**Study Material for 6th sem Major Paper 6.2**

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**Intentional Fallacy and Affective Fallacy**

The terms **Intentional fallacy** and **Affective fallacy** have been coined by W.K WImsatt and M. C. Beardsley in 1949 as a principle of New Criticism. The New Critics were opposed to impressionistic criticism and social/ historical approaches and focussed on the literary text itself as the object of study and not as a social artefact that expressed the inner life of the artist or the society in which it was written. It emphasized close reading, particularly of poetry, to discover how a work of literature functioned as a self-contained, self-referential aesthetic object. Wimsatt and Beardsley focussed on the centrality of the text and the irrelevance of external reference in the approach of a text and this is what they aimed to emphasize in the two essays “Affective Fallacy” and “Intentional Fallacy”.

Affective fallacy refers to the supposed error of judging or evaluating a text on the basis of its emotional effects on a reader. As a result of this fallacy, criticism ends in impressionism and relativism and objective criticism becomes almost impossible. According to Wimsatt and Beardsley, Affective fallacy is a “confusion between the poem and its results….It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism.” The meaning of text is public, not personal. The effect of the text varies from person to person and from reading to reading. Thus if the critic depends on the meaning produced by a single reader it will be a kind of mistake and will lead to a number of potential errors. As a text is an autonomous entity, the best way of deriving meaning is to analyse linguistic elements such as syntax, semantics etc since the work of art has its own anthological status, and it should not be judged through the parameters outside the text.

Intentional fallacy refers to the supposed error of judging a text in terms of author’s intention, feeling, emotion, attitude, biography and situation. According to Wimsatt and Breadsley “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art.” They therefore claim that author’s intended meaning is irrelevant to the lirerary critic. The meaning, structure, value of text is inherent within the work of art itself; it is an object with certain autonomy. Intentional fallacy is confusion between the poem and its origin. It is a fallacy because an author is not the part of the text; instead it is public not private. In the words of Wimsatt and Beardsley “The poem belongs to the public, it is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge.” Criticism should therefore be objective and textual and the critic should never go beyond the text.

While Affective fallacy considers the impact of the text over the reader, Intentional fallacy examines the authorial hold over the text. And in either of the situation the centrality of the text is lost. Wimsatt and Beardsley held the view that a text’s value comes from within it and its success must not be measured either from the effect it has on the reader or to any intention of the author.