

# METAPHYSICS IN LITERATURE

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**Abstract:** Basically metaphysics is the branch of psychology. Literally metaphysics means beyond the nature. Metaphysics answers, in an abstract manner the following: 1. What is there?

2. What is it like?

**Index Terms** – Existence, objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect and possibility.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In English literature, a no. of writers used the concept of metaphysics to the great effect and lasting long. Although, many writers have used the term metaphysics and have applied in their corresponding literary works, but famously it was Samuel Johnson who very first time named the metaphysical poetry, When he was describing Cowley in his lives of the poets in the pre-romantic period.

Objectives of the article: the research paper is aimed to make a fresh reappraisal of the influence of metaphysics in literature by different writers of different eras.

Background: it is supposed that metaphysics, was used by the Aristotle in ancient times. Andronicus of Rhodes is believed to have given the name metaphysics, while editing the work of Aristotle. Later Aristotle's metaphysics proved to be the great work in psychology. Influence on Greeks, the philosophers and even writers like Dante, was immense. It consists mainly the criticism of Plato's "Theory of Forms".

Writers in English literature who championed the concept of metaphysics to the great effect and long lasting success: the term metaphysical poetry was coined by the great critic Samuel Johnson, who described the 17<sup>th</sup> century English poets, characterized by the use of conceits and greater emphasize on spoken than lyrical quality of their verse. Samuel Johnson in his "Lives of The Most Eminent English Poets", in the chapter on Abraham Cowley refers to the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in which their "appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets".

Before Samuel Johnson it was John Dryden who said of John Donne: "he affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them, with the softness of love. In this Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault".

Probably the only writer before Dryden to talk about new style of poetry was Drummond of Hawthornden.

Rejection of metaphysics: so many people belonging to literary field believe that metaphysics should be rejected. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Frances Bacon disregarded metaphysics and strongly argued in favour of Empiricism. In 18<sup>th</sup> century David Hume strongly criticized metaphysics and argued that all genuine knowledge comes either mathematics or from the matter of fact. Later Immanuel Kant published his "Critique of Pure Reason". Immanuel Kant followed completely to the Hume but he also proposing that there was some room for prior knowledge.

Criticism of metaphysical poetry: until 20<sup>th</sup> century metaphysical poetry was a derogatory remarks to the poets. John Dryden satirized the metaphysical poets in his "Mac Flecknoe" and Samuel Johnson famously attacked the metaphysical poets; "the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought and though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased". In 20<sup>th</sup> century T.S. Eliot, a modernist writer used metaphysical poetry in his writing.

Defining the canon: in fact, there is no consensus which English poets come under the metaphysical school of poetry. Samuel Johnson quoted only three writers Abraham Cowley, John Donne and John Cleveland. Collin Burrow later included George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell and Richard Crashaw in the canon.

Two key anthologists in particular were responsible for common traits among 17<sup>th</sup> century poets. Herbert Grierson's "metaphysical lyrics and poems of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1921)".

Helen Gardener's "metaphysical poets (1957)" included "PROTO-METAPHYSICAL" writers such as William Shakespeare and Sir Walter Raleigh.

Characteristics of metaphysical poetry: a poetry marked by bold, Ingenious Conceits, Incongruous Imagery, Complexity and Subtlety of thought, frequent use of paradox and often by deliberate harshness or rigidity of expressions. Metaphysical poets have a common theme. They all had a religious sentiment. Many poems explored the theme of Carpe Dien (seize the day).

Famous poems of metaphysical poetry: "The Flea", "The Sun Rising" by John Donne

"To His Coy Mistress" by Andrew Marvell

“The Retreat” by Henry Vaughan

“The Pulley” by George Herbert

## CONCLUSION

Despite criticism of metaphysical poets as derogatory, holds a top place in the English literature. Melody of metaphysical poetry is such that English literature cannot be discussed without the writers of the canon of metaphysical poetry.

## REFERENCES

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