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The second occurs 'when two or more meanings are resolved in one' (as per 'Double Grammar' in Shakespeare); the third consists of two seemingly disconnected meanings given simultaneously, as in a pun, or, by extension, in allegory or pastoral, where reference is made to more than one 'universe of discourse'; the fourth occurs when alternative meanings combine to clarify a complicated mood in the author (with examples of Shakespeare, Women, and G. M. Hopkins); the fifth consists of what Empson calls lucky confusion, with examples of Shelley and Swinburne, suggesting the possibility that the 19th century. technique is partly the metaphysical tradition excavated when rotten; the sixth occurs when a statement in itself devoid of meaning or contradictory forces the reader to provide interpretations; and an account of the seventh, which marks a division in the author's mind, is accompanied by quotes from Freud and illustrations by Crashaw, Keats, and Hopkins. This article is about the book by William Empson. For Elliot Perlman's novel, see Seven Types of Ambiguity (novel). For the television series, see Seven Types of Ambiguity (TV Series). Seven Types of Ambiguity is a literary critique by William Empson that was first published in 1930. It was one of the most influential critical works of the 20th century and was one of the main fundamental works in the formation of the new criticism school. [1] The book is organized around seven types of ambiguity that Empson finds in the poetry he criticizes. The second revised edition was published by Chatto & Windus, London, 1947, and there was another revised edition in 1953. The first print in America was in New Directions in 1947. Seven types of ambiguity have opened up new criticism in the United States. The book is a guide to a style of literary criticism practiced by Empson. An ambiguity is represented as a puzzle for Empson. We have ambiguity when alternative opinions could be taken without pure misperception. Empson reads poetry as an exploration of conflicts within the author. Seven types The first kind of ambiguity is metaphor, which is when you say that two things are similar that have different properties. This concept is similar to that of metaphysical presumption. Two or more meanings resolved into one. Empson characterizes it as the use of two different metaphors at once. Two ideas that are connected through context can be Simultaneously. Two or more meanings that disagree, but combine to clarify a complicated mood in the author. When the author discovers his idea in the act of writing. Empson describes a similarity that lies halfway between two statements made by the author. When a statement says nothing and readers are forced to invent their own statement, most likely in conflict with that of the author. Two words that within the context are opposite that expose a fundamental division in the author's mind. [2] References - Sir William Empson, DVD edition of the British Encyclopedia 2003. The Sacrifice, Chapter VII of Seven Types of Ambiguity, William Empson. Archived copy. Originally released October 27, 2009. Retrieved 2007-04-11.CS1 maint: Copy stored as title (link) CS1 maint: BOT: original-url status unknown (link) Retrieved by Revised twice since it appeared, it remained one of the most read and cited works of literary analysis. Ambiguity, according to Empson, includes any verbal nuance, however mild, that gives rise to alternative reactions to the same piece of language. From this definition, wide enough by his own admission at times to see absurdly far stretched, he launches into a brilliant discussion, under seven classifications of different complexity and depth, of such works, among others, such as the works of Shakespeare and the poetry of Chaucer, Donne, Marvell, Pope, Wordsworth, Gérard Manley Hopkins and T. S. Eliot. Poet, scholar and critic Sir William Empson, he was a massive literary figure of his time, one who revolutionized our ways of reading a poem, in the words of the London Times. The school of literary criticism known as New Criticism gained important support from Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity: A Study of Its Effects on English Verse. This work, along with his other published essays, has become part of the furniture of every good English or American critic's mind, comments G.S. Fraser in Great Writers of the English Language: Poets. Empson will also be remembered for the peculiar, utterly original and surprising tenor of his works, the Times writer says. Radically different from romantic poetry produced by Dylan Thomas and Empson's other peers, Empson's poetry employed more objective and unselfish sentimental language that reflected his competence as a mathematician and his reverence for science. The Times article tells that his first collection, Poems, had a deserved and explosive immediate impact as the literary scene in Britain knows only two or three times in a century. Empson was also a legendary professor of English literature at the University of Sheffield, where he taught for almost 20 years. John Gross of New York Book Review says: An essentially positive critic, [Empson] had the gift of being able to show you quality in a work that you had never seen without and the even more important gift of broadening your imagination, encouraging you to keep looking for yourself. This new approach to the appreciation of poetry focused on the reader's close attention to the properties of poetic language has opened up a new field of literary criticism, a remarkable achievement, considering that Empson did so without proposing to modify previous methods of criticism; nor has he revised the standards by which literature is traditionally judged, nor invented new ways to reclassify well-known works of literature. Hugh Kenner points out in Gnomon: Essays on Contemporary Literature. Empson's explanations of how meaning is brought into poetic language have made poetry accessible to hundreds of readers, Kenner notes. Perhaps most useful to poetry readers is Empson's first critical work, Seven Types of Ambiguity. In general use, a word or reference is considered ambiguous if it has more than one possible meaning. In Seven Types, Empson wrote: I propose to use the word in an extended sense, and I will think that any verbal nuance, however mild, that makes room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language is relevant to my subject. The seven types of Empson are briefly defined in the summary: First-type ambiguities arise when a detail is effective in several ways at once.... In second-type ambiguities, two or more alternate meanings are completely resolved into a single object.... The condition for ambiguity of the third type is that two seemingly unrelated meanings are data at the same time.... In the fourth type, alternative meanings combine to make clear a complicated mood in the author.... The fifth type is a lucky confusion, as when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing... or don't keep it in mind all at once.... In the sixth type what is said is contradictory or irrelevant and the reader is forced to invent interpretations.... The seventh type is that of full contradiction, which marks a division in the author's mind. Ambiguity hinders communication when it stems from the writer's indecision, Empson wrote in Seven Types: It should not be respected as it is due to the weakness or thinness of thought, obscures matter at hand unnecessarily... or when the interest of the passage is not mantated on it, so that it is only an opportunism in the management of the material, if the reader does not understand the ideas that are mixed, and a general impression of inconsistency will be given. However, the protean properties of words, their ability to bring more meanings in a variety of ways, are an important component of poetic language, and being aware of how this aspect of opera language is one of the pleasures of poetry, Empson said. Seven Types is mainly a intended to help the reader who has already felt the pleasure of understanding the nature of his answer, suggests a collaborator of contemporary literary criticism. Some of Empson's early critics that a license had simply been written to look for multiple meanings without any awareness of the control context in which local ambiguity appears, reports the collaborator himself. Instead, Empson guides critics to consider purpose, context, and person in addition to the critical principles of the author and the audience for which he is writing when they express meaning. Roger Sale, a contributor to Hudson Review, believes the book has been judged too harshly in many reviews. He writes: Most discussions have chosen its less interesting aspects, its use of the word 'ambiguity' and its range of 'types' along a scale of 'progressive logical disorder'. But these things are really minor.... The book, [Empson] says, is not philosophical but literary, and its purpose is to examine the lines that Empson finds beautiful and haunting.... But in at least fifteen places Empson proves that the purpose of the analysis is not so much to understand the lines as to discover entire traits of the mind, and the book is dotted with right things agreeing on a poet or a historical period. In fact, concludes Robert M. Adams in the New York Review of Books. Already some passages of Empsonian exegesis.... have achieved classic status, so that the text cannot be considered intelligently without them.... I think he had, though to a lesser extent, Dr Johnson's extraordinary gift for pointing the finger at crucial literary moments; and that alone is likely to assure him of a measure of permanence. Some Versions of Pastoral care address the modern propensity to express nostalgia for the idyllic views of the world that belong to the past. According to Empson, pastoral literature implied a beautiful relationship between rich and poor [and made]... simple people express strong feelings... in the learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way). Empson argues that contemporary expressions of pastoral care are for the most part pretensions: in pastoral care one takes a limited life and pretends to be the full and normal one. Writing in Modern Heroism: Essays on D.H. Lawrence, William Empson, and J.R.R. Tolkien, Sale argues that by examining a series of 16th-century leaders/heroes forward, Empson means saying that the moieties that once bound leaders to their people no longer exist - in Sale's words, the people have become a crowd and the hero painfully alienated - and that, therefore, the role of hero or Christ is unreachable. Sale believes that some versions of Pastoral care are Empson's best work, although this too has been misjudged as a literary work and abused as a critical tool. Sale notes that in [this book] he can go from work at hand to his vision without almost pushing the evidence, so even though his prose and organization may seem difficult at first reading, it turns with almost indescribable grace from the smallest detail to the largest generalization and then again to various intermediate terrains. When you get used to the book and and to hear the massive chorals of his orchestrations that support even the most irrelevant aside, the effect is only one of the greatest books can produce - it envelops and controls such large areas of the imagination that for a while you are willing to admit that it is the only book ever written. As a modern work of persuasion is unparalleled. Milton's God is a diatribe against Christianity that Empson believes has a monopoly on the worship of torture, sexual repression, and hypocrisy, writes the essayist of Contemporary Literary Criticism. Milton's God, Empson argues, seems to want to put aside the cruelty of his absolute dominion, and has cut off from Christianity both the horror of torture and sexual horror, and after the monster seems almost decent. Questioning Milton's orthodoxy on these grounds, Empson presents Milton as a humanist, a vision that has raised a furor among the entrenched Miltonic establishment. Adams says. It was, he says, the eccentric professor's last raid on the academic chicken coop before his retirement from the University of Sheffield in 1971. Empson's humanism represents in part his open approach to the theme of meaning in literature. Kenner observes: 'The object of life, after all,' [Empson] tells us late in ambiguity, 'is not to understand things, but to keep defenses and balance and live as well as you can; it is not only maiden aunts that are placed in this way. In Milton's God, he declared his agreement with the philosopher Jeremy Bentham that the satisfaction of every impulse is in itself an elementary good, and that the practical ethical question is how to satisfy the greatest number. Empson's poetry and criticism are the natural extensions of his opinions. Empson offers not a theory of literature or a single method of analysis, but a model of how to read with pleasure and knowledge, notes New Statesman reviewer Jon Cook. In Using Biography, for example, it demonstrates how familiarity with an author's life helps the critic empathize with the author, allowing the critic to apply the corresponding personal experiences to see in an author's intentions. The resulting insights into Andrew Marvell and W.B. Yeats, says James Fenton in the London Times, owe more to Empson's speculation and free associations than to the systematic analysis of biographical details. According to Cook, Empson makes it clear that it is much worse to succumb to the critical habit of pressing literary works in the service of authoritarian and repressive ideologies, all this, of course, under the comforting guise that receiving authority in this way is good for us. Even after his death in 1984, Empson's ideas continued to have an impact on the field of literary criticism, as many of his unfinished, unreleased or unpublished writings were published posthumously. These include Argufying: Essays on Literature and Culture, Faustus and the and the two-volume essays on Renaissance literature. A collection of previously published reviews and essays, previously, it is divided into five sections, covering topics such as poetry, fiction and cultural perspectives. Much of the collection is taken with Empson's verbal sparring with other critics, prompting Miller to comment on the impending polemical tone with which Empson also pursues the friendliest review or comment. Faustus and the Censor is a critical study by Dr. Faustus by Christopher Marlowe. Empson's two-volume essays on Renaissance literature, such as Argufying, were published by his licensed biographer, John Haffenden. Volume 1, Women and the New Philosophy, is a collection of essays on the man whose poetry strongly influenced Empson. Volume 2 includes various essays focusing on Shakespeare's midsummer night's dream, as well as a number of other Renaissance writers including Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. Empson was a true miracle-worker in his criticism; did the dead live again and gave the silenced speech. Fielding comes to life when Empson writes about him, as Women's poems do under the critic's skillfully charitable hands, notes Eric Griffiths in a Times Literary Supplement review of Volume 1. Stephen Greenblatt, however, reviewing Volume 2 of the London Review of Books, argues that none of these are close to the level of Empson's main work. While Charles Rosen, writing in the New York Review of Books, admits that Empson was wrong... often as a critic, he argues that Empson's success here as elsewhere stems from the generosity of spirit that has made him a constant critic. Although Empson is best known for his criticism, Preliminary Essays author John Wain writes: It may be that criticism is read and remembered while poetry is forgotten, because criticism generates new criticism more easily than a poem that generates fresh poetry; but in Empson's case it would be a pity if he were known simply as the man of ambiguity, and not as a poet. A. Alvarez writes in Stewards of Excellence, William Empson's poetry was more used [as a model] than any other English poet of our time. While the upheavals of World War II threatened to render romanticism and pastoral meal obsolete, poets were challenged to find the same language and forms at the time. Empson's verse was read with an overwhelming sense of relief after the brazen and embarrassed inconsistency of postwar and postwar poetry, notes Alvarez, who explains, there is something in his work that encourages other writers to use it for their own ends. I believe that it has an essential objectivity.... In later poems what goes into how strong personal feeling comes out as something more general; while in the previous work all personal energy goes into a particularly impersonal business. In addition, Empson's best verses have a quality of and spell that goes quite against his professed rationalism, notes Robert Nye in the London Times. The poems, says one writer for the London Times, have been perceived by some critics as exercises: exercises: similar to incredibly intelligent crossword puzzle, extruded, riddling, in a word, too intellectual. But as Edwin Muir and other astute readers noted, their real keynote was passion. They represent, as Empson said in one of the most famous of them, a style learned from despair. The topic of the great... is the nature of sexual passion and the nature of political passion. The writers found in Empson's verse the balance between intense emotion and detachment that seemed appropriate to describe life in the contemporary world. Alvarez believes that Empson's poetry depends on his control over a wide range of ideas: [Empson] is less interested in saying his own voice than in the agility, skill and variety with which he juggles his ideas. So it's a personal poem only at some point: the subject is impersonal; involvement is all his effort to do as much as possible out of the subject, and in the realization with which he connects his multiple themes so elegantly together. Empson, in short, is a poem of wit in the most traditional sense.... And, like most wit, the pleasure it gives is largely in the immaculate performance, which is a rare but limited pleasure. In tracing the development of Empson's poetry, Alvarez says of early poems: In his sardonic way, Empson made his lucid and inventive as a personal claim to sanity, as if he saw it all in a fourth and terrifying dimension, but he was too polite to say so. Hence the ironic despair and vigorous elegance did not seem at all contradictory. He notes that Empson is the most important thing as a stylist of poetry and ideas. He took control of everything [T.S.] Eliot's suggestions on what was most significant in the English tradition, and put them into practice without any of the techniques Eliot had derived from the French and Italians. And so his poetry shows with strength and purity the perennial vitality of the English tradition; and in demonstrating it also expresses the vitality and excitement of the extraordinarily creative moment in which Empson began to write. While Empson focused on poetry when he did not write criticism, he attempted several fictional works during his lifetime. The Royal Beasts and Other Works, published by Haffenden, collects many of Empson's unpublished fictional works, and includes poems, a satirical fable, and the outline of a ballet. The title of the collection comes from Empson's fable, The Royal Beasts, written while Empson taught in China in 1937. This work explores the possibility of a race of monkey-like creatures, the Wurroos, which by a strangeness of evolution have evolved rational thinking skills, notes Tyrus Miller in Modern Language Notes. The sketch of the ballet, also inspired by Empson's period in the Far East, examines religious myths both than western ones. Before his death, Empson was knighted by Queen Elizabeth. His most enduring legacy will probably be as critical. Empson's critical result has to do with crippling theories, wrote Jim McCue in Agenda. It's an empirical survey of how to read, think and maybe live better. Better.

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