F.R. Leavis (1895-1978)

* Frank Raymond Leavis was an influential [British](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) critic.
* He was a Cambridge teacher.
* His notable work – *The Great Tradition* (1948)
* Emphasised the moralist function of literature

**Major Ideas:**

* He emphasized the moralist and civilizational functions of literature and not simply the aesthetic factors. (In this he was a Platonist, Arnoldian etc.)
* He was writing during, between, and after the two World Wars and the various upheavals of the period. This was the context of his moralist position.
* He believed that art and literature should embody the great tradition and values of a culture. (In this case the British culture.)
* He shares with Eliot the notion of tradition, though with some differences.
* According to Leavis, the English novelists who carry the great English tradition are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Joseph Conrad and Henry James. (D.H. Lawrence also later.) But he left out Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Lawrence Sterne et al.
* As a critic his main tenet (rule) was that great novelists show an intense moral interest in life and that this moral interest determines the nature of form in fiction.

**On Poetry:**

* He criticized Victorian poetry for its separation between thought and feeling (similar to dissociation of sensibility).

**Canon:**

* It is the finite number of great literary texts which carry the great tradition by containing the noble and great values/thoughts of humankind.
* Canon is not a fixed entity. It is the product of socio-political and cultural factors.

\*\*\* (BJ’s classnotes; typed by Nimidha James; 25/02/2016) \*\*\*