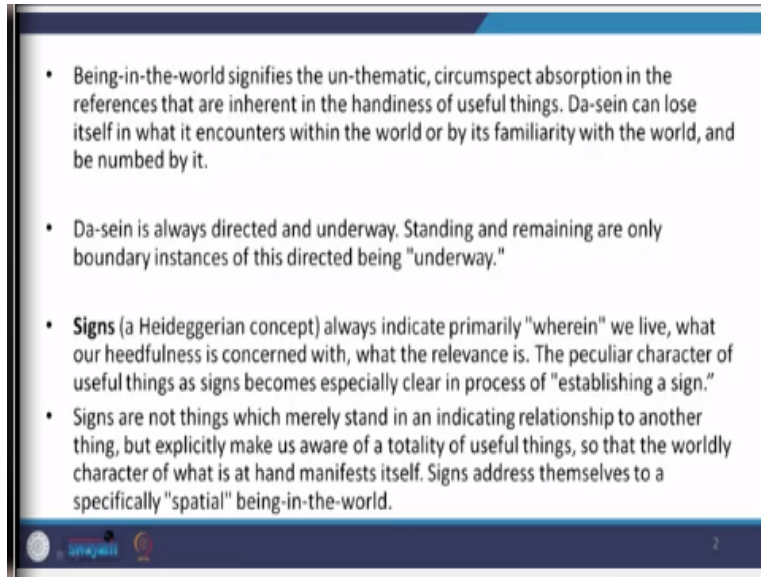


Narrative Mode and Fiction
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Lecture-18
Novel of Existence-III

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative mode and fiction. So, we are discussing a novel and existence primarily in the light of a Heideggerian thoughts, Heideggerian philosophy, Heidegger's concept of the same.

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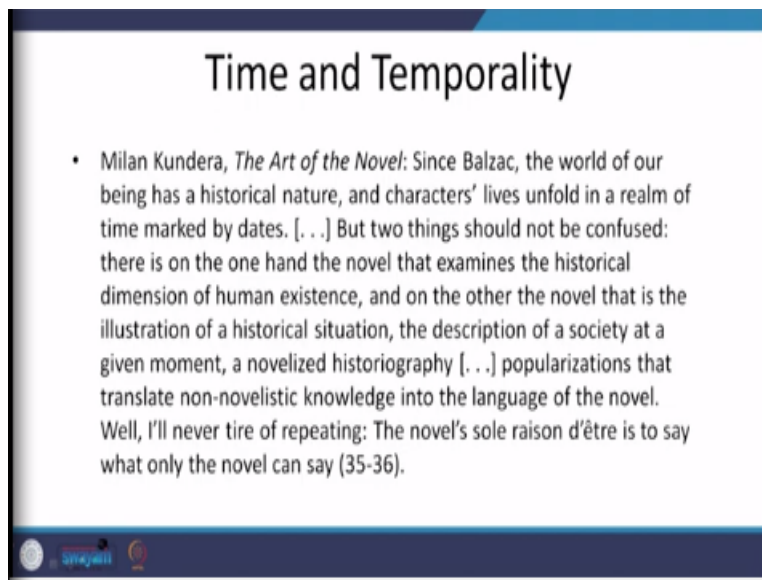
So, we were talking about being-in-the-world sign. So, being-in-the-world signifies the un-thematic, circumspect absorption or being aware in the references that are inherent in the handiness of useful things. So, Da-sein can lose itself in what it encounters within the world or through it is familiarity with the world and thereby it can be numbed by these familiar aspects or dimensions.

So, they are saying is always directed and underway and standing and remaining are only boundary instances of this directed and being underway. So, I mean Da-sein is always to mean that it is directed and under remains that it is always to be, although it is inert, it is in the process

of becoming something. Now in a Heideggerian concept we also find sign, sign always indicates primarily the wherein we live what our heedfulness is concerned with and what the relevance is.

The peculiar character of useful things as signs becomes especially a manifest or clear in this process of establishing of a sign. So, signs are not things which merely stand in an indicating relationship to other things but explicitly make us aware of a totality of useful things such that the worldly character of what is it and manifests itself. Signs address themselves to a specifically spatial being-in-the-world.

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So, Milan Kundera, in the art of the novel sees and Since Balzac, the world of our being has a historical nature and characters lives unfold in a realm of time marked by dates. But two things should not be confused: there is on the one hand the novel that examines the historical dimension of human existence, and on the other the novel that is the illustration of a historical situation, the description of a society at a given moment, a novelized historiography, popularizations that translate non-novelistic knowledge into the language of the novel. Well, I will never tired of repeating the novel sole raison d'être is to say what only the novel can say.

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- In a novel, history can be present in two ways – (a) how individual character speaks to history and is shaped by it, (b) illustration of a historical situation, i.e. Description of a society at a given moment, which leads to a novelized historiography.
- In MK's work's, history is not a bare description. He makes a minimal interface with history per say. Rather than directly elaborating a political party or an organization, social institutions, i.e. history itself, he is interested in **the history of man embedded in the history of the society** → so novelist's work is to write the **alternate history that the historiographer forgets to mention (think of Khaled Hosseini's novels)**
- For MK, just like the Self, **history is itself an existential situation and creates existential situation for the characters in a novel** → history has a major role in **shaping the collective psyche of a generation born in a given socio-politico-historical juncture**

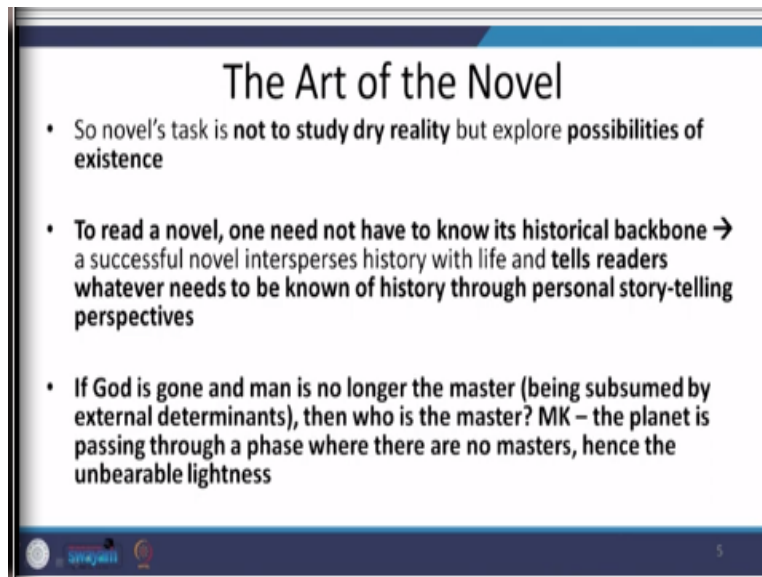
So, in a novel history can be present in 2 ways, one is how individual character speaks to history and is shaped by history and second is illustration of a historical situation. In other words description of a society at a given moment which leads to a novelized historiography. In Milan Kundera's work's, history is not a bare description. He makes a minimal interface with history per say. Rather than directly elaborating a political party let us say or an organization, a social institution.

In other words rather than elaborating history itself Kundera is rather interested in the history of man embedded in the history of the society. So, novelists work is to write the alternate history that the historiographer forgets to mention. And here we are thinking of so many writings, Khaled Hosseini comes to mind Khaled Hosseini's kite runner of 1000 splendid sons, we have so many other authors who bring in this backdrop of real happenings.

Khaled Hosseini is talking about Afghanistan and the wars in Afghanistan, U.S invasion, Russian invasion of Afghanistan. And his story is, his characters are pitted against this historical background, these chapters in history that actually happened. So, for Milan Kundera just like the self history is an existential situation and creates existential situation for the characters in the novel.

So, history has a major role in shaping the collective psyche of a given generation that is born in a given sociopolitical historical juncture. Think of the novels, the artworks written against the backdrop of partition, Bapsi Sidhwa, cracking India for example, Amrita Pritam's writings, so Kushwant Singh's train to Pakistan, so many of these artworks come to mind.

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So, novel's task is not to study just the dry reality or the events that are depicted in history but to explore possibilities of existence. So, to read a novel one need not have to know its historical backbone. A successful novel interferences history with life in such a way as to tell readers whatever needs to be known and told about history. However, not through history directly but through personal storytelling perspectives.

Now Kundera says something very interesting, he says here that if God is gone in the modern world, in the post-modern world if we do not see the God and if man is no longer the master of his own being and he subsumed by external determinants, one of such determinants being history, then who is the master? So, drawing from this discussion Kundera goes on to say that the planet is currently passing through a phase where there are no masters and that is why there is a lightness, a lack of anchorage which is nonetheless unbearable.

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The Art of the Novel

- MK looks at history's encounter with novel in terms of **reincarnations**, where same characters keep coming back. History is traversed by the same characters endlessly reincarnated. This points to the question of (a) novel as a genre growing **through dialogue, reception, and influence**, (b) **history and zeitgeist** (world-spirit, an idealistic pattern that influences ethical, political, philosophical, and cultural understanding) moving in time **not in a unilinear fashion but in a circular manner**
- As modern beings with a historical dimension, we tend to confuse and conflate reality, real incidents into symbols in our minds. Creating such kinds of sameness aids survival in the manner we like – e.g. we are attracted to any ideas rich with rhetorical meanings and that produce popular symbols – **Nazism, fascism, colonialism** – they almost have a poetic value and create an aura in the minds of the people. Symbols can be responsible for the set up of the most despotic forms of government.

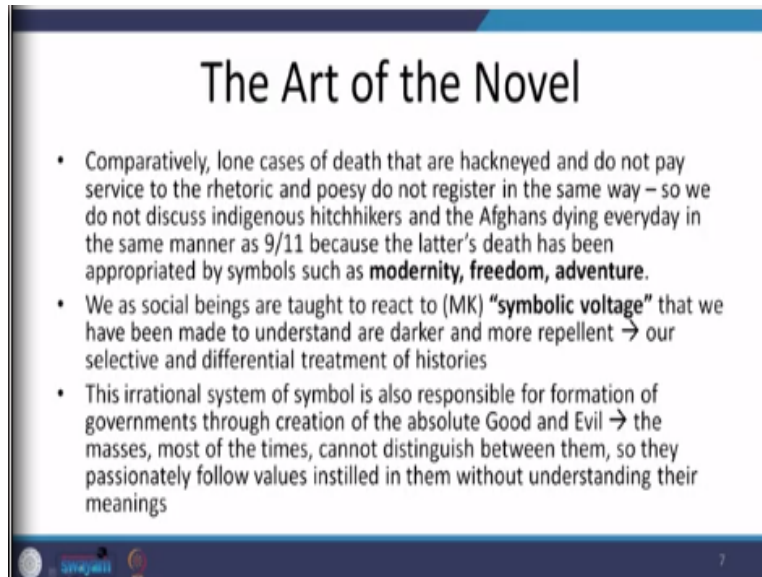
So, Milan Kundera looks at history's encounter with novel in terms of reincarnations, he is using the word reincarnation where same characters seem to keep coming back. History is traversed by the same characters endlessly reincarnated. These points to the question of a novel being a genre that is constantly growing, developing, metamorphosing through dialogue, reception and influence.

And then the second fact is being that history and zeitgeist or world spirit which is an idealistic pattern that influences ethical, political, philosophical and cultural understandings, this history and zeitgeist moving in time not in a unilinear fashion but in a circular pattern, in a circular manner. As modern beings with a historical dimension we tend to confuse and conflate reality, real incidents into symbols in our minds.

So, creating such symbols of sameness aids survival in the manner that we like. For example, we are attracted to any ideas that are rich with rhetorical meanings and that produce symbols, symbols such as Nazism, fascism, colonialism and they almost have a poetic value and they create an aura in the minds of the people. So, symbols like Kundera would very correctly note can be responsible, could have a very destructive dimension and intention and could be responsible for the setup of the most despotic forms of government.

So, he says that there could be a lot of occurrences going on around us that do not appear as symbols that our minds, our collective psyche, collective understanding does not grasp in the form of symbols.

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So, lone cases of death, they appear hackneyed to try it and they do not pay service to the rhetoric and the poesy, so they do not register in the same way. That is why we do not discuss so many things these giving us examples, let us see the indigenous people regularly dying, we do not talk about it because they do not have the symbolic power, symbolic voltages, the word that Kundera would use.

The Afghans dying every day in the same manner as people died in 9/11 for example. However 9/11 is blown out of proportion, it becomes the worst form of a massacre in the recent history. Because we see the subjects that die, that suffer here are Americans. So, the subjects that die in 9/11 are symbols of modernity, freedom and adventure. So, **so** people grasp it immediately, other deaths are not as terrible as the deaths caused on 9/11, not as much is at stake as the destruction of the pentagon for example not as much is put at stake when we bomb Afghanistan.

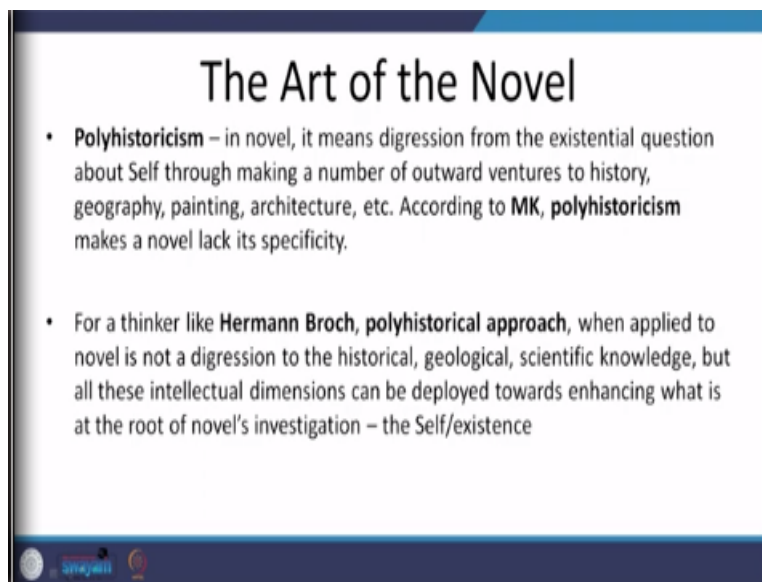
Or when we massacred the indigenous people not much as much is at stake as when Pentagon is destroyed. So, we as social beings are taught to react in a very pre-programmed manner to what Kundera calls as a symbolic voltage. That we have been made to understand as darker and more

repellent, some incidents, some chapters in history are automatically registered in our mind as more repellent. Our selective and differential treatments of histories come to the fore.

This irrational system of symbol is also responsible, like I was saying a while back for the formation of governments through creation of absolute good and absolute evil, so the values that we kind of invest towards in these symbols. The masses, most of the times cannot distinguish between good and evil, it is very difficult to distinguish in reality, most of the times they are intermingled, they are present together.

So, masses passionately tend to follow values that are instilled in them without understanding their meanings and so symbol associating institutions with symbols could lead to the formation of the most tyrannical form of government.

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The slide is titled "The Art of the Novel" and contains two bullet points. The first bullet point discusses polyhistoricism as digression from the existential question about the Self, leading to a loss of specificity. The second bullet point discusses Hermann Broch's polyhistorical approach, which uses historical, geological, and scientific knowledge to enhance the investigation of the Self/existence.

The Art of the Novel

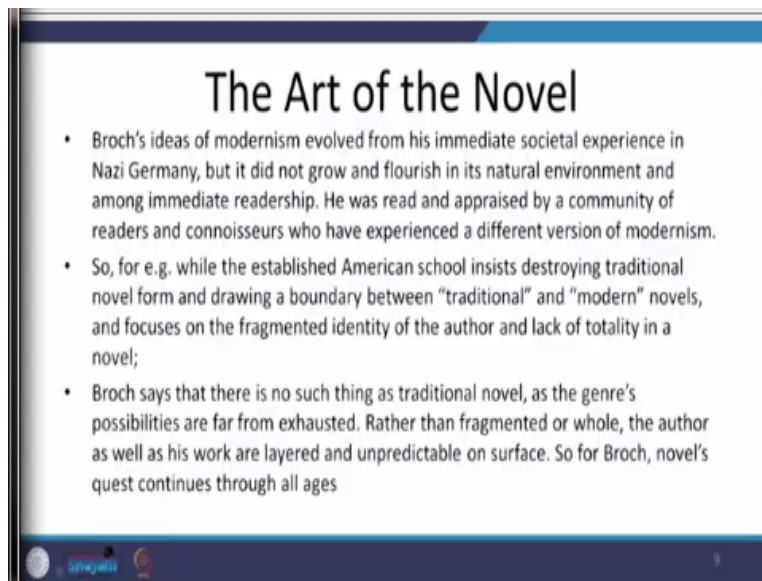
- **Polyhistoricism** – in novel, it means digression from the existential question about Self through making a number of outward ventures to history, geography, painting, architecture, etc. According to **MK**, **polyhistoricism** makes a novel lack its specificity.
- For a thinker like **Hermann Broch**, **polyhistorical approach**, when applied to novel is not a digression to the historical, geological, scientific knowledge, but all these intellectual dimensions can be deployed towards enhancing what is at the root of novel's investigation – the Self/existence

Now coming to another term polyhistoricism, in novel polyhistoricism means digression from the existential question about self through making a number of outward ventures to history, to geography, painting, architecture and so on. According to Milan Kundera polyhistoricism makes the novel lack it is specificity. Now to counter this statement by Kundera we have a thinker like Herman Broch.

According to a Broch polyhistorical approach when applied to the novel is not really a digression to the historical, geological, scientific inquiry. But all these intellectual dimensions can be deployed to us enhancing what is at the root of the novel's investigation as a genre which is seeking the self or the question of existence. So, a polyhistoricism might bring in dimensions of that are extra literary, that are outside of literature.

They could be history or geography or painting like we already noted but they are not happening inside the novel as decoupled from the mood question, they are integrated to the mood question of self and existence; in fact they amplify that question.

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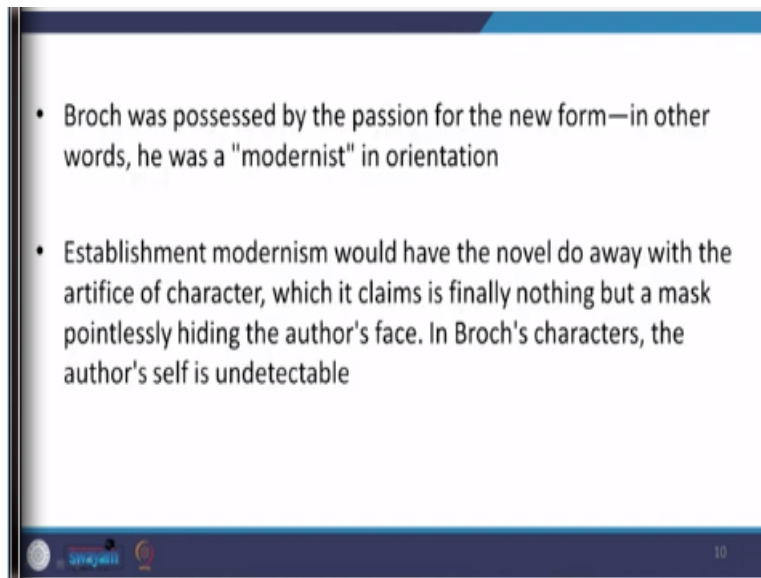
So, Broch's ideas of modernism evolved from his immediate societal experience in Nazi Germany but it did not grow and flourish in its natural environment and among immediate readership. He was read and appraised by a community of readers and connoisseurs who have experienced a completely different version of modernism. For example while the established American school insists destroying traditional novel form and thereby drawing a boundary between traditional and modern novels.

So, for example while the established American school insists on destroying the traditional novel form and drawing a boundary line between traditional and modern novels thereby focusing on the fragmented identity of the author and the lack of totality in the modern novel. Broch would

say that there is no such thing as a traditional novel; this is because the genre's possibilities are far from exhausted, novel and traditional always a sound as oxymoron.

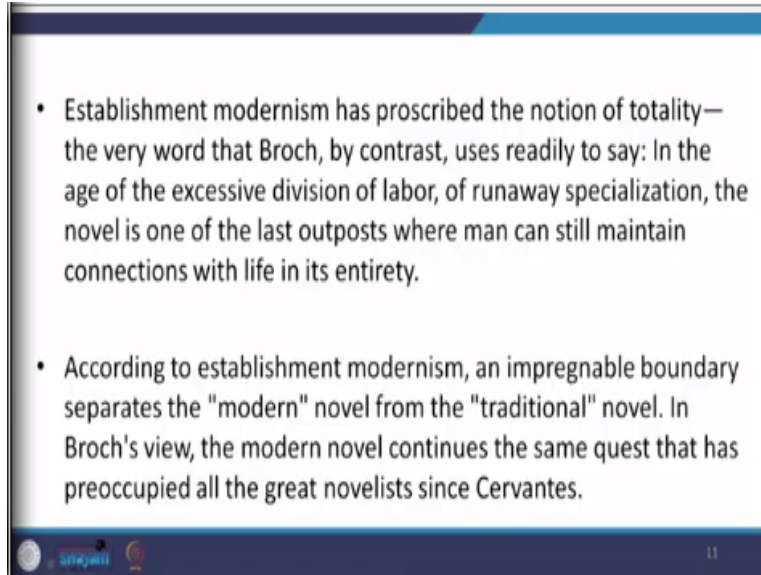
A novel can never be traditional, what is bygone could make a comeback in the modern avatar. So, rather than a fragmented or whole the author as well as his work are layered and unpredictable on surface. So, according to Herman Broch novel's quest continues and will continue through all ages.

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Broch was possessed by the passion for the new form, so he was a modernist in orientation. We see that establishment modernism would have the novel do away with the artifice of character which it claims is finally nothing but a mask that is pointlessly hiding the author's face. Now Broch says that author's self is undetectable, so what is the face? What is the mask? What is being hidden is? What comprises artifice of character cannot be pinpointed as such. The author's self is undetectable.

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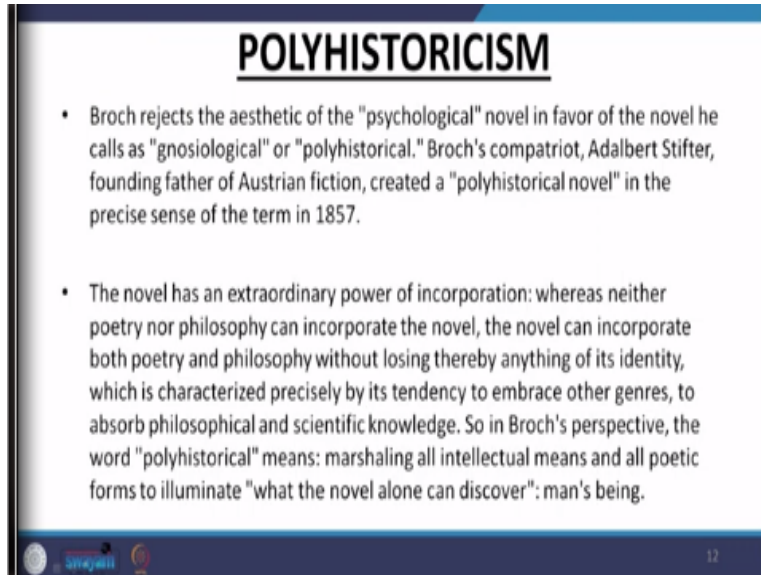
So, establishment modernism has proscribed the notion of totality, the focus on fragmentation, the very word that Broch on the other hand uses readily in order to say that in the age of the excessive division of labour or in the age of runaway specialization. Novel could be treated as one of the last outposts where man or rather human can still maintain connections with life in all it is entirety. So, novel unlike what establishment modernism sees that novel is fragmentation; modern novel is all about fragmentation.

Broch would see that novel is the only place where life in it is entirety is visible, in all other places life is in shambles, life is available as broken shards and pieces. So, according to establishment modernism and impregnable boundary separates the modern novel from the traditional novel, they are trying to draw this distinct demarcation. In Broch's view the modern novel continues the same quest that has been preoccupying all the great novelist's since Cervantes's times.

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POLYHISTORICISM

- Broch rejects the aesthetic of the "psychological" novel in favor of the novel he calls as "gnosiological" or "polyhistorical." Broch's compatriot, Adalbert Stifter, founding father of Austrian fiction, created a "polyhistorical novel" in the precise sense of the term in 1857.
- The novel has an extraordinary power of incorporation: whereas neither poetry nor philosophy can incorporate the novel, the novel can incorporate both poetry and philosophy without losing thereby anything of its identity, which is characterized precisely by its tendency to embrace other genres, to absorb philosophical and scientific knowledge. So in Broch's perspective, the word "polyhistorical" means: marshaling all intellectual means and all poetic forms to illuminate "what the novel alone can discover": man's being.

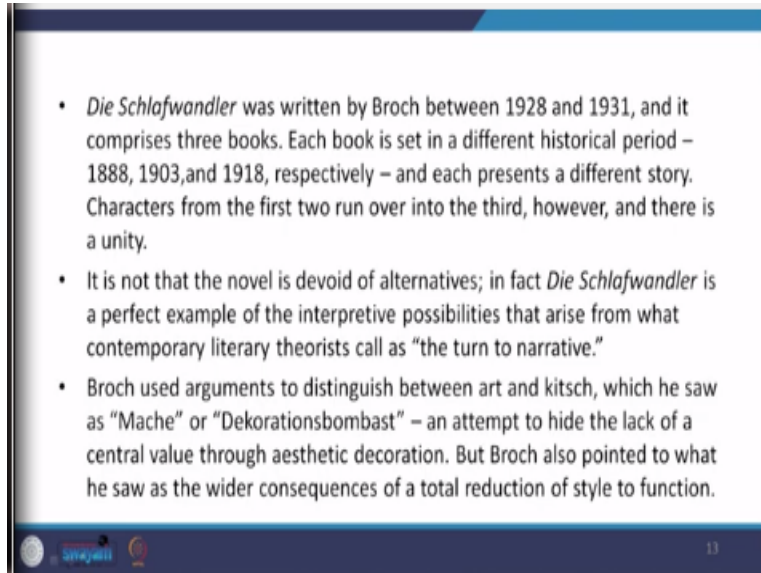


Now Broch rejects the aesthetic of the psychological novel in favor of the novel that he calls as gnosiological. So, instead of psychological he would use, so instead of psychological you would use the term gnosiological or polyhistorical. So, we also have Broch's compatriot Adalbert Stifter who is considered as the founding father of Austrian fiction and he created a polyhistorical novel in the precise sense of the term in year 1857.

So, the novel has an extraordinary power of incorporation whereas neither poetry nor philosophy can incorporate the novel, the other way around is not possible. The novel can incorporate both poetry and philosophy without losing any of its identity which is characterized precisely by its tendency to embrace other genres. Novel embraces other genres and novelizes them, the other way around is not possible.

So, novel can absorb philosophical and scientific knowledge and still metamorphose but remain the novel as such, so still remain the novel all the same. So, in Broch's perspective the word polyhistorical means marshaling all intellectual means and all poetic forms to illuminate what the novel alone can discover. So, we are bringing in poetry, philosophy, history, architecture, film, letters, everything into the novel but the query at the heart remains the same which is to discover man's being.

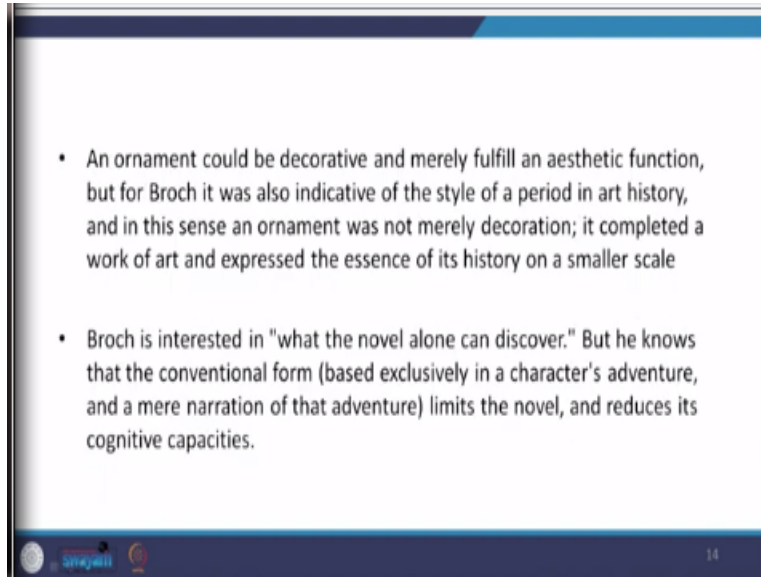
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So, *Die Schlofwandler* was written by Broch between 19 28 and 1931 and it comprises 3 books, each book is set in a different historical period in 1888, 1903 and 1918 respectively and each book presents a different story. Characters from the first 2 books run over into the third and yet there is a unity. It is not that the novel is a devoid of alternatives in fact we see that *Die Schlofwandler* is a perfect example of the interpretive possibilities that arise from what contemporary literary theorists would call as the turn to narrative.

Die Schlofwandler is symptomatic of the turn to narrative. Broch uses arguments in order to distinguish between art and kitsch. According to Broch what is kitsch? Kitsch is an attempt to hide the lack of a central value through aesthetic decoration; he calls it as *Mache* or *dekorationsombast*, bombastic decoration that is hollow within somewhere. So, however Broch also points out to what he saw as the wider consequences of a total reduction of style to function. So, And in a way he also confesses or understands that kitsch after a point is unavoidable to a lesser or greater extent it does come in writing, in art making.

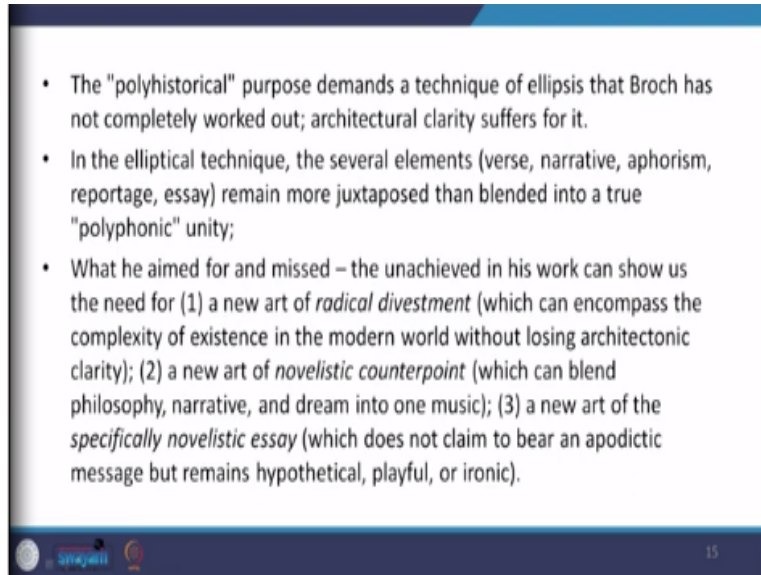
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So, notes that an ornament could be decorative and nearly fulfill an aesthetic function, however it is also indicative of the style of a period in our art history. And in this sense when seen in this where an ornament is not merely a decoration, it completes a work of art and expresses the essence of it is history on a minor or smaller scale. Broch is interested in what the novel alone can discover, which something that cannot be approached or explained by history or any other field.

But he knows that the conventional form of novel comprising a character's adventure and a mere narration of that adventure is very limited. Novel's traditional avatar is limited and it could also reduce the cognitive capacities.

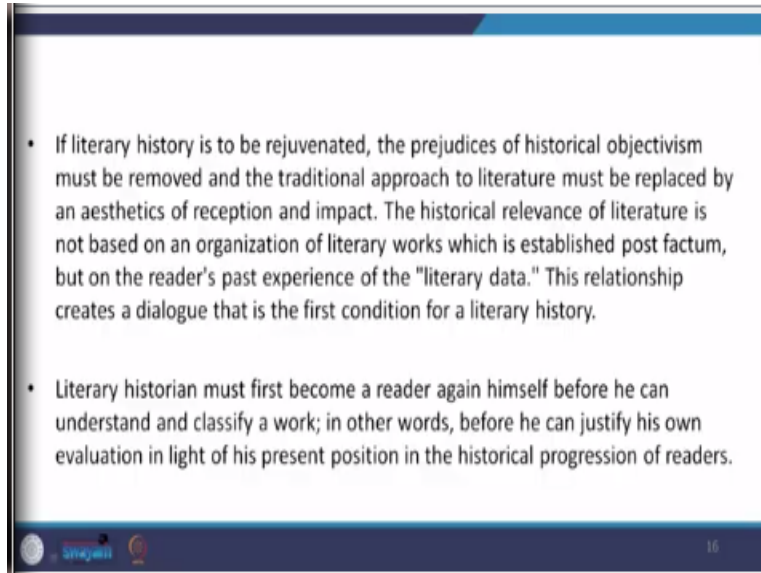
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So, the polyhistorical purpose demands a technique of ellipses which Broch has not completely worked out and architectural clarity suffers for it. We talk about architectonics that informs an organic wholeness in an artwork where the very many parts, the various parts are not only floating and superficially attached to one another but they are fused into one another. In the elliptical technique the several elements including verse, narrative, aphorism, reportage, essay all these remain more juxtaposed than blended into a true polyphonic unity. So, what Broch aims for but misses is the architectural clarity.

So, the unachieved in his work can show us the need for several things, one is a new art of radical divestment. This technique of ellipses which can encompass the complexity of existence in the modern world without losing architectonic clarity. And second is a new art of novelistic counterpoint which can blend philosophy, narrative and dream into one and it could acquire, it could have some form of musical quality. Third is a new art of the specifically novelistic essay which does not claim to bear an apodictic message but remains hypothetical, playful and even ironic.

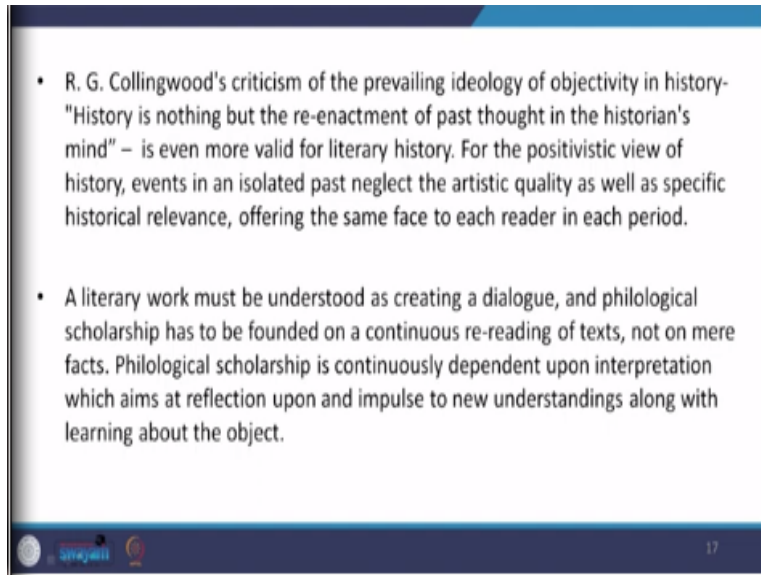
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So, if literary history is to be rejuvenated, the prejudices of historical objectivism must be removed, must be done away with and the traditional approach to literature must be replaced by an aesthetics of reception and impact. The historical relevance of literature is not based on an organization of literary works which is established a post-factum but on the reader's past experience of the literary data.

This relationship creates a dialogue that is the first condition for a literary history. Literary historian must first become a reader again himself before he can understand and classify a work. In other words before the literary historian can justify his own evaluation in the light of his present position in the historical progression of readers.

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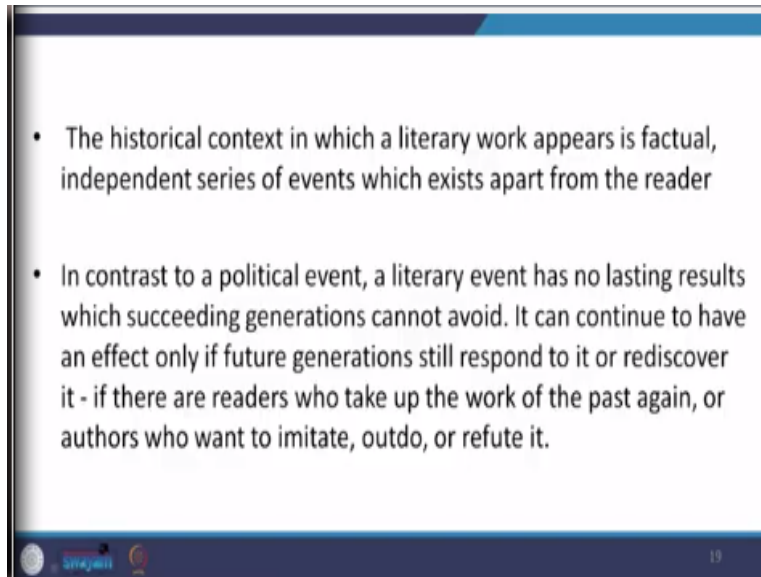
Now R.G. Collingwood's criticism of the prevailing ideology of objectivity in history to quote Collingwood here history is nothing but the re-enactment of past thought in the historian's mind is valid for literary history. For the positivistic view of history events in an isolated past neglect the artistic quality as well as specific historical relevance and they offer the same face to each reader in each period.

So, when we do not have an artistic quality and historical relevance embedded into the historical events they would offer the same piece to all the readers across all periods. A literary work must be understood as creating a dialogue and philological scholarship has to be founded on a continuous re-reading of texts not only based on mere facts. Philological scholarship is continuously dependent upon interpretation which aims at reflection upon as well as impulse to grasp new understandings along with learning about the object.

So, history of literature is a process of aesthetic reception and production which takes into cognizance or which takes place in a realization of a literary texts happening, performing on the part of the receptive reader, the reflective critic and the author all working in tandem, all working in a continued flow of creativity. The continuously growing literary data which appear in the conventional literary histories are mere left over from this process of creative continuity if we may call it so.

So, they are only literary data are only the residual aspects, they are the collected and classified past and therefore not history at all, literally data could be seen as pseudo history. Anyone who considers such literary data as equal to history, anyone that equates literary data with history confuses the even full character of a work of art with that of historical matter of factness.

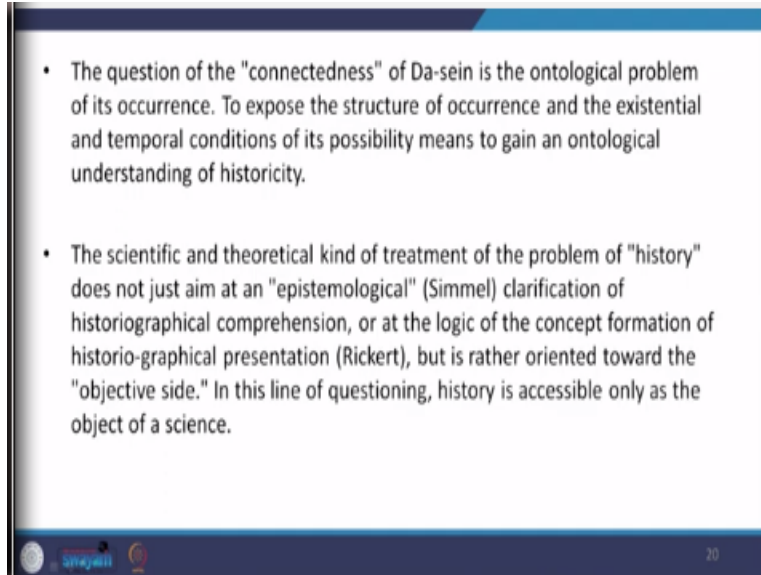
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The historical context in which a literary work appears is factual, independent series of events that exists apart from the reader. So, in contrast to a political event or chapter literary event has no lasting results that succeeding generations cannot avoid. So, to put this simply literally event cannot last regardless of the recipient, the audience from a particular period, history can, a political event can exist.

Because it is based on matter of factness, it can exist regardless of whether we like it, we ignore it; it will continue to exist as a concrete past. So, literally event can continue to have an effect only if future generations still respond to it or rediscover it. So, if there are readers who take up the work of the past again that is how literary past can be resumed in the present or if there is a need a desire by the current generation to imitate out to or refute a work when contemporary authors are engaging with a literary past in that way. Only then can literary past survive in the succeeding generations.

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So, the question of the connectedness of the Da-sein is the ontological problem of its occurrence. To expose the structure of occurrence and the existential and temporal conditions of its possibility means to gain an ontological understanding of historicity. The scientific and theoretical kind of treatment of the problem of history does not only aim at epistemological clarification of historiographical comprehension or logic of the concept formation of historiographical presentation rather it is oriented towards the objective side.

So, in this line of questioning history is accessible only as an object of science. I would like to stop our lecture here today and let us meet in another lecture with another round of discussions, thank you.