the Poetry Foundation logo, which includes a bird icon and the text "POETRY FOUNDATION". To the right of the logo is a vertical stack of icons for "POETRY" and "NPTEL". Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area of the webpage contains the following text:

which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.



The screenshot shows the same woman speaking. The background is the same webpage as in the previous screenshot, but the text in the main content area has changed to:

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a

Now he is coming back to the analogy that he referred to towards the end of the first section. The analogy was that of the catalyst when the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid.

So he is talking about chemical reaction as an analogy to the poetic production to the creative exercise. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present. So platinum, like the poet is a medium over here, it remains unchanged, but it also accelerates, it also facilitates this entire process.

Nevertheless, the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, so when sulphurous acid is formed after this process after this chemical reaction, we do not find the presence of

platinum over there. In the same way when poetry is eventually produced, one should not find any trace of the poet over there, the poet's personality should be completely erased.

And the platinum itself is apparently unaffected has remained inert, neutral and unchanged, the mind of the poet is a shred of platinum, it is very-very clear and this objective scientific analogy has helped much to make sense of what Eliot is trying to convey, 'it may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself'.

Yeah, and he does not deny that entirely, the experience what the man has undergone, what the man is about, that will certainly have a bearing on the kind of production, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates and this sums up his theory of impersonality.

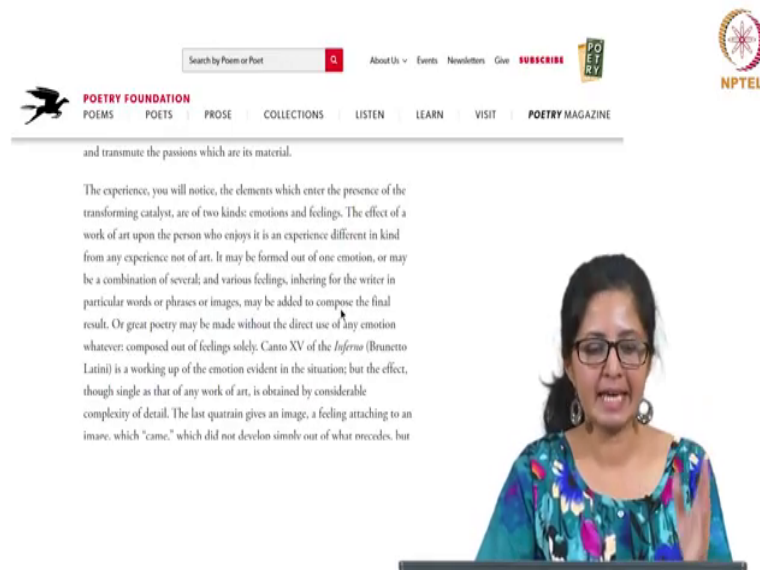
The mind which suffers and the mind which creates has to be different, has to be distinct. These two entities should be essentially divorced from each other, if the mind which suffers also becomes a mind which creates, he believes that there is no impersonality and there is no possibility for perfect poetry to get produced.

The more perfect the artist, which is where he talks about the maturity of the artist, a mature artist will also know how to disassociate himself from that process, from that product which is being created. The mature artists will also know how to situate himself as this perfect medium which will remain in his own words inert, neutral and unchanged.

The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates. The more perfectly will the mind, digest and transmute the passions which are its material. So here again we will see that Eliot is trying to very-very evidently, very-very deliberately moved away from the Romantic ideals which were in place from the end of 19th century onwards.



(Refer Slide Time: 12:06)



The screenshot shows the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", and "Give" with a "SUBSCRIBE" button. Below these links is a vertical "POETRY" logo. On the left side of the page, there is a bird logo and the text "POETRY FOUNDATION". Below this are navigation links: "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area features a quote from T.S. Eliot: "and transmute the passions which are its material. The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever: composed out of feelings solely. Canto XV of the *Inferno* (Brunetto Latini) is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation; but the effect, though single as that of any work of art, is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which 'came,' which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but

Overlaid on the right side of the screenshot is a video of a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a colorful patterned top, speaking.

What were two other chemicals which were at work when platinum was accelerating the action? Here, he further clarifies it saying the two other elements were emotions and feelings. So emotions and feelings are extremely important.

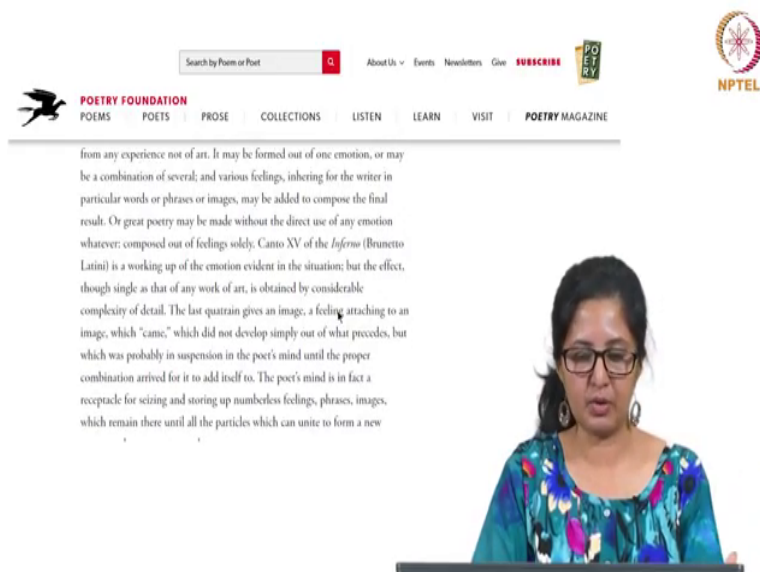
When he is talking about an impersonal theory of poetry he is not asking the poet to get detached from emotions and feelings, but he is also talking about a way in which the poet is able to be present over there by engaging with emotions and feelings, but not necessarily pouring his personality out in that final product.

The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience, not for art, it may be formed out of one emotion, or maybe a combination of several. Eliot is no point make no mistake, he is not denying the significance that emotions and feelings have in this potent creative production, and various feelings inherent for the writer in particular words or phrases or images may be added to compose the final result.

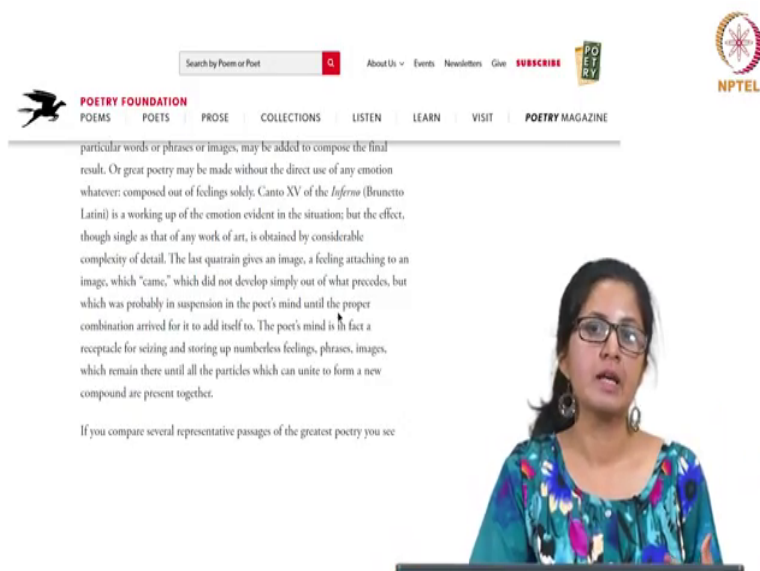
And here he is again alluding to 'objective correlative', which we shall be taking a closer look at in one of the other sessions. A great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion, whatever composed out of feelings solely. He is here trying to do something very delicate, very fine without really clarifying it any further unfortunately, he is making a fine distinction between emotions and feelings.

These are two separate things in Eliot's mind, but in this essay, he has not really bothered to clarify this better.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:41)



The screenshot shows the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", and "Give", followed by a "SUBSCRIBE" button and a "POETRY" logo. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with the following items: "POETRY FOUNDATION", "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area displays a paragraph of text from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto XV. The text discusses the composition of poetry from various feelings and the poet's mind as a receptacle for these feelings. A video overlay of a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top is positioned on the right side of the text.



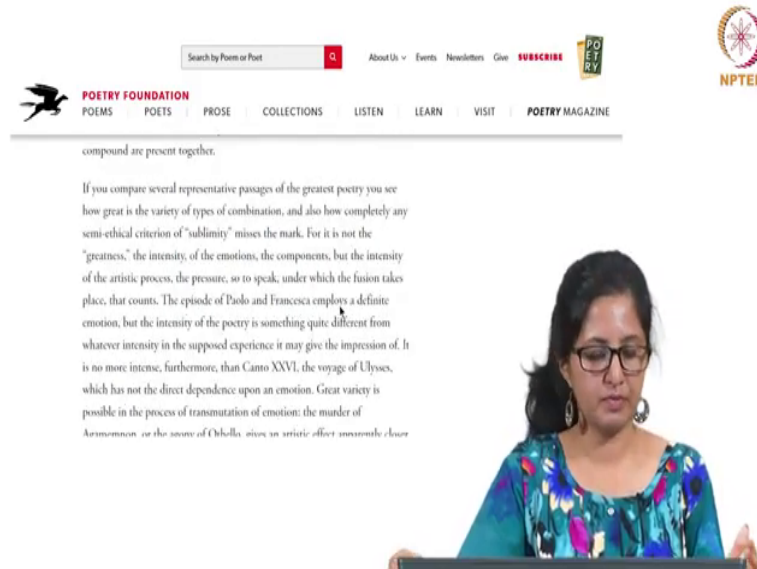
This screenshot is identical to the one above, showing the Poetry Foundation website with the same navigation and search elements. The text in the main content area is the same paragraph from *Inferno*, but it is followed by a new line of text: "If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see". The video overlay of the woman is also present on the right side.

He gives the example of *Inferno* and says it is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation. But the effect though single is that of any work of art is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. And he continues to develop on that example and says the poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.

So he is talking about this entire creative production, the process of creative production in terms of scientific analogies, in terms of chemical reactions, the poet just needs to be present over there to facilitate and accelerate all these reactions and actions and the end product will emerge by itself.

But for this, what needs to be present in very potent forms is a mature poet, someone who can remain as a perfect medium.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:43)

The image shows a screenshot of the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a red search button. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", "Give", and a "SUBSCRIBE" button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with the following items: "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area of the website displays a quote: "compound are present together. If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness,' the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts. The episode of Paolo and Francesca employs a definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of. It is no more intense, furthermore, than Canto XXVI, the voyage of Ulysses, which has not the direct dependence upon an emotion. Great variety is possible in the process of transmutation of emotion: the murder of Agamemnon or the scene of Othello, gives an artistic effect immensely clear". In the foreground, a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a colorful patterned top, is looking down at a tablet device she is holding.

In this passage, the next passage that we shall be taking a look at, Eliot is on to talking about some of the classical notions that we have taken a look at while in the previous sessions. If you compare several representative passages of greatest poetry, you see how great is a variety of types of combination and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of sublimity misses the mark. So there is no, one exact formula for perfect aesthetic production.

For it is not the greatness, the intensity of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place that counts. This is very significant, just like Eliot emphasizes the need for hard work, the need for labour in producing a work of art, in comprehending a work of art, he is also talking about the pressure which is involved over here. It is not entirely about leisure, it is not entirely about pleasure. In fact, it is more about the pressure, the conditions under which the work of art gets produced. The episode of Paolo and Francesca employs a definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity is supposed to experience it may give the impression off.

He gives examples from Shakespeare from Dante to talk about the combination of these different elements. And he says, the effect would be varied, the kind of combinations, the processes would be varied, but what remains the same is that in either case, there has been a fusion of elements. So this fusion is particularly important, the fusion between emotions and

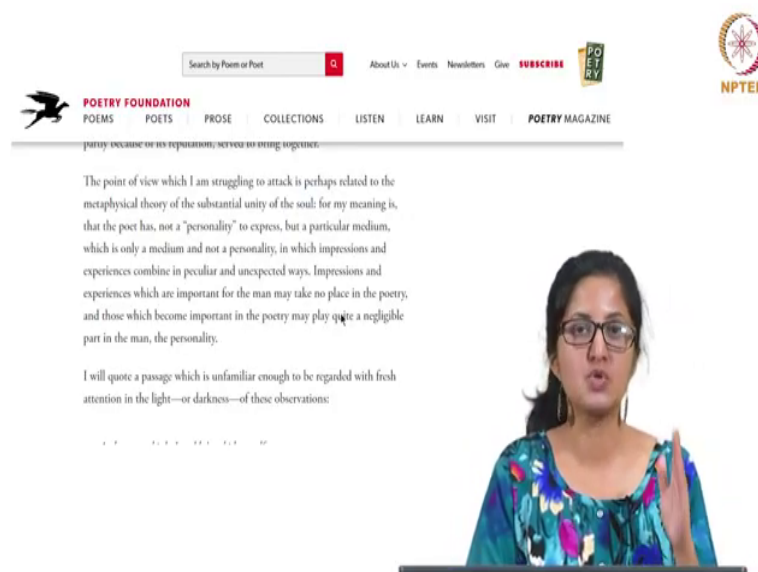
feelings, and in what sense, Eliot had made a distinction between the two and unfortunately, we do not really get to know.

The Ode to Nightingale contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the nightingale partly perhaps because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, serve to bring together, so this is the kind of fusion that he is talking about.

It is not as if the nightingale and the emotions which are being talked about have a direct link to each other, it is up to the, the onus is upon the poet to make this fusion possible. It is upon this mature mind in this perfect medium, it entirely depends on in this perfect medium, the poet to make this fusion happen in such pleasing terms.

And it does not necessarily mean that it is an easy process that is this is a process which works under pressure, which is why he also uses the scientific analogy to make sense of it for us to make sense of it rather.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:17)



The screenshot shows the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar labeled "Search by Poem or Poet" and a navigation menu with links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", "Give", and "SUBSCRIBE". Below the navigation menu, there are links for "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area displays a quote from T.S. Eliot: "The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality." Below the quote, there is a video overlay of a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top, who appears to be speaking or presenting.

So he again reiterates this point that the poet does not have a personality to express, it is not about the poet's personality at all, but it is about a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.

So, that is the uniqueness of this process, the poet moves away from his personality, he continues to remain only as a medium, but the combinations that he accelerates, the fusions

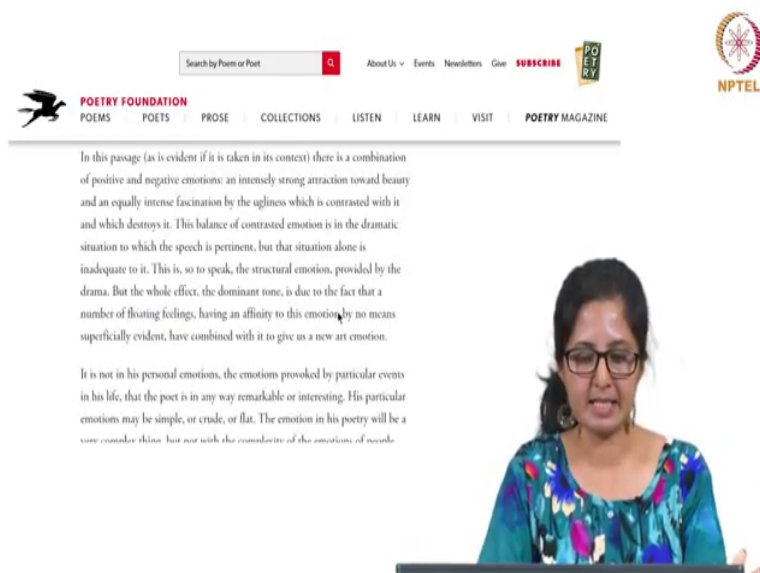
that he makes possible, they are peculiar and they come together in very unexpected ways and that is where individuality also comes in.

So here is where Eliot in these painstaking ways he tries to drive home the idea that tradition is extremely important, but at the same time the uniqueness, the individuality of the poet is also in making possible and facilitating these combinations which are unique, as well as unexpected.

Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality. So, this is what he means by impersonality and the ideas of objective correlative, which we shall be taking a look at in greater detail.

We will also take a look at one of his finest poems, one of the most representative poems of Modernist period, “The love song of Alfred Prufrock” to see how this impersonality is at work over there. How aesthetically, the idea of objective correlative gets represented over there as well.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:54)



The image shows a screenshot of the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar labeled "Search by Poem or Poet" and a navigation menu with links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", "Give", and "SUBSCRIBE". The main navigation bar includes "POETRY FOUNDATION" and "POETRY MAGAZINE", along with categories like "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", and "VISIT". The main content area displays a paragraph of text discussing the combination of positive and negative emotions in poetry. A video overlay in the bottom right corner shows a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top speaking.

Search by Poem or Poet

About Us Events Newsletters Give SUBSCRIBE

POETRY FOUNDATION

POEMS POETS PROSE COLLECTIONS LISTEN LEARN VISIT POETRY MAGAZINE

In this passage (as is evident if it is taken in its context) there is a combination of positive and negative emotions: an intensely strong attraction toward beauty and an equally intense fascination by the ugliness which is contrasted with it and which destroys it. This balance of contrasted emotion is in the dramatic situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it. This is, so to speak, the structural emotion, provided by the drama. But the whole effect, the dominant tone, is due to the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion, by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a *very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of words.*

Search by Poem or Poet

About Us Events Newsletters Give **SUBSCRIBE**

**POETRY FOUNDATION**  
 POEMS POETS PROSE COLLECTIONS LISTEN LEARN VISIT POETRY MAGAZINE

number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion by no means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently we must believe that

Search by Poem or Poet

About Us Events Newsletters Give **SUBSCRIBE**

**POETRY FOUNDATION**  
 POEMS POETS PROSE COLLECTIONS LISTEN LEARN VISIT POETRY MAGAZINE

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that "emotion recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity. It

While giving some examples from classical texts, he also talks about the presence of emotion in varied ways. And he talks about the balance of contrast and emotion, and it is in the dramatic situation to which speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it.

So, he talks about the need to bring together different kinds of emotions in order to produce the kind of effect that poetry entails while celebrating this need to move away from personality. Eliot also finds it important reiterate that the experience that the poet had, it need not be unique any way, he says it is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting.

It is not about the kind of experiences the poet had at all. His particular emotions may be simple, crude or flat, a poet can lead an extremely uneventful life and still write about complex things. He argues, the emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not

with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life.

So that is not the kind of equation that he is trying to bring over here. On the contrary, he is trying to break that equation which the Romantics tried to solidify. That the artistic expression is an extension of the poet's personality. On the contrary, Eliot is here saying that the artists need not have a complex life, a complex experience in order to produce a complex emotion.

One error in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express and in this search for novelty in the wrong place, it discovers the powers. So there is absolutely no need to go in search of a novel emotion that one experiences. Poetry is not about that at all, he tells again and again, 'the business of the poet is not to find new emotions' it is very, very clear, let us underscore this statement.

The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. Here we find very ironically, certain kinds of continuity is being established with Romanticism.

If you recall the Lyrical Ballads, the preface to Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth, he also spoke about how certain ordinary things could be transformed into elevated things through the presence of this poet's mind, that it is not about the inherent exoticity, not about the inherent sublimity of any experience or of any object, but it all happens in the mind of the poet.

And of course, Eliot thinks he is deviating radically from the Romantic principles by focusing or rather entirely defocusing the idea of personality. But in a certain way, it also appears that both of them are also perhaps trying to say the same thing that everything happens in the mind of the poet that the poet is actually an ordinary person who has the capacity to transform the ordinary into something else, something poetic, something exotic, which is what Eliot is also in a different way arguing over here.

The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones, and in working them up into poetry to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. So, there is an entire change which happens when the poet's mind is at work and emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that emotion recollected in tranquillity is an inexact formula.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:39)

The image displays two sequential frames from a video lecture. In both frames, a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top is speaking. The background is a screenshot of the Poetry Foundation website. The top frame shows the website's header with a search bar, navigation links (POEMS, POETS, PROSE, COLLECTIONS, LISTEN, LEARN, VISIT, POETRY MAGAZINE), and a quote by Wordsworth: "The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity. It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation. These experiences are not 'recollected,' and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is 'tranquil' only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and". The bottom frame shows the same woman speaking over a different part of the website, with the text: "great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation. These experiences are not 'recollected,' and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is 'tranquil' only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him 'personal.' Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."

Here he is very, very directly disagreeing with Wordsworth's notion that poetry is emotion, be collected in tranquillity, a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions, recollected in tranquillity.

And he very directly says it is an inexact formula, but the ironical thing continues to be that we can always find a kind of continuity being built, being established from Romanticism to Modernism, the ways in which the individuality of the poet is being asserted, in spite of the different modes of aesthetics and different modes of artistic productions that these different poets celebrate.

It is a concentration and a new thing resulting from the concentration of a very great number of experiences which a practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all.



Romantic poetry also, if you care to remember they also did the same. If you look at a number of poems produced during the romantic period, "Ode to a Nightingale, or Ode to a Grecian Urn we find that it is not entirely about that object.

But it is about a certain kind of fusion, which happens in the poet's mind, where the sort of fusion which is new, which is unexpected, and it gives a different kind of an experience to the reader. These experiences are not recollected, and they finally unite in an atmosphere, which is tranquil only in that it is a passive, attending upon the event.

So he seems to be disagreeing with Wordsworth's notion of emotions recollected in tranquillity, but we find that the focus continues to be on the poet's mind which is at work. 'both errors tend to'... In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious.

We did not know whether way he is indirectly calling the Romantic poets as bad poets, both errors tend to make him personal. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion. It is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality but of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

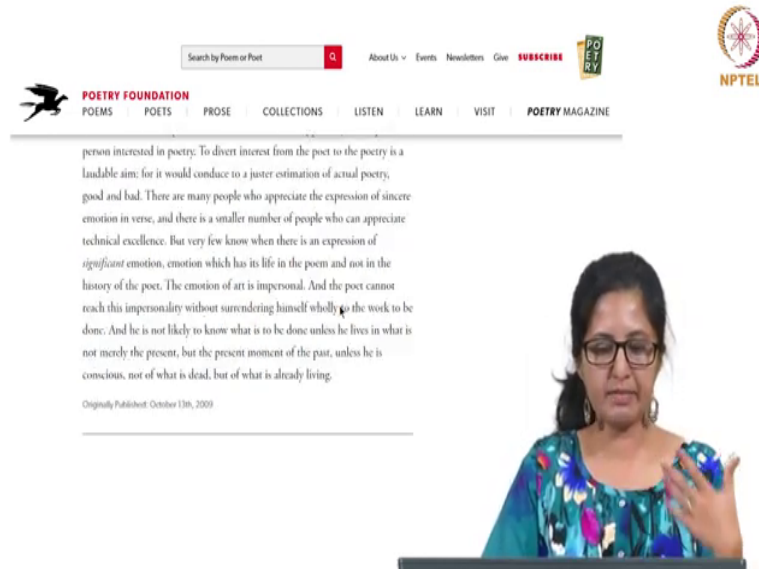
Here we find a striking similarity with Keats's notion of negative capability. It is not about the lack per se, but the knowledge of that lack enables the poet to move away from that rather than knowledge of that thing which should not be there, enables a poet to move away from that as well. It is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality.

But of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things. So here another thing which comes to our mind is, even when Wordsworth spoke about emotions recollected in tranquillity, it was not about the direct pouring out of emotions, direct pouring out of personality into the work of art.

There was also a certain kind of detachment that he spoke about, which is why it had to be emotions recollected in tranquillity, it was not emotion, it was not the experience in the fresh way that the poet had undergone, but it had undergone a certain transformation in the poet's mind. So, in a certain level, essentially both of them are talking about what happens within the poet's mind.

Both of them are talking about this entire process and both of them if you recall, they also had used scientific analogies to talk about this entire process which is at work.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:55)



The image shows a screenshot of the Poetry Foundation website. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search by Poem or Poet" and a red search button. To the right of the search bar are links for "About Us", "Events", "Newsletters", "Give", and a "SUBSCRIBE" button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with the following items: "POEMS", "POETS", "PROSE", "COLLECTIONS", "LISTEN", "LEARN", "VISIT", and "POETRY MAGAZINE". The main content area displays a quote from T.S. Eliot: "person interested in poetry. To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad. There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is an expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living." Below the quote is the text "Originally Published: October 13th, 2009". Overlaid on the right side of the screenshot is a video of a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned top, who appears to be speaking or gesturing.

So in the final section, it is a very, very short section, this is how he wraps up this discussion. The emotion of art is impersonal so that is one point that Eliot continues to drive home, his theory of poetry which is rooted in personality. The emotion of art is impersonal and the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done.

And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living. He is trying to bring this discussion back into focus to where he began by talking about the need to bring back tradition, the need to have a fusion of the tradition as well as the present.

He is again reminding the poetry that the business of the poet is to remain impersonal. And this impersonality cannot be achieved unless the poet is willing to surrender himself entirely to the work of art which is going to be produced. And in that work of art, one should not find any trace of this poet, the poet's mind which had created this work, and this he says this entire knowledge, this entire exercise could be engaged with only if one is very-very conscious of what had gone by about the tradition and about how the poet's work, the poet's decision is situated within that.

So, here is how he talks about the combination of tradition and individual talent by arguing that tradition is not a dirty word, tradition is not something that could be swept under the

carpet, but on the other hand, it is a very live thing which continues to undergo a change and the poet's personality and the poet's individual work will get significance, will produce fruition only if there is an act of engagement with what is past, with what is now referred to as tradition.

I read the final sentence again, And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

He is also referring to canon, tradition, which never dies, which continues to live on, whether this is a right way to engage with theory of poetry or not, that is a different question altogether. But the significant thing is that he is reiterating the significance of canon and we find that it is the entire discipline of literary studies, this is also heavily rooted in what is canon and how to move away from it.

So this is again, a very significant seminal moment in the history of literary criticism, where canon becomes extremely important, tradition becomes extremely important in order to evaluate a work of art, in order to engage with the work of art creatively as well as critically. With this, we wrap up for today. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to seeing you in the next session.