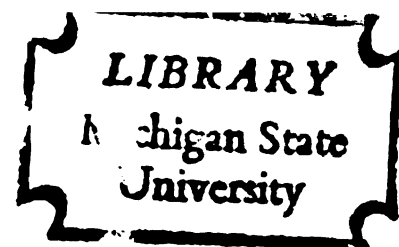


A METHOD FOR UNDERSTANDING
AND EVALUATING CRITICISM OF
PHILOSOPHY IN LITERATURE:
APPLICATION OF THE METHOD TO
THE CRITICISM OF THOMAS HARDY

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
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PHYLLIS JANE DIVITA WOODY
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ABSTRACT

A METHOD FOR UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING CRITICISM OF PHILOSOPHY IN LITERATURE: APPLICATION OF THE METHOD TO THE CRITICISM OF THOMAS HARDY

By

Phyllis Jane Divita Woody

It is apparent to students of criticism that a considerable amount of controversy exists among critics and aestheticians about the function of criticism and the value of the various critical approaches. One of the most intriguing differences centers on the so-called philosophical and moral element in literary works. While it was assumed for many generations that literature is a superior means of presenting philosophical and moral truth, more recently theorists have challenged this view with a variety of arguments. Consequently, criticism reflects numerous assumptions about the exact nature of the philosophical and moral element in literature, the desired critical approach to it, and the extent to which the critic's personal beliefs are brought to bear on interpretation and evaluation.

The purpose of this thesis is to propose one method for understanding and evaluating criticism of the philosophical element in literature and to apply the method to a specific group of critical endeavors. The background for the evolution of the method, which is presented in Part I, focuses on three significant factors involved in understanding and judging criticism of the philosophical aspect of literature. The first factor is understanding the relevant

terminology, specifically, the meanings of the philosophical element in literature, of artistic truth, and of belief as relates to art and criticism. The second factor is awareness of the major aesthetic theories that provide the basis for literary criticism. The third factor is formulation of criteria for evaluating aesthetic theories and critical practice.

In Part II the method is applied to selected critical studies of Thomas Hardy's philosophy. The studies are categorized for analysis and evaluation according to the aesthetic theories that underlie them, with the major theoretical categories being Imitationism, Hedonism, Expressionism, Transcendentalism, and Formalism-Organicism.

Among Hardy's imitationist critics, there is considerable reliance on essence imitation theory, a theory which values artistic insights into the nature of reality as conveyed by literature's representation of so-called essential reality. There are three major trends among Hardy's essence imitation critics. In the first group are critics who define essential reality, the aesthetic norm to be represented, in accord with their personal beliefs and who often equate artistic insights to simple doctrinal messages based on these beliefs. In the second group are imitationists who set up an aesthetic norm for judging artistic insights that demands correspondence to Hardy's so-called characteristic philosophy. The value of the criticism in both these groups is limited by a narrow and subjective aesthetic foundation. In the last group are critics with a major interest in exploring Hardy's insights into essential reality but whose norms reflect awareness that artistic insights are integrally connected to

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certain formal elements in literary works. The interpretations and judgments of this group are sometimes worthwhile and often outstanding.

Hardy's hedonist critics interpret and judge his works on the basis of the aesthetic pleasure they evoke. I designate two categories of hedonist criticism. In the first group are critics who define aesthetic pleasure in terms of single, specific kinds of emotional responses. The criticism in this group fails to enrich our understanding of Hardy's philosophy since it is dictated by an extremely narrow definition of aesthetic pleasure. Represented in the second group is a critic who defines aesthetic pleasure in fairly expansive and complex terms. His aesthetic rationale, which permits him to explore a variety of literary phenomena and effects, represents an achievement for hedonistic criticism.

Hardy's expressionist critics reveal an interest in the communication of emotion or experience from the artist to the audience and link aesthetic value to the success of the communication. Two tendencies are apparent in this category of critics. The first is to concentrate on Hardy's intellectual and emotional background with the major intention of demonstrating that the novelist held a sincere belief in a particular vision of life that necessitated its expression in his works and that the sincerity of the vision is the source of its aesthetic value. The second approach is to attempt to measure the success of the communicated experience and judge the quality of the experience. Both tendencies rely strongly on the critics' impressions and inferences and thus contribute very little to an understanding of the philosophy of Hardy's works.

Transcendentalism rarely constitutes the sole aesthetic basis of criticism, but its criterion of artistic excellence often permeates much critical commentary. That criterion places value on the capacity of literature to allow for intuitive insight into the nature of ultimate reality. An analysis is made of two critical studies that reveal a transcendentalist tendency, namely, the assigning of aesthetic value to purely anti-realistic literary structures, especially grotesque, absurd, and alogical ones, as in themselves suggesting to the imagination that ultimate reality is characterized by man's struggle for meaning in a chaotic and absurd universe. These critics offer enriching interpretations, but there is the possibility of distortion of the literary work that may result from overvaluing certain kinds of metaphorical structures as embodying in themselves insight into ultimate reality.

Organicism serves as the aesthetic foundation for some of the best available criticism of Hardy's philosophy. The basic theory places value on the art object as a self-sufficient entity existing to be experienced in and for itself, with aesthetic excellence depending on the integration of all the work's various elements. The organicist criticism of Hardy's philosophy may be placed into three groups--mediocre, adequate, and outstanding. The mediocre criticism is characterized by an explication of a single literary element that fails to suggest the precise or the significant function of that particular element in the whole work. The adequate organicist criticism is characterized by analyses and interpretations of philosophical themes as embodied in the various aspects of total works. Several of Hardy's organicist critics make a truly outstanding contribution because their

studies not only enrich our understanding of the philosophy of his works but also enlarge our understanding of important aesthetic and critical issues.

The designation of the problem to be investigated in the present study, the explication of its background, and the evolution of the method described for understanding and evaluating literary criticism all serve to sharpen perception of the complexities involved in criticism of the philosophical element in literature. Analysis of the Hardy criticism reveals that there are numerous kinds of responses to this element. If we go to criticism for an understanding and appreciation of the so-called philosophical aspect of a literary work, then we may judge the value of the criticism according to the quality of the aesthetic response that it reveals. The present study proposes to help modern readers and would-be critics recognize and understand the various possible approaches to the philosophic element in literature. This kind of awareness will indicate to them the nature of their own reactions in a literary experience. It will enable them to analyze a critical interpretation according to the quality of the literary experience on which it is based and according to the efficacy of the methods that it implies. It will suggest the value of striving consciously to reach the richest stage of aesthetic experiencing. It will clarify the importance of the critic's unique adaptation of a theoretical system. Finally, it will demonstrate the importance and inevitability of the relationship between aesthetics and criticism.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern age is often characterized as being obsessed with analysis, introspection, and intellectualization. Having discarded certain moral and philosophical absolutes so relied upon by other eras, we feel compelled to analyze motives for individual and collective acts and beliefs and attempt to justify them on the basis of their intrinsic merits. The practice of contemporary art criticism follows the pattern of the modern temper: critics are self-conscious about their activity, especially its theoretical basis; they want to understand what they are doing as critics and why; and they want to convince their audience of the correctness of their critical stance. The attitude of self-consciousness among critics has come about from their study of the history of criticism, from exposure to numerous modes of criticism, and from the confusion resulting from diverse and often conflicting critical judgments. The knowledgeable critic realizes that he cannot assume that his audience holds any common or shared notions about the nature and value of art. Consequently, he must understand the purpose and rationale of his criticism in order to instruct and persuade his readers.

The preoccupation with theoretical issues has resulted in a considerable amount of controversy among critics and aestheticians about the function of criticism and the value of the various critical approaches. R. S. Crane points up the dilemma facing students of

criticism: "What are we to say, for example, when poetry is viewed by one group of critics as imitation and by other groups, opposed to the first but differing sharply among themselves, as expression, as communication, as language peculiarly marked by ambiguity or paradox, as symbolic action, as myth, or as imaginative 'prehension of the world'?"¹ Wayne Booth expresses similar awareness of the controversy among critics of fiction as he deals with the basic question as to whether fiction should be judged according to the standards of realism, formalism, or symbolism.²

One of the most intriguing differences among critics centers on the philosophical and moral element in literary works. The history of literary criticism records a variety of ways in which this element has been approached. For example, it was assumed for many generations that literature was a superior means of presenting philosophical and moral truth: readers could attain improved minds and refined consciences via the pleasant avenue of literature. And the main function of criticism was to aid the reader in his quest by interpreting the truths contained in literary works. The critic was likely to rely on his personal beliefs about life in performing his critical task, but his beliefs were probably in accord with the basic philosophical and moral assumptions of the Western world. More recently theorists have asserted that the value of literature does not reside in its philosophical and moral implications, that criticism must deal strictly with the qualities unique to literary art, and that these qualities may be elucidated best if the critic's personal philosophical beliefs are not directly involved in his critical effort. But the controversy over this issue has by no means been resolved. The exact nature of

the philosophical and moral element in literature, the desired critical approach to it, and the extent to which the critic's personal beliefs are brought to bear on interpretation and evaluation--all of these issues are still open to debate among both critics and aestheticians.

It was with these three controversial issues in mind that I undertook the present study. In its final form, it proposes one method for evaluating criticism of the philosophical and moral element in literature and it offers an application of the method to a specific group of critical endeavors. There were, however, several preliminary steps that led to formulation of the final topic.

In thinking about the various approaches to the philosophical aspect of literature,³ I felt that an excellent example of the diversity of method could be found in the criticism of Thomas Hardy's so-called philosophy. This body of material, I knew, was characterized by a variety of critical opinion and method. After the briefest exposure to the conflicting interpretations of the nature and significance of Hardy's philosophy, I set for myself two goals: to explore means of accounting for the variety of critical opinion and to attempt an evaluation of the relative merits of the criticism. The first step in pursuit of the goals seemed obvious--a careful consideration of each critic's statements in order to determine the underlying assumptions of his individual response. Close analysis revealed two major types of assumptions that were relevant to the critic's response to the philosophical element of Hardy's novels: those assumptions that the critic held about aesthetics and criticism and those assumptions that constituted his own personal philosophy of life. I concluded that in order to explain a critic's response to Hardy's

philosophy, it would be necessary to specify the critic's aesthetic assumptions and to determine the influence of his personal philosophy on his commentary. The next logical step was a study of major aesthetic theories. My investigation of theories provided support for a premise that is important to this entire thesis, namely, that the extent to which a critic's personal beliefs enter into critical interpretation and judgment is related to the aesthetic assumptions that he endorses. One may grossly illustrate the nature of the relationship by saying that certain theories allow the critic to apply his personal beliefs in critical judgment while other theories forbid such a practice.

The procedures described above seemed adequate for the achievement of my first goal--accounting for the variety of critical opinion of Hardy's philosophy. The diversity appeared to be due mainly to differences in the critics' aesthetic rationales; an understanding of the major theories of art would allow a categorizing of the criticism according to aesthetic basis; and this would facilitate understanding of it. But the procedure that produced classification of the criticism could not lead to precise evaluation of it.

The necessity to evaluate the criticism of Hardy's philosophy became the major challenge of my study. I had naturally had some immediate, almost instinctive, reactions to certain critics which were tantamount to evaluations. These, I felt, were of small value since they were based on my own fragmented ideas about the proper functions of art and criticism. At times I concluded that all critical effort was a vain pursuit since there was apparently no essential agreement among theorists or practitioners. Obviously, this kind of thinking

would not produce meaningful assessments. I concluded that any attempt to judge criticism must be rooted in a knowledge of aesthetic and critical theory, and that ultimately it would be necessary to assess the various theories.

Confronting this issue led to a shift in my initial major goals. The aspect of the study which had large implications and which became the major goal was the formulation of a method for understanding and assessing critical approaches to the philosophical element in literature; assessing the criticism of Hardy's philosophy by means of the method would be a test of its usefulness, and thus a secondary goal.

In order to specify criteria for judging criticism of the philosophical aspect of literature, I drew from several facets of my background knowledge of aesthetic and critical theory. It seemed necessary to take into account the following: a definition of the philosophical element in literature and its relation to other terms such as artistic truth and belief; the basic tenets of major aesthetic theories, especially the significance each accords to philosophy in art; the implications of the critic's individual interpretation of aesthetic theory; and finally, authoritative opinions on evaluating aesthetic theories and critical practice. The criteria obviously reflect my own views about art, since they result from my general awareness of the theoretical issues and from my selection of theorists and their perceptive ideas. I believe, however, that many others will find the general method evolved in this study to be useful and acceptable.

It may appear that the criteria (presented in Chapter 3) are suggestive of the superiority of one aesthetic theory, Organicism, to be

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exact; but this is not quite the case. Any relatively objective study of aesthetic theory is likely to uncover the inherent weaknesses of certain aesthetic rationales that would prohibit acceptance of them in their pure or most basic form. And no one is surprised by the fact that certain contemporary theories of art purport to overcome the limitations of earlier theories and thus often seem contradictory to them. These facts do not mean that we simply discard theories and criticism that diverge from contemporary views. But one must acknowledge that most of the theorizing about the relative merits of aesthetic rationales has been done by contemporary aestheticians and critics. I consider their views to be valuable because they command a large perspective of the important theories of art and because their judgments seem wise and prudent in view of this perspective.

A brief discussion of the organization of the thesis will serve to introduce the major issues involved.

Part I is devoted to explicating the background for establishing the method. It deals with three topics: terminology, aesthetic theories, and criteria.

Chapter 1 provides explanations of the various terms that relate to the philosophical element in literature. The first step in understanding the issue is to determine what aestheticians and critics mean by philosophy in art and by other related terms such as truth, knowledge, and belief. As one reads criticism, he becomes aware that certain critical interpretations focus on the philosophical implications of the literary work regardless of whether the critic employs the term philosophy. And it also becomes apparent that a major complicating factor in critical discussions of philosophical

implications is the problem of beliefs--both the critic's and those contained in the work.

Chapter 2 presents explications of five major aesthetic theories: Imitationism, Hedonism, Expressionism, Transcendentalism, and Formalism-Organicism. A knowledge of theories is of utmost importance in the attempt to understand and evaluate practical criticism. If one has a basic knowledge of major aesthetic theories, he can identify, upon close analysis of critical commentary, the underlying aesthetic assumptions of the critic. While the critic may not explicitly state his aesthetic rationale, "every assay of practical criticism inevitably implies theoretical assumptions which belong to the province of aesthetics."⁴ Classification of practical criticism according to its aesthetic basis facilitates our understanding of the critic's intentions, which is the first step in evaluation. R. S. Crane believes that we cannot judge "fairly of either the meaning or the validity of any critical statement" until we "first reconstruct the underlying and often only partly explicit conceptual scheme in which the statement appears."⁵ Furthermore, it is an understanding of the various aesthetic theories that enables one to perceive their inherent weaknesses and strengths and to evolve criteria for evaluating them.

Chapter 3 sets forth specific criteria for judging aesthetic theories and critical practice. The formulation and use of specific criteria are necessary if one expects his judgments about a critic's aesthetic rationale and critical practice to be convincing to others. I realize, however, that a precise set of criteria is especially vulnerable to attack. For example, the reader may judge that some significant criterion has been neglected, or he may prefer different

terminology, or he may prefer the opinions of other authorities. There may be reasonable objections to my criteria, but I believe that the value in actually formulating and using a practicable set of standards is sufficient to counteract its limitations.

Part II of the thesis presents the application of the method to the criticism of Hardy's philosophy. Here the method is tested for its adequacy. Hardy's critics provide excellent material for demonstrating the method since their criticism spans a period of time adequate enough to encompass a variety of critical approaches, since much of the criticism stresses the so-called philosophy, and since the value of Hardy's artistic achievement has often been disputed. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the imitationist criticism; Chapter 5, an analysis of the hedonist, expressionist, and transcendentalist criticism; and Chapter 6, an analysis of organicist criticism. The method of classification and evaluation presented in this study allows us to discriminate minute as well as large differences in the critical approaches to Hardy's philosophy. It enables us to determine how the critics' views of philosophy in art relate to major aesthetic theories. It allows us to detect the influence of personal beliefs on aesthetic judgment. And it enables us to assess the critic's individual interpretation of his aesthetic rationale and his general critical procedure.

Part III presents a discussion of the conclusions and implications of the thesis. The total procedure involved in the study clarifies the theoretical and practical issues surrounding critical approaches to the philosophical aspect of literature. Moreover, it appears that

other problem areas of criticism (besides approaches to philosophy in literature) might be illuminated by a study of their basis in aesthetic theory. The method proves adequate to the challenge presented by the Hardy criticism, and the results suggest that it has the potential of facilitating understanding and evaluation of other bodies of criticism devoted to philosophy in literary works. Finally, the problem and solution posited by the thesis point to the advantage of a relatively objective appraisal of aesthetic theories and critical methods and practice.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹"Introduction," Critics and Criticism Ancient and Modern (Chicago, 1952), p. 5.

²The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961), passim.

³A discussion of what critics mean when they refer to philosophy in literature is presented in Chapter 1. Since the concept includes various things, for example, moral, social, political, and theological aspects, I have decided to employ the encompassing term philosophy to refer to these elements in literature; the various aspects included are suggested in Chapter 1. Furthermore, in the interest of simplifying the discussion throughout the thesis, I refer to "Hardy's philosophy" and the "philosophy of Hardy's novels" as though they were the same thing. And in applying the method of analysis and evaluation to the Hardy criticism, I have selected critical studies that deal mainly with the philosophy of the novels. This selection is intended to eliminate differences in interpretation and judgment that may be specifically related to genre differences, since some theorists believe that different genres demand different critical approaches.

⁴Harold Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism (London, 1955), p. 6.

⁵Crane, p. 7.

PART I

BACKGROUND FOR ESTABLISHING THE METHOD

CHAPTER 1

TERMINOLOGY

The first step in clarifying the problems presented by critical discussions of philosophy in literature is to determine what aestheticians and critics mean by this element. As one explores both explicit and implicit definitions, he becomes aware that the topic of philosophy in literature is related to other terms, the most important being artistic truth and belief. The following discussions of the philosophical element in literature, of artistic truth, and of belief will suggest the basic issues surrounding the criticism of philosophy in literature and will indicate the pertinence of a knowledge of them to formulating a method of understanding and evaluating this kind of criticism.

The Philosophical Element in Literature

From even the most casual reading of literary criticism, one immediately becomes aware that the term philosophy appears often in discussions but that it is rarely defined or delimited to any great extent. It is also quite freely interchanged with other undefined terms such as truth, knowledge, and wisdom. Critics seem to assume that the reader knows what is meant by the philosophy conveyed by an artist or a work of art. We must determine, to a reasonable extent, the scope of the meanings involved and the variety of terms employed

in critical discussions of philosophy. Although practical critics seldom devote attention to defining terms, critics and aestheticians in their theoretical endeavors have attempted to elucidate the meaning of the philosophical aspect of literary works.

Theorists have occasionally defined art in terms of its performing the comprehensive functions of science and formal philosophy. In support of their definition, they argue that all three disciplines serve similar functions since they all seek the nature of reality and disclose new reality; only the manner of searching and the dimension of reality explored are different.¹ It is my impression, however, that when practical critics discuss the philosophy conveyed by art, they usually do not mean by it this large, integrative function that is common to science, formal philosophy, and art; critics usually have in mind a more limited meaning.

Norman Foerster offers a critic's explanation of the differences between "literary philosophy and systematic philosophy." He believes that philosophy in art is conveyed by symbol and myth rather than by logic. "It is the very nature of literary philosophy to be loose, to be unsystematic, to be open not closed, to be generous not exclusive, to be suggestive not decisive." He feels that "the informal philosophies of our writer" generally distrust fixed systems and the power of reason and logic to "exhaust the whole of reality." According to Foerster, literature blends a love of beauty with a love of truth. "Its subject is, essentially, the inner nature of man; it offers a working philosophy of man, or that 'philosophy of wisdom' of which Erasmus spoke." Foerster's statements suggest that the term philosophy is used in discussions of literature to denote truth or wisdom about

the inner nature of man. Or put in another way, writers are unsystematic thinkers who think about and use everything in their art: "experience here and now, the traditions of literature and the arts, history, science, religion, philosophy, all the concerns of man."²

Foerster thus seems to intend the meaning of philosophy in literature to include anything about which the writer expresses ideas or thoughts. Moreover, he views the philosophic aspect of literature as an indispensable concern of the critic: "The literary critic is concerned with the wisdom inherent in literature, with the judgment of its ethical soundness, the firmness and range of its imitation of life" (pp. 74-75).

René Wellek and Austin Warren express a view similar to Foerster's and add further support to the idea that when critics refer to philosophy in literature, they have in mind a rather large and loose topic. According to Wellek and Warren, many of the problems concerning philosophy in art are brought about by the confusion of the functions of the two disciplines. They feel that literature deals with many of the same problems and themes which philosophy investigates but that literature deals with them unsystematically and expresses not only philosophical ideas but also emotional attitudes towards ideas and solutions. They accept Rudolph Unger's classification of philosophical themes that literature may explore:

. . . the problem of fate, by which he means the relation of freedom and necessity, spirit and nature; the religious "problem," including the interpretation of Christ, the attitude toward sin and salvation; the problem of nature, which would include such questions as the feeling for nature, but also questions of myth and magic. Another group of problems Unger calls the problem of man. It concerns questions of the concept

of man, but also of man's relation to death, man's concept of love; and finally there is a group of problems of society, family, and state.³

From this listing of philosophical problems that literature may be concerned with, it almost seems that the ideas or thoughts expressed by the artist on nearly any subject that affects man may be termed philosophy. Moreover, the pure and social sciences to a great extent also study these same issues confronting man so that one may say that almost any field of knowledge that is part of either scientific or philosophical inquiry may constitute intellectual content in art and may thus be labeled philosophy or knowledge or wisdom by the critics. John Middleton Murry expresses a similar opinion while labeling philosophical content simply "thought": " . . . the range of mental acts in poetry is unlimited and . . . the element of distinguishable thought can vary from a comprehensive proposition . . . to the most tenuous apprehension of a quality physical or spiritual, or both."⁴

M. H. Abrams adds further support to the view expressed above that philosophy in art is perceived by critics in rather broad terms. Abrams sees a relationship between the philosophical implications of literature and the element of "theme" as explained by contemporary organic theory. He praises the recent tendency to preserve the autonomy of the poem and yet to anchor it to the world and to the "moral consciousness of the reader." One example of this tendency is the widespread insistence that the poem's "structure of symbols, images, and meanings is governed by a 'theme.'" Abrams asserts that "this 'theme' frequently turns out to be a moral or philosophical commonplace which bears a startling likeness to the 'moral' or governing proposition, once postulated by the didactic theorists of the

Renaissance and neoclassic ages."⁵ Thus, according to Abrams' position, the general theme, moral, central meaning, or proposition expressed by the poem which emerges from the total poem may very well be termed "philosophy" by the critics. This idea is also implied in Abrams' discussion of the various rivals art has encountered from the time of Plato, who decided that poetry could not compete with the truth of philosophy. Since then, poetry has been on the defensive so as to meet threats "from one or another enterprise claiming exclusive access to the kind of truth poetry was supposed to pretend to: philosophy, history, Christian theology, and morals," and, of course, most important since the eighteenth century--science (p. 3).

It thus appears that critics employ a very catholic approach when it comes to determining what may be encompassed under the term philosophy in literature. Foerster suggests a sort of working philosophy of man, a kind of wisdom, that one perceives in art. Wellek and Warren specify a number of "philosophical themes" consisting of both ideas and emotional attitudes toward ideas. In their list, the scope of the ideas is broad; it includes the nature of man, the universe, God, society, states, and the possible interrelationships among these. Murry labels philosophical content simply thought, while Abrams asserts that philosophical and moral implications often constitute the basis of what critics discuss as a work's theme. Since critics take such a flexible approach to the so-called philosophical aspect of literature, it is hardly possible to delineate any further the meaning of the term. In order to study this literary component as it is treated by critics, one must likewise remain flexible so as to perceive when the critic is

actually dealing with some of the philosophical implications of a literary work.

The general definition suggested above of philosophy in literature should enable us to recognize whether a critic is focussing on the philosophical aspect of a literary work. And once it is apparent that a philosophical topic is explicitly or implicitly under discussion, an important issue is whether the philosophical element per se enters into critical judgment. Some very important questions arise, for example, those posed by Wellek and Warren: Is literature better for being philosophical? Is it to be judged by the value of the philosophy adopted or by the degree of insight shown into the philosophy? Is it to be judged by originality of philosophical thinking or adherence to a great traditional philosophy? Is coherence and consistency of philosophical endeavor to be a criterion of literary criticism?⁶

These questions are central to the purpose of this thesis. It is obvious that much critical commentary deals with the philosophical aspect of literature. But how is one to decide on the relevance and worth of such criticism? In the case of Hardy, for example, the novelist's so-called philosophy seems to be responsible for both positive and negative critical appraisals. To make sense of the conflicting opinions, a method is needed that will enable us to pinpoint the aesthetic and personal assumptions that are involved in the critics' responses. By means of an awareness of the complex issues involved in the philosophical aspect of literature and by means of a broad knowledge of aesthetic theories, it becomes possible to distinguish critical approaches to philosophy. And once these approaches

are clearly understood, we may then select criteria with which to evaluate them and ultimately the individual criticism which employs them.

Artistic Truth

Any consideration of the relevance of philosophy in art must include an explanation of several related terms, the most important of which appears to be artistic truth. Critics often use the term truth when they deal with a topic that has philosophical implications. It becomes evident that the expressions "truth in art" and "philosophy in art" present essentially the same problems for critics and aestheticians. This fact is illustrated in the similarity between the questions posed above by Wellek and Warren about philosophy in art and the following questions asked by Morris Weitz about truth claims in art:

(1) does some or all art embody truth claims? (2) ought any art to embody truth claims? (3) does the presence of truth claims make a difference to our appreciation of those works that have them? (4) ought the presence of truth claims to make a difference in our appreciation of those works that contain them?⁷

The term truth as it relates to art appears often in the writings of aestheticians and critics. It is unfortunate, however, that many who make statements about truth in art fail to define the term. In such cases one can only derive the meaning intended from the context. Recently, several aestheticians have attempted to separate and categorize the various meanings conveyed by the term truth as it appears in aesthetic and critical studies.⁸ And, as one might expect, in the process of such categorization, the scholar ultimately rejects all of

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the "wrong" meanings assigned the term truth and sets up the correct meaning that complements his particular theory of aesthetics. My aim in the initial presentation of definitions is not to pass final judgment on the worth or correctness of the definitions but to make clear the basic definitions that have been and are used, to suggest their values, and to discuss their relevance to my study of the criticism of philosophy in literature. Once we arrive at the meaning a critic assigns explicitly or implicitly to a concept such as truth in art, it is then possible to determine if that meaning is part of a systematic and significant theory of aesthetics and if the critic is aligned either in part or in total with that theory.

The first and vaguest usage of artistic truth to be considered is truth as a laudatory term. This is the only meaning that one can derive in certain discussions of art in which the term is loosely used to convey the general greatness of the work of art (Heyl, p. 45; Hospers, p. 144; Stolnitz, p. 307). Used in this sense, the term artistic truth is unjustified and unrelated to any theory of aesthetics.

The second and a most important definition is that of truth as scientific fact. It is important for three reasons: first, it serves as the basic definition from which discussions of artistic truth usually proceed; second, the acceptance or rejection of this meaning provides a basic tenet for certain theories of art; and third, there are several key terms associated with this meaning. Heyl explains so-called factual truth as a "broad 'scientific' approach to truth which has for its chief criteria accuracy, testability, and public verifiability" (p. 54). Several aestheticians agree that when truth in art is seen as truth to fact, what is actually meant is propositional

truth, and the issue of propositional truth involves the terms knowledge and cognition.

Truth as propositional truth is the definition that many theorists take to be the ordinary sense of the word. In this usual sense, truth "is the property of straight-out factual assertions about the world." Factual assertions or statements which may be proved as either true or false are called propositions. It should be noted that a proposition is always verbal and is true when its assertion corresponds to the facts it describes (Stolnitz, pp. 305, 308-309). Truth as propositional truth thus conveys scientific facts or verifiable beliefs; and since bodies of such facts have been organized into different fields of knowledge, we may now explore definitions of knowledge.

Eliseo Vivas considers the strict sense of the term knowledge to be "that which can be tested by positive methods because the thing known is in some sense independent of the formulated knowledge and is referred to by the latter." Vivas concedes that others may assign different meanings to knowledge, but in his very basic definition knowledge is equated with facts about the actual or real which exists and which is referred to by the language in which the knowledge is expressed. This position is supported by Monroe Beardsley, who believes that the term truth should be kept connected with knowledge and should involve a correspondence of something to reality. Further implied in the position is the definition of the cognitive function of language as the capacity to make either true or false statements and to record and communicate knowledge.⁹ Consequently, the process of knowing, that is, of cognition, is in this case the scientific method.

If we accept the definitions presented thus far of truth, proposition, and knowledge, we can summarize the position as follows: knowledge is the subject matter of propositions, which may be tested for truth. To give an example of the relation of this very basic concept of truth and knowledge to aesthetics: if the truth that art conveys is propositional truth about verifiable facts, then a work of literature may be labeled true if all of the statements within it are tested and verified. Clearly this definition of artistic truth as propositional truth can refer only to surface or linguistic truth claims that may appear in a work of art, that is, to the truth of statements within it. And such a definition has little to do with literature and nothing to do with other art forms, since the visual arts and music do not contain propositions at all (Stolnitz, pp. 308-309; Heyl, p. 55). The limitation of the definition of truth as propositional truth is that it excludes from consideration the so-called "depth meanings" of art which are somehow "expressed" but not necessarily "stated" as assertions.¹⁰

The third definition of truth in art is truth as artistic sincerity. In brief, this position finds truth in art to be "any genuinely held attitude whatsoever toward life," either intellectual or emotional (Heyl, p. 58). Another definition of this sense of truth is "the absence of any attempt on the part of the artist to work effects upon the reader which do not work for himself" (Hospers, p. 141). Most critics agree that the quality of sincerity is highly desirable in art, but there is disagreement as to the wisdom of applying the label truth to the quality. Nonetheless, several aestheticians seem to support this usage, for example, Benedetto Croce, W. T. Stace,

and R. G. Collingwood; and it appears in practical criticism as well. Stace feels that art embodies true intellectual concepts; but it appears that "any number of apparently conflicting concepts may be equally true and that, therefore, all works of art are true which reflect any genuinely held attitude whatsoever toward life." As for Collingwood, who closely follows the ideas of Croce, "it is the genuineness of one's personal reactions, whether they are called intellectual or emotional, which forms the primary content of truth and of art" (Heyl, p. 58).

A fourth sense in which the term truth is used in discussions of art is that of artistic consistency. In this view truth refers to such qualities as artistic probability, internal necessity, stylistic excellence (Heyl, pp. 60-63), and coherence of effects and parts (Hospers, p. 242). This concept, which was first developed by eighteenth-century theorists, is based on the analogy between the poet and the Creator. "The poet . . . emulates God by creating a 'second world' which is not an imitation of the real world, but a world of its own kind, subject only to its own laws, and exhibiting not the truth of correspondence, but only the truth of coherence, or purely internal consistency."¹¹ Although some contemporary theorists find this a vague and imprecise meaning of artistic truth, especially since other terms such as artistic probability, etc., more adequately describe the quality, others, mainly certain organicists, support this usage. Harold Osborne, for example, states that "'internal consistency' not conformity with the actual is the sole standard of 'aesthetic truth' in literary art."¹²

The final meaning of artistic truth is a complicated one and is especially relevant to critical discussions of philosophy in literature. This definition is truth as artistic insight or revelation; the insight or revelation has to do with depth meanings about the world of human experience and reality. This meaning of artistic truth differs from the previously discussed meaning of truth as propositional knowledge in the sense that depth meanings are "meanings of universal scope underneath relatively concrete meanings or ideas" and are usually implied.¹³ In other words, the insights or revelations conveyed are not necessarily expressed in the form of specific verbal assertions, but they are felt to be somehow expressed or conveyed by the total art object. In general, most critics reject the notion that art conveys propositional truth or knowledge, but they agree that a work embodies depth meanings. Critics usually explain the function by saying that the work of art "says something," has "the character of revelation," offers "new insights, new observations, new interpretations, new appraisals of a more or less familiar subject matter," or that art "rings true" or is "true to our experience." Thus while eschewing the position that art gives propositional knowledge, critics and aestheticians usually accept the idea that art reveals depth meanings about things, about reality (Heyl, pp. 65-67). This definition of artistic truth has to do with knowledge, but obviously it is a kind of knowledge that departs from the usual definition of knowledge as the subject matter of propositions capable of being true or false.

There are several ideas about the nature of truth as insight into or revelation of depth meanings--meanings which somehow inhere in the work of art, though not presented as verbal assertions. The various

ideas on the subject may be placed on a continuum, on one end of which is mystical truth and on the other, something very close to scientific truth as discussed previously. At the mystical end of the continuum, artistic insight is seen as transcendental and unverifiable, while at the scientific end, artistic insight is viewed as similar, if not equivalent, to propositional knowledge.

In the first view, the mystical, artistic truth is intuitive or imaginative; it transcends facts and deals with ultimate reality (Heyl, p. 68). Thus works of art are true "by provoking affective states which involve this non-conceptual knowledge of reality" (Osborne, p. 91). This bit of aesthetic theory is most commonly associated with nineteenth-century Romanticism. For example, Schelling viewed the imagination to be the organ of truth, and Coleridge claimed that "all truth is a species of Revelation" (Heyl, p. 68). In general, the mystical position implies the idea that a work of art can provide a truer or more ideal form of knowledge than nature offers or than science can infer from nature. The foundation of the idea is the view that nature mirrors imperfectly or even hides the world of real essences (Osborne, p. 191).

Moving away from the mystical end of the continuum, we may explore another view of the knowledge and truth offered by artistic insight. This view is not at all mystical, but the rationale for it depends on extensions of philosophical concepts. Dorothy Walsh rejects the idea that art provides either mystical or scientific knowledge, and sets forth instead the view that art is "the delineation of the possible."¹⁴ Arguing in a philosophical context,

she asserts that art presents the alternative possible--"this is an internally coherent or compossible scheme presented as alternative to the actual." This function of art affords definite "cognitive satisfaction since insight regarding the possible is insight into reality" (p. 611). Art is therefore related to the ultimate object of philosophical inquiry which is reality. The real must be construed as embracing the possible as well as the actual. "Consequently, an interest in the possible for its own sake should be recognized as philosophically justifiable It is a question of a philosophic comprehension of the real in its manifestation as the intrinsically interesting possible" (p. 618). In summary, this view holds that art can express depth meanings about reality in the sense that the cognitive content of art presents alternatives to the actual and such alternatives can convey insight into the actual.

A third opinion on the depth insights or revelations offered by art may be placed closer to the scientific end of our continuum. The basic distinction in this position is that art conveys not truth about things (as science does) but truth-to things. Thus art does not present verifiable propositions, yet it is true-to human nature, and we can verify this truth "in our own further observations of people and actions." Moreover, art is not only true-to action and character but also to "the felt qualities of experience in general." Art may express truth-to human character, situations, sequences of events, objects in the world, and all-pervading phenomena like light and massiveness; even the things usually "included under esthetic forms, design structure, rhythm, balance, 'plastic orchestration' can themselves be included under the principle" (Hospers, pp. 173, 175, 192). And all of this

sort of truth-to the felt qualities of experience may be verified in our subsequent contacts with reality.

Another view of artistic insight and revelation that pertains specifically to fictional narrative should also be placed at the scientific end of the continuum. This is the view that regards the narrative method as a genuine mode of thought because of its close affinity with history and because of its derivation from the medieval and classical tradition of allegory. That tradition viewed allegory as an important means of conveying and acquiring knowledge. To clarify how allegory conveys knowledge, it is necessary to distinguish between two traditional literary techniques: allegorical illustration and representation. Allegorical illustration is the narrative approach that presents "selected aspects of the actual, essences referable for their meaning . . . to ethical and metaphysical truth." Representation is the approach that presents aspects of the actual for their reference to historical, psychological, or sociological truth.¹⁵ The culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, during which time the great epics were written, accepted the view that narrative (mainly characterized by allegorical illustration) was a useful mode of thought and a "genuine instrument of philosophical discovery" (p. 110). It was expected that great narrative works would express "fidelity to philosophical truth, which tended to mean the unique literary illustration of commonplace ideas, 'truths too important to be new'" (p. 151).

This tradition appears to have continued to some extent even today in our expectations for the novel, but is further complicated by the fact that the novel seems to straddle the borderline between traditional illustration (which usually resulted in romance, with the

main pursuit being beauty) and traditional representation (which usually resulted in history, with the main pursuit being truth). Scholes and Kellogg feel that in Western culture these two traditions unite in the concept of realism and specifically in the novel (p. 58). Therefore, because of the derivation of the novel as a genre, we have large expectations of it. Many readers feel that its allegorical aspects convey genuine knowledge about ethical and metaphysical truths while its representative aspects convey knowledge about historical, psychological, and sociological truths. Consequently, the potential of the novel as purveyor of valid knowledge is perceived to be great.

The final view of artistic insight on the continuum from mystical to scientific truth is one that is often called the "proposition theory." This theory hinges on an extension of the term proposition previously defined as strictly verbal. In the present sense, propositions are conceived of as expressible in any medium of communication. Proponents of the theory argue that the artistic media communicate and that art offers a truth and knowledge nearly the same as that provided by science. The basic assumption of the position is that even non-verbal art objects are or contain propositions, that is, statements capable of being true or false. The artist in his task closely resembles the scientist, philosopher, moralist, and theologian. The resemblance stems from the preoccupation of art "with what man accepts as real."¹⁶ "The artist is preoccupied with the same world of objective existence and the same human experience which concern the other cognitive disciplines (Greene, p. 235). Consequently, the categories of truth and falsity are applicable in our response to art, with the

terms being used "in a manner conformable to common usage" (Greene, p. 425).

Let us further explore how the proposition theory depends on an extension of the term proposition. Greene, as a major proponent of the view, explains: "In making propositions the locus of truth, accordingly, I am conceiving of propositions much more broadly than they are commonly conceived on; I would include every proposition about reality which can be expressed with precision in any medium of communication, including the several artistic media" (Greene, p. 427). In other words, Greene does not limit the meaning of proposition to verbal assertion. In using the term proposition in this sense, Greene wants to convey that art can provide depth meanings, not merely surface statements, about the nature of human existence and reality and that these meanings are subject to the categories of truth and falsity.

As the discussion indicates, the final meaning of artistic truth as artistic insight or revelation is a complicated one because the insights are equated to depth meanings that somehow inhere in the total work. Let us review definitions of the four previously discussed concepts of artistic truth so as to clarify their difference from artistic truth as insight and to suggest their significance in the critical treatment of philosophy in literary works.

(1) Truth as a laudatory term. When a critic uses truth as a laudatory term, he generally uses it vaguely to suggest the work's general greatness. This usage may be noted but is not significant in a consideration of the theoretical issues surrounding the critical treatment of philosophy in literature.

(2) Truth as propositional truth. When a critic perceives artistic truth as propositional truth, he labels a literary

work true only if all the statements within it are tested and verified. Clearly this usage has nothing to do with the total literary work. Yet critics have been known to extract specific statements from literary works and examine them as if they were propositions.

(3) Truth as artistic sincerity. When a critic defines artistic truth as artistic sincerity, he equates it to the genuineness or sincerity with which the artist expresses attitudes that he himself holds. This usage is important in the critical treatment of philosophy in literature.

(4) Truth as artistic consistency. When a critic defines artistic truth as artistic consistency, he equates it to the integrity or inherent unity of the work. This usage is neither common nor relevant since it essentially becomes a laudatory term. To be more precise, the definition in this sense usually appears in support of the critic's advocacy of a strictly organicist interpretation, and the reasoning seems to be that if a laudatory term such as truth is to be invoked, it should refer to the work's supreme consistency with itself, and not to anything outside of it.

We may now consider how the fifth meaning of truth differs from the above definitions.

(5) Truth as artistic insight or revelation. When a critic refers to the truth of the artistic insights of a literary work, he is suggesting that the whole work seems to say something, to offer ideas, to make interpretations of things. This usage of artistic truth is of major significance in a study of criticism of philosophy in literature. For it is specifically these so-called artistic insights or revelations that critics treat on under a variety of labels, for example, philosophy, philosophical theme, idea, thought, wisdom, knowledge, and truth. Not only is this aspect of literature given different labels, but critics also hold varying notions as to the nature of the truth of the insights. As the earlier discussion of artistic insights indicates, their nature has been explained in the following terms: as mystical revelation, as alternatives to the actual, as truth-to experience, as "genuine" representational and metaphysical truth, and as scientific truth. This last definition of truth has to do with knowledge obviously, but the kind of knowledge implied departs from the usual definition of knowledge as the subject matter of propositions capable of being proved true or false.

The above explanations introduce some of the complex issues involved in the criticism of literary philosophy. Some of these relate to the critic's attitudes toward the philosophical element, and his

attitudes may be usually traced to his basic aesthetic rationale. The most important issues are: the artist's sincerity, the complexities involved in the concept of depth meanings or artistic insights, the means by which they are embodied in the whole work, and their association with such complicated labels as truth and knowledge. Because the strict definitions of knowledge and truth are not really applicable to artistic insights, they are often considered under the broad category of belief. And this term introduces another complicating factor in the critic's approach to the philosophical aspect of literature.

Belief

It is first necessary to clarify what is meant by belief and how it may be involved in the critic's response to a work of art. Belief and disbelief have been defined as cognitive terms referring "not to the properties of propositions but to psychological states of mind. They distinguish respectively our acceptance or rejection of knowledge claims" (Stolnitz, p. 330). Belief in this sense essentially denotes "conceptual and intuitive convictions" (Heyl, p. 74).

Henry Aiken distinguishes four specific types of beliefs that apply to art. First, there are natural beliefs, which refer to our convictions about the natural world and about life values. Second, there are cultural beliefs, which pertain to "the specific scientific, philosophical, or religious commitments which are characteristic of only a particular culture or age." Third, there are generic aesthetic beliefs, which have to do with the process of "framing" or maintaining

an aesthetic attitude in the contemplation of representational art. And fourth, there are specific aesthetic beliefs, which are held as characteristic of given artists, forms, or schools of art.¹⁷

The first two types of belief--natural and cultural--are the ones usually associated with the controversy about the artistic relevance of belief. We may explore some of these views: first, the extreme positions and second, the "compromise" positions. One opinion is that belief is totally irrelevant to aesthetic experience and judgment. According to this view, art may express beliefs, but aesthetic value does not depend on them or on the critic's agreement with them. The critic simply holds his own views in abeyance and judges the artistic insights solely on the basis of the standards within the work of art (Heyl, p. 74; Stolnitz, p. 333). The other extreme opinion is that the critic must share the beliefs presented in the work if he is to experience and appraise it properly (Heyl, pp. 76-77). The compromise positions that follow involve more complex views on the relevance of belief in literature.

M. H. Abrams' position relates to Aiken's concept of cultural beliefs. Abrams emphasizes the autonomy of the work of art and the significance of its "inherent and terminal values," but he posits the theory that the work of art "involves assumptions and beliefs and sympathies with which a large measure of concurrence is indispensable"¹⁸ He thinks of these constitutive beliefs as quite broad enough to encompass the assumptions of various cultures: "As it evolves, the poem makes constant call on a complex of beliefs which are the product of ordinary human experience with life, people, love, mutability, age, and art. These subsist less in propositional form

than in the form of universalized attitudes, propensities, sentiments and dispositions" (p. 16). Moreover, this complex of beliefs is basic, pervasive, and essential to the total work since it inheres in "the silent understructure of suppositions, norms, and beliefs which has controlled the choice, conception, and management of the literary subject" (p. xi). But if the poet fails to win our imaginative consent to the pervading ethos of a work, it may assume the stature of an assertion which the reader feels compelled to challenge. If the poet is to avoid this occurrence, he must take seriously his "responsibility to the beliefs and prepossessions of our common experience, common sense, and common moral consciousness" (p. 28). Abrams acknowledges that what the term "common" encompasses is open to dispute; nonetheless, he proscribes "positions so illiberal, or eccentric, or perverse that they incite counterbeliefs which inhibit the ungrudging 'yes' that we grant to the masterpieces" (pp. 28-29).

Another view is that of Aiken, who argues that the process by which we perceive beliefs in literature is cognitive as well as emotional. He suggests the possibility that cognitive cues are necessary before certain emotional attitudes can be developed in the spectator. Aiken states that beliefs may exist on two levels--the behavioral and the mental. On the behavioral level, beliefs "are perhaps best conceived as expectancies or ideo-motor sets which dispose us to act when, as, and if something is the case." There are various degrees to which such beliefs may be aroused, and some degrees may involve no action whatsoever. On the mental level, beliefs "manifest themselves within the field of consciousness primarily as 'felt determination' . . . or as feelings of acceptance." The second kind--

mental beliefs--pertain to reality; for example, when we say that a work of art is real, we mean we have a pervasive, unbroken belief in it.¹⁹

Aiken holds that it is quite natural in representational works of art that we should invoke beliefs we have about the natural world; moreover, the life values which relate so much to the emotional and affective aspects of art rely greatly on natural beliefs and cognitive processes, although they may not be formulated in terms of propositions. In the aesthetic experience, such beliefs may be aroused; but since there arises no need for action or choice, the beliefs thus serve an aesthetic function. The relevance of cultural beliefs is the most disputed issue. The question posed is whether we can appreciate the art of cultures other than our own since these may involve scientific, philosophical, or religious commitments we no longer share. Aiken argues that the proper question is not simply whether we can appreciate the works of other cultures, "but rather in what degree and on which levels of significance," and he acknowledges that levels of significance for appreciation vary with belief (p. 309).

The final view offers another compromise position. It suggests "that the critic should judge the truth of the artistic insights on the basis both of the artist's stand and of his own." This approach includes first "feeling" a work of art and second, "thinking" the work (Heyl, pp. 76-77). In the thinking stage, the critic may reject the artist's beliefs if they do not correspond to his own or if they lack coherence and credibility within the work's frame of reference (Stolnitz, p. 334).

All of the views on the relevance of belief in the aesthetic experience and critical judgment are important to an understanding of the possible ways in which a critic may approach the philosophical aspect of literature. When critics discuss this topic, they are most often dealing with the artistic insights or revelations which the work conveys. And while these are often referred to as truth and knowledge, these latter terms are not strictly applicable since artistic insights are not verifiable as are propositional truth and knowledge. Consequently, the whole issue of philosophy in literature, whether it is called the philosophic theme, the idea, the thought, the wisdom, or the truth of a given work, comes under the broad category of belief. And as such, we must consider the variety of ways in which the element of belief may affect critical response and judgment.

This chapter has presented a discussion of terminology pertinent to the theoretical background that contributed to my evolving a method of understanding and evaluating criticism of philosophy in literature. The first section dealt with the term philosophy as used and intended in critical discussions, with the major conclusion being that philosophical implications are present in a variety of topics explored by critics. The second section dealt with artistic truth as relates to the issue of philosophy, with the major conclusion being that the definition of artistic truth as artistic insight is suggestive of exactly the same topics that critics equate to philosophy in literature. The third section dealt with the term belief as designating the category most applicable to the so-called philosophy or artistic insights of literature and pointed up the possible influences of belief on aesthetic experience and judgment.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1. TERMINOLOGY

¹Eric Kahler, "What is Art?" in Problems in Aesthetics, ed. Morris Weitz (New York, 1959), pp. 167-168.

²"The Esthetic Judgment and the Ethical Judgment," in The Intent of the Critic, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (Princeton, 1941), pp. 82-83.

³René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 2nd ed. (New York, 1956), pp. 103-104.

⁴Countries of the Mind, 2nd ser. (London, 1931), p. 23.

⁵"Belief and the Suspension of Disbelief," in Literature and Belief: English Institute Essays 1957 (New York, 1958), p. 10.

⁶Wellek and Warren, p. 103.

⁷"Art, Language, and Truth," in The Problems of Aesthetics, eds. Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger (New York, 1965), p. 595.

⁸Jerome Stolnitz, Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art Criticism (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); John Hospers, Meaning and Truth in the Arts (Chapel Hill, 1946); Bernard Hayl, New Bearings in Esthetics and Art Criticism (New Haven, Conn., 1943). These theorists make a considerable contribution to my discussion of terminology. Subsequent references to them will appear in the text.

⁹Eliseo Vivas, Creation and Discovery: Essays in Criticism and Aesthetics (New York, 1955), p. 103; Monroe Beardsley, Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (New York, 1958), pp. 367-368.

¹⁰The question of depth meanings in art constitutes a major issue in aesthetics and is the source of variations and extensions of the usual sense of the terms truth and knowledge as discussed above. An important aesthetician, Theodore M. Greene, believes that truth claims involving depth meanings about the world of human experience and reality may be considered propositional in nature. Greene's position, which will be discussed subsequently, demands an extension of the definition of proposition.

¹¹M. H. Abrams, "Belief and the Suspension of Disbelief," Literature and Belief, p. 6.

¹²Aesthetics and Criticism (London, 1955), p. 93.

¹³Morris Weitz, Philosophy of the Arts (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 137. Quoting DeWitt Parker, The Principles of Aesthetics (New York, 1946), p. 32.

¹⁴Dorothy Walsh, "The Cognitive Content of Art," in The Problems of Aesthetics, eds. Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger, p. 610.

¹⁵Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York, 1966), p. 88.

¹⁶Theodore M. Greene, The Arts and the Art of Criticism (Princeton, 1940), p. 229.

¹⁷"The Aesthetic Relevance of Belief," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, IX (June, 1951), 306.

¹⁸"Preface," Literature and Belief, p. x.

¹⁹Aiken, p. 305.

CHAPTER 2

AESTHETIC THEORIES

The province of aesthetics is the elucidation of beauty or the quality that is the "distinguishing feature of works of art" and the propounding of the principles which underlie aesthetic judgments.¹ Insofar as the judgment of art ultimately derives from aesthetic assumptions, there is an important relationship between aesthetics and the practice of criticism. One should not expect, however, to find a precise relationship between the two disciplines, that is, to discover critics consciously and consistently performing their work on the basis of a set of definitions of art and criteria for judgment laid down by a particular aesthetic theory. That practice is rarely found. In fact, the lack of a precise relationship is viewed by Vivas as having disastrous results: " . . . criticism is for the most part incoherent when one probes below the surface, because critics are either indifferent to its critical foundations or militantly antagonistic to efforts to strengthen its foundations."² The incoherence may stem from factors other than the complete absence of a foundation in aesthetic theory. It may be due to an inconsistent adherence to a theory, to an irresponsible intermingling of theories, to reliance on a partial or oversimplified theoretical concept, or to an oversimplified interpretation of a theory. A major premise of the present study is that one can determine the critic's underlying aesthetic assumptions from

careful analysis of his criticism: "There can be no single judgment of practical criticism which does not involve doctrines of aesthetics" (Osborne, p. 26). Determining a critic's aesthetic rationale is the first step toward an understanding and evaluation of his commentary.

Aestheticians have elucidated most of the major aesthetic theories in an attempt "to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find a universal formula for it" (Osborne, p. 29); but numerous critics have also attempted to work out their own aesthetics, for example, Walter Pater, I. A. Richards, and Murray Krieger. In discussing major aesthetic theories, I will include theories derived from both the philosophy of aesthetics and from theoretical criticism. Obviously, some theories will be more complex or more thoroughly delineated than others; and some of the theories emphasize one of the arts, for example, literature, whereas others aim to encompass all the arts. My aim is to present the basic principles of the theories, and to clarify these, I will include at least one specific interpretation of each theory. It is important to remember, however, that the individual critic essentially adapts a basic aesthetic theory or theories to his purposes. Consequently, my discussion will indicate some of the inherent limitations and strengths of the different aesthetic rationales, but explicit evaluations will be made in the analyses of the Hardy criticism, that is, in the context of the critic's practical use of theories.

One other point about my classification of theories and use of labels merits attention. I call each of the major categories included in the discussion aesthetic theories as if they are all equal in representing total or complete systems on the nature of art, and I attempt

to discover in or at least infer from each some answers to several basic questions that relate to the issue of philosophy in literature. But a serious problem exists since not every theory has been elaborated to the extent of answering all questions relating to the function and value of art and to the relevance of philosophy or artistic truth to aesthetic appreciation and appraisal. Several of the theories are partial since "they refer to theories concerning the art object whereas others apply to theories of the creation of art or the appreciation of art." In other words, some of the theories merely apply "to different views about the various constituents of the aesthetic experience."³ Thus I am aware that issue may be taken with my classification of theories; however, I do show how the different theoretical categories possess similarities or how one theory may grow into another simply by means of an added refinement.

The five major theories to be explained are Imitationism, Hedonism, Expressionism, Transcendentalism, and Formalism-Organicism. Attention will be focused on how each theory accounts for the following concepts: (1) the nature and value of art, (2) the definition of artistic truth and its relevance to the philosophical aspect of art, (3) the criteria for aesthetic appraisal, and (4) the specific relevance of artistic truth and belief in criticism based on the theory.

Imitationism

It seems wise to initiate the explanation of aesthetic theories with the basic theory of Imitationism. So important is this theory to the history of Western aesthetics that Murray Krieger has noted: "One

could simplify the history of literary theory until our own time (but not altogether inaccurately) by characterizing it as the many paths that have finally led to imitationism."⁴ This historic emphasis on imitation allows us to distinguish two very general approaches to aesthetic theory and criticism. These are the extrinsic and intrinsic approaches to theory and criticism. The extrinsic approach assumes that the work of art has reference to something outside the art object and thus emphasizes the close relationship between the art object and the particular facet outside of it that is, broadly speaking, being imitated. The intrinsic approach finds the locus of the work of art to be within the art object and thus emphasizes interpretation and analysis of the art object itself.⁵ (This approach is opposite of imitationism, which essentially centers attention on some element outside of the art object.) The terms extrinsic and intrinsic are useful as one means of making gross distinctions between types of theories and modes of criticism deriving from them.

Imitationism includes any theory which assumes that art has reference to some facet outside the art object and that it should be judged against the norms of this external locus.⁶ The most important interpretation of Imitationism is that art imitates reality. In other words, so-called reality is seen as something outside the art object which it imitates and which provides the norms for aesthetic judgment.

In classical theory Plato, rather than Aristotle, developed most fully the basic definition of art as imitation of reality; his theory has been termed "simple imitation." In Plato's definition art is " . . . the attempt to copy reality with literal fidelity and to produce the illusion that your copy is reality."⁷ In addition to the

function of reproducing reality, another function of art is to give pleasure. Aristotle, fully accepting a doctrine current in his day, accounts for this function by explaining that man has an innate desire for imitation and derives pleasure from it. A final point about the imitation theory of classical antiquity is that it also emphasized the pragmatic function of art as evidenced in the criterion that art is ultimately judged by its effect in influencing men to good and profitable citizenship (Osborne, pp. 51-52).

In imitation theory, the "reality" that art imitates is a key term and must be defined. Plato's theory of "simple imitation" emphasizes "the faithful, literal duplication of the objects and events of ordinary experience."⁸ Reality, or from Plato's point of view, actuality, refers then to the physical objects and events of ordinary experience. But it was because of the fact that art imitates actuality, or the "sensible things, which are but the faint shadows of reality" that Plato condemned art. His theory has significant implications for the concept of truth in art. In "Art as Appearance" (The Republic), Plato argues that since art is an imitation of appearance, not reality, "the imitator . . . is a long way off the truth" Such imitations are "thrice removed from the truth, and could easily be made without any knowledge of the truth because they are appearances only and not reality." Art, therefore, according to Plato, possesses only "an inferior degree of truth."⁹ It is obvious that Plato's theory of art as simple imitation is set forth in order to be rejected. But it has been noted that although "simple imitation" of physical reality is a theory that has been endorsed by almost no philosophers, it can still be found today as an underlying assumption of certain critical

statements (Stolnitz, p. 115).

There are other varieties of Imitationism that define "reality" or the norm to be represented in terms, not merely of appearance, but in terms of essence. "Imitation of essences" has been called "the central and seminal concept of art throughout much of modern times" (Stolnitz, pp. 120-121). It will become clear, however, that the essence of reality may be conceived of as many things, even as simple appearance, and that the conception depends on the particular philosophy of reality that one endorses.

We may begin the discussion of essence imitation theory with Aristotle and neo-classical theorists. In Aristotelian theory art imitates essences or universals and does not merely copy particulars; art, then, presents a greater truth than the truth of particulars. Poetry is superior to history because poetry represents not the actual but the typical, that is, "hypothetical events as they might well happen."¹⁰ Neo-classical theorists similarly define essence of reality as "general nature." Dr. Johnson writes in Rasselas:

The business of the poet is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest. He is to exhibit in his portraits of nature such prominent and striking features as recall the original to every mind; and must neglect the minuter discriminations, which one may have remarked, and another have neglected, for these characteristics which are alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness.

(Osborne, p. 94)

The problem associated with essence imitation theory is that there are many beliefs about essential reality and these find their authority in various sources; obviously, there are differences of opinion as to which concepts give a valid account of essential

reality. In general, theorists have offered relatively few specific definitions beyond so-called typical, universal, or transcendental truth. It is quite common, however, for practical critics to set forth or imply specific concepts about life and reality which they deem essentially true and worthy of imitation in art. When a critic singles out a concept of reality which he considers true, worthwhile, and edifying and prescribes that art imitate this concept, we encounter a form of essence-imitation that may be called "imitation of the ideal."

Imitation of the ideal is one variety of essence theory that stresses not only the value and pleasure of imitation but also the function of art to imitate a true and worthy concept of essential reality. The theory possesses a strongly pragmatic quality in its position that art instructs by pleasing and that it cannot please unless it is moral, the morality being defined by the particular doctrine held up as the ideal to be imitated. According to general ideal imitation theory, the value of art and the criterion for judgment depend on how well the particular doctrine recommended (for example, Christianity, la belle nature, Marxism, or any belief designated as ideal) is represented in the work. The work may depict evil, as the particular system defines it; but the forces of virtue, subject to doctrinal definition, should always triumph (Stolnitz, pp. 128-129). A correlative criterion is that the art object succeeds if it instructs its audience in the sentiments and behaviors proper to the beliefs of their system. Ideal imitation theory offers precise criteria for artistic assessment: if one knows the ideal belief and the practices

supported by the belief, he simply judges by comparing the representation in the work of art to these externals. Moreover, the concept of artistic truth is readily defined: it is equated with the accurate expression of the doctrine viewed as the ideal.

It is important at this point to understand that the major distinction I make between ideal imitation and essence imitation is a matter of the emphasis of each. Ideal imitation theory is specifically aligned with a moral interest, an interest that must be largely defined in terms of the critic's beliefs. The scope of the doctrine and the extent to which the critic perceives it as embodying absolute truth may vary. Basic essence theory may be potentially aligned with other interests besides morality. For example, a critic may associate a concept of essential reality with the artist or with specific qualities in the work itself; that is, he may assign value to a certain concept of reality conveyed if, for example, it represents the sincere belief of the writer or if the nature of the work requires and integrates that particular concept. It appears to me that the strength of essence imitation theory increases to the extent that the critic can dissociate concepts of essentiality from single or narrow personal beliefs.

The theory of essence imitation (especially the variety called ideal imitation) contains numerous implications for the aspect of criticism explored in this thesis. When a critic intends to comment on the essential reality represented in a literary work, this is a subject that has philosophical implications; he thus enters the realm of dispute surrounding terms such as truth, knowledge, and belief about the nature of man and the universe. Because art does not deal

with these topics in terms of propositional truth, we must conclude that what the artist and critic are dealing with is belief. It is, then, important to consider how the critic's beliefs about essential reality may affect aesthetic judgment.

Before one can judge if the art object represents universal or essential reality, he must have knowledge or certain beliefs about universals or essences, and this information he will have acquired by other means than experiencing the work of art. He has several alternatives available to him for judging the representation of essences in the art object. He may judge on the basis of his prior knowledge and beliefs, in which case he may see value in a variety of beliefs, or he may set up one specific belief as the ideal to be represented. He may hold his own knowledge and beliefs in abeyance and judge the artistic insight into essential reality solely according to standards inherent in the work itself; in this procedure, he is concerned with the literary work as an independent entity whose aim and structure create its own standards. Finally, he may judge according to his own and the work's beliefs. It is easy to see how assessment of artistic excellence may be linked with each critic's personal beliefs about essential reality. And if the critic does not make clear the criteria for his assessment or the relevance of his own beliefs to it, one must carefully analyze the critical commentary to discover these factors.

The most important problem that arises in dealing with essence theory is that of the knowledge and beliefs that one brings to the aesthetic experience and against which he may judge the representation of essences in the art object. I have noted that there are numerous

concepts about the essential nature of man and reality. Technically, most of us arrive at our conceptual knowledge of these concepts by exposure to a particular cultural milieu and to various fields of inquiry or learning. Cultural concepts are so deeply rooted that one is almost unaware of them, yet they greatly influence ideas about man and reality. People also arrive at their differing views about the essential nature of man and reality via specific fields of study, for example, philosophy, theology, psychology, and economic, social, and political science. Furthermore, some views of essential reality may derive from a single aspect of a specific field of study. Consequently, it should be emphasized that when one asserts that art represents essentials or universals, he may have in mind a concept of essential reality that is based on his deeply-rooted cultural beliefs or on some specific field of knowledge or on a single aspect of the field, either scientific or speculative.

René Wellek and Austin Warren in Theory of Literature discuss the nature of the relationship between art and areas of knowledge that are often said to constitute part of the content of art, especially of literature.¹¹ The nature of this relationship is important to the understanding of the essence theory because of the critic's possible dependence on a specific bit of conceptual knowledge for his judgment of the work of art. For example, a critic might reject a work because it does not depict the "true" nature of man as based on principles of modern psychology; for him the work has little value if it cannot capture the essence of man's nature. Or a critic might reject a work if it does not present an adequate view of the social reality, for it fails to capture the essence of man as a social being; perhaps his

beliefs about social reality stem from social, economic, or political science. Or, finally, a critic might disparage a work of art because its philosophical underpinnings are vague, inconsistent, or foolish; once more the judgment appears based on the critic's knowledge of philosophical argument. It is important to note that in all of these hypothetical examples of aesthetic judgment, the criterion of some sort of "artistic truth" is invoked, and the work is found wanting in depiction of some aspect of the true essence or universal nature of man and reality.

What I wish to emphasize, finally, is that imitation of essential reality, which is set forth as the norm in a most important interpretation of imitation theory, is so broad a concept that potential definitions of it are practically limitless. It might be helpful simply to list a few of the possible definitions that one encounters in the history of literary criticism. They have been incorporated into critical dicta at various times:

- (1) Art should imitate general or typical "Nature."
- (2) Art should imitate observable particulars or scientific fact.
- (3) Art should imitate particulars as potentially embodying the macrocosm.
- (4) Art should imitate the truth of the great traditional philosophies or great traditional art works.
- (5) Art should imitate the essential truth of Christianity.
- (6) Art should imitate the archetypal truth of man's cumulative cultural history.
- (7) Art should imitate the truth of man's existential chaos.

In summary, the essence theory pronounces the function of art to be the imitation of the essential nature of reality; the value of art depends on the "true" and accurate representation of these essentials. The complexity of making aesthetic judgments on the basis of essence theory is apparent. There are numerous concepts about the essence of

man's nature and of the universe. It is possible for a critic to accept a variety of interpretations and apply these flexibly in his analysis and judgment of art. But it is also possible for a critic to adopt a single concept about the nature of reality, set this up as the ideal on the basis of its absolute truth and morality, and equate its representation to artistic excellence. Another complicating factor is that critics do not always explicitly acknowledge their criteria of excellence or the relevance of personal beliefs to them. The nature of essence theory is such that the element of belief may potentially play a large part in aesthetic judgment.

An elaborate theory of art that has its foundation in essence theory has been propounded by Theodore M. Greene, whose vision of the nature of essential reality may be labeled rationalist-traditionalist. Analysis of Greene's theory should elucidate the most important aspects of essence theory and illustrate the implications for practical criticism. Greene places great importance on the close resemblance of the artist to the scientist, philosopher, moralist, and theologian. This resemblance stems from the preoccupation of art "with what man accepts as real."¹² The only difference between the artist and the scientist, philosopher, moralist, or theologian is that the artist has a distinctive approach and goal: he is concerned with both the individuality and specificity of reality, and with its universal implications. But as for the subject matter of art, it is not at all distinctive: "The artist is preoccupied with the same world of objective existence and the same human experiences which concern the other cognitive disciplines" (p. 235). The significant points in

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Greene's theory are that the universal or essential nature of reality that art deals with is the same as that studied by the cognitive disciplines, and that the knowledge offered by the cognitive disciplines and by art is indeed similar.

Greene is known as one of the strongest proponents of the proposition theory of aesthetics, which holds that even non-verbal art objects are or contain propositions, that is, statements capable of being true or false. In Greene's words, "a work of art, defined as a proposition or set of propositions, expressed in a distinctive communicatory medium may be as true or false as a scientifically expressed proposition . . . , with the terms [true and false] being used in a manner conformable to common usage" (pp. 424-425). He rejects the notion that propositions are expressed only in and through a conceptual medium and advocates the idea "that certain aspects of reality can be apprehended and expressed most adequately and precisely in and through the artistic media, and that what is thus apprehended and expressed cannot be translated into a conceptual medium without vital loss" (p. 427). Given this approach, the subject matter of art will be highly significant. Greene believes that art must contain some subject matter because art arises "from the artist's desire to express and communicate to his fellows some pervasive human emotion, some insight felt by him to have a wider relevancy, some interpretation of reality other than the work of art itself in all its specificity" (p. 231).

Greene elaborates on the exact relationship between the artist's presentation of reality and the concept of artistic truth; and he concludes the following: that the truth of art is a genuine truth in

the sense that it may be verified, that the artist bears the responsibility of presenting a true vision of reality, and that the truth of art resides not in the form or medium but in the content. The artist must comprehend his subject matter honestly and intelligently; if his evaluations are to be relevant, the artist must genuinely understand man's normative experiences and apprehend and interpret human values. Thus the content, as defined above, constitutes the locus of artistic truth (pp. 443-444). And, one should note, that content derives from the same world of objective existence that other modes of cognition are concerned with.

The essence theory of Greene possesses numerous implications for criticism that have to do with the philosophical aspects of literature, the significance and truth of artistic content, and their relevance to the final aesthetic assessment. He offers three specific exhortations to critics. First, the critic has the responsibility to decide if the artist has explored and treated his subject matter with as much depth and breadth of vision as his point of view requires, and to point out any deficiencies in this area (p. 455). In other words, the critic can require of the artist "that he explore some major phase of reality and human experience from some relatively inclusive point of view, and that this exploration be pursued with real imaginative power" (p. 471). The second point for the critic to remember is that an historical survey of the greatest art reveals that the conveyance of the breadth and depth of a true experience of reality has been achieved by the artist's drawing on the "traditional philosophies of life, adding to them new insights which other men could share, and giving them new interpretation which others could find enlightening and ennobling" (p. 474).

Thus if a work of art expresses a profound and inclusive view of some aspect of reality as based on one or more of the great traditional philosophies of the world, then the work possesses "artistic greatness." The third requirement of the critic deals with the final evaluation of the art object: the critic must not ignore the element of "artistic greatness" which, as explained above, depends mainly on content, in favor of other so-called "aesthetic" criteria (p. 477).

In summary, Greene's imitationist position involves four major points: (1) the artist deals with the same objective reality as the other cognitive disciplines; (2) art is capable of being true or false, in the ordinary sense of being verifiable by correspondence to reality; (3) the truth of the artistic vision may be judged by its breadth and depth and by its foundation on one of the great traditional philosophies; and (4) the truth of its vision, which is equated with artistic greatness, is the most important criterion for aesthetic assessment. One may characterize Greene's interpretation of essential reality as rationalist-traditionalist; that is, he finds support for it in the cognitive disciplines and traditional philosophies. And it is mainly this interpretation that he expects literature to represent.

This section has dealt with Imitationism, with extensive attention being given to essence imitation theory and the variety of it that may be called ideal imitation. This particular interpretation of Imitationism has great relevance to an exploration of the critical treatment of philosophy in literature, since critical discussions of the philosophical element are likely to be in context of the depth meanings or insights expressed about the nature of reality. The discussion

emphasized the numerous possible interpretations of essential reality and the problems stemming from evaluation of art on such a basis. The major limitation of the theory is due to the possible excessive influence of the critic's beliefs on aesthetic judgment with the result being a diversity of irreconcilable critical opinion. The extent to which imitationist critics are able to avoid this influence must be determined by analysis of the individual criticism.

Hedonism

Hedonism in aesthetic theory has a long history; in fact, we have already touched on the pleasure principle in the foregoing discussion of imitation theories. The first principle of the hedonist position is that the function of art is to give pleasure, which is usually equated with a positive emotional reaction. For example, Longinus maintains that poetry should arouse passions and feelings and delight the soul, and Dryden insists that poetry should act on the soul and passions while it also performs its mimetic function. A definition of aesthetic pleasure that was widely accepted by theorists from Winckelmann to Ruskin equates the pleasure of art to a state of calm and placid mental repose in which the mind is elevated and the soul refreshed. This narrow view of aesthetic pleasure is no longer held by modern theorists of Hedonism, who include under the pleasure principle the stimulating, arresting, or even disturbing qualities of great art; moreover, some theorists have discriminated aesthetic pleasure as distinct from pleasures in general. For example, Vernon Lee and C. J. Ducasse believe that pleasure in the beautiful derives from the pure

contemplation of an object without regard for its utility, for its capacity to satisfy desires, or for its intellectual appeal; yet the exact nature of this form of pleasure as pure contemplation remains so unclear that certain critics have suggested that it should not be labeled pleasure at all. Another concept of the nature of aesthetic pleasure emphasizes the stable, long-lasting, or ever-renewing quality of the delight we take in great art. According to the first principle of Hedonism, then, the function of art is to please, yet we must bear in mind that there is a variety of definitions of aesthetic pleasure (Osborne, pp. 112-124).

The second principle of Hedonism is that the value of art derives from its capacity to please; but it is necessary to explore the exact nature of the source of human values according to the hedonist position before we can understand the specific manifestations of artistic values. In the mechanistic view of the universe, on which hedonist aesthetic theory is based, "value cannot plausibly be located outside of individuals within whom pleasures and pains generate" (Pepper, p. 36). According to the mechanistic world hypothesis, the only reality is that which is located in physical space-time. Physical atomism is basic to this hypothesis, and consequently " . . . the universe is thus conceived as a huge aggregation or system of essentially separate individuals" (Pepper, p. 37). Since man as a separate and autonomous individual can know only his own responses, the locus of human values must be placed within each individual. Pleasure aesthetics, therefore, as based on the mechanistic view of the universe, finds the value of art to reside in human consciousness (Pepper, pp. 39-40). Ultimately, then, the value of art will be determined by each individual according

to his analysis of the pleasure it affords him and according to his definition of pleasure. We may further note that there are two aspects of value that the individual can determine: first the qualitative aspect, which relates to the nature of the immediate pleasure or displeasure the art object arouses; and second, the quantitative aspect, which relates to the amount and intensity of pleasure produced (Pepper, p. 45). Because the concept of value is so individualistic in Hedonism, it is not possible to discuss in any general way the issues of artistic truth, aesthetic criteria, and types of criticism deriving from the basic theory; instead it will be necessary to deal with individual varieties of Hedonism and to discuss these issues as they might arise for each specific theory.

Two broad categories of hedonistic theory will be considered: those stressing emotionalism and those stressing contemplation. In the former category will appear the ideas of Pater and Santayana; in the latter, the ideas of Ducasse, Bullough, Bell, and Fry.

Walter Pater offers a thoroughly emotionalist theory of beauty and criticism. For Pater, beauty is relative, just as are all other qualities of human experience. Beautiful objects are those possessing the power of producing "pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind."¹³ As we experience these unique impressions in increasing depth and variety, our education becomes complete. The value of art is that it can give a quickened sense of life in that it offers us experience for its own sake, and this attribute is desirable in an unstable world of fleeting impressions. Art allows us, therefore, a kind of exquisite passion, "a quickened, multiplied consciousness" akin to wisdom.¹⁴

The critic's task, according to Pater, is not to attempt to define beauty abstractly, but rather to define it in the most concrete terms, that is, in relation to a given object and himself. The critic first has "to know his own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly." He must determine what effect the object has on him, whether it gives pleasure and of what sort, and whether it modifies his nature. These are the issues that the critic deals with, and they relate strictly to himself. To experience the many varieties of beauty, the critic must possess "a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects." If he experiences the artistic impressions strongly and can discriminate and analyze them, he has succeeded in the critical task. He has no reason to concern himself with the abstract issue of beauty or its relation to truth or experience; these latter issues are metaphysical and of no interest to the aesthetic critic (Pater, "Criticism and Personality," pp. 124-125).

From Pater's aesthetic theory derives an extreme form of impressionist criticism: the individual impression is all that matters; the critic completes his task when he has analyzed his impression and distinguished the quality in the art object that produced the impression of beauty or pleasure for himself; validation of aesthetic assessment is impossible; and artistic truth does not enter into the critical process.

George Santayana is considered one of the most important of the modern proponents of the hedonist aesthetic. Santayana approaches the definition of beauty by calling it a species of value, any further

understanding of which must be gained by exploring the nature of value. Values have no existence apart from consciousness; they exist only when a sentient being shows awareness of something to the extent of assigning its worth. In the assigning of values, the aspect of consciousness that operates is not intellectual or rational but is specifically emotional.¹⁵ For Santayana, values "spring from the immediate and inexplicable reaction of vital impulse, and from the irrational part of our nature."¹⁶

Aware of the traditional rivalry between art and other fields of inquiry, Santayana elaborates on the nature and value of art by distinguishing it from science. The former provides entertainment by means of stimulation of the imagination and senses, whereas the latter provides truthful information. Truth, which Santayana feels is the province of science, may enter into art only insofar as it subserves the demand for entertainment (Singer, p. 39). (Entertainment is Santayana's term, for example: "Art is the response to the demand for entertainment, for the stimulation of our senses and imagination, and truth enters into it only as it subserves these ends" [Santayana, p. 22].) Santayana deprecates the past practice of using reproduction of fact and reality as a sole standard of aesthetic judgment; this quality may be aesthetically good but it is not all-sufficient, especially since fact and reality may not always be artistically pleasing or effective. Nonetheless, correctness of copy, that is, representation of fact and reality is "almost indispensable, because its absence would cause a disappointment and dissatisfaction incompatible with enjoyment" (Santayana, pp. 20-21).

Artistic truth, then, for Santayana involves a correspondence to reality, the same verifiable reality that science deals with; truth may be artistically important to the extent that it subserves the end of pleasure. Santayana believes that truth is especially relevant to the art of literature because the structure of language is a "mirror of the structure of the world as presented to the intelligence." As a result of this fact, "language has its function of expressing experience with exactness, and the poet--to whom language is an instrument of art--has to employ it also with a constant reference to meaning and veracity" (Santayana, pp. 168-169).

In hedonist aesthetics, one must ultimately consider the issue of unpleasant truths in a work of art. Santayana first notes that if the matter or experience of the work is unpleasant, the artistry must be all the more powerful and arresting in order to compensate for the element of displeasure. But there can be other compensations for unpleasantness in art, and one of these is our deep interest in truth: "However unpleasant truth may prove, we long to know it We covet truth, and to attain it, amid all accidents, is a supreme satisfaction" (Santayana, p. 230).

The fact that unpleasant truth need not distract from the pleasure art affords stems from Santayana's concept of aesthetic elements. He distinguishes three elements: materials, which pertain to the sensuous, e.g., sights and sounds; form, which is the "pattern or arrangement of materials that molds them into something more than primitive sensuous elements"; and expression, which has to do with the cognitive aspect of experience, with the character of objects as

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derived from interpretation, judgment, reminiscence, or even casual revery (Singer, pp. 133-141). It is the element of expression that artistic truth relates to, and unpleasant truths may be aesthetic "insofar as they appear in enjoyable presentation and through the mediation of formal and material elements that are themselves aesthetic." One may summarize by saying that unpleasant truth may cause sadness, but the vehicle of it offers delight (Singer, p. 143).

The next point for discussion is the relevance of artistic truth in critical appraisal. Santayana remarked in late life that he felt he had insisted too much in his early works on the relevance of fact to poetry. He appears to equate fact with a truthful understanding of the world. Specifically, this aspect of his theory emphasizes the function of expression (as one aesthetic element) to interpret our immediate experience and "to formulate an ontology or metaphysics that will account for experience itself." He felt that philosophical poetry that would investigate truth or reason upon it was possible and desirable. Since the vision of philosophy may be poetic and imaginative, philosophical poetry could provide not information but a contemplative vision or insight into universal order, that is, "insights of ultimate truth" (Singer, pp. 172-173). Thus insofar as philosophy and truth are integral to the element of expression in art, the critic must consider these cognitive components in his final aesthetic appraisal. The work of art possesses a variety of relations, and the critic cannot limit his judgment merely to one or another. In regard to the possibility of universality of aesthetic application and judgment, Santayana feels it would be dogmatic to seek aesthetic agreement.

The closest we can come to correct judgment is to rely on "the degree and kind of satisfaction undergone by a discriminating critic" (Singer, p. 195).

In summary, Santayana's emotionalist aesthetic consists of the following principles: the nature and value of art reside in its ability to provide entertainment by means of stimulating the imagination and senses; the value of art inheres in the human consciousness, specifically the emotional consciousness, and is manifested as pleasure; artistic truth may be a component of art but is subservient to the basic function of entertainment; artistic truth as an expressive element must be considered in aesthetic evaluation; and universality of aesthetic evaluation is neither possible nor desirable.

Certain contemporary aesthetic theories have added refinements to the basic hedonist position. Some of the ideas to be considered belong to theorists who themselves support Hedonism, whereas others come from theorists who could be placed into different aesthetic categories. One of the most important recent contributions is a normative theory on the nature of aesthetic appreciation, normative in the sense that it prescribes the proper attitude toward art as contemplation. Contemplation is usually seen as an aesthetic emotion and as a type of pleasure, thus its association with Hedonism.

C. J. Ducasse believes that art is essentially the embodiment of emotions and that we should therefore attend to these emotions by means of contemplation, which he defines as a savoring of the aesthetic experience. If one is to give rein to the emotions aroused and savor the experience itself, he must bypass classification or interpretation,

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for example, in favor of "'listening' for the feeling impact--for the emotional reverberations--of the object attended to." There are, however, certain elements in art that make achievement of this pleasurable yet contemplative attitude difficult. Ugliness, the disgusting, and the demonic are among these elements since they give rise to action rather than to contemplation.¹⁷ Ducasse's view of contemplation appears to be more a form of mild emotional indulgence somewhat reminiscent of Pater's approach than a form of pure contemplation.

Edward Bullough presents a theory of contemplation which supports objectivity in the aesthetic experience. In Bullough's theory, objective contemplation is the unique pleasure that one derives from art. A disinterested, non-moral, detached, and contemplative attitude which gives rise to "psychical distance" is necessary for proper appreciation. Bullough believes, however, that appreciation also depends on participation in the emotions presented by the art object; so indulgence in emotion is legitimate up to the point that psychical distance begins to disappear (Weitz, p. 181). Like Ducasse, Bullough offers a somewhat limited theory of contemplation.

The definition of aesthetic contemplation suggested by Clive Bell and Roger Fry straddles the hedonist-formalist boundary. Yet because it involves what may be called unique aesthetic emotion, which is the source of the pleasure that art gives, we will consider it at this point. The distinguishing, essential feature of art that initiates the aesthetic emotion is significant form (Weitz, p. 23). Significant form results when the artist captures a vision of reality and renders it into a formal art object (Weitz, p. 7). The peculiar aesthetic

emotion experienced "is a clue to the presence of significant form" (Weitz, p. 3). It is a sort of symptom or indicator to be used as a gauge measuring the degree of beauty possessed by the art object. But the concept of significant form that gives rise to the aesthetic emotion remains a somewhat indefinable, mysterious property of the object. Nonetheless, the peculiar aesthetic emotion serves to notify us when we are in the presence of significant form (Osborne, p. 131).

Contemplation of the art object, according to Bell and Fry, is the proper aesthetic attitude, and it means pure appreciation. True contemplation focuses attention on the significant form of the work of art; it involves transcendence of our ordinary experiences and emotions; it is independent of any factual knowledge; it results in an "exalted, rapturous, nonpractical, disinterested, pleasurable, contemplative experience" (Weitz, p. 7). Bell and Fry have labeled this unique experience that the spectator undergoes as a result of the pure contemplation of art the aesthetic emotion. This is but one aspect of their formalist aesthetic, yet it links them to hedonist theory to the extent that emotion and pleasure are basic to the aesthetic experience. But because both the accompanying emotion and pleasure are so uniquely defined, some theorists believe this approach to the art object essentially abandons the hedonistic criterion (Osborne, p. 123).

Certain elements of Hedonism have been extremely pervasive in practical criticism, and whenever critics appeal in their writings to a criterion of pleasure, they are relying to some extent on a hedonist aesthetic. In summary, Hedonism encompasses the following principles:

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the function of art is to please, either by arousing positive or pleasant emotions, by stimulating sensations or sentiments, or by providing a unique aesthetic emotion; the value of art resides in this capacity, but the assignment of value rests exclusively with the individual, though some hedonists believe that a certain amount of agreement on aesthetic judgment is possible; impressionistic criticism necessarily results from Hedonism; artistic truth is not usually a major factor in the assessment of value, though truth may be a contributory element to the overall pleasure that the art object provides if the individual so determines.

There is in Hedonism, as in Imitationism, a highly individualistic component that may come to influence a critic's interpretation of the philosophical aspect of literature. Because the individual critic subscribing to the hedonist aesthetic determines for himself what exactly constitutes his pleasure in art, there are numerous attitudes that he may take toward the philosophical aspect of a literary work. He will regard it with reference to its power to produce pleasurable sensations or emotions, but these factors are subject to individual interpretation. For example, one critic may require that art evoke a wide range of emotional response; another may favor a specific type of emotion. And in relation to the range of emotion designated, the critic may also link pleasure to certain preferred attitudes toward the philosophical implications of literary works. Thus the major limitation of the hedonist theory would appear to be the latitude a critic is allowed in defining the nature of aesthetic pleasure and excellence.

Expressionism

The general idea of art as "a mode of expression, as the language of feeling and emotion" is widespread and has a history that goes back as far as the Renaissance (Osborne, p. 142). In at least one aspect, Expressionism resembles Hedonism: both theories stress the significance of emotion in the appreciation of art; but the two theories distinguish the function that the emotions serve. In hedonistic theory, the aesthetic experience involves the arousal of emotion, while in expressionistic theory, it is the communication of emotion from artist to audience that constitutes the core of aesthetic experience. Another difference is that Hedonism posits no specific theory of artistic creation; the theory of Expressionism, on the other hand, encompasses both the origins and the effects of art.

There are three basic definitions of expression as the term applies to aesthetic theory. The first meaning is that of self-expression. Self-expression is usually associated with Romantic theory; two of the related components include an intrinsic interest in the personality and genius of the artist and the communication of his unique emotional experiences, wisdom, or inspired insight. Expression as such is but one element in a basically transcendental theory of art (Osborne, p. 144; Stolnitz, pp. 161-162). The second meaning is expression of "an emotion, a mood or an emotional situation." This form of expression is quite common in mimetic art of all ages. In appreciating art of this nature, the audience becomes aware of, observes, and may be moved by the emotion embodied in the art object (Osborne, p. 145). It is the third sense of expression that relates

to modern Expressionism; in this usage the art object is said to be a symbol of the artist's particular state of mind or emotion, and the symbol serves to communicate to the percipient and to create for him the same state of mind or emotion that the artist experienced (Osborne, p. 146; Stolnitz, p. 167). The following discussion deals with three proponents of modern Expressionism: Tolstoy, R. G. Collingwood, and I. A. Richards.

Tolstoy advocates a basically expressionist theory of art. The function and value of art lie in its power to communicate the artist's emotions and to afford emotional indulgence for the spectators, that is, to allow them to share the emotions. The first criterion of artistic judgment is based on the success of the communication, which determines the success of the work's infectiousness. The second criterion is based on the subject matter, which Tolstoy specifically prescribes. Because of the great power of art to infect its spectators, Tolstoy sees the aesthetic experience serving as a means for uniting men in a religious humanitarianism. He emphasizes that the artistic infectiousness must be of the proper kind--the kind that moves men toward unity and blessedness. The subject matter must include humanitarian feelings and move the spectators to benevolence (Weitz, pp. 172-173).

Tolstoy offers no specific views on artistic truth and its relevance to aesthetic evaluation. Although sincerity on the part of the artist is necessary because it serves to increase the degree of infectiousness, he does not equate the quality of sincerity with truth. One may, however, link Tolstoy's emphasis on religious subject matter

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with the concept of artistic truth as defined in ideal-imitation theory. He states that the truly Christian spirit is the "true ideal of our times," and that art tends toward it, although there is still much decadent art that ignores this ideal. According to Tolstoy, this religious perception "already unconsciously directs the life of man," and once it is consciously acknowledged, art will get on with its humanizing function.¹⁸ One discovers in these statements the theory of ideal-imitation in which artistic truth is equivalent to the representation of some ideal doctrine about the nature of reality. We may view Tolstoy's ideal doctrine of Christian humanism as the true doctrine to be communicated, with successful communication of it being a criterion of artistic success, but Tolstoy does not himself make this equation. It is impossible to identify any formal criteria for evaluating artistic success in Tolstoy's theory; in fact, he feels there is no need for formal critical evaluation: art is good art merely if it transmits itself to the people. The people will recognize immediately what good art is, and it will influence their behavior and sentiments; it is not for the expert critic to evaluate art (Tolstoy, p. 133).

R. G. Collingwood believes it a commonplace to define art in terms of expression. Expression is the essence of art; specifically, art is the expression of emotion. The nature and function of art are closely related to its origin. The artist experiences an emotion which he wishes to know and express, because to express it is to come to know it himself. Moreover, in his desire to express it, he wishes not to arouse his audience but to make them understand how he feels; he makes his emotions clear to the audience just as he does so for

himself. The function of art should not be construed as the description of emotion; description generalizes, whereas true expression individualizes, and art should express a certain emotion not a general one. Finally, there can be no limitation on the emotions art may express; art expresses whatever is expressible.¹⁹

If it is a commonplace to say that the nature of art is expression, then it is just as much a commonplace to say that the value of art resides in its expressive nature and effects. Expressionism affects both the artist and the audience: it enables the artist to solve the problem of expressing his particular emotion, and it enables the audience not only to understand the artist's emotion but to express their own emotion as well. In other words, the audience experience the same emotions as the artist; but the audience do not express them until the artist shows them how via the art object (pp. 117-118). The value of art, then, lies in its capacity to produce "sensuous-emotional or psychical experiences which, when raised from impressions to ideas by the activity of the spectator's consciousness, are transmuted into a total imaginative experience identical" with the artist's experience. This is a rich, highly organized experience for the percipient, for he becomes creator as well as spectator, since the art object affords him the means of expression (p. 308).

Collingwood defines artistic truth in relation to his concept of the imagination. The imagination as it manifests itself in artistic creation is concerned neither with make-believe nor with possible reality. The imaginative activity that results in art evolves from necessity. The work of art exists to express a given emotion; the

expression of that given emotion necessitates the work of art, for only it can express the emotion. Collingwood explains the exact nature of artistic truth as follows:

If what an artist says on a given occasion is the only thing which on that occasion he can say; and if the generative act which produces that utterance is an act of consciousness, and hence an act of thought; it follows that this utterance, so far from being indifferent to the distinction between truth and falsehood, is necessarily an attempt to state the truth. So far as the utterance is a good work of art, it is true utterance; its artistic merit and its truth are the same things.

(p. 287)

To justify this account of artistic truth, Collingwood distinguishes two forms of thought: intellect and consciousness. Since intellect is "concerned with the relations between things, . . . its truth is a peculiar kind of truth, namely a relational truth," and we apprehend it by arguing or inferring (p. 287). Consciousness, on the other hand, is the level of experience at which "crude sensation" is converted into imagination; "it is a level of thought which is not yet intellect." The truth that consciousness gives is truthfulness about one's emotions: "A true consciousness is the confession to ourselves of our feelings" (p. 216). Collingwood emphasizes that art is essentially the pursuit of truth, not the truth of relations but the truth of individual fact. The self-contained individualities that art discovers exist for their concrete individuality and not for the sake of any abstractions that the intellect may apprehend from them (p. 288).

Collingwood believes that since art expresses the individual, art is therefore "knowledge of the individual" (p. 289). Art expresses knowledge of individual situations, and for ourselves as percipients, the situation becomes our situation, and we are conscious only of our

involvement in it. The artist too gains knowledge: he comes to know his own emotion, he comes to know the world of language, which is the medium of all art, and he comes to know the new world that he creates. According to Collingwood, the aesthetic experience remains "a knowing of oneself and of one's world, these two knowns and knowings being not yet distinguished, so that the self is expressed in the world, the world consisting of language whose meaning is that emotional experience which constitutes the self, and the self consisting of emotions which are known only as expressed in the language which is the world" (p. 292).

The final issue that relates to artistic truth and knowledge in aesthetic experience is that of so-called intellectual subject matter. Collingwood states that art works of a certain kind may contain intellectual subject matter because they are expressing emotions of a certain kind, that is, "emotions that can arise only as the emotional charges upon intellectual activities" (p. 293). Intellectual emotions are perhaps among the most important emotions that art expresses, since man's emotions, to a great extent, spring from intellectual experiences and apprehensions. The artist expresses human experience as thought fused into emotion; he expresses how it feels to think in a certain way. Collingwood views the philosophical poet as one who holds certain ideas and who expresses how it feels to possess such ideas. Philosophical poetry, then, expresses "the intellectual emotion attendant upon thinking in a certain way" (p. 297).

We may now consider what bearing Collingwood's ideas on artistic truth, knowledge, and intellectual subject matter have on aesthetic

assessment. For Collingwood, one basic premise covers all issues involved in judging art: "The definition of any given kind of thing is also the definition of a good thing of that kind: for a thing that is good in its kind is only a thing which possesses the attributes of that kind" (p. 280). The artist in trying to express a given emotion succeeds if he expresses it and fails if he expresses it badly. The artist will know whether or not he expresses the emotion, since to express it is to become conscious of it. A sincere, true, uncorrupt consciousness on the part of the artist leads to success. Failure to become conscious of an emotion and thus express it is due to a false or corrupt consciousness. The corrupt consciousness disowns its feelings because the idea into which feelings are converted proves alarming (p. 217). But corruptions of consciousness are not total and final; the artist can compare his successes and failures, and this comparison leads him to the criteria for true expression. Now we may summarize the relationship of aesthetic assessment to truth and knowledge: one does not judge art on the basis of these specific qualities; the qualities will automatically be present if expression is successful. A consciousness that works successfully in expression of emotion does provide truth and knowledge and facts for the intellect, but only the truthful consciousness gives this because only it gives art proper: "corruption of the consciousness is the same thing as bad art" (pp. 284-285).

The critic as audience will judge the work of art according to the same criteria the artist uses. That is, the successful work will enable the critic to have the same emotional experience as the artist;

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it will thus enable him to give truthful expression to the attendant emotion; he must then ultimately assess the sincerity of the artist's and of his own expression of the emotion. The artist in a sense utters his own secrets, and if they are true, they are the secrets of the audience as well, who automatically recognize them as such.

Collingwood's criterion for aesthetic evaluation is simply a generalization based on his definition of art. The inherent limitation of his theory is evident. To determine the genuineness of a work of art on the basis of exact duplication of the audience's and artist's expression of emotion is a difficult task. For such a judgment, the critic must rely on inferences and guesses about the artist's emotion and on purely subjective impressions as to the nature of his own emotion.

I. A. Richards endorses certain expressionist concepts in his theory of literature. In Richards' view, the basic function of literature is "to excite valuable attitudes and emotions in the reader." As the attitudes and emotions are aroused in the reader, they recreate the author's attitudes and emotions. To be more specific, Richards believes that "a satisfactory work of imaginative literature represents a kind of psychological adjustment in the author which is valuable for personality, and that the reader, if he knows how to read properly, can have this adjustment communicated to him by reading the work."²⁰ This concept of literature as a means of communicating emotional experiences or attitudes from one man to another is similar to Collingwood's theory of the nature of art.

The value of literature, according to Richards, lies in its function of mediating actual experience and in the nature of the experience mediated. Although much of Richard's theory emphasizes the effect which poetry has on the reader, he assumes that the desired effect is for the reader to recreate the poet's experience. For example, in Science and Poetry (1926), Richards considers why the poet selects the precise words which he uses in a given poem and notes:

We can see still more clearly that thought is not the prime factor if we consider for a moment not the experience of the reader but that of the poet. Why does the poet use these words and no others? Not because they stand for a series of thoughts which in themselves are what he is concerned to communicate. It is never what a poem says which matters, but what it is. The poet is not writing as a scientist. He uses these words because the interests which the situation calls into play combine to bring them, just in this form, into his consciousness as a means of ordering, controlling, and consolidating the whole experience. The experience itself, the tide of impulses sweeping through the mind, is the source and the sanction of the words. They represent this experience itself, not any set of perceptions or reflections, though often to a reader who approaches the poem wrongly they will seem to be only a series of remarks about other things. But to a suitable reader the words--if they actually spring from experience and are not due to verbal habits, to the desire to be effective, to factitious excogitation, to imitation, to irrelevant contrivances, or to any other of the failings which prevent most people from writing poetry--the words will reproduce in his mind a similar play of interests putting him for the while into a similar situation and leading to the same response.²¹

In emphasizing the nature of the experience mediated, Richards offers a more concrete standard of aesthetic judgment than Collingwood. For evaluating the communicated experience, Richards sets up a specific ethical standard: "'What is good or valuable is . . . the exercise of impulses and the satisfaction of their appetencies.'" That which is valuable "'will satisfy an appetency without involving the frustration

of some equal or more important appetency.'" Art works of the greatest value are "'those which involve the widest and most comprehensive co-ordination of activities and the least curtailment, conflict, starvation and restriction'" (Osborne, pp. 148-149). Art is therefore valuable in making available an experience that allows for width and breadth of stimulation and expression of a range of impulses, all stabilized, however, by the organization and order of art.²²

The term which Richards uses to denote the process of aesthetic experiencing, that is, the experiencing of Beauty, is Synthaesthesia. This experience moves us beyond the stage of coming in contact "with the personality of the artist." He explains the process as follows:

As descriptive of an aesthetic state in which impulses are experienced together, the word Synthaesthesia . . . covers both equilibrium and harmony As we realise beauty we become more fully ourselves the more our impulses are engaged Our interest is not canalised in one direction rather than another. It becomes ready instead to take any direction we choose. This is the explanation of that detachment so often mentioned in artistic experience. We become impersonal or disinterested.²³

According to Richards, the aesthetic experience has an educative value not only because it allows us to establish "relations with personalities not otherwise accessible" but also because the attitude of disinterestedness allows our individuality to become "differentiated or isolated from the individualities of things around us."²⁴ Finally, the great value that attaches to the quality of equilibrium in aesthetic experience is "the fact that it brings into play all our faculties"; in other words, "the ultimate value of equilibrium is that it is better to be fully than partially alive."²⁵

Richards acknowledges that the experience which art affords is apt to make us feel that we have achieved knowledge, insight, or revelation; and while he seems sympathetic to Revelation Doctrines of aesthetics, he rejects the terminology used in these doctrines to describe the aesthetic experience. In Richard's own terminology, art brings into play "more of our personality," exposes "more facets of the mind," and allows us to be affected by "more aspects of things" than is possible in "experiences of a more defined emotion." And because of this intense responsiveness, we feel that we are seeing all around things, seeing "them as they really are";²⁶ this is the sort of language man uses to describe the aesthetic experience because he wants to convey the great value of such states of feeling. Nonetheless, Richards argues, one should not confuse "the incitement of an attitude" with "a statement of fact," the latter being the definition we must keep for the word knowledge.²⁷

Richards is widely known for his explanation of the relationship of truth to art. The basic premise of his position is that poetry does not deal with truth. The truth or falsity of any poetic statement is an irrelevant issue. Richards distinguishes between scientific statement, "where truth is ultimately a matter of verification as this is understood in the laboratory" and pseudo-statement or "emotional utterance, where 'truth' is primarily acceptability by some attitude, and more remotely is the acceptability of this attitude itself"²⁸ Poetry may thus make pseudo-statements, but it does not make scientific statements. The acceptance given the pseudo-statements of poetry depends on the way the pseudo-statements affect our feelings

and attitudes, but such acceptance must not be equated with the kind of belief we accord to verified scientific statements; nor is this latter kind of belief necessary for the arousal of attitudes, which is the function of literature.²⁹

Given Richards' views on the function and value of literature and the relevance of truth and belief to literature, we may now ask what the critic's function is. Is it ever possible that actual belief is necessary for full and imaginative realization in the aesthetic experience? To answer the latter question, Richards distinguishes between intellectual belief and emotional belief. Intellectual belief is concerned with bringing all our ideas into an ordered system as logical and as perfect as possible; most poetry has no connection with intellectual belief. Emotional belief is the acceptance or use of an idea because it suits "interests, desires, feelings, attitudes, tendencies, and what not";³⁰ emotional belief is what we either accord or deny to poetry. And the question of intellectual belief should not arise as long as we are reading well.³¹ Now we may answer the first question posed: what is the critic's function? The critic is to assess the success with which the writer communicates his emotional experience and the value of the communicated experience. The first task, the "technical" part of criticism, demands description of features of the art object through which mediation takes place; the second task, the "critical" part, deals with evaluation of the mediated experience according to Richards' theory of the satisfaction of impulses and appetencies (Osborne, p. 149). Richards accepts only one definition of truth, that is truth as verifiable fact; and since poetry is not concerned with truth as such, there is no criterion of assessment that

relates to truth.

In summary, modern Expressionism emphasizes the communication of emotion for the purpose of giving the percipient the experience of the artist; the success of the art object is due to the success of the expressive attempt. In Tolstoy's interpretation of the theory, success is also due to communication of "proper" feelings. According to Collingwood, success is due to the work's capacity to communicate the artist's true or genuine emotion, the communication of which results from the necessity of the artist to express himself. We judge the communication to be successful if we feel we are able to experience the same emotion. Each percipient determines success on the basis of inferences and guesses about the artist's emotion and his subjective impressions as to the nature of his own experience with the art object. In Richards' explanation of the expressionist component of art, success is due to the nature of the mediated experience, the value of which depends on more than its being the sincere expression of the artist. The value of the experience is due to the breadth of stimulation and expression it affords the reader, specifically its capacity to bring into play a variety of faculties and impulses, all stabilized by the organization and order of the art object. As certain critics of Expressionism point out, the basic criterion as implied in Tolstoy's and Collingwood's accounts is impractical since empirical verification of the exact nature of the artist's and percipient's experiences is impossible; the criterion essentially invokes the sincerity of the artist, a quality that can only be judged impressionistically (Osborne, pp. 152-153). Richards offers a much more sophisticated criterion for

evaluating the expressionistic component of art; it emphasizes that the quality of the experience depends on the range of impulses contained by the organization and order of the art object itself and the reader's capacity to experience these.

Expressionist theory is suggestive of several possible critical attitudes toward philosophy in literature. The most important one is that the critic may discuss the philosophy of a literary work in terms of the genuineness or sincerity of the artist's attitude toward the philosophy. In this approach, the critic usually equates the truth of the philosophy to the artist's sincerity. The critic may take a narrow view, as Tolstoy does, and equate the artistic success to the expression of prescribed kind of experience that illustrates an ideal philosophical stance, e.g., Christian humanism. Or he may attempt to judge the qualitative value of the communicated experience according to more complex and comprehensive standards (as Richards does), but such standards are likely to reflect individual beliefs about art and reality. All three approaches involve the potential excessive influence of the critic's personal impressions, and possibly beliefs, on aesthetic judgment.

Transcendentalism

The transcendental aesthetic presupposes the basic expressionist theory, but adds a new dimension to Expressionism. According to Expressionism, the work of art communicates the artist's emotion, and the aesthetic experience results in the exact duplication of the artist's emotion in the spectator. The dimension added by

transcendental theory is that the communicated experience further mediates to the spectator a knowledge of some sort of ultimate reality. Since the theory deals principally with a very specific aspect of art--its capacity to convey knowledge of a transcendent reality--the basic idea of Transcendentalism may be easily grafted onto other theories (Osborne, pp. 189, 200). And the history of aesthetics witnesses the theory's sometime alliance with Imitationism, Emotionalism, Formalism, and Organicism, as well as with Expressionism. Although the transcendental aesthetic has a long history, deriving from Platonic philosophy and filtering into nearly every romantic movement since its inception, I will discuss only a few modern applications of the theory.

We may first consider a general explanation of the nature and value of art according to Transcendentalism. Art is viewed as a means of providing man with experiences that may lead to his direct, intuitive knowledge of ultimate and transcendent reality. In this capacity inheres the unique value of art. Within this theory of the function of art are contained ideas on both the origin and appreciation of art. The processes may be described as follows. The artist is able (sometimes or always), by means of an affective state toward a natural object or toward the whole cosmos, to apprehend a reality beyond appearances. This affective state brings him direct, intuitive knowledge of essences, a form of knowledge that makes no claim to be rational, logical, or conceptual. By embodying his emotion and its concomitant intuitive knowledge in the art work, the artist thus conveys to the spectator the same experience and the same knowledge. There is implied in the theory the idea that a work of art can provide a

truer or more ideal form of knowledge than nature offers or than science can infer from nature. The foundation for this idea is the mystical view that nature mirrors imperfectly or even hides the world of real essences (Osborne, pp. 189-191).

According to transcendental aesthetics, then, it is possible for a work of art to offer insight, via concrete and sensuous forms, into the most basic principles of reality, nature, man, and the relationship among these entities. An interpretation of transcendentalist aesthetics which has been influential is that of William Wordsworth, but it is desirable to place his interpretation in the whole context of what is possible in transcendentalist aesthetics. In other words, there are in transcendentalist theories, as in imitationist theories, key concepts to be defined such as man, nature, and reality. In general, Wordsworth's conception of all three involved optimism, order, purpose, and unity. Accordingly, the poet, with an imaginative potential essentially congruent with nature and reality, could embody in his works intuitive insight into the unity of all things. But there are other interpretations of what may be called transcendentalist aesthetics in which nature, reality, and man may be conceived in terms other than Wordsworth's. Yet such interpretations still hold that the imagination is capable of grasping a knowledge of ultimate reality and of embodying that knowledge into artistic structure.

French Symbolism presents an example of the application of transcendental aesthetics. Baudelaire believed that the artist's function is to attain mystical insight into a reality beyond the world of appearances and sensations. By means of intuition, one can come to

know the true relation between natural objects and supernatural reality: natural objects are but symbols of transcendental reality. Moreover, a variety of different symbols may actually correspond to the "same sublime forms of ideal reality," but conventional vision and knowledge are blind to this relationship. The artist must pierce through the ordinary mode of seeing and knowing; he does so by means of his own intuition and by means of his unconventional use of symbols, thus disturbing the drab, logical way of viewing reality. Rimbaud added to Baudelaire's theory the idea that the poet must actually "violently disturb the normal equilibrium of the senses, forcing them to a paroxysm of excess transcending their normal powers." Finally, Mallarmé made a very important contribution to Symbolist theory; in his view the poem itself is no longer merely an instrument of communication, but is the actual source of the mystical experience for both poet and reader (Osborne, p. 195).

At least one of the aims of the Surrealist aesthetic has its basis in Transcendentalism; that aim is the apprehension of a hidden, supra-mundane reality which can be achieved only by completely freeing the subconscious mind from the confines of intelligence and reason. Proponents of this aim believe that insight into some sort of "over-reality" is possible through the uncontrolled unconscious. The emphasis on the unconscious often results in the widespread use of dream elements, absurdity, and incoherence in art and the use of automatism in artistic creation. The proponents of Surrealism consider it neither a movement nor a direction but "a permanent state of the soul."³² Accordingly, nature, man, and reality are defined in terms of man's

inner or psychological reality; for example, dream elements are especially valued for their capacity to "cast light upon our true internal reality" and to "reveal new aspects of a wider external reality" (Matthews, p. 65). The ultimate goal is "the future resolution of those apparently contradictory states, dream and reality, in a sort of absolute reality," which is called surreality (Matthews, p. 67). The belief is that transcendental Surreality would eventually illumine and regenerate the soul of desperate humanity" (Osborne, pp. 198-199). In other words, a kind of redeeming knowledge would become available through the artistic apprehension of true reality, and this knowledge could enable man to save himself from the banality of uninspired conventional actuality.

C. Day Lewis presents a version of transcendental aesthetics in which he specifically emphasizes artistic truth. Subscribing to the general transcendental view of the nature and value of art, Lewis believes that the vehicle by which the art object conveys intuition is the metaphor in its widest sense. The philosophical basis of this concept is that everything in the universe is a microcosm, and it is the poet's function to convey the unity of all things and persuade us of the truth of this doctrine. Although the truth of poetry is not verifiable, it is nonetheless convincing because of its "emotional logic." One comes to feel the truth of the mystical unity and oneness of life (Osborne, p. 195). The emotional conviction that accompanies such an experience is so strong that logical reasoning or scientific verification is not needed. In fact, it is actually the unverifiable element that convinces: " . . . there are such things as unverifiable

truths and it is the unverifiable element in poetry which carries the conviction of truth" (Osborne, p. 203).

I have noted that the transcendental theory of aesthetics is often combined with other aesthetic theories. The reason is that numerous aestheticians, critics, and schools of art point to the value of art as revelation of some form of ultimate or superterrestrial reality; acquisition of intuitive knowledge of this sort is felt to be a great achievement since it usually makes man aware of the truth of the relationship of all elements in the universe, and this is the highest truth. In practical criticism, one often finds the transcendental aesthetic permeating the entire commentary or casually emerging in concluding remarks. Although the critic may invoke criteria of artistic excellence belonging to other theories, he is also appealing to the transcendental criterion if he praises the work for its communication and revelation of an ultimate reality or for a truth superior to ordinary scientific truth. The transcendental standard of excellence is specifically "the extent to which the spectator achieves --or feels that he achieves--a revelation of ultimate Reality through contemplation of the work of art" (Osborne, p. 201).

Transcendentalist theory is significant in a study of the various ways in which critics interpret and judge the philosophical element in literature. It is important to note that most versions of transcendentalist theory emphasize the symbolic or metaphorical aspects of art, even, for example, the whole poem itself as constituting a metaphor. According to the theory, it is basically through metaphor that an intuitive knowledge of ultimate reality is mediated to the reader. When a critic attempts to discuss this knowledge, his commentary will

likely have the same philosophical implications of any discussion that deals with artistic knowledge, truth, or insights. The implications stem from the fact that all these topics involve beliefs.

Although transcendentalist theory focuses on specific elements within the work itself, namely, symbol and metaphor, a large element of subjectivity is involved in interpreting the transcendent knowledge. When the critic judges the artistic value of the so-called intuitive truth or knowledge conveyed, there is a possibility that his personal beliefs may exert an extreme influence on his appraisal. Because transcendentalism is rarely used as the sole aesthetic basis for criticism, the success with which a critic uses this theory will depend on his other aesthetic assumptions.

Formalism-Organicism

The formalist theory proper is strictly a twentieth-century phenomenon, and is the main source of the concept of the art object as a self-contained, autotelic entity, a concept that is germane not only to Formalism but also to twentieth-century organic theory. It seems wise in considering Formalism and Organicism to envision the theories on a continuum, with Organicism adding some refinements and extensions to the basic formalist approach. The following discussion will deal with the early formalist theory of Clive Bell, the pure organicist theory of Harold Osborne, and the somewhat mystical organic theory of Murray Krieger.

Formalism offers a theory of art that is a complete antithesis to Imitationism. Most of the basic tenets of Formalism can best be

introduced by contrasting it to imitation theory. First, in formalist aesthetics, it is the work of art, in and of itself, to which the spectator must direct his attention; there is to be no shifting back and forth, as in imitation theory, from the art object to reality to determine the correctness with which the object copies reality.

Another difference is in the way Formalism defines the nature of the work of art: it is self-sufficient and independent of human experience, and contemplation of it requires nothing from life, neither knowledge, ideas, or emotions. In general, formalist theories define fine art as the organization of the elements distinctive of any particular artistic medium into a formal pattern that is aesthetically valuable. A final difference is that formalist aesthetics identifies the distinguishing quality of works of art as "significant form"; and to experience significant form, one concentrates only on formal relations, not on any associated ideas or emotions that the object represented may give rise to (Stolnitz, pp. 134-142).

In the aesthetic theory of Clive Bell, there are three basic premises that have an important bearing on his total position. First, Bell derives his views from his experience with the visual arts. Second, he believes that "the starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion";³³ this emotion is unique in that it is the aesthetic emotion and is experienced only in the presence of aesthetic objects. Third, any system of aesthetics has to be based on subjective not objective truth; yet this assertion, Bell believes, does not deny the possibility of general validity; validity in a system of aesthetics can be achieved once it is determined what quality is common to objects that evoke the

aesthetic emotion.

According to Bell, the quality common to all objects that evoke the aesthetic emotion is "significant form"; this quality is the sine qua non of art and therefore defines the nature of art. Bell's definition of significant form proves to be somewhat circular: he states that significant form refers to the forms and relation of forms that are aesthetically moving; he then adds that significant form refers to a "combination of lines and colours (counting black and white as colours) that moves me aesthetically" (pp. 8, 12). From these statements, it is clear that the nature of art as significant form is defined in terms of the aesthetic experience: art is whatever moves one to experience the aesthetic emotion. Bell attempts to clarify the nature of significant form by contrasting it to the characteristic quality of "Descriptive Painting," a category referring to "painting in which forms are used not as objects of emotion but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information" (pp. 16-17). Descriptive painting cannot be considered art because it suggests emotions rather than being the object of aesthetic emotion. Bell believes that art attaining to exact representation and technical cunning necessarily loses formal significance. Where representation is valuable, it is valuable as form. Representation as representation and all the emotions and ideas from life deriving from it are irrelevant to art. An inclination toward the emotions of life, either in artist or per-cipient, reveals a defective sensibility (pp. 20-29).

It follows from the definition of significant form as the characteristic of aesthetic objects that the value of art resides in the art

object itself, in significant form, and in its capacity to evoke the aesthetic emotion. The aesthetic emotion provides a thrill and exaltation close to ecstasy since it affords the percipient the opportunity to experience pure forms as ends in themselves. This experience only art gives, for only in aesthetic appreciation can one see the object for itself instead of seeing it as a means to other ends (pp. 49-53). The basic value of art, then, is that it adds something to our emotional lives, and that addition comes not from life but from pure form. According to Bell, the reason for our being so profoundly moved by certain combinations of lines and colors remains essentially mysterious. But he suggests a metaphysical hypothesis that provides a suitable answer for himself. He believes that "artists can express in combinations of lines and colours an emotion felt for reality which reveals itself through line and colour" and that significant form is essentially a means to a sense of ultimate reality (p. 54).

We may now consider whether artistic truth has any relevance in Bell's formalist theory. If significant form in a work of art communicates the artist's vision of reality and this vision is of the thing in itself, rather than of its practical attributes, then the aesthetic emotion aroused in the percipient enables him to have the same vision of ultimate reality that the artist had. It is in this context that the element of truth enters Bell's theory of art, for the argument implies that the aesthetic vision is a truer vision than the practical. There is in this view a mystical or revelatory quality similar to what one finds in transcendental theory. But there appears to be a difference: the ultimate reality revealed, according to Bell, has

little or nothing to do with the human scene; it is a reality above and beyond human concerns and relations. Bell states:

But if an object considered as an end in itself moves us more profoundly (i.e., has greater significance) than the same object considered as a means to practical ends or as a thing related to human interests--and this undoubtedly is the case--we can only suppose that when we consider anything as an end in itself we become aware of that in it which is of greater moment than any qualities it may have acquired from keeping company with human beings. Instead of recognizing its accidental and conditioned importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading rhythm.

(p. 69)

Now, Bell's approach is very close to pure Platonism, whereas most modern transcendental aesthetic theories find the ultimate and mystical truth revealed by art to be somehow associated with man, his nature, and his relationship to the universe. For Bell, the arrogance of humanity contaminates the aesthetic experience and interferes with attainment of the ultimate truth of the individual significance of the thing in itself (p. 70). It appears that truth in the sense of most of its common aesthetic meanings has little relevance in Bell's formalist theory; truth is relevant only as the revelation of the ultimate reality as perceived through contemplation of significant form.

The final issues to be considered in Bell's theory are the function of the critic and the criteria for aesthetic assessment. The function of criticism is "to be continually pointing out those parts, the sum, or rather the combination of which unite to produce significant form." By pointing to these elements, the critic attempts to help the viewer feel the work for himself, helps him to receive the aesthetic emotion, and thus enables him to recognize for himself the work of art. The

critic must therefore strive to affect the aesthetic experience of the percipient (p. 9).

How, specifically, is the critic to go about his task? He must, as any spectator, begin with his own aesthetic experience; ultimately he determines whether or not it moves him aesthetically. Bell clarifies this approach: "Having made that discovery he can go on to criticise in detail; but the beginning of all aesthetic judgment and all criticism is emotion" (p. 232). In regard to specific criteria that may enable the critic to know when he is in the presence of significant form, Bell offers only brief and generalized remarks: simplification is essential to all art; realism means detail and is thus the antithesis of art; technical swagger is irrelevant; the representative or cognitive element has value only as it contributes to the perception of formal relationships; design, which is organization of individual forms into a significant whole, provokes the profoundest emotions (pp. 220-231).

In summarizing Bell's formalist theory, one need say little. It is evident that the total theory revolves around a single equation: significant form, as the nature, value, and criterion of art, is that which gives rise to the aesthetic emotion.

Organicism can easily be seen as an expanded version of Formalism. In fact, Harold Osborne, in his organic theory of beauty as configuration, professes to provide for some of the inadequacies of Formalism. He attempts to isolate and elaborate on the characteristics of structures possessing form and to give a satisfactory reason for the great value we place on formal beauty.

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Osborne sets forth a definition of art that he considers to be a real definition, that is, a definition identifying the basic property of art, the quality in virtue of which works are classified and assessed as art. Such a definition disregards all qualities possessed by some but not all works of art. According to Osborne, a work of art is a thing made; it is autotelic, or self-sufficient, and it exists to be experienced for what it is in itself.³⁴ Specifically, a work of art is " . . . a perduring potentiality for the actualization of a specific set of perceptions." Actualization takes place when a competent person experiences the art object (p. 234).

The unique quality in virtue of which objects are classified as art and which constitutes their artistic excellence is beauty of configuration or organic unity. Organic unity is "a configuration such that the configuration itself is prior in awareness to its component parts and their relations according to discursive and additive principles." The exact process of perceiving organic form is all-important to Osborne's definition. A construct that is perceived as an organic unity is apprehended "synoptically"; that is, it is perceived as a "single complex whole of multifarious and intricately related parts; it is not apprehended discursively by summation of a series of rapid but discrete particular apprehensions of the parts and their relations" (p. 228). It is possible to look at a given visual field synoptically only if the field is structured so as to allow it to enter into awareness in a single act, in other words, if the relations of the parts to each other and to the whole are such as to give it organic unity.

" . . . The degree in which any work of art can be seen in this way is

the degree of its beauty" (p. 247). In aesthetic perception all attention must be focused on the art object; all other ordinary and practical interests are excluded. It bears repeating that not only is the quality of organic unity or beauty in configuration the gauge of artistic excellence; it also defines the nature of art.

Osborne locates the value of art in the synoptic apprehension of an art object. Synoptic apprehension demands "a heightening and tautening of awareness--visual, aural, or intellectual far beyond the normal needs of practical life," and only art can provide the material that will make this experience possible. The experience is valuable since it causes a "heightening of consciousness" and an "enhancement of mental vitality." Osborne believes that we attach supreme human value to any process that thus activates the higher human faculties (p. 228).

The aesthetic excellence of a work of art is to be assessed on the basis of only one criterion--its organic unity; and the process by which this task is carried out is called configurational criticism. Configurational criticism begins with the actualization of a work of art. Achieving synoptic vision is a difficult and rare accomplishment, but it is the ideal toward which the critic must strive and toward which he must guide his readers. There are three ways in which the critic may fulfill his function: he may attempt to grasp the essential character of the aesthetic whole and describe his observation impressionistically or "suggestively"; he may deal with form as an essential to the total configuration of the work of art; and he may discuss and illuminate details so as to allow a clearer perception of

parts and their relations to the whole (pp. 254-258). Validity of aesthetic judgment is possible only if the work is ideally organized.

Osborne states:

. . . any two ideally competent observers will actualize the same work of art when looking at the same picture or hearing the same music only provided that the work of art is itself ideally well organized and without any intrinsic indefiniteness or imprecision This definiteness or compactness of organization which allows only one competent actualization is the quality often spoken of as "organic form" and is the nearest anyone has yet come to a definition of beauty in works of art.

(p. 238)

Osborne makes some specific comments in regard to literary art and gives considerable attention to problems of evaluation arising from the importance of meaning in literature. All of his remarks are based on the premise that in literature the beauty of meanings is more important and more contributory to literary excellence than the beauty of words. A major principle relating to the nature of literary art is that the beauty of rhythm is ultimately a "quality possessed by sequences of words as bearers of meanings" (p. 263). A second principle deals with the arrangement of word sequences into units of coherent meaning. Because literature has content, there must be coherence of organization of that content, but coherence is not to be construed as strictly logical.

Assessment of craftsmanship is an aspect of criticism that presents a difficult task, but it is legitimate so long as it relates artistry to organic configuration. Osborne suggests two standards for assessing craftsmanship. First, the work must possess "precision, a conjunction of verbal conciseness and univocacy of unit meaning" (p. 275). By



conciseness, Osborne means the absence of redundancy, not only in word choice but in conceptual and ideational content. Univocacy is a property of units of meaning that possess one and only one meaning; the meaning may be complex or profound, but the one full meaning of the sequence must be univocal. The second standard for assessing craftsmanship is that successful art conceals the artistry: attention should not be called to the craftsmanship to the extent that there is a lapse of awareness of the organized configuration. The third standard relates to the use of word sound for the enhancement of meaning: this quality is known as rhythm and does not exist independently of meaning. Rhythm contributes to the peculiar state of suggestibility that seems necessary for proper aesthetic appreciation, and is a powerful element for the actual structuring of meanings into organic wholes since it requires varying degrees of attention to various units of meaning (pp. 268-280).

Osborne deals specifically with the relationship of truth in literature to aesthetic judgment. In no sense is the meaning of literature something that can be abstracted from the work; meaning as applied to art is unique to the art object; it cannot be expressed in any other way or in any other words. Ideas occurring in poetic context are affected by alogical influences reacting on them from all the other elements of the poem. While it is possible to isolate the ideas from their context, to paraphrase them, the paraphrase is something other than the ideas in the context of the poem. The excellence of the poem resides in its organic unity, not in any quality belonging to the separate constituents, not, for example, in the truth, originality, or

profundity of ideas (pp. 296-297). Analysis of qualities inherent to literary ideas is not the function of true literary criticism: "The sociological assessment of literary content, the estimation of the truth or the validity of what literature 'says' has no part or parcel in the aesthetic criticism of literature as a mode of fine art" (p. 300). If one wishes to assess the value of the wisdom or morality of literature, he should realize he is dealing with a utility-value, not with its value as a work of art.

Osborne feels that what art often evokes that appears to be knowledge is actually new attitudes of mind toward old or familiar experiences. The poet, for example, can induce a state of mind that causes us to place great value on a certain aspect of experience. But the poet does not convey new experience, except in the sense that he creates a new object for experience, that is, the poem. When a poet is praised for wisdom, what is probably meant is that he has induced in us new attitudes of mind toward the doctrines of philosophy, science, or religion. Osborne concludes that evoking such attitudes may be the ultimate practical wisdom, which can be defined as an "awareness in experience of what it is like to adopt" a particular attitude. "It is a legitimate function of poetry but not, let it be said, the essence of what poetry is" (p. 188).

In considering the relevance of poetic wisdom to the final aesthetic evaluation, Osborne laments the fact that critics continue to praise art for its truth to human nature and insight into man's life and destiny. He stresses the fact that the wisdom of art is not equivalent to philosophical truth or scientific knowledge. While

critics and spectators may extract from art this so-called wisdom and use it for their own purposes, to do so is to use art for a utility function which may be performed by other things that are not works of art and by mediocre or bad art. Consequently, the value of any utility function of art must never be invoked in the assessment of artistic excellence (pp. 97, 312-313).

Osborne sets forth a theory that may be called pure Organicism. I use the term "pure" for two reasons: because he remains close to the formalist position in diminishing the value of the existential or naturalistic content of art and because he purports to provide a real definition of art in terms of a single, unique quality by which it is classified and assessed. That quality is organic form and is defined essentially by the process through which it is perceived. One perceives organic form synoptically; that is, the whole complex and its related parts enter awareness in a single act, not by a summative or discursive process. The perception of organic form as the aesthetic experience constitutes the value of art in that only this experience demands and affords activation of the higher human faculties. In criticism organic unity must be the sole criterion of aesthetic evaluation. Because of the great importance of meaning in literature, critics have made the error of abstracting ideas from literary works, labeling them knowledge or truth, and assessing the works on the basis of these abstracted qualities. According to Osborne, the meaning of a literary work cannot be abstracted from the work itself, nor can meaning be equated with truth or knowledge. Critics may more correctly call the abstracted ideas or new attitudes towards ideas wisdom, but to do so and to assign a value to the wisdom apart from the aesthetic

experience is to use art for a utility function, and art is never to be evaluated on the basis of utility functions.

Murray Krieger believes that many proponents of Organicism essentially limit their theories to a kind of Formalism in the sense that they fail to account for the relationship between art and existence; they simply assert that art reflects only its own internal relations and nothing of the world or life. An example of this sort of pure Organicism is the theory of Harold Osborne, who believes that art neither imitates life nor offers any knowledge of life; the poetic experience is uniquely self-sufficient and independent of life. Krieger feels that mature organicists cannot accept this view, and he attempts to add a new dimension to pure organic theory. Krieger's theory will be discussed in detail since it deals specifically with issues relevant to the criticism of philosophy in literature: the existential content of art, its treatment as the philosophical element in art, its truth and falsity, and its relevance to artistic assessment.

The central issue in Krieger's theory pertains to the relationship of literature to life. To clarify the issue, Krieger sets forth the problem in terms of metaphor. There are three ways in which to view the language of poems as functioning. The first is as a window to the world; in this sense the literary work "reveals the full existential density of life as lived in all its desperate unresolvable tensions"; the work "is justified in relating itself directly to the world of experience." The second way poetic language functions is as an enclosed set of mirrors; in this sense, the literary work is "a self-sufficient aesthetic system of intramural relations among symbols that together

strive toward a oneness that contains its reader by compelling upon him a unified response that inhibits an escape to the world"; the work's justification is in its "creating itself as a separate self-sustaining world of terminal values." These first two propositions appear to be contradictory, but Krieger presents the third way in which poetic language functions, and this proposition combines the first two functions and reconciles the contradiction inherent to them. In the third way the same set of mirrors becomes a window again by miraculous means; in this sense, the literary work "is able miraculously to satisfy both propositions at once, being at once totally thematic and totally aesthetic, answerable to itself only by being answerable to the outside world."³⁵ This third position, Krieger believes, moves beyond formalist Organicism as supported by many of the New Critics. Only this position attempts "to get through the poem's closed context back to history and existence" (p. 3).

Krieger justifies his position by appealing to a miracle to account for the complexity of the poetic experience. He begins his account by dealing with the way the aesthetic experience works. In our initial confrontation with a literary work, we are aware of all sorts of information external to the work--psychological, biographical, technical, ideological, and historical; we treat the language of the poem as we do any other language, that is, referentially. But we must get beyond this stage if we are really to have a poetic experience. In the second stage, we become able to apprehend the poem by means of awareness of its intramural relations; we become aware of the elements as transforming themselves into new meanings determined only by the self-sustaining aesthetic system that is the poem (pp. 29-30). Krieger

believes that we must accept the ordinary dimensions of language as sign, that is, its semantic, syntactic, and logical dimensions; but then we must also lose these as they come to function within a unique symbolic system that becomes its own sign. He once more invokes metaphor to clarify the process, except at this point, it is a miraculous metaphor--the metaphor that is central to the Christian faith. In the aesthetic experience, the elements of the poem as the word (as discrete signs) become the body of the world (its own autotelic aesthetic symbol). Krieger then asserts that once this happens, the world itself is changed forever, in the sense that the world will be affected by the poem because the poem does relate somehow to existence and not just to itself. This miracle is what Organicism ought to assert, for this is the actual way poetry seems to work. The appeal to miracle is necessary because the complexity of the aesthetic experience forces it on us (pp. 36-39).

To further explain how the poem can at once be both totally thematic and totally aesthetic, Krieger delineates the relationship between literature and life and history. There is bound to be some imitative role to literature since history exists before literature, but the history that initially enters literature is history as existential force; it is "the living, felt, pulsing history of breathing men and not the static formulae of ideology." This raw, existential form of history constitutes the first of three possible phases in the developing relation of historical meaning to language and poetry. The first phase, the existential, includes the potential meanings and values of a culture, which remain unanalyzed, uninstitutionalized, and probably not even understood. The second phase, the aesthetic-thematic,

presents "these meanings and values as they are grasped in and through the total intramural structure of the poem, as the mirror-window, though they can never appear thus elsewhere." The third phase, the propositional, sets forth "these meanings and values as they are extracted from the work to enter culture by being translated and thinned for use (p. 59). In the poetic process, the poet initially imitates the preconceptual existential phase of history. The aesthetic-thematic phase is the poem itself; it both creates and discovers within its independent world the existence it initially imitated; only the poem makes perceptible what is being imitated since awareness of raw existence is not possible (pp. 64-65).

The relationship of the poem's aesthetic success to its existential context is an important issue in all aesthetic theories. Pure Organicism denies that there is any relationship: for example, Osborne holds that aesthetic success is strictly dependent on beauty in configuration or organic form. But Krieger, in what he terms mature Organicism, finds the relationship between aesthetic success and existential context to be so complex that only appeal to miracle can justify it.

According to Krieger, the poem must first earn its success as mirror, that is, as its own self-sufficient symbolic system; this achievement automatically assures success as mirror-window, that is, as a mode of opening up a view of the world unavailable by any other means. If the poem succeeds within its self-enclosed walls of meaning, a transformation of the initial material of raw existence takes place. It seems that producing "this monistic experience of the symbol" would somehow cut the poem off from the initial experience. But the poem as

unique monistic symbol actually provides us with the "un-self-conscious immediacy of primitive language experience, . . . discourse that dedicates itself to disrupting the normal dualism which a culture finds in its Platonized [discursive] discourse" and that "forces us to respond to it as its own entity" (p. 204). Thus the aesthetically successful poem is a primary form of discourse equivalent to our primary way of knowing. And it is this primary way of knowing that modern sophisticated discourse does not consider to be knowledge at all. The exact nature of this knowledge of culture is difficult to define, but is neither propositional nor transcendental, nor is it something our sophisticated language can give. It offers a primitive grasp of existential awareness; it enables us to confront the "immanent here-ness of existence" before "'existent' propositional strategies ideologize, institutionalize, and devitalize them" (p. 205).

Thus far we have been speaking of the success of the poem as a mirror and as mirror-window, that is, "the poem as a reflection of the existential in the aesthetic mode." We have yet to relate this power of poetry to culture, to determine the exact relationship of the aesthetic and the existential. If the poem is both the bearer and the creator of a cultural wisdom; if the raw materials of existence achieve their creation only in and through poetry, how do we judge the accuracy or fidelity of the imitation? To measure the poem's "insistent" reality against any propositional translation would be a post-poetic transaction and would destroy the authenticity of the poem. Krieger concludes that " . . . we cannot identify what the work ends by being an imitation of since it must be the creator as well as the bearer of

its vision so that only it can lead us to its object of imitation" (pp. 206-207). Because the union between the poetic and existential contexts is central, the only criteria to be invoked for assessing the poem's success are those deriving from the organistic approach. Specifically, Krieger advocates the application of "thematics," defined as "the study of the experiential reflection of that work's aesthetic complexity. Thematics thus conceived is as much beyond 'philosophy'--and in the same way beyond 'philosophy'--as, in pure poetics, an organic, contextually responsible form is beyond a logically consistent system" (p. 207).

This method of assessment can lead to objective aesthetic judgment about the poem as an autonomous entity; but the question remaining is how aesthetic success assures "the accuracy of its historical and anthropological vision." How can aesthetic complexity automatically lead to existential complexity and authenticity? And the only answer to this question is to resort to the original metaphorical miracle. Krieger believes this question is the same as: how do the enclosed mirrors become enchanted windows? It is this insoluble complexity of the poetic experience that demands an appeal to miracle (p. 208).

To further explain how the miracle works, Krieger elaborates on the nature of the central union between the aesthetic and existential contexts: they are essentially equated because of the extremity of both realms--the aesthetic and the existential. The poet is actually dedicated to extremity in the sense that he reduces one sort of experience to another: he reduces normal, pre-poetic, messy experience into the extreme, delimited narrow experience of total metaphor; in

other words, he reduces the broad, mixed (and thus extreme) experience of life to the pure, self-contained experience that is art. These are the two realms of extremity that become poetically equated, yet in a sense, they always remain polarized (p. 209). What the latter statement means is that even as we experience the poem as total metaphor, even as the elements are transformed into a dramatic whole, their separateness still "asserts itself to our rational, less totally committed selves" (p. 210). In other words, the extension of metaphor to the ultimate equation of tenor and vehicle is seen as miracle, but "the miracle can be asserted as miracle only by continually recognizing its impossibility, by continually acknowledging the intransigence of the materials and oppositions being mastered, though they are never destroyed." Thus what actually happens in the poetic experience demands that we view it as a miracle, and specifically as an incarnation, since all the discrete, intransigent elements are transformed into a pure and unified form that compels the percipient to experience and accept it as a new creation even as it urges awareness of its former discrete elements (p. 211).

Krieger feels that his account of the poetic experience can correct the over-emphasis made by several aesthetic theories on unity, especially unity of meaning, as a criterion of assessment. The simultaneous assertion and denial inherent to the aesthetic experience should lead to an emphasis on divergent meanings, ambiguity, variety, and the centrifugal thrust of a work within the boundaries of its organic nature (p. 212).

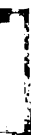
In considering the ultimate question of the truth of aesthetic experience, Krieger states that its extremities are not asserted to be true but are asserted to be miracle. And this answer seems to point to "the need of our experience to be visioned this way if we are to order it, to understand it in its immediate purity of implication." One cannot assert this pure immediate vision propositionally since it would appear a gross oversimplification. Yet we demand to see experience via this unique vision, for it offers a more brute, a more immediate, a more primitive confrontation with experience than sophisticated, discursive language will allow. It "allows us to see what an historical moment, in the privacy of hidden, personal inwardness has, in its most daring creations, in the total metaphors of its single, reduced moments of vision, dared make of its world" (p. 214). Providing man with such a vision is the great value of poetry.

The meaning of the oneness of the poetic context and of the existential context of cultural forces should now be clear: it is this unity that justifies the application of "thematics" as the method for assessing poetry. The task is to distinguish between "the fully incarnating metaphor and lesser attempts at metaphor that fall short of the fully contextual poem." Krieger briefly mentions two means for detecting the failures. First, the total metaphor fails if there remains a duality between tenor and vehicle. Second, it fails if its rhetorical form remains logical, single-minded, respectful of contradictions, and concerned with maintaining identities. Such form can never achieve the truly incarnating metaphor that both polarizes and equates its elements in the same act (p. 215).



The organic theory of Murray Krieger purports to go beyond some of the more formalistic organic theories. The basic premise of the theory is that the nature of poetic language allows it to function both aesthetically and thematically. It is the nature of poetry to present an aesthetic-thematic grasp of history; poetry both creates and discovers the unformulated here-ness of existence. There is a significant relationship between aesthetic success and existential content. Aesthetic success is equated to authenticity of existential context, because experiencing the monistic symbol that is the poem actually affords us with a primary, almost primitive mode of existential awareness and knowledge. Because of this inherent unity of aesthetic and thematic elements, the only criteria necessary for judging poetry are those deriving from organic theory. Specifically, Krieger advocates application of "thematics," which is "the study of the experiential tensions which, dramatically entangled in the literary work, become an existential reflection of that work's aesthetic complexity." The means by which aesthetic complexity automatically produces existential complexity is essentially miraculous. To assess the poem in all its aspects, one need only determine whether it succeeds as a totally incarnated metaphor.

We may now consider some of the implications of Formalism-Organicism for a study of the critical approach to philosophy in literature. If a critic adopts the formalist position, he is not likely to deal with the philosophical aspect of literature as explained in the present study. According to Formalism, art is valued for its significant form, defined as that which evokes the aesthetic emotion,



the arousal of which serves to indicate the presence of significant form. The theory specifically denies the formal relevance of such human concerns as expressing insight into man's nature and reality.

If a critic adopts the position of pure Organicism, he may acknowledge that some readers find a kind of philosophical knowledge or wisdom in art, but it is not the function of aesthetic criticism to be concerned with this literary element. This element serves a utility function, and aesthetic value must never be judged according to a utility function. The excellence of art resides in its organic unity, not in any quality belonging to the separate constituents. Pure organic theory, in its derivation from Formalism, essentially aims to diminish the importance of the so-called philosophical aspect of literature and in so doing suggests that this aspect is simply another artistic constituent, one having no special value and presenting no unique problems.

If a critic adopts an interpretation of what has been labeled mature Organicism, he is apt to see more complexity than the formalists in the philosophical element in literature and its role in the aesthetic experience. He will view the existential element of literature (which would include philosophy) as not merely another of many constituents but as a constituent of approximately equal value to the total aesthetic nature of the literary work, though its existential nature is ultimately encompassed by its aesthetic nature. It is in this sense that Krieger asserts that literature is able to be totally thematic and totally aesthetic at the same time. While accepting the concept of the art object as a self-sufficient entity to be judged

according to its organic unity, this position essentially takes us through the closed context of the literary work back to history and existence. Thus the mature organicist critic will approach the philosophical element in the context of the whole work; he will view the work as both bearing and creating its vision, which he may ultimately comment on in terms of certain philosophical generalizations. But he will perceive that there is a unique value in the almost primitive grasp of the "immanent here-ness of existence" that literature gives. This does not mean to say that the unique value is equivalent to truth; however, man needs the existential vision as reflected in the aesthetic complexity of art.

There are several noteworthy characteristics of the organicist approach to the philosophical element in literature. Ideally, the problems associated with the influence of personal belief on critical judgment should not arise. Because the literary work contains within it all that is needed for a percipient to experience it, the critic need not bring any specific conceptual knowledge or belief to the experience; that is, his own beliefs should not enter into the aesthetic experience. If there appears the possibility that personal beliefs may influence the aesthetic experience and judgment, the critic should consciously hold his own beliefs in abeyance and judge the existential elements (including philosophy) solely on the basis of the standards within the work, that is, in context of total aesthetic structure. Some theorists believe that in actual practice this degree of objectivity is neither possible nor desirable. In any event, organic theory purports to reduce greatly the extent to which a

critic's beliefs may influence his aesthetic judgments. One other implication of the theory merits attention: the philosophical aspect of literature is not likely to be valued excessively in and for itself. Because the organicist is interested in the total work of art, his treatment of this element will be balanced by attention to a variety of other literary components. Yet in mature Organicism, the treatment of philosophy as part of the existential content of the work may very well be suggestive of its unique value.

The background knowledge of major aesthetic theories that this chapter has provided serves two important functions in the method offered herein for understanding and evaluating the criticism of philosophy in literature. First, it provides a means of classifying practical criticism according to the critic's aims and procedures, and classification greatly facilitates comprehension of different interpretations and judgments. And second, theoretical knowledge makes possible the selection of specific criteria for assessing aesthetic theories and critical practice, and these standards allow evaluation of the individual criticism.

NOTES

CHAPTER 2. AESTHETIC THEORIES

- ¹Harold Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism (London, 1955), p. 24.
- ²Eliseo Vivas, "Literary Criticism and Aesthetics," Paper presented to the Conference in the Study of Twentieth Century Literature, Michigan State University, 1964, p. 21.
- ³Morris Weitz, Philosophy of the Arts (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 21.
- ⁴Murray Krieger, A Window to Criticism: Shakespeare's "Sonnets" and Modern Poetics (Princeton, 1964), p. 40.
- ⁵Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 2nd ed. (New York, 1956), pp. 61, 127.
- ⁶Stephen Pepper, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), pp. 105-107.
- ⁷W. D. Ross, Aristotle (1923), p. 287. Quoted in Osborne, p. 50.
- ⁸Jerome Stolnitz, Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 10. *Italics mine.*
- ⁹Plato, "Art as Appearance," in Problems in Aesthetics, ed. Morris Weitz (New York, 1959), pp. 9, 16.
- ¹⁰Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative (New York, 1966), p. 120.
- ¹¹See Chapters VII-X.
- ¹²The Arts and the Art of Criticism (Princeton, 1940), p. 229.
- ¹³Walter Pater, "Criticism and Personality," in Victorians on Literature and Art, ed. Robert L. Peters (New York, 1961), p. 125.
- ¹⁴Walter Pater, "The Renaissance," in English Prose of the Victorian Era, eds. Charles F. Harrold and William D. Templeman (New York, 1938), p. 1411.

- ¹⁵Irving Singer, Santayana's Aesthetic (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 38.
- ¹⁶George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty (New York, 1896), p. 19.
- ¹⁷Morris Weitz, Philosophy of the Arts, pp. 179, 180.
- ¹⁸Leo N. Tolstoy, "What is Art?" in Modern Continental Literary Criticism, ed. O. B. Hardison, Jr. (New York, 1962), pp. 136-137.
- ¹⁹R. G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art (Oxford, 1938), pp. 109-117.
- ²⁰David Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature (New York, 1956), p. 134.
- ²¹Daiches, p. 138.
- ²²I. A. Richards, "The Aesthetic Response and Organization of Attitudes," in The Problems of Aesthetics, eds. Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger, p. 390.
- ²³I. A. Richards, C. K. Ogden, and James Wood, The Foundations of Aesthetics (New York, 1925), pp. 75-78.
- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 79-80.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 91.
- ²⁶I. A. Richards, Principles of Criticism (New York, 1925), pp. 251-252.
- ²⁷Ibid., pp. 286-287.
- ²⁸I. A. Richards, "Poetry and Beliefs," in A Modern Book of Aesthetics, 3rd. ed., ed. Melvin Rader (New York, 1935), p. 275.
- ²⁹Ibid., pp. 276-277.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 283.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 284.
- ³²J. H. Matthews, An Introduction to Surrealism (University Park, Pa., 1965), p. 50.
- ³³Clive Bell, Art (New York, 1914), p. 6.
- ³⁴The discussion of Osborne's theory is based on his ideas presented in Aesthetic and Criticism cited earlier.
- ³⁵The discussion of Krieger's theory is based on his ideas presented in A Window to Criticism cited earlier.

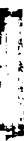
CHAPTER 3
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING AESTHETIC
THEORIES AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

In becoming familiar with the basic tenets of the five major aesthetic theories that provide the rationale for much practical criticism, we acquire a means of classifying criticism. With this information, it is possible to analyze a piece of critical commentary and label it according to its major aesthetic foundation, that is, Imitationism, Hedonism, Expressionism, Transcendentalism, Formalism-Organicism, or a combination of these. But classification according to theoretical basis constitutes merely the first step in understanding and evaluating the work of a given critic. It is an important step, of course, as Richard McKeon notes, in so far as "such identification may indicate the appropriate criterion and thereby contribute to both the understanding and the judgment of his [the critic's] statements."¹ Ultimately, it is necessary to derive specific criteria for assessing the value of the aesthetic theories and for assessing the manner and method by which the individual critic carries out his task. Guidelines for evaluating theories and critical practice have been offered by numerous contemporary theorists and critics, and the following delineation of criteria is based on selected authoritative opinions. The guidelines are by no means comprehensive or exhaustive,

and there is no attempt to include the views of every major contemporary theorist. Nonetheless, the standards set forth prove adequate for the establishment of one method for judging aesthetic theories and their adaptation into actual critical practice.

Criteria for Evaluating Aesthetic Theories

Evaluating aesthetic theories and the critical systems deriving from them is a task that requires not only an academic knowledge of major theories but also a large measure of common sense. Exposure to the variety of aesthetic theories serves to convince us that no one theory is going to provide any real, true, or final definition of art. Morris Weitz sets forth the opinion that since art cannot be a closed concept, a definitive "theory of it is logically impossible and not merely factually difficult."² This relativist position is not meant to suggest that aesthetic theories are irrelevant in aiding our understanding of art. On the contrary, knowledge of the many theories should cause us "to deal generously with the traditional theories of art." Although individual theories may fail if we take them literally, their function and value are their "serious and argued-for recommendations to concentrate on certain criteria of excellence in art (Weitz, p. 156). Weitz believes that each theory argues for attention to some element of art previously neglected or perverted. This view provides the most basic (and obvious) criterion for judging aesthetic theories; namely, the theory has some value if it directs attention to any feature that seems to be a significant property of art works. And common sense certainly suggests that each of the five major theories



discussed above does just that. But this obvious criterion for judging theories and systems of criticism deriving from them is very general. It merely prevents our throwing out at the beginning any one or all of the systems as worthless. It is necessary to delineate more specific criteria.

Some theorists believe that although it is wise to recognize the plurality of distinct aesthetic concepts, one must eventually appraise the comparative worth or efficacy of the critical conceptual systems, in other words, the aesthetic bases of criticism. R. S. Crane argues that any system has its characteristic limitations and strengths and that their source lies in the scope and flexibility of the analytical apparatus. These two qualities belong to systems that permit "a reasonably many-sided or comprehensive discussion of literary phenomena."³ Crane's position essentially points up the need to make judgments about partial and comprehensive concepts of art and suggests a major criterion for evaluating aesthetic theories and critical systems: one can value the theory whose scope and comprehensiveness allow critical attention to a variety of artistic phenomena.

There is only one other specific standard for judging aesthetic and critical systems that I intend to designate; it is related to the first criterion and may even be considered a variation of it. Aestheticians have often classified theories according to their major emphasis. For example, William Righter offers the following classification: "'uniquely aesthetic' theories," which refer to qualities in things and "'naturalistic' theories," which are usually concerned with the whole of our experience.⁴ Righter indicates that theories

stressing either one or the other aspects of art--the aesthetic or the naturalistic--imply oversimplified criteria which ignore "both the individual character of the works themselves, and the entire history of critical practice" (Righter, p. 20). In elaborating on a standard for evaluating theories, Righter discusses certain accounts of art that stress "particular historical or moralistic points of view," and he notes that for many readers historical and moralistic criteria of art suggest only a naturalistic emphasis and are thus perceived as interests alien to the aesthetic values of literature. Disagreeing with this view, Righter detects a paradox in the nature of art. The paradox is simply that while moralistic and historical criteria do seem foreign to literary art, yet in another sense they do not (Righter, p. 29). Norman Foerster holds a similar position. He labels the two kinds of inherent values as ethical and aesthetic and concludes that the two are interdependent and blended.⁵

The naturalistic-aesthetic dichotomy has been previously suggested in the discussion of aesthetic theories in Chapter 2, though in somewhat different terms. The word formal is most often used interchangeably with aesthetic, and there are several synonyms for the naturalistic aspects of art, for example, the experiential, existential, life, imitative, or ethical element. (Compare the terms used by Righter and Foerster with those used by Krieger and Osborne.)

Regardless of which set of terms is used, many critics have noted as a basic difference in aesthetic theories the degree of emphasis given to either the naturalistic or the aesthetic components of art. These classifications are important in my attempt to evaluate theories

and critical systems. The aspect of criticism that I am concerned with, philosophy in literature, may be considered as one of the naturalistic components of literature, since it involves the whole of human experience. In evaluating theories and critical practice, it is important to determine the value assigned to the element of philosophy and the general account of both naturalistic and aesthetic components. Thus the second major criterion for judging aesthetic and critical systems may be posited: one can value the theory that allows for a natural, balanced, reconciled, or expansive vision of the so-called naturalistic and aesthetic components of art. .

My delineation of the two major criteria for judging the efficacy of aesthetic and critical systems represents an attitude of compromise that is dictated by our actual experience with literary works. The first places value on the breadth, comprehensiveness and complexity of the conceptual system that allows criticism about a variety of artistic features. The second places value on recognition of the relationship between life values and purely aesthetic values. These standards suggest a balanced, integrated position on aesthetic theories that finds support in many sources. For example, R. P. Blackmur warns against criticism "governed by an idée fixe, a really exaggerated heresy, when a notion of genuine but small scope is taken literally as of universal application."⁶ And M. H. Abrams, in talking of the validity of critical theories, refers to the "scope, precision, and coherence of the insights" that a given theory yields "into single works of art and the adequacy with which it accounts for diverse kinds of art."⁷ In emphasizing the worth of a critical system that

possesses breadth and comprehensiveness, I do not mean to suggest that the critic employing a somewhat narrow theoretical framework may not arrive at valuable insights. The value of relevant critical insights that emerge from concentration on a given element can hardly be questioned as long as they involve appreciation of the literary work as art and not as something else.

No attempt is made at this point to evaluate the five major aesthetic theories discussed in Chapter 2. Since my purpose is to demonstrate a method for understanding and judging the efficacy of practical criticism, I will judge theories in the context of a body of practical criticism, specifically, in the context of what the Hardy critics, employing and interpreting given aesthetic rationales, are able to accomplish. The value of criticism depends not only on the strengths and weaknesses of a basic aesthetic foundation but also on the critic's interpretation of the theory and his general critical procedure.

Criteria for Evaluating Individual Critical Practice

In determining some standards of critical practice, I would first like to explore the nature of the critic's responsibility to his audience. The critic performs several roles: he acts "as an individual responding to the work, as interpreter to an audience, and finally as judge."⁸ Because of his role as interpreter and judge, his opinions and their basis are subject to evaluation by his audience. The ideal critic knows and lets his audience know what his aesthetic principles and standards are, how and why they are valid and

applicable to the work under consideration, and whether any possible distortion may result from application of them. In other words, both the critic and his readers should know "what he is not considering, but what should be considered in any total criticism" (Stauffer, p. 23). This standard implies the critic's awareness of other possible approaches to the art object. To restate the first criterion of good critical practice: the critic knows and makes us aware of his aesthetic principles, their values, and their limitations.

A second standard of ideal critical practice requires that the critic adhere to his critical system and work to achieve precision in his interpretation and judgment of the work and its various elements (Stauffer, p. 24). The first part of this statement should not be interpreted as limiting the critic's methodology; it merely limits him to the methodology that derives from his rationale. And the critical precision referred to is largely the result of the critic's use of convincing evidence from the art object itself in support of his general aesthetic principles, which he initially justifies as applicable to the work being considered. We may restate the second criterion of good critical practice: the critic adheres to his critical system and strives for precision in his interpretation and judgment of the work of art.

The second criterion is not meant to imply that criticism is merely a matter of stating abstract aesthetic principles and citing details from the art object in support of them. Criticism is obviously a more complex process than this. The critic must, in a sense, convey or construct the work of art, and his success at this task becomes, in fact,

a test of the value of his critical method and of his unique critical talent. Margaret Macdonald suggests that critical judgments are more like verdicts than true or false statements; she believes that the judge himself must contribute something in order to justify the verdict:

To justify such a verdict is not to give several criteria as "reasons" but to "convey" the work as a pianist might "show" the value of a sonata by playing it. Critical talk about a work is, as it were, a construction of it by someone at a particular time, in a certain social context. Thus criticism does not, and cannot, have the impersonal character and strict rules, applicable independently of time and place, appropriate to science and mathematics.⁹

On the basis of Miss Macdonald's view of criticism, I would posit a third criterion for evaluating critical practice: the critic must somehow construct or convey the work of art so as to bring it into vivid or significant focus. This procedure may relate to any number of factors--to the unique way in which the critic handles his aesthetic rationale, to his perception of the work's relationship to the aspects of time, place, or audience, or to the way in which the critic conveys that his criticism involves an individual's response to a work of art. It is with the third criterion that one begins to perceive the actual complexity of the critical process and the concomitant complexity of evaluating it.

At this point it is necessary to face the problem of establishing a standard for judging the factors that constitute the individuality and uniqueness of the critic's talent. Although I may not succeed in determining a precise criterion, it is most important to acknowledge and examine the factor of individuality in a critic's achievement. I have discussed the various theories that a critic

might use as his aesthetic rationale. One should realize, however, that a critic's adoption of a particular aesthetic theory or theories implies not only his peculiar sensitivity to art but also a thorough view of life, " . . . for what the critic is at bottom always discussing is the viability of art, what feelings it sanctions, what logic it shows, what relations these have to life at large."¹⁰ Common sense forces us to acknowledge that underneath the critic's judgment about what makes the good in art (that is, his adoption of an aesthetic rationale) is another judgment, namely, that about certain "philosophic criteria of what makes the good in life" (Greene, p. 6). In the last analysis, it appears that the critic is telling us what value the work of art has for human life, and this value reflects his own opinion of life itself. Ultimately, criticism must "come from an individual psyche and an individual bent." This discussion leads to the fourth and final criterion for judging critical practice: though acknowledging the element of personal opinion in critical statements, one may still expect from the critic judiciousness, consistency, and integrity (Greene, pp. 200-201).

These qualities are of major importance when one becomes aware of the possible excessive influence of the critic's personal beliefs on his interpretation and judgment of the philosophical element in literature. The decision as to whether a critic possesses these somewhat nebulous qualities will likewise depend in part upon the judge's personal opinion. But I believe that critical judiciousness, consistency, and integrity are also measured in varying degrees by all of the standards presented above. And it is precisely in the interest of

minimizing as much as possible the effects of personal bias that I have attempted to delineate specific criteria. For example, it seems that the quality of judiciousness includes a kind of wisdom and sophistication that derive from the critic's awareness of the complexity of literary works and of the variety of critical responses to them. Consistency is indicative of the critic's grasp of his theoretical principles and of his skill in applying them logically and convincingly to the work itself. Integrity is suggested in all three of the criteria of good critical practice. It relates to the critic's recognition of what is really involved in his response, to his informing the audience of the bases of his response, and to his demonstration that his critical response enhances appreciation and understanding of the work while doing no violence to its nature.

Conclusion

When we read critical commentary on the philosophical aspect of a literary work, we want to be able to decide quickly what the commentary is worth. We desire criticism that will aid and enrich our understanding of the work's philosophical implications. The discriminating reader realizes that he must examine the basic assumptions of the criticism. He looks for an aesthetic rationale that does justice to the complexities of literary art and for a critical procedure that reflects the critic's judiciousness, consistency, and integrity. The specific criteria designated allow us to determine the degree to which criticism meets these two broad standards. Since they constitute the evaluative aspect of the method proposed in the present study, it

might be helpful to restate them.

Criteria for evaluating aesthetic theories.

- (1) One can value the theory whose scope and comprehensiveness allow critical attention to a variety of artistic phenomena.
- (2) One can value the theory that allows for a natural, balanced, reconciled, or expansive vision of the so-called naturalistic and aesthetic components of art.

Criteria for evaluating general critical practice.

- (1) The critic knows and makes us aware of his aesthetic principles, their values, and their limitations.
- (2) The critic adheres to his critical system and strives for precision in his interpretation and judgment of the work of art.
- (3) The critic must somehow construct or convey the work of art so as to bring it into vivid or significant focus.
- (4) Though acknowledging the element of personal opinion in critical statements, one may still expect from the critic judiciousness, consistency, and integrity.

NOTES

CHAPTER 3. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING AESTHETIC THEORIES AND CRITICAL PRACTICE

¹"The Philosophic Bases of Art and Criticism," in Critics and Criticism Ancient and Modern, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago, 1952), p. 544.

²"The Role of Theory in Aesthetics," in Problems in Aesthetics, ed. Morris Weitz (New York, 1959), p. 147.

³"Introduction," in Critics and Criticism, ed. R. S. Crane (Chicago, 1952), p. 9.

⁴Logic and Criticism (London, 1963), p. 16.

⁵"The Esthetic Judgment and the Ethical Judgment," in The Intent of the Critic, ed. Donald A. Stauffer (Princeton, 1941), p. 69.

⁶"A Critic's Job of Work," in Problems in Aesthetics, ed. Morris Weitz (New York, 1959), p. 666.

⁷"Orientation of Critical Theories," in The Practice of Criticism, eds. Sheldon P. Zitner, James D. Kissane, and M. M. Liberman (Chicago, 1966), p. 281.

⁸Donald A. Stauffer, "Introduction: The Intent of the Critic," in The Intent of the Critic, p. 7.

⁹"Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts," in Problems in Aesthetics, p. 696.

¹⁰William Chace Greene, The Choices of Criticism (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), p. 5.

PART II

APPLICATION OF THE METHOD TO THE CRITICISM
OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THOMAS HARDY'S NOVELS

CHAPTER 4

IMITATIONIST CRITICISM OF HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

As one might expect, there is an abundance of criticism on the philosophy of Hardy's novels that may be classified as imitationist. And most of the commentary relates specifically to essence imitation theory. According to this theory, the critic values a work of art for its representation of essential reality or some aspect of it. In practice, the critic may explore or explain the concept of essential reality that the work conveys, but he may also and often does evaluate the work on the basis of its presentation of reality's essence. There are numerous problems associated with the use of essence imitation theory for evaluating literary works. I will mention several that will be illustrated and clarified in the ensuing discussion of the Hardy criticism.

First, it is necessary to explain how the essence-imitationist criterion of artistic excellence is related to the philosophical element in literature. As indicated in the discussion of terminology, philosophy in literature is often equated to artistic insight into the nature of man's reality, which consists of a variety of aspects. Artistic insight into reality, whether it is called philosophy, vision, wisdom, truth, etc., must be considered as one of the naturalistic elements of art. The essence imitation critics expect that representation of essential reality will provide a kind of artistic insight

or truth; thus they value this literary element highly. Moreover, the critics in this category often perceive representation of essential reality in terms of a doctrine or message. We may, then, designate two characteristics that enter into evaluation of the theory: the tendency to emphasize a single naturalistic element and the tendency to perceive the work's vision of essential reality in terms of doctrinal statement or message. In view of these characteristics alone, essence imitation theory as an aesthetic foundation appears from the outset to have serious limitations. These are due to defining the aesthetic norm in terms of a narrow interpretation of a single naturalistic component of art. In judging individual criticism, it will be important to note the extent to which the imitationist critic can expand this basic aesthetic norm.

Another limitation of essence imitation theory is associated with the problem of belief. Because essential reality is such a broad concept and because there is a variety of theories about its nature, it is ultimately the critic's prerogative to designate the nature of essential reality that constitutes his norm for literature to represent; and it is likely that his designation will depend on personal beliefs. The norm of essential reality may therefore be defined narrowly or broadly, foolishly or wisely. In judging individual criticism, it will be important to note the nature of the critic's definition of essential reality as an aesthetic norm: specifically, the extent to which the critic prescribes a single view of reality as the ideal doctrine to be represented, the extent to which a critic acknowledges that numerous aspects of reality may be represented, and

the extent to which a critic is able to perceive imitation of essential reality in terms (other than doctrine) that may reduce the influence of personal belief.

There are six major characteristics of the imitationist criticism of Hardy's philosophy. First, the imitationist approach is most common among Hardy's early critics (from 1890 to 1940), but examples of it still appear after the early period and even in the present decade. Second, the imitationist critics usually perceive the philosophical element as "Hardy's philosophy" and employ the term philosophy rather broadly to designate the novelist's views and attitudes about Providence, the universe, the nature of man, his relation to the universe, his possibilities, and his destiny; moreover, they use the term to refer to specific ideas or theories about human conduct and relationships, social systems, religion, and ethics. Third, they are particularly concerned with doctrinal labels for the philosophy, such as, determinism, pessimism, optimism, naturalism, meliorism, Christianity, modernism, humanism, and existentialism. Fourth, the imitationist critics arrive at numerous and conflicting interpretations of the philosophy which often enter into their judgments about Hardy's artistic achievement. Fifth, it appears that the basic assumption of essence imitation theory is responsible for much of the widely divergent interpretation and appraisal, since critics may subscribe to any number of concepts of essential reality and employ these as aesthetic criteria. With the critic's personal beliefs largely determining which concept is true and worthy of imitation in literature, one can hardly expect much critical agreement. The sixth and final

characteristic of the imitationist criticism of Hardy's philosophy is that the relative value of the criticism increases to the extent that critics abandon ideal doctrines as the sole criterion of artistic excellence, and to the extent that a concept of essential reality is explored and judged in literature in the context of other literary constituents.

The following discussion includes classification and appraisal of selected essence imitation criticism of Hardy's philosophy. In making appraisals, I have considered two things: the general strengths and weaknesses of the imitationist approach in view of the criteria designated for evaluating aesthetic theories, and the critic's adaptation of theory and his critical practice in view of the criteria designated for evaluating individual critical procedure. My classification of the criticism is also indicative of appraisal, with the most adequate examples being discussed last. The groups are: first, criticism based on ideal doctrines defined in various ways and possessing varying degrees of value; second, criticism based on concepts of essential reality defined partly in terms of the author's unique vision; and third, criticism based on concepts of essential reality defined partly in terms of certain aesthetic or formal components in the literary work itself.

I

We may first consider the Hardy criticism that is based on ideal imitation theory. It is not difficult to see immediately the inadequacy of the theory, since the critical approach required by it greatly

reduces the actual complexity of the aesthetic experience. The critic focuses attention mainly on one naturalistic element--the insight conveyed by the work as reducible to philosophical doctrine or message. He further reduces the scope of his interest by prescribing a single doctrine as the ideal which is worthy of representation and which makes for artistic value. The designation of the ideal doctrine is a matter of the critic's personal beliefs about the nature of reality, and thus aesthetic judgment is often based solely on the critic's personal beliefs.

In general, the value of such criticism is usually negligible, although in certain cases it may possess interest for various reasons. It may, for example, give some indication of the history of critical taste, or it may furnish biographical data about literary figures writing this kind of criticism. But these interests are not really pertinent to evaluation of the criticism and its aesthetic basis. The purpose is to determine how meaningful and convincing the criticism is as a means of facilitating and enriching our appreciation of Hardy's novels. And for reasons that will become clear in the discussion, ideal imitation generally constitutes a most inadequate approach to literature. Nonetheless, there are degrees of inadequacy, and I intend to explore these. In fact, it will prove extremely important to note the specific elements in certain examples of imitationist criticism that add to their relative value. It is important because these very elements are often related to aspects of other aesthetic theories or are characteristics of good critical practice as suggested in Chapter 3.

The totally inadequate ideal imitation criticism results from the narrowness or idiosyncratic nature of the doctrine in combination with the critic's lack of awareness of his ideal or the possible need for justifying it beyond the ground of personal preference due to the pleasure, solace, or inspiration that it affords. This latter characteristic is indicative of poor critical procedure, since the good critic fulfills the responsibility to know and justify his aesthetic basis.

Several of Hardy's early critics set forth a preference for an extremely narrow ideal doctrine for no other reason than that it pleases them. Their ideal doctrines include "optimism," free will, the hope for a good life, the nobility of man's life, stoical humanism, and Christian morality.

The anonymous critic who wrote "Thomas Hardy--Optimist or Pessimist," which appeared in Current Literature¹ presents no comprehensive views on the philosophies of optimism and pessimism but merely defines them in terms of two writers. He defines optimism as the view of life that stresses the good (exemplified by R. L. Stevenson) and pessimism as the view that stresses the bad (exemplified by Hardy). The critic announces his preference for optimism, which he proceeds to define even more narrowly as the belief that "life is for the adventurous" (p. 103). On the basis of this preferred ideal doctrine, he finds Hardy lacking in the spirit of adventure and particularly regrets his passive characters. In a similar approach, Joyce Kilmer in his "Introduction" to The Mayor of Casterbridge² judges Hardy's works against his preferred ideal doctrine of free will. Kilmer initially

seems to suggest that the concept of free will is not only true and noble but that it also offers "tremendous dramatic possibilities" (p. xiv), yet he does not pursue or support these arguments. Instead, he ultimately expresses favor for the use of free will in fiction because it offers a happier view of life than Hardy's and because he assumes that any writer would want happiness and success for his created characters. He states that Hardy, in The Mayor, lets his philosophy guide him to "changing his purposes, forcing him to deal harshly, sometimes, with characters whom a writer must come to love as a father his children. Was not Matthew [sic] Henchard's rehabilitation to be complete, and the tale to end with a prosperous reunited family? Probably, but Thomas Hardy . . . had his monstrous theory to reckon with" (p. xiv). Kilmer offers no evidence for his ability to discern Hardy's "purposes" in the novel. The only rationale for the opinion is Kilmer's own belief in and preference for the doctrine of free will, his assumption that a writer would naturally believe in the doctrine, and his suggestion that if free will operates in a novel, it can result in happiness and success for the characters.

The practical values of solace and inspiration often appear to be the reason behind a critic's preference for a narrowly-defined ideal doctrine, which, when applied in literary judgment, results in meaningless and inadequate criticism. For example, Patrick Braybrooke³ finds Hardy's novels to be deficient as works of art because their philosophy might cause despair since the author fails to formulate for the characters "any elaborate plans for their betterment" (p. 39). A similar concern is expressed by John H. Fowler in The Novels of

Thomas Hardy, an English Association pamphlet.⁴ Fowler is troubled by the possibility that a wave of pessimism may pass over the new generation if readers look to Hardy as a great teacher. He suggests that we go to our greatest artists for "an uplifting and inspiring vision of life"; he subsequently announces his preference for the hopeful view of life and death and the belief in the nobility of man that was expressed by the great Victorians (pp. 17-18). Fowler finds some specific qualities to admire in Hardy, but they also relate to his ideal doctrine that stresses inspiration. For example, he praises Hardy's strong characters, in particular Oak, Venn, Winterbourne, and John Loveday, as "characters who exalt our opinion of human nature by the depth and unselfishness of their love" (p. 16).

One should note that the use of an inspirational ideal doctrine as the major criterion for judging literature is not limited to Hardy's early or minor critics. An eminent Hardy scholar, Carl Weber, employs the ideal-imitationist approach as late as 1939. In "Virtue from Wessex: Thomas Hardy,"⁵ Weber's doctrine consists of a rather broadly defined stoical humanism, a doctrine that he finds exemplified in Hardy's works. Consequently, he values Hardy as a writer to whom the modern reader can turn for solace; for, he argues, even in despair, the novelist found life intensely interesting. "In expressing this attitude, Hardy stands ready to serve as a moral leader for thousands of modern groping minds" (p. 218). Weber's concluding remarks further indicate the inspirational function of the doctrine that he extracts from Hardy's works: "Thomas Hardy is one of the great spiritual leaders of the modern world and from him, they may draw virtue who

read him aright" (p. 222). Weber's essay has little value as literary criticism. He, like many of Hardy's early critics, approaches the novels with the expectation of finding his ideal doctrine represented and extracting a solacing or inspirational message.

The final category of totally inadequate ideal imitation criticism is characterized by the critic's lack of real awareness that he is using an ideal doctrine as the major criterion for literary evaluation. H. C. Duffin's Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and "The Dynasts" falls into this group. The most disturbing thing about the book is that the critic attempts to pay lip service to certain aesthetic criteria when, in fact, he evaluates Hardy on the basis of a rather narrow moralism deriving from Christian ethics and from support of the status quo. In other words, careful analysis reveals that a narrow ideal doctrine constitutes the major aesthetic criterion, yet Duffin is either unconscious of its operation, or he attempts to camouflage it. In any event, the weakness of his aesthetic foundation is compounded by a most inadequate critical procedure. For example, he notes that the governing idea of a novel need not be moral, although "if the moral tendency is also there, we may count it for gain, provided always that it is merely latent in the material that is used, so that it does not hinder the all-important aesthetic function" (p. 98). But in spite of this statement, Duffin never clarifies the so-called "aesthetic function," and none of his major judgments of Hardy's art reflects any aesthetic basis.

The exact components of Duffin's ideal doctrine become apparent only in specific comments about Hardy's works. The critic does express

a preference for presentation of a "lofty conception of human nature," but in most cases, his ideal is only implied. For example, of The Mayor he states that its outlook is so gray that its truth might be totally denied (pp. 184-190). And in regard to the behavior of some of Hardy's characters, he notes that the "gentle moralists had a case!" in being shocked (p. 204). Duffin appears greatly distressed by Sue's opinion that legal marriage is vulgar, and he asserts that marriage has value in discouraging the "obvious evil of promiscuous unions" (p. 249). From numerous comments such as these one can surmise Duffin's ideal doctrine.

The confusion that characterizes Duffin's critical procedure results in a number of contradictory judgments about Hardy. The contradictions reveal the critic's uncertainty either about his theory for judging art or about Hardy's works in particular or perhaps about both. He obviously approaches a work of art with the expectation of seeing his ideal doctrine represented, and to the extent that Hardy's works illustrate his ideal, he evaluates them highly, but he also notes when they fail to depict the ideal. He seems satisfied to pick and choose within Hardy's novels, accepting those parts that conform to the ideal and rejecting those parts that violate it. For example, finding certain passages in Jude relating to marriage and divorce to be objectionable, Duffin remarks that " . . . it will be desirable to separate these out" (p. 245). He further exemplifies the "pick and choose" approach to art in the discussion of Hardy's pessimism:

" . . . what he thought about things found its way into his work, but without disturbing its artistic shape." Since the critic never deals with artistic shape or form, one can only assume that form is equal

to adequate expression of ideas illustrating the ideal doctrine. Another example of Duffin's uncertainty about his aesthetic rationale is revealed in his comments on the immoral behavior of some of Hardy's characters. He notes that one is justifiably shocked by their behavior, but he concludes that compared to the "abnormal sex-obsession that floods the fiction of today," Hardy's men and women do not behave so badly after all (p. 204).

The general inadequacy of Duffin's study of Hardy is a serious matter in a full-length work of criticism. The critic's implicit ideal doctrine, which emphasizes a rather narrow moralism based on Christianity and the status quo, emerges as the major criterion for judging the works. The value of his criticism is even further reduced by the critic's lack of awareness of his actual aesthetic basis and by the resulting inconsistency in his judgments. For example, he is reluctant to state explicitly the many negative opinions of Hardy's art which he seems to arrive at in applying his criterion, and he does not attempt a meaningful reconciliation of his negative and positive responses. He essentially says that one can find some valuable teachings in Hardy, which may be separated from the unacceptable elements.

The foregoing examples of criticism illustrate the most unacceptable kinds of ideal imitation criticism. When a critic attempts to evaluate literature on the basis of an extremely narrow ideal doctrine, when he assumes no reader will question his criterion and thus sees no need to justify it beyond the fact that it pleases or inspires him, and when he appears unaware that he is using a certain doctrine for artistic assessment, one can only conclude that the resulting criticism

will be unsatisfactory. That is, it could not possibly facilitate and enrich our understanding of Hardy's novels.

Some degree of value must be accorded to the critics who are aware of their use of an ideal doctrine in judging Hardy's works and who often specifically defend the value and appropriateness of the ideal. This characteristic reflects the critic's responsibility to his readers to know and support his aesthetic rationale. This one quality, however, is not likely to counteract the extremely narrow interpretations usually produced by ideal imitation theory. In this group, the critics attempt to support their doctrines, but their defenses are, as one might expect, grounded in personal belief. In all ideal imitation criticism one is struck by the wide divergence of critical judgment, and the reasons for this should be obvious: as long as critics single out philosophy as the major literary element and then use a belief regarding any aspect of life as the major criterion of literary excellence, there is bound to be much divergence of opinion.

In the case of Hardy's critics, we will look at two basic groups--critics who evaluate Hardy's philosophy negatively and critics who evaluate it positively. But within these groups philosophy or ideal doctrine is conceived of in various terms, for example, social, cultural, religious-theological, and religious-ethical. In view of the many possible avenues by which one may arrive at an ideal doctrine and its ultimate grounding in the critic's preferred beliefs, it is not difficult to understand why there is little critical agreement.

Among the criticism presenting a negative response to Hardy's philosophy is Mrs. M. O. W. Oliphant's essay titled "The Anti-Marriage League."⁷ Mrs. Oliphant is very much aware of her ideal doctrine and attempts to justify it. It pertains exclusively to certain attitudes towards and beliefs about marriage and human relationships which she values for the support and stability they afford society as a whole. Thus her justification for her ideal, which is primarily social, is ultimately a matter of preferred beliefs. First, she acknowledges the great power of art and states that it should be directed toward expressing ideals that will contribute to the well-being of society; and second, she states that literature should uphold the traditional concept of the institution of marriage, which, in fact, represents "that faithful union of Two upon which pure and progressive society is built" (p. 141).

Another of Hardy's early critics, P. T. Forsyth⁸ concludes that the novelist fails in the tragic mode since he does not show the struggle of moral souls and since he does not include the fact of Christian revelation in his novels. Forsyth's ideal doctrine initially seems to be based on the authority of man's total cultural reality; that is, he argues that writers should recognize all of the facts of our culture and these include the following: the fact of Jesus Christ, the great historic and creative tradition, classic theology and classic Scripture, as well as the scientific and modern treatment of these. However, he drops this initial rationale for his criticism and ultimately sets forth as his ideal the Christian doctrine of redemption, which he defends on the basis of its truth, its handling of

a deep problem and providing a high solution, and its making possible communion, cooperation, and life itself (pp. 463-466). Although Forsyth originally sought to defend the presentation of Christianity in literature on the basis of its being part of Western culture, he finally supports it on the basis of a religious-theological belief to which he subscribes. In other words, the initial defense was based on certain facts of our culture, whereas the final defense must be placed in the category of belief.

Several other critics present negative judgments of Hardy's philosophy on the basis of specific religious-theological doctrines, with the primary defense of the ideal being its absolute truth, a defense that obviously belongs in the realm of belief. In some cases the ideal doctrine is relatively general or simple: for example, W. J. Dawson⁹ finds Hardy's vision of life to be far too narrow and microscopic because in Dawson's rationale, an adequate view of man must include "man's authentic relations with infinity" and life's "vital good, its moral base, its hidden hope" (pp. 229-231). Dom David Knowles, writing in the Dublin Review,¹⁰ sets forth his religious ideal in terms of its direct relationship to aesthetics. According to Knowles, the immoral person or the atheist cannot be a poet, for the poetic view of life is equivalent to a certain kind of vision. The "poet sees God's work, Being, in the form of beauty" (p. 209). And the poetic vision assumes "that man's action is ruled by himself, has an assigned purpose which makes virtue a better thing than vice, and stretches forward beyond our vision to something beyond death; it assumes also that beauty, harmony, and love are real and valuable wherever they are found in the universe, and that in and for themselves" (p. 216). Knowles'

final word of caution regarding the application of his religious-aesthetic ideal doctrine is that the critic must not sacrifice "all reverence for religious or ethical truth" to the concept of artistic beauty (pp. 209-210). When critics attempt to support religious-theological doctrines on the basis of their absolute truth, we are not dealing with any kind of truth that can be verified. Consequently, their defense is essentially a matter of belief.

Robert Shafer is another critic who attempts "a study of Mr. Hardy's interpretation of life" and finds it seriously deficient. Shafer's title, Christianity and Naturalism¹¹ indicates the ideal and anti-ideal doctrines to be evaluated in literature. The critic's justification for his negative opinion of Hardy is mainly presented in terms of an attack on what he considers the premises of the Naturalistic school of fiction. He argues that it is surprising that Hardy would have placed so much faith in the so-called scientific method of the Naturalistic approach, which, in fact, involves selection and control. Moreover, he emphatically denies that there is artistic value merely in the honest rendering of an individual man's experience. Shafer concludes, like some of the previously mentioned critics, that Christianity presents us with the true significance of man's experience in life, which includes his freedom, life's higher values, and the reality of eternity (pp. 279-280).

The foregoing examples illustrate the critic's conscious use of an ideal doctrine as an aesthetic norm, and all of the resulting evaluations of Hardy's works are basically negative; we may now explore some positive appraisals of Hardy by critics who set forth different ideal doctrines for judging literature. These critics also support

their ideal beliefs in terms of their social or religious implications, but they arrive at far different judgments. In surveying the conflicting aesthetic judgments, one begins to see the extreme limitation of the use of an ideal doctrine as a criterion for assessing art, since the aesthetic criterion is essentially equivalent to the critic's preferred beliefs.

Among the positive responses to Hardy's philosophy is that of Duane Williams in "The Teaching of Thomas Hardy."¹² Williams' ideal doctrine, which he finds so well represented in Hardy, consists of several elements: a new "saner morality" and a version of reality--both of which are based on social conscience, democracy, and the findings of science. Using these beliefs as an aesthetic norm, Williams praises Hardy's criticism of outmoded moral codes, which "do not further ethical developments," and which are, indeed, "survivals of degenerate states . . . and therefore retrograde and harmful" (p. 253). He interprets Jude to be one of the "intellectual proletariat" that will reconstruct modern political institutions (pp. 257-258). Herbert L. Stewart¹³ also gives considerable attention to Hardy's "teachings." Stewart's ideal encompasses the theological-ethical truth that there exist within man certain ethical and moral criteria which, despite the cosmic order, remain as "eternal verities." Stewart concludes that although Hardy does not present in his novels the highest ideal, which is a "trust in the Good" as the only possible clue for solving the problem of conscience and fate, his novels do contain the paradox of the "clear-cut cosmic theory" and "a fierce moral protest." The critic thus accords some value to Hardy's representing simply the riddle or paradox of life--minus solutions

(pp. 593-596). The final positive evaluation of Hardy's philosophy in this category is that of E. S. Bates,¹⁴ whose ideal belief is "heroic optimism," an optimism based on neither submission to a Supreme Perfection nor on ignorance. Bates justifies heroic optimism as the rationalist's approach to man's ethical life; he attributes great significance to man's acts, a significance which results in a sense of responsibility rendering ethical activity possible (p. 477). The critic argues that the struggles of Hardy's characters represent not only a justifiable pessimism, which is experienced by many rational persons, but also "a worthy humanity, true to itself, unconquered by destiny, sanctified by love" (pp. 484-485).

It should be apparent why there is great divergence of critical opinion when ideal doctrines are used as the main criterion for aesthetic assessment. First, the critic singles out one aspect of art--the so-called naturalistic--and further limits this aspect to the sort of philosophical message one can derive from the literary work. Second, in determining what shall be the standard of aesthetic excellence, that is, what philosophical message or ideal doctrine should be conveyed, the critic has many aspects of reality to choose from, as based on various kinds of authority. The problem, of course, is that both decisions are strictly a matter of the critic's personal beliefs. For example, both Mrs. Oliphant and Duane Williams are concerned with an aspect of social reality, specifically marriage and human relationships. But Mrs. Oliphant's views are based on traditional attitudes, whereas Williams' ideas are supported by more "modern" theories. We see a similar situation in the case of ideal

religious or theological doctrines. Forsyth, Knowles, and Shafer primarily defend their religious beliefs on the basis of absolute truth or traditional authority, whereas Stewart and Bates make a strong appeal to the truth of modern rationalism. What is actually the central factor in these critical opinions is belief and its relation to aesthetic judgment. In all cases the critics allow a belief to become the criterion for determining artistic excellence; and, naturally, because there is a limitless number of kinds of beliefs that may be brought to bear on literary evaluation, one cannot expect much agreement in criticism of this sort.

Occasionally we encounter among the Hardy critics some who employ what is obviously an ideal doctrine, but who seem to write criticism that contributes to our appreciation of Hardy's works. Again, to mention this fact is not to defend what is still an extremely limiting approach to literature. The precise qualities in this criticism that lead to a higher evaluation of it than is accorded to the previous examples are related to the critic's individual procedure and sensitivity. We may explore how these factors affect the quality of ideal imitation criticism. First, the critic explains and defends his ideal in such a way that one is convinced that it is at least somewhat appropriate for the given literary work. Perhaps we are convinced because the beliefs involved possess a breadth and depth that give them a kind of naturalistic relevance. In other words, although the ideal involves beliefs, they are beliefs that experience with life, in a sense, verifies.¹⁵ The second quality exhibited by the critics in this group pertains to their adeptness in constructing the literary work in terms

of the ideal doctrine. Thus, I believe these critics succeed to some extent in justifying their doctrines and in conveying their relevance to the artistic insights contained in Hardy's novels.

In looking at much of the Hardy criticism, especially that dealing with the general philosophy of the works or the vision of reality expressed, we have explored two basic judgments: first, Hardy's vision is seen as deficient because it fails in depicting the truth to man's situation or to man's reality; and second, Hardy's vision is seen as the source of the greatness of his works because it is true to reality. In these examples, reality was perceived in a variety of ways and the nature of truth was ultimately dependent on belief. Furthermore, we have detected a trend in these two categories of critical judgment. The critics who find Hardy's vision deficient nearly always hold as an aesthetic criterion an ideal doctrine of reality that is based on tradition, while the critics who mainly offer praise of Hardy's philosophy hold ideal doctrines of reality that are "modern" or "revolutionary." The following critics to be discussed fit into the same broad categories, but their increased adequacy relates both to the specific terms in which their ideal doctrines embody "truth to man's reality" and to their more sophisticated critical practice.

Lionel Johnson's The Art of Thomas Hardy¹⁶ is a most important study based on a traditionalist ideal doctrine. Johnson's aesthetic ideal is not simply the doctrine of Christianity, though Christianity is part of it; it might be more accurately described as traditional humanism. In explaining and defending humanism as a criterion of artistic excellence, he cites its basis in both artistic tradition and

in man's experience with life. The assumption behind Johnson's criterion is that there must be a measure of truth in the humanistic doctrine or else it would not be so pervasive in our literary tradition. Analysis of the critic's commentary reveals the truth to be the kind of truth-to man's experience that is verifiable by his contacts with life.¹⁷ Explained in this way, Johnson's ideal of humanism seems to possess relevance to both the naturalistic and aesthetic elements in Hardy's novels, and is somewhat removed from the realm of absolute truth, a category totally dependent on belief.

In an introductory chapter titled "Critical Preliminaries," Johnson succinctly sets forth his aesthetic rationale, although the exact nature of his ideal doctrine emerges from comments made throughout the entire book. He believes that the value and power of literature reside in its "occupation with the whole mind of man" (p. 1). More specifically, "Life in contact with the passions and with the emotions of men" gives rise to the origins of literature (p. 2). Johnson seems to equate the humanity (a naturalistic element) that one looks for in literature to a kind of primeval immediacy of life. For example, noting that when literature loses its humanity it loses its beauty, he explains this position as follows:

Emotions become entangled with the consciousness of them: and after-thoughts or impressions, labored analysis or facile presentation, usurp the place of that older workmanship, which followed nature under the guidance of art.

(p. 3)

Johnson thus makes two points about his humanistic ideal: first, that humanism reflects the immediacy and naturalness of man's passions and emotions, and second, that the "broad and high traditions of

literature" have captured these qualities and can serve as an aesthetic model (p. 4). Johnson further clarifies the humanistic tradition in his designation of two standards by which to judge art: ancient greatness and proper conscience. Finally, he states that the purpose of art is to derive the "interior virtue, the informing truth" from the "conflict and the turmoil of life" (p. 13). The difficulty with Johnson's concept of humanism arises from his attempt to prescribe art's "informing truth."

For a more complete definition of Johnson's ideal doctrine, we must look to the final chapter, "Sincerity in Art." It is here that the moralistic aspect of his humanist doctrine appears. The critic argues that art cannot be separated from morality and that man's morality basically stems from a faith in divine justice, which provides him with ethical principles by which to live. Johnson sees man's faith in divine justice evidenced in the general beliefs of classical Greece, but he sees this faith more thoroughly exemplified in Christianity and its ethics (pp. 256, 260). To summarize, Johnson's basic humanistic tradition places considerable value on the experiential element of truth-to man's existence, and this aspect, employed as an aesthetic norm, allows the critic to make some enriching interpretations of Hardy. But the moralistic aspect of his humanistic criterion leads to overvaluing of a moral message and is responsible for some of the constricted interpretations.

When Johnson applies the moralistic aspect of humanism as a criterion for assessing Hardy's novels, some very negative evaluations result. For example, he regrets the pervasive "note of revolt," for

great literature has always expressed "the sanity, the measure, the harmony of the world" (p. 234). It is on the basis of this specific norm that the critic objects to Tess. He denounces the novel's insinuated argument of vindicating the ways of man to God (p. 236), and seems almost regretful of having to scrutinize "the argument of so piteous a story" (p. 246). He views Tess as "an indictment of 'Justice,' human and divine" but notes that without Hardy's commentary, one would arrive at a different moral--in other words, the moral attendant upon acceptance of Tess's real guilt (p. 246). Johnson believes it possible and valuable to read the novel apart from authorial commentary. If this is done, Tess appears, not as a wholly irresponsible victim but as one who had some choices; he suggests that she could have, for example, followed the course of self-renunciation as did Maggie Tulliver in turning to Thomas à Kempis (pp. 267-268). He is critical of Hardy's inconsistent handling of Nature, but his main objection to Tess is that God is blamed (p. 248). This fact denies human conscience and faith in divine justice. Johnson appears outraged by Hardy's "descanting upon the fact, that man and woman in 'nature' are not the same, as man and woman in 'society.'" At this point, the critic invokes the ideals of the Christian ethic, noting that though it may be austere, it represents the way to honorable life (pp. 258-260). Johnson further objects to Tess because of Hardy's treating women with a "curious lack of dignity" (p. 254), and because of his making Tess, who is a sinner, appear attractive. The critic sincerely doubts "the wisdom or morality of drawing fictitious portraits of noble-minded and interesting sinners, by way of teaching

us to feel for the sinner" (p. 262). He acknowledges that Hardy does not condone corruption, yet he finds it hard "to sympathize with much of his sentiment upon man's position in Nature" (p. 270).

When Johnson applies his initially stated humanistic ideal (encompassing both naturalistic and aesthetic elements), we encounter more positive evaluations of Hardy's achievement. For example, he praises the simple truth conveyed in the bare facts of The Return of the Native. The truly unequivocal praise goes to Hardy's creation of Wessex and its country folk for its wealth of human nature, and its variety of life. Johnson concludes that "we can hardly refuse our praise to a writer of so much power" regardless of the truth and rationality of his philosophy (p. 274). Moreover, he reluctantly concedes that some of Hardy's views represent partial truths that are part of the great humanist tradition. When Hardy dwells on "the dust and ashes of things, the cruelty of lust, and the fragility of love," he presents some "old and very grave truths"; and after all, Johnson notes, one must recognize in literary tradition the element of "reasonable sadness" (pp. 274-275). One must not infer from this last remark that Johnson accords moral truth to Hardy's views; his moralistic criterion forbids this. We see its operation in the critic's acknowledged difficulty in evaluating Hardy's delineation of character. The difficulty stems from the character's "relation to certain views of life" and from "the method of their presentation, which follows upon an honest holding of these views" (p. 187). The only acceptance that Johnson can allow in this aspect of Hardy's art is an imaginative one: the conflicts between souls and the forces of the world "are of

sufficient validity in the region of imaginative thought, to fill a story with the breath of life." But when he judges the moral truth of Hardy's "sentiments about the meaning of the unconscious universe, or of conscious mankind," Johnson can only say that these sentiments may represent the "sad friends of Truth" not truth itself (pp. 191-192).

Johnson's study of Hardy proposes as a standard for judging art the great humanistic tradition in literature, which, according to the critic's initial explanation, includes the experiential quality of life and its reflection in great literary works, which can thereby serve as an aesthetic model. This tradition embodies a concept of essential reality that is broad and true in the sense of being true-to life's experiences. But the humanist tradition is eventually circumscribed by Johnson's designation of another truth, an absolute moral truth that hinges upon the human conscience as derived from faith in divine justice. This morality is obviously an important part of the great tradition of Western art, but in perceiving it as an absolute truth and invoking its pragmatic value in providing the way to an honorable life, Johnson reverts to a doctrinal interpretation of Hardy. Though he comments on the formal and experiential aspects of Hardy's novels, it is the doctrinal interpretation that leaves the strongest impression.

We may now consider some of Hardy's critics who have judged the philosophy of the novels against certain modernist ideal doctrines and determine how the critics' conceptions of the truth of man's reality and their individual critical approaches influence judgment of their critical achievement.

Arnold Kettle¹⁸ praises the novel as a genre because he associates its development with man's attempt to win his freedom from feudalism. According to the critic, the genre of romance imposed "a static, idealist moral code upon the actual movement and complexity of human behaviour" (I, p. 35), whereas the novel emerged from the bourgeois writers of eighteenth-century England, for whom it "was, above all, a means of taking stock of the new society. A medium which could express a realistic and objective curiosity about man and his world, this was what they were after" (I, p. 37).

Kettle seems to take the position that the novel is supremely suited to express genuine truth, specifically, a kind of historical truth. His position reminds one of Scholes and Kellogg's account of the nature of the artistic truth that is offered by fiction.¹⁹

Analysis of Kettle's commentary reveals an ideal doctrine emphasizing a revolutionary version of social and economic history which represents the truth of man's struggle to free himself from domination by either feudalistic or capitalistic elements. In defining his ideal doctrine in this way, Kettle points to certain aspects of man's reality which are verifiable in history, and he relates representation of this aspect of reality to a specific literary genre. His ideal doctrine appears, therefore, to be anchored to historical reality and to a specific literary form. In his initial defense of his aesthetic rationale, the critic convinces us that his doctrine has some degree of appropriateness to some of Hardy's novels.

Kettle sets forth the opinion that in Tess and Jude Hardy has created tragedy which "bitterly and poignantly captures a central truth

of the era in which he lived" (II, p. 10). In his criticism of Tess, he states that the novel "has the quality of a social document The thesis is that in the course of the nineteenth century the disintegration of the peasantry--a process which had its roots deep in the past--had reached its final and tragic stage" (II, p. 49). It becomes evident from Kettle's criticism that Tess is a tragedy because the subject of the novel--the destruction of a proud and noble peasantry--was a tragic occurrence. The critic very pointedly rejects other interpretations of Tess: "It is important for a number of reasons to emphasize that Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a moral fable, that it is the expression of a generalized human situation in history and neither (what it is generally assumed to be) a purely personal tragedy nor (what Hardy appears to have intended) a philosophic comment on life in general and the fate of Woman in particular" (II, p. 53). Kettle makes this point because he believes that most of the novel's flaws stem from Hardy's inadequate philosophical ideas, whereas its strengths are due to his "social understanding" and "the moving story of the peasant Tess" (II, p. 61). In his pointed rejection of any other interpretation of Tess, one sees the typical result of most ideal imitation criticism: namely, reducing the complexity of a literary work to a single message or doctrine.

A similarly modern or revolutionary ideal doctrine (at least for the early twentieth century) emerges as the major aesthetic criterion in D. H. Lawrence's "Study of Thomas Hardy."²⁰ Lawrence devotes considerable effort to explaining his ideal doctrine. Because its principles include certain broad aspects of man and nature, many people will

accept that it contains some degree of truth about the essence of reality. Again this kind of truth can only be defined as that which experience with life seems to verify. There might always be some people whose experience with life does not verify Lawrence's vision of man's nature; but it is worth noting that beliefs are involved in determining what one's experience with life will be in that a person's beliefs influence what aspects of life he is able to perceive and participate in.

Lawrence's view of essential reality may best be explained in terms of two principles of life, their meaning, and the degree of unity and conflict associated with them. Lawrence envisions all of life in terms of the principles of Law and Love, and both individual and absolute truth is found in the perfect union of the principles. (One should note at this point that Lawrence perceives his doctrine as bearing absolute truth, while I suggested above that the experience of many people would support that it contains some degree of truth about man and nature.) The meanings of the principles may be demonstrated by listing the various qualities that Lawrence assigns to each of them. The principle of Law is equated to the great primeval principle of earth, to the womb, the flesh, the senses, the feelings, the soul; it is also called the Female principle. The principle of Love is equated to spirit, mind, consciousness, and knowledge; it is also called the Male principle. Lawrence explains truth according to his vision of reality:

What we call the truth is, in actual experience, that momentary state when in living the union between the male and the female is consummated. This consummation may be also physical,

between the male body and the female body. But it may be only spiritual, between the male and female spirit.

(p. 460)

In literature, Lawrence considers our main interest to be in the truth of the individual man. The next aspect of Lawrence's theory relates to the degree to which man can achieve truth in actual life and the nature of its manifestations. He believes that men and women find their culmination or their truth in their relationship with each other, that is, in love. Love marks for the male his highest point of activity, and for the female, her arrival at her intensest self. Total consummation is other than just physical--it is infinite and eternal. Through the union, man finds the "axle for his motion," and woman finds the "hub for her stability" (p. 447). In their total union exist all the qualities usually attributed to God--Eternality, Infinity, Immutability. But total union is rarely achieved, mainly because man finds his pure, non-practical, non-utilitarian culmination to be hindered by a force that is over-emphasized by society or the community. That force is self-preservation which manifests itself in work, practical action, business, money, and social convention. It is this force that keeps man from bringing himself to his own being, his own fullness, his own blossoming, a state which is valuable in and of itself (pp. 402-408).

We may now determine the specific value and function of art according to Lawrence's theory. First, there is in all art "testimony to the wonderful dual marriage, the true consummation" of the principles of Law and Love, or Female and Male (p. 475). He notes that most art depicts the antinomy between the flesh and the spirit and that

moralists will insist on either one principle or the other. He feels that art must go beyond such specific concepts of morality:

But if it be really a work of art, it must contain the essential criticism on the morality to which it adheres. And hence the antinomy, hence the conflict necessary to every tragic conception. The degree to which the system of morality, or the metaphysic, of any work of art is submitted to criticism within the work of art makes the lasting value and satisfaction of that work.

(p. 476)

Lawrence explains the nature of artistic form as "a revelation of the two principles of Love and Law in a state of conflict, yet reconciled" (p. 477). The difficulty associated with the metaphysic of a work of art is that the artist may have allowed his personal metaphysic to overpower the artistic form (p. 479). There are various degrees of artistic excellence, but the supreme art, which yet remains to be done, demonstrates the reconciliation between the principles of Law and Love (p. 516).

Lawrence is particularly successful in conveying how application of his ideal doctrine illuminates our understanding of Hardy's characters. He detects in the actions of many of Hardy's characters a desire to break out of society and out of convention; they seem to blossom, to explode, "independently, absurdly, without mental knowledge or acquiescence"; nonetheless, they cannot totally free themselves from the self-preservation scheme on which the community is modeled.

Lawrence concludes that it is Hardy's tragedy and the theme of the Wessex novels to present man as willful, passionate, and desirous of breaking out of society's stifling conventions, and yet to show his alienation and ultimate destruction resulting from his inability to

survive without society. He feels that Hardy's version of tragedy is inferior to that of Sophocles and Shakespeare because he portrays man transgressing a purely human morality, a mechanical social system. Sophocles and Shakespeare show their heroes "destroyed by their own conflicting passions"; the transgression is within the individual soul. Lawrence regrets that Hardy always presents his characters as having "an inevitable, unconquerable adhesion to the community." "It is, in Wessex, that the individual succumbs to what is in its shallowest, public opinion, in its deepest, the human compact by which we live together, to form a community" (pp. 439-440). In interpreting the significance of Hardy's presentation, Lawrence asserts that according to the novelist's metaphysic, "there is no reconciliation between Love and the Law"; Hardy cannot understand the principle of Law and consequently relegates it to nothingness, to blind confusion; he must destroy all who represent the "old Primeval Law, the great Law of the Womb, the primeval Female principle" (pp. 480-482).

General opinion about Lawrence's study exemplifies especially well the fact that evaluation of what is obviously ideal imitationist criticism may depend to some extent on the exact nature of the ideal doctrine and on the critic's peculiar sensitivity in applying it to the literary work. The essay on Hardy has been regarded with great interest since its publication and respected for its insights into certain of Hardy's works. Part of the reason for the interest and praise, I believe, derives from the fact that Lawrence's account of the essential principles of life emphasize certain basic, indisputable components of man's nature that are verifiable in life experiences

(assuming that one's beliefs do not blind him to this aspect of life). The life experiences of many modern readers especially corroborate the views on sexuality, individual fulfillment, and society's constricting influences. Moreover, Lawrence is adept in constructing for us a meaningful interpretation of Hardy's novels in terms of his doctrine. Nonetheless, many of his judgments reflect the extreme narrowness of interpretation so common in ideal imitation criticism, and in these cases highly personal beliefs about the absolute truth of the doctrine control aesthetic judgments.

It is now possible to consider the implications of my judgments of Johnson's, Kettle's, and Lawrence's criticism. Johnson favors representation of the broad humanistic tradition of literature which includes the morality dictated by the Christian conscience. Among the modernists, Kettle demands proper representation of man's historical struggle to liberate himself, while Lawrence sees the greatest art depicting the ultimate reconciliation between the forces of Law and Love, a reconciliation resulting in the individual's achieving fulfillment. I believe that the ideal doctrines of these critics are such that the average person's experience in life verifies that they possess some degree of truth-to man's nature and reality. For this reason, many of their individual interpretations enrich our understanding of the philosophical implications of Hardy's novels. But when these critics perceive their doctrines in terms of their absolute truth, their responses to Hardy's novels are subsequently greatly limited. A critic's belief in the absolute aesthetic relevance of his ideal doctrine inevitably results in the narrowing of aesthetic response, the

distortion of the work of art, and conflicting critical interpretations and judgments.

The foregoing discussion has dealt with ideal imitation criticism possessing varying degrees of adequacy. Ideal imitation is the label applied to critics who specify a single concept of reality as embodying truth, see moral value in the doctrine, demand representation of it in literature, and perceive artistic excellence mainly in terms of deriving the proper philosophical message. We encountered doctrines that were both narrow and broad in scope. We also noted the extent to which they were defended simply in terms of the critic's beliefs and the extent to which they were defended in terms of certain cultural and historical facts or in terms of their truth-to man's experience. These factors, in conjunction with the critic's individual procedure and sensitivity, enter into my appraisal of this group of criticism. One must conclude that ideal imitation theory as an aesthetic rationale constitutes a narrow approach to literature, regardless of the definition of doctrine and the critic's skills.

II

The next major group of criticism to be considered reflects concern with a concept of essential reality, but that concept is seen to be worth explaining and evaluating precisely because it is the writer's unique view of things. Specifically, the critic feels that the writer possesses a vision of essential reality and that it is worthwhile to explore the vision as it appears in his works. This approach in essence imitation criticism would seem to represent an improvement over

the ideal imitation rationale for two reasons. First, the critic appears to focus on another aspect of literature besides its capacity to convey an appropriate philosophical message. There is acknowledgment that each writer conveys his own view of reality and that each one possesses value. Thus the critic is potentially able to see aesthetic value in many accounts of reality. The second reason is that critical judgment will apparently be separated from the critic's personal beliefs since he prescribes no appropriate doctrine. In other words, critics in this category appear to have expanded their idea of literature so as to include its so-called expressionistic element, an element unique to the writer and possessing value regardless of whether it supports the critic's own beliefs.

The approach described above will remind the reader of certain basic assumptions in the expressionistic theory of art, but I want to distinguish between the true expressionist attitude and the imitationist approach that deals with the writer's views about reality. The expressionist critic is interested in the unique quality of each writer's vision and in the elements that produce the vision and necessitate its expression; moreover, he is mainly concerned with the success with which the work communicates the vision so as to provide for the reader the same experience that produced the vision of the writer. Finally, the expressionist critic holds the view that each work gives expression to a particular emotion, experience, or vision which only that work has concretized. Now, the imitationist critic is ultimately concerned with the representation of norms. And we may distinguish the essence imitationist critic who is specifically

interested in the expressionistic element of the writer's vision by his normative approach; that is, the critic approaches the literary work with the intention of demonstrating the presence therein of the writer's "characteristic" view of reality. In the imitationist critic's perception, it is not the work itself that concretizes a particular philosophic vision; he is not concerned with the fact that the writer's expressive attempt produces a particular work and a particular philosophic vision. The imitationist critic believes in a characteristic philosophy that may be derived from data outside the work and with which the philosophic aspects of the work may be compared. I do not think that this approach is merely a matter of the critic's mode of argumentation. I think that certain critics see value in demonstrating that a writer possesses a characteristic philosophy that will find expression in his works. The usual procedure is to determine the nature of the philosophy and to show the extent of its presence in the writer's works.

The major problem with this critical approach is that the norm, the writer's characteristic philosophy, must be determined by the critic. This means that he will essentially reduce the large and expansive body of facts about the writer's life, works, and views to a philosophical or doctrinal account of man's reality. And such an account is likely to reflect the critic's perceptions of, if not actual beliefs about, life. Another problem is that aesthetic judgments are often expressly linked to representation of the writer's characteristic philosophy of life. In evaluating criticism in this group, I have taken into consideration several factors: the extent to which the critic

accords value to a variety of interpretations of reality, the extent to which his beliefs explicitly or implicitly influence his definition of Hardy's characteristic philosophy, the extent to which he explains Hardy's philosophy in terms of literary components, and the extent to which his aesthetic judgment is linked with representation of the typical philosophy.

We will first consider Harvey C. Webster's study titled On a Darkling Plain.²¹ In this work the critic mainly responds to one aspect of the novels--their presentation of what he understands to be Hardy's philosophy. In the Preface to the 1964 edition, Webster acknowledges the extreme limitation of his method: "I feel that I write of the novels too often as though they were illustrations of Hardy's philosophy . . . " (p. v). Yet he believes his study to be "sound" and does not wish to revise it.

Webster looks at the novels with the intention of determining their philosophy and deciding if it is representative of Hardy's characteristic philosophy. His basic premise is that the philosophy expressed in a writer's works will be the writer's personal philosophy. So in order to determine Hardy's typical view of life, Webster turns to the facts of the writer's life, to his journals, his poems, and to explicit philosophical statements in the novels. And from these sources he arrives at Hardy's philosophy, which appears in a similar form in most of the works:

For an artist with no pretensions to philosophical schematism, Hardy presented a singularly consistent Weltanschauung between 1865 and 1870. Chance allows happiness and unhappiness to be distributed almost at random. Man has desires which the nature of things prevents him from fulfilling. The struggle for existence, directed by an indifferent nature, does not

ordinarily result in success for the most deserving. Love causes pain far more often than it does joy. Perhaps in the distant future, something can be done to ameliorate conditions

(p. 77)

Webster finds it somewhat difficult to understand the persistence of Hardy's "twilight view of life" during subsequent periods when the facts of his life would suggest "many reasons why Hardy might have been, and frequently was, happy." But he explains the situation by saying that Hardy "could not escape the painful consciousness of the 'cursed condition of humanity'" (pp. 86, 88).

We may now explore how Webster's critical assumptions determine the emphasis that he gives to the philosophy expressed by the novels. Of Desperate Remedies, he remarks that although it is a sensational work, it still contains the "considered philosophy of the writer of 'Hap'" (p. 95). He believes that Under the Greenwood Tree does not contain much of "Hardy's characteristic reading of life," and he offers reasons for its absence:

Either because Hardy was himself unusually happy in his love for Emma Gifford or because he continued to feel the necessity of moderation until he had found an audience, or for both of these reasons, he never allows the more somber aspects of his world view to be emphasized.

(pp. 99-100)

In the commentary on A Pair of Blue Eyes, we can see how the critic accords aesthetic value to the expression of Hardy's characteristic philosophy. He notes that in spite of the novel's "stylistic incongruities" and its "floundering construction," "its more serious 'criticism of life' earns it more extensive treatment than either of its predecessors The exposition of Hardy's entire viewpoint is

clearer, more detailed, and more convincing than it had been before" (p. 102). From this comment, it appears that, for Webster, expression of Hardy's so-called complete philosophy or criticism of life becomes a major aesthetic criterion.

In his criticism of Hardy's later novels, Webster notes the inconsistency of the novelist's growing emphasis on determinism in conjunction with his intense attack on society; that is, if man's fate is determined, then so is that of society. In spite of the inconsistency, Webster still admires Hardy's hope for human betterment, and he ultimately explains the basis for hope in Hardy's idea of the growing consciousness of Will. But, the critic remarks, Hardy had not assimilated this solution to the inconsistent elements of his philosophy in the last novels; and in one sense the inconsistent philosophical stance detracts from their value. He concludes, however, that in another sense the inconsistency saves the novels since to the modern mind neither total pessimism nor total optimism would be a satisfactory philosophy.

Webster's criticism of Hardy ultimately reveals that the critic allows certain preferred beliefs about essential reality to influence aesthetic evaluation; he is explicit in setting forth his standards as to what constitutes a viable philosophy. Webster explains and justifies his belief that the writer must be able to relate his peculiar ideas about life to a large view of things:

If the philosophy of the artist is meretricious or false, markedly at odds with an intelligent and honest interpretation of the universe, it is no good finally, whatever its temporary appeal to people similarly addicted to turning their backs

upon reality. Still further, if the philosophy of the artist is inconsistent within itself, his creative work loses aesthetic value because of this inconsistency.

("Hardy as a Thinker," p. 55)

In other words the writer's personal philosophy, the critic asserts, must accord with the general consensus of intelligent men and be internally consistent. This requirement is not especially idiosyncratic, but it focuses attention on the writer's philosophy as separable from his literary works and available from a variety of sources. And when a critic attempts to derive the writer's typical philosophy from a variety of nebulous sources, his interpretation is likely to be influenced by personal beliefs.

To elaborate on this point, one may, first of all, question the value of the imitationist expectation of determining a writer's characteristic philosophy. Much of literary biography denies the likelihood of deriving consistent philosophical views from a writer. Yet the imitationist is devoted to proving that a typical philosophy may be posited. If the evidence from the writer's life and works suggests divergent philosophical opinions, then the critic must make judgments about what are and what are not the writer's strongest and most pervasive views. In such a case, there is likely to be distortion because there must be selection and condensation. And the kind and extent of distortion may often be traced to the critic's own beliefs. In other words, even when a critic is expressly devoted to ascertaining the writer's unique and characteristic philosophy and its presence in his works, he may still allow certain of his own personal beliefs about essential reality to exert an excessive influence on his judgment of

the writer's philosophy and works.

In an article titled "The Woodlanders, or Realism in Sheep's Clothing," William H. Matchett²² devotes considerable attention to proving that Hardy's characteristic philosophy is a form of realism and that it is expressed in The Woodlanders. His interpretation includes both autobiographical data and formal aspects of the novel, but his preoccupation with proving his point about the philosophy detracts from the value of his formal analysis. He gives considerable attention to the concept of realism and its relationship of the author's intention, because these are factors relevant to his definition of Hardy's typical philosophy. Matchett acknowledges that there is considerable disagreement as to what constitutes reality; it becomes clear from his explanation that he equates reality to "realism"; it also becomes clear that he does not accept that a writer's unique vision constitutes a worthwhile account of reality. To be precise, Matchett prefers that literary works convey "realism," which implies one particular interpretation of reality. Moreover, he asserts that realism is Hardy's characteristic vision, although the surface events and structure of his novels may seem to deny it. Consequently, he argues, the writer's intention must enter into any interpretation of the reality conveyed by his works:

Intention is not then, nor can it be, a sufficient determinant in defining a work of art; but it must, I believe, enter into the definition of realism to a greater degree than it does into other literary devices. This becomes especially clear in relation to the penetration of the devices of realism into contemporary fiction where they are frequently used as an effect-gaining façade for works of the most unrealistic sort. The outer garment is one of realistic details, but it often covers the shoddiest kind

of sentimentalism. The author is not engaged in presenting his view of reality, but in disguising as real a view that is frequently neither coherent nor mature.

(p. 244)

Now Matchett does not say that any view of reality expressed by a writer should be acceptable; he suggests that the view should be comprehensible, coherent, and mature. And a sentimental view of reality, he argues, cannot be this; it would be what he terms "false realism." It is difficult to understand why Matchett says that certain authors are not engaged in presenting their views of reality, simply because the views appear to him as sentimental ones. We begin to see how the normative interests of the critic overshadow any value that might be attributed to the uniqueness of the writer's vision in a given work.

In relating his critical rationale to Hardy, Matchett pursues his set idea about true and false realism. He remarks: "It is in the context of this prevalent false realism that The Woodlanders assumes a special interest, for in that novel Hardy, it seems to me, attempted to combine the elements in the opposite way, molding a realistic intention to the requirements of a sentimental form" (p. 244). It becomes clear from this statement that Matchett feels that conveying reality is not a matter of form or subject matter but of the author's intention. The trouble with this critical premise is, of course, the difficulty of determining the author's intention.

Let us look at the evidence that Matchett cites as support for his knowledge of Hardy's intention. First, he states that there was no bowdlerization of The Woodlanders; by this statement the critic

establishes that Hardy successfully kept the novel within the bounds of "a sentimental form"--the family magazine serial. He then simply asserts that Hardy always wanted to express his philosophy in his novels: he wished to put "across his unswerving view of reality, that it is implicit in the universe that man will be unhappy This view runs, as I have said throughout his novels, its power increasing in the last of them. But it is clearest, I think, in The Woodlanders just because it is not confused with the sexual realism that caused the uproar about the better-known (and artistically more satisfactory) Tess and Jude" (p. 247). Matchett further supports his knowledge of Hardy's intention to present his "characteristic" view of reality by citing some biographical evidence--that Hardy later asserted that he wished he had been more explicit about Grace's being doomed to unhappiness with an incontinent husband (p. 249).

Having established Hardy's realistic intention, Matchett explains how the novelist weaves his typical pessimistic view of reality out of the four sentimental threads of the novel. Hardy, he declares, further conveys this reality in creating a certain atmosphere by means of his symbolic descriptions of the woods and nature; he thus "establishes the completely unsentimental world in which his characters exist" (p. 258). Noting that Hardy's vision of reality stresses the idea that the instincts and desires of man are natural and yet man must suffer for them, the critic concludes:

Such is the view of reality that he presents and sustains in a form in which one would not have expected to find it. The sincerity with which it is presented is such that, in spite of the false notes struck by the combination . . . the result lives up to the intention and must be considered a convincing example of a tenable view of reality.

(p. 261)

Several factors are involved in my evaluation of Matchett's approach to Hardy's philosophy. There is value in his explicit presentation of his basic aesthetic assumptions and in his attention to various formal aspects of the novel, for example, realistic, sentimental, and symbolic techniques. His subsequent analysis and interpretation of The Woodlanders is an enriching and convincing one. But it is essentially separable from his narrow theoretical assumptions: the overvaluing of Hardy's characteristic philosophy, the narrow definition of reality, and the account of the relevance of the author's intention to the interpretation of a novel's vision of reality. A few specific weaknesses may be noted. First, he reduces Hardy's general view of reality to a simple pessimism and assumes that he wished to convey it in all of his novels. A second limitation relates to Matchett's assumption that he convincingly establishes Hardy's intention to convey his pessimistic philosophy in the novel. The third weakness derives from the critic's general approach to realism, which he somehow views as the most adequate interpretation of reality and as largely dependent upon the author's intention and not recognizable in the work itself. For example, he notes that realistic details are often a façade for sentimental or incoherent views and that Hardy's use of a sentimental form should not blind us to his typical pessimistic view of reality. The critic offers no meaningful guidelines for detecting true realism except for his implication that realism involves a "tough" view of things as opposed to a sentimental view. Ultimately, it seems, Matchett allows his beliefs about the nature of reality to determine his idea of the concept of realism in literature;

for him, reality is not basically pleasant and literature that represents it thus can only convey a "false reality." And so it appears that even if a critic purports to criticize a literary work on the basis of its representing the writer's unique vision of reality, he may allow personal beliefs to influence his evaluation of that vision and the literary work.

Just as Webster's and Matchett's overriding concern is with Hardy's typical philosophy and demonstrating its presence in the novels, a very recent study, Roy Morrell's Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way,²³ similarly purports to set forth the "correct" interpretation of Hardy's characteristic philosophy. Because Morrell's criticism is so recent and because it magnifies the shortcomings of Webster's and Matchett's critical approach, it merits a thorough analysis. It is particularly significant that one of the few Hardy critics that Morrell admires is Webster. This admiration, I would argue, is due to the similarity of the critics' interests and approaches. Although Morrell is well aware that present day critics are apt to be unsympathetic toward criticism that is concerned solely with extracting the writer's philosophy, he attempts to justify the approach for himself. His basic rationale for undertaking such criticism is twofold: the majority of Hardy's critics have misunderstood or misinterpreted the philosophy; and the abundance of criticism devoted to inaccurate expositions of Hardy's ideas demands correction along similar lines. He remarks:

For the last seventy or eighty years, critics have been discussing what they took to be Hardy's ideas: it is too late to rule me out of court; to get an unbiased decision

the rest would have to be ruled out too. It cannot be done. All we can do is to re-open the case, and try to get the ideas right.

(pp. ix-x)

Although the critical aims and methods of Webster and Morrell are similar, the resultant interpretations of the philosophy are different. Let us look at Morrell's version. For Morrell, the most significant term in regard to Hardy's philosophy is "evolutionary meliorism," a term that Hardy used on occasion to describe his own personal view of life. In explaining the term, the critic chooses to pursue its associations with naturalist theories of evolution which stress that survival of individual species depends on the organism's ability to adapt and utilize all advantages and options. He argues that Hardy's philosophy is that man must be aware that the worst can happen to him and that only he can prevent its happening by acting and using his various assets and seizing on the fortunate options that may present themselves. According to Morrell, such a philosophy indirectly pervades the novels:

At all events, the dual pattern--the recurring possibility of what is left undone, beneath the grossly imperfect pattern of what is actually done--is characteristic of Hardy's novels and stories. And the tension between the two patterns is what controls the reader's interest and the rhythm of the narrative. It may properly be said that his tragedies are not so much about unhappiness, as about happiness missed.

(p. 53)

He further explains the indirectness of Hardy's philosophical position as the result of the intention to convey the irony "that man fails through neglecting chances of success" (p. 88). Ultimately, Morrell relates Hardy's philosophical views to those of certain contemporary existentialist writers.

For the most part, I find Morrell's study to represent an unsatisfactory attempt to focus on Hardy's philosophy and a most unsatisfactory critical approach. His initial aim--to arrive at an accurate interpretation of the philosophy in order to correct previous critical failures--is a valid one. But his methods are questionable. In order to justify his methodology, which contemporary theorists would view as stemming from the biographical and intentional heresies, Morrell attacks the methods of the New Critics as subject to the influence of the critic's beliefs and prejudices. But his attack does not conceal the several strengths of the New Criticism, nor does it conceal the weaknesses of his reactionary approach. For example, like Hardy's earliest critics, Morrell supports his interpretation of the philosophy of the novels by citing evidence about the writer's own life, character, personal qualities, and beliefs; in other words, he views the philosophy as a fixed entity belonging to the author, an entity which will undoubtedly appear in his works. Moreover, he purports to divine Hardy's intention in the novels from specific bits of biographical data (pp. xi-xiii). He cites several times the same few personal remarks of Hardy's that add support to his interpretation, specifically, Hardy's mention of the "chink of possibility" open to man and the need to take a "full look at the Worst." It is most unfortunate that in a study that has the noble aim of setting forth the correct interpretation of the philosophy the critic should very selectively draw his evidence from Hardy's journals, poems, parts of novels, and from the impression that Hardy was a kind of natural evolutionist (p. 95). Although Morrell appropriately points out the

possible influence of a critic's own beliefs and prejudices on explanation of literary works, he fails to see that his personal beliefs may be controlling his interpretation of Hardy's philosophy.

Perhaps the most questionable critical procedure is the one that provides the basis of the critic's entire interpretation of Hardy's philosophy. Morrell argues that the philosophy that Hardy intends readers to derive is embodied in his works in an indirect and ironic form. That is to say, the surface events portrayed bear ironic overtones suggesting that the events need not have been as they were and that the fate that befalls Hardy's characters should not be taken as inevitable or predetermined. He insists that Hardy directly sets forth his view of reality only in two works: An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress and Far From the Madding Crowd. Consequently, he sees these works as providing a basis for understanding the irony of most of the others. I think that this general procedure reflects the critic's considerable inability to perceive the limitations of his whole aesthetic basis and his lack of judiciousness in pursuing such questionable critical techniques.

Morrell's study reflects all of the critical shortcomings so evident in the first fifty years of the Hardy criticism. I would argue that there is little justification in his adopting critical theories and employing critical methods that have proved to be not only inadequate but also the precise source of an almost endless series of conflicting interpretations of Hardy's philosophy. Morrell's study implies an awareness of the history of literary criticism, but the critic shows no awareness of the relative strengths and weaknesses of

critical approaches as evidenced in practical criticism. His argument that almost any method is justified in order to get us to think differently about Hardy is not convincing (p. xiv). Nor can one be particularly impressed by the argument that his interpretation makes Hardy interesting to modern readers; this statement simply means that his works can be interpreted to accord with certain modern beliefs, instead of with Victorian beliefs. Another fault is that the critic relates his particular explanation of Hardy's philosophy to the overall aesthetic value of the works. For example, in commenting on the failures of other critics, he notes that John Holloway's interpretation "continues to reduce Hardy's writings to pointlessness, to a denial of any meaning in human choice or human effort . . . " (p. 17). It would seem from this statement that Morrell associates the ultimate value of literature with the philosophy of human choice and action. One may find further support for this premise in the critic's comment on The Well-Beloved:

The Well-Beloved is an absurd novel, perhaps, and unsuccessful; but it is difficult to share the common opinion that it is trivial. It seeks to show that the beautiful appearances which glamorize our lives are devices of cowardice; and that reality is life, and life is courage.

(p. 119)

Morrell's commentary eventually begins to sound like the early ideal imitation criticism in which the critics demanded that characters be portrayed in such a way as to illustrate the proper moral stance inherent in their ideal doctrines. The ideal doctrine in The Will and the Way is that man need not be helpless in the hands of Fate, for he can prevent helplessness by wise and responsible action. Everyone is

familiar with the kind of early criticism (based on a narrow concept of Christianity) that suggested that Tess could never be considered pure in view of her portrayed transgression; these critics further declared that a good woman, once she had fallen, would never have gone back to Alec, as Tess did. Morrell's comments about the poem A Conversation at Dawn reveal the same critical assumption: that there is a "right" course of action for the girl, one that accords with a specific ideal doctrine. The critic believes that Hardy's treatment of the problem in the poem is actually indicative of the proper course of action, although it is expressed in an indirect and ironical manner. The following comment about the poem reveals a twentieth-century interpretation of moralistic criticism (one that is based on the ideal doctrine of existentialism):

So far the pattern is familiar: had the girl taken stock of the worst possibilities, from the very beginning, she would not have become pregnant; when circumstances changed for the better, she would then have been able to take advantage of them. Or, having got herself into a difficult position, she would still have found the happiness she sought, had she had the courage to face her troubles, and, if necessary, pay the price of her mistake.

(p. 127)

Morrell, in attempting to get at the accurate interpretation of Hardy's philosophy, has discovered it to be existentialism. But throughout the book one finds abundant evidence that the critic is not interested in all of the facts about Hardy's philosophy or even in all of the facts about the philosophy of a given work. He is, indeed, giving a reading of Hardy's vision as he wants it to be, that is, one in support of his personal preference for existentialist thought.

Morrell's criticism, much more so than Webster's and Matchett's provides an example of imitationist criticism that is ostensibly devoted to explicating the writer's unique view of reality, but which, in fact, turns out to be an interpretation of the writer's philosophy that accords with the preferred beliefs of the critic.

None of the imitationist critics who attempt to interpret Hardy's artistic insights in relation to his personal philosophy manages to convince us that the relationship is relevant to critical judgment. Yet theoretically, their approach represents an improvement over ideal imitation theory, since it implies the critic's willingness to explore whatever unique vision of reality the writer may express and since the critic would not appear to have any preference for deriving a particular doctrinal message. But these critics do little justice to the expressionistic element in Hardy's novels. To varying degrees, their delineations of Hardy's so-called typical philosophy (gleaned from a variety of sources) reflect their personal beliefs which often force them into oversimplified interpretations of the novels. Webster's commentary is weakened by the tendency to overemphasize Hardy's consistency as a thinker. Matchett's analysis of The Woodlanders is perceptive and convincing, but it does not really depend on his theoretical arguments about realism and the author's intention. And Morrell's attempt to "correct" previous readings of the philosophic insights of Hardy's novels proves to be excessively influenced by the critic's determination to find existentialist ideas in Hardy.

III

The third and final group of essence imitation critics includes those who are interested in Hardy's artistic insights into reality or some aspect of reality (his philosophy), but who approach that philosophy in conjunction with attention to certain other elements of the work itself. In this approach critics have dissociated the version of reality (to varying degrees) from their own ideal beliefs and from the writer's so-called characteristic philosophy; they view the philosophy as somehow connected with the work proper. In many cases the critic associates the philosophy with merely one element of the work, for example, character, whereas in other cases philosophy is associated with genre expectations or broad approaches to art such as realism or allegory. And one must emphasize that not all of the criticism in this category is adequate or valuable. But this kind of imitationist criticism is important because it indicates the critic's awareness that aesthetic elements of the work are related to its philosophical vision or insight. As a result, most of them do not make any simple demand that Hardy's works should express a particular ideal doctrine or what the critic considers to be the writer's typical view of reality. In general, the whole aesthetic foundation of the criticism in this group gains strength from its attention to artistic phenomena other than philosophy perceived as doctrinal message, by its consideration of both naturalistic and aesthetic components of Hardy's works, and by the tendency to see the philosophy expressed through formal aspects of the works themselves.

We may first consider some of the weaker of the critical studies that link Hardy's philosophy to certain elements of the novels. In "Four Novels of Hardy: Some Second Impressions," Joyce Weiner²⁴ attempts to establish two primary characteristics of tragedy, the genre which she believes the novels fit. The first is "mimesis well and truly performed," with the nature of essential reality defined very generally as "the natural order of things"; the second characteristic is universality (p. 229). The problem with Miss Weiner's attempt is that the characteristics of tragedy that she cites are so general that they would apply to any genre. And her definition of the essential reality that tragedy imitates can give no insight into the philosophy of a literary work unless the so-called natural order of things is clarified. Moreover, she totally ignores an element that is universally associated with the genre: tragic conflict. Another critic, F. Brompton Harvey,²⁵ evaluates Hardy's world view in relation to the genre which he terms "serious fiction." The norm that Harvey sets up for serious fiction requires that the writer use the elements of plot, character and incident, so as to render a plausible version of reality. His rationale ultimately leads to the construction of a series of equations: the serious novel equals the "Naturalist School" equals modern realism equals Hardy's fiction. And the essential reality that one expects to be conveyed in the genre of serious fiction is that of "the laws of probability" (pp. 12-15). In accordance with these norms, Harvey deems Hardy's novels to be failures. The problem with Miss Weiner's and Harvey's criticism stems from their highly questionable "aesthetic" norms. Miss Weiner's definition of the

characteristics of tragedy fails to provide any specific standards beyond representation of universal or typical reality. And I have previously indicated that such a concept must be defined by the individual and will inevitably reflect his beliefs. Although Miss Weiner never explicitly defines her concept of typical reality, Harvey does; and in the definition, we see the excessive influence of the critic's beliefs. Harvey limits the province of serious fiction to representation of a plausible, average reality: in other words, for the critic, the most acceptable account of essential reality is that evidenced by a sort of scientific law of averages, and this is the account he demands in fiction.

William Rutland is another critic who fails in his attempt to set up certain aesthetic norms that meaningfully relate the work's philosophy to innate literary elements. His Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background²⁶ contains much useful information. But when it comes to critical appraisal, the value of the study diminishes. Rutland stresses the formal concepts of the unities, the tragic hero, and presentation. The concept of presentation is important in his judgment and he views it as the opposite of authorial purpose and judgment. He feels that, in the novels following The Mayor, authorial purpose and judgment become propaganda and the works cease to be art, since Hardy is merely asserting instead of presenting (p. 211). Although the element of presentation emerges as the major aesthetic norm, Rutland only vaguely suggests the characteristics of the element; presentation for him includes an emphasis on telling the "story" (p. 221), on "natural" action, and on a sort of positive

endorsement of life (p. 256). These few brief comments that are suggestive of a definition prove inadequate to clarify the exact nature of the aesthetic norm used to judge Hardy's works. Rutland's failure as a critic is due to an imprecisely formulated aesthetic foundation. When a critic intends to distinguish between art and non-art, he should take great care to identify precisely the characteristics of each category and to make the aesthetic norms clear to readers.

Among some of Hardy's early critics, one can detect varying degrees of success in the attempt to relate philosophic views in literature to certain other naturalistic and aesthetic elements. While these critics are not always thorough in exploring the characteristics of the elements under consideration, the elements remain significant, and more recent critics and theorists often offer refined explanations. We may take the example of Helen Garwood's Thomas Hardy: An Illustration of the Philosophy of Schopenhauer.²⁷ In addition to demonstrating the similarities between Hardy and Schopenhauer, Miss Garwood also makes some aesthetic judgments. These are based mainly on the relationship between a view of reality and the genre of fiction. In Miss Garwood's opinion, the essential reality we look for in fiction may be defined as bearing truth-to man's experience in life. This quality refers to a man-centered view of life--the way man sees it (not necessarily as it is according to ideal, absolute, or scientific standards). The novel, she feels, is the genre particularly suited to the expression of the man-centered view, which, more often than not, is a somewhat negative one. Such a view has life in it, arouses our interest, and has a large mixture of earth in it, precisely because it

is so close to man's experience (pp. 80-85). I think that what Miss Garwood is referring to is the same quality that a modern aesthete, John Hospers, labels the truth-to experience that we find in art and that we may verify in our contacts with the world. Murray Krieger also elaborates on the nature of this sort of experiential or existential dimension of art.²⁸

Bonamy Dobrée, in his chapter on Hardy which appeared in The Lamp and the Lute,²⁹ is more successful than Joyce Weiner in attempting to relate the philosophy expressed in the novels to the genre of tragedy. Dobrée defines tragedy in terms of man's probable conflict with reality: "the end of tragedy, then, is to show the dignity of man for all his helpless littleness in the face of the universe, for all his nullity under the blotting hand of time" (p. 23). He further defines (though perhaps impressionistically) certain other aspects of tragedy such as beauty, terror, pity, plot, and character. Whether or not one accepts Dobrée's definitions of tragedy and its elements, his criticism of Hardy represents an attempt to apply an aesthetic criterion that emphasizes the merging of the artistic and philosophic elements that are involved in the genre of tragedy. Consequently, one is left with the feeling that the critic is concerned with the whole work of art, with both its beauty and its truth, and not merely with a philosophic doctrine that can be extracted from it.

Three of the critics writing in the 1940 Hardy Centennial edition of the Southern Review employ critical rationales that link certain views of essential reality with literary elements, and the resulting criticism represents the best of the essence imitation criticism of

Hardy's philosophy. We will consider the studies by Morton D. Zabel, Jacques Barzun, and Herbert J. Müller.

In "Hardy in Defense of His Art: The Aesthetic of Incongruity,"³⁰ Zabel sets forth the view that it is necessary to evaluate and interpret Hardy's philosophy in relation to his peculiar aesthetic, which he links to certain broad expectations for the genre of fiction. He notes that Hardy's natural impulse and taste were toward the romance, the drama, and especially the sensation novel. As a result of this tendency, Hardy favored the quality of "casual vitality" in art, the function of which is to record "impressions" or "seemings"; these, he felt, have a permanence above intellectual doctrines and convictions. Zabel proceeds to relate Hardy's aesthetic views to his philosophical position, which, the critic argues, was meliorism. The main problem with understanding and appreciating Hardy's impressions is that they are tentative. Although he asserts humanistic hope through depiction of his characters' courage and dignity, the hope is presented as materializing "slowly, out of blight and despair"; and Zabel acknowledges that it is often crudely and clumsily handled (p. 140). The critic asserts that the reason that Hardy's melioristic view of reality seems vague and tentative is that his aesthetic prescribed a casual, instinctive, incongruous approach, rather than "what the modern critic has come to expect of a reformed fictional art--of the firmness of structure and tone, the accuracy of suggestion, and the formal and atmospheric unity . . . " (p. 142). He suggests that if we are to appreciate Hardy's art and philosophy we have to persist and move beyond his wrenchings of congruity, such as are evidenced in the defective and crude plots. Zabel concludes that Hardy "now appears to

us as a realist developing toward allegory--as an imaginative artist who brought the nineteenth-century novel out of its slavery to fact and its dangerous reaction against popularity . . . " (p. 148). This critical study demonstrates that the version of essential reality that a literary work imitates cannot simply be the writer's personal vision of life; the version of reality conveyed by a work of art is also related to the writer's aesthetic and to his peculiar integration of his vision into the literary form that he chooses.

Jacques Barzun's³¹ conclusions about Hardy are similar to those of Zabel; he relates the concepts of essential reality expressed in Hardy's novels both to the writer's philosophical and aesthetic assumptions. The critic discusses these assumptions in terms of the general artistic categories of the poetic and the realistic. Barzun argues that Hardy fits neither category; he is, instead, a "Romanticist" and thus offers a form of art and a vision of reality in which poetry and realism merge.

Barzun's discussion of the two categories--poetic and realistic--actually involves both beliefs about essential reality and beliefs about art. For this reason one must carefully untangle the two aspects of each of the categories. In regard to beliefs about art, the poetic category traditionally includes the right of the poet to invent or consciously to manipulate artistic materials (p. 182). In regard to beliefs about essential reality, the poetic category includes the idealistic vision or a "faith in the reality of the unseen" (p. 190). The realistic category, in regard to beliefs about art, emphasizes the simple artistic functions of observing and recording; and in regard to

beliefs about essential reality, it includes emphasis on historical happening, on what regularly happens, on the rational and logical, and on testable reality (pp. 182-183, 186, 190). Barzun argues that neither the poetic nor the realistic category is applicable to Hardy.

The critic believes that Hardy is a Romanticist and supports his Romantic vision for two reasons: it is generally true and it constitutes the novelist's unique (therefore true) vision.

The general truth to which Barzun refers appears to be truth-to man's experience, especially modern man's experience. For example, in discussing Hardy's use of coincidence, the critic declares that "the thoughtful observer must confess that these chances and mischances are not only common realities but also symbols of our powerlessness" (p. 184). He further remarks: "As naturalists, we are bound to accept the characters' self-will and the world's indifference to their desires" (p. 186). In these statements, Barzun is arguing that the so-called Romantic machinery of the novel carries philosophical insights which the general experience of men can verify. He wisely acknowledges, however, that acceptance of this kind of truth depends on "both temperament and experience" (p. 186).³²

Barzun also accepts Hardy's Romantic vision as true because it represents his unique view of things. He argues that an artist's unique vision must be valued for two reasons. First, the creative artist can expand our view of reality (p. 187). In this assertion, Barzun suggests the role of the artist as the seer (in accord with the Poetic tradition). He emphatically notes that "there is always a gap between the reality perceived and conveyed by a creative artist and the

recognition of it as plausible by the public at large" (p. 187). The second reason for valuing the artist's unique vision is that it is indicative of the fact that reality cannot be conceived of outside of perception. This fact means that we should not treat Hardy as a systematic thinker, nor should we interpret his novels in terms of "problems" or "contemporary ideas." The novels must be taken as views of these things, for Hardy saw reality under momentary moods or moments of vision. "Where the materialist is forced to explain away sentiment, hope, passion--mind, in short--Hardy perceives the elementary Pascalian truth that without mind there is no science, no Time, no hot desire or cold necessity. Having consciousness, we can conceive these things as existing without us, but the conception has only imaginative value." In other words, the reality conveyed in Hardy's novels is tied up with perception; it is the world as perceived by Hardy the artist (p. 191). Barzun concludes that the artist's perceived vision of reality must be regarded as a true aspect of essential reality, though it is not to be measured by truth to material fact. In his final remarks, he defends the truth of Hardy's perceived reality:

. . . in his world Truth and Poetry do not fight a Manichean fight which will leave Science or Ignorance master of the field; they merge into each other by degrees and constitute together the sum total of mind-measured reality.

(p. 192)

Barzun seems to accept that there are several kinds of true and valuable visions of reality (poetic, realistic, romantic, etc.) and that these give rise to broad classifications of art which refer to both philosophical and artistic elements. One can, therefore, better

appreciate and criticize the work if he first carefully determines its proper category.

In "The Novels of Thomas Hardy Today," Herbert J. Muller³³ sets forth an aesthetic rationale in which several qualities are valued, all of which pertain to a view of essential reality as it relates both to the work's aesthetic and naturalistic elements. Muller's aesthetic foundation possesses some characteristics of Krieger's mature Organicism, which was explained in Chapter 2. The difference is that while Muller acknowledges the interrelationship between aesthetic and thematic elements, he focuses on the thematic aspect of Hardy's novels interpreted as their insights into essential reality; consequently, he does not pursue the organicist interest in demonstrating how formal elements bear the thematic weight of a literary work.

There are several qualities that constitute Muller's aesthetic criteria and lead to his praise of Hardy's insight into essential reality. The first two qualities are closely connected but may be separated for purposes of discussion: they are universality and a kind of eternal truth. Universality encompasses the most basic, elemental, and primary characteristics of man. The critic explains the quality as depiction of man's primary passions, his major crises, his primal, ultimate, and common destiny; it is the quality typically attributed to Greek tragedy (p. 219). In elaborating on his conception of eternal truth, Muller emphasizes that he does not refer to any one version of essential truth: "the value of an artist's thought lies not in its essential truth but in the possibilities it permits him of so dealing with experience as to transcend any specific version of essential truth." By this, Muller means that artistic value is

related to the power with which the writer handles the truth of ideas and ideals so as "to suggest and nourish other ideas and ideals" (p. 221). He further clarifies this point: "In art as in science, which alike represent a dynamic, unfinished world, the universal is to be sought not in particular truths but in modes of truth-making" (p. 223). Thus the so-called truth-making in a literary work should be such that it does not lead to a diminishing of the aesthetic experience afforded by the work; it is the particular artistic embodiment of the truth that is important not the particular truth. As an example, the critic remarks that the creative activity that gives life to Hardy's characters "makes nonsense of his philosophy" (p. 222). Muller states that critics should not object to a writer's thought on the grounds of its falling short of absolute truth, but one may object to it insofar as it adversely affects his artistry, his style, his fictional inventions. The fictional artistry referred to is another quality that Muller values, and his explanation of it reflects both imitationist and organicist ideas. Specifically, he equates artistry to the quality that all great art shares--the vividness and a vitality of concrete representation of life. This characteristic refers to the representation of man as a vital, living creature, and such a representation, according to Muller, results in a natural, organic, inevitable literary action (pp. 221-222). We may now list Muller's three criteria of aesthetic excellence: universality, eternal truth, and fictional artistry.

In dealing with Hardy's flaws, Muller finds the philosophy to blame for the rigid and diagrammatic scheme of the novels, for the

too formal and too explicit arguments, and for the lack of a vivid and vital representation of life. He cites as examples of these shortcomings the "extraordinary actions" in Jude and "the dismal generalizations" illogically induced from them (p. 216). The critic concludes that Hardy's philosophy generally weakened his artistry and sapped his fictions of some vitality: " . . . his characters are at times slighted or manhandled for the sake of widely improbable events, the relations between character and plot seem at times mechanical and arbitrary rather than organic and inevitable" (p. 222). But fictional artistry is not for Muller the most important criterion of aesthetic excellence. Muller believes that Hardy's literary achievement is great. He asserts that there is enough universality and essential truth in the Wessex novels to overcome the artistic weaknesses so that their overall effect is impressive. In other words, the expressed insights into essential reality give the novels a kind of eternal quality. First, in assessing the effects of Hardy's excessive manipulation of character to illustrate his philosophy, Muller can see success in spite of the author's method. He mentions, for example, that Hardy's best characters are not puppets but actually "have a vigorous life of their own; they have dignity and force, they aspire and assert themselves passionately, their full measure is taken" (p. 222). That is, they emerge as vivid, vital human beings and thus exhibit the characteristics of basic, universal mankind. He cites further examples of the qualities of universality and essential truth in the novels. Muller seems to believe that Hardy's explicitly stated gospel of despair potentially limits the many modes of truth making inherent in human life; but he asserts that Hardy manages to

overcome this constricting tendency because what his novels eloquently represent "is not only a deep passion but a deep faith: a natural reverence for man, an illogical ideal belief that he is superior to the forces that destroy him, above all a conviction that at stricken moments . . . he can 'shine terribly against the dark magnificence of things'" (p. 222). The critic finds universality and truth not only in Hardy's characters and gods but also in the stories as well: "The past always changes with the present, is never seen or felt exactly as it was lived; and in this ceaseless process nothing is affected more surely than versions of universal, eternal truth." Hardy's truth-making is not dependent on his specific ideas, which one may easily reject, but there remains his vivid and compelling account of the underlying uniformities of human affairs: "the primary desires and emotions, the basic patterns and rhythms of experience, the laws that give all behavior continuity and consequence, exact payment from all men in accordance with their capacity for feeling" (p. 223).

As an evaluation of Hardy's novels as a whole, Muller's essay furnishes an example of imitationist criticism in its most perceptive and integrated form. One might define his criterion of aesthetic excellence as the organic representation of the concrete universal. Muller carefully elaborates on the precise relationship between vivid, vital representation and universal, essential truth. The representation of concrete experience in all its vitality is almost equivalent to a kind of organic quality in the work itself (though he does not demonstrate this); and the universal quality and the artist's version of truth-making find their being in representation of man in his

elemental, primitive vitality. It is representation of this elemental quality which Muller believes Hardy's novels possess and which will withstand certain modern critical tastes (e.g., the overvaluing of psychological and formal complexity and of a so-called "sound" philosophy in literature). Muller's criterion of aesthetic excellence enables him to illustrate convincingly Hardy's faults and achievements without referring to specific genre distinctions or requirements. Moreover, he expresses some warranted concern about modern approaches to art as being "hyper-technical, hyper-practical, hyper-critical"; and he warns critics about being so narrow in their admiration of the brilliance and subtlety of modern literature that they overlook the simple but majestic fictions of writers such as Hardy (p. 224).

I would like to mention one final work of criticism in the group of imitationist critics who value representation of essential reality in relation to certain inherent aesthetic elements. Iascelles Abercrombie's Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study³⁴ is a notable example because it incorporates a degree of breadth and objectivity about the significance of Hardy's philosophy that one does not usually find in early criticism. Abercrombie's aesthetic rationale represents a nice compromise between certain traditional attitudes toward art and the beginnings of twentieth-century attitudes. The traditional quality in his theory resides in the view that the ultimate value of art lies in its metaphysical power (p. 14). The critic explains this value as bearing a relationship to concepts of the essence of reality:

The highest art must have a metaphysic; the final satisfaction of man's creative desire is only to be found in aesthetic formation of some credible correspondence between perceived existence and a conceived absoluteness of reality.

(p. 19)

It is important to note that Abercrombie refers not to one view of essential reality but to "a conception of originating reality" (p. 22). It is not necessary, he claims, to examine the metaphysic for its truth: " . . . it is nothing to criticism, whether one considers the basic metaphysic of artistic expression to be a true or false, an agreeable or disagreeable, representation of the manner of our existence in this world." For the reader, the metaphysical concept need only be "a tenable, plausible, and coherent speculation, even when liberated from the art which holds it" (pp. 166-167). In the second part of his aesthetic rationale, Abercrombie shows a leaning toward the twentieth-century organic aesthetic. He asserts that the metaphysic must be expressed "by the whole of the art which contains it" (p. 20). He believes that all aspects of the art object should work together to provide "experience for the imagination," but he does not go so far as to say any experience or the imaginative experience for itself. Abercrombie emphasizes that form serves but one end: "We have a right to demand no more than that while we are immersed in an art, and giving ourselves up to it, everything therein shall work together to make us at the conclusion apprehend the metaphysic dominating the whole" (p. 23).

The critic explores Hardy's metaphysic in its imagined formalized expression and, in general, evaluates the novels very highly. He states that one may call Hardy's basic world view pessimism to the extent that the novelist depicts life as an "invasion into human consciousness of the general tragedy of existence"; accordingly, individuals are not puppets of a malicious fate, but they merely obey "the general,

measureless process of existence" (pp. 25-26). Hardy's pessimism is unusual, however, since it is capable of tragedy, as evidenced in the following characteristics present in the novels: a noble and dignified human resistance, substantiality of material in the form of credible persons, and form, which puts events of life under control and allows tragedy to be enjoyable (pp. 29-31). Abercrombie's broadest praise of Hardy derives from his perception that all aspects of the novels--the humor, the beauty of country life, the landscape, the use of Nature--contribute to the dominating spirit of his tragic view.

One can admire in this early study several qualities that are characteristic of more recent and more integrated imitationist criticism. There is a willingness to acknowledge the acceptability of several concepts of essential reality. There is refusal to criticize the work on the basis of a so-called absolute truth. And there is the suggestion that the vision of essential reality must be considered in the context of the total work of art and all of its components; that is, attention must be given to both aesthetic and naturalistic elements. I believe that Abercrombie's critical rationale significantly foreshadows that of Herbert Muller. Both critics feel that a work's "metaphysic" or "modes of truth-making" constitute a major aesthetic element, yet they also see this element integrally connected to an equally important aesthetic element--the organic nature of the literary work.

The discussion of the foregoing category of imitationist criticism points out a highly significant trend. The critics have not abandoned the view that a major function or value of art is to offer

representations of essential reality. But they show an awareness that the concept of reality expressed is integrally connected with certain other elements of the work, for example, with certain genre expectations, with the experiential dimension of art, with the interaction between the writer's personal and aesthetic assumptions, or with other complex qualities such as the concrete universal or the organic nature of the work of art. These elements are important because they include both aesthetic and naturalistic components of literature. This new direction is significant for several reasons. It allows the critic greater objectivity in regard to concepts of essential reality, since he must realize their value is relative to their unique functioning in the total literary work. It potentially enables him to dissociate versions of essential reality from both his own preferred beliefs and from those attributed to the author. And it allows him to pay attention to a variety of artistic phenomena. Not all of the criticism in this group, however, is particularly adequate. My general evaluations have been based on the extent of the critic's attention to the formal element which he associates with the philosophy, on his preciseness in defining the formal element, and on his ability to see the significance of this element to the whole work.

It is now possible to posit some conclusions about the value of essence imitation criticism. My main concern is to determine its usefulness in facilitating and enriching our understanding of the philosophy of Hardy's novels. A survey of the criticism reveals that a considerable amount of essence criticism is useless; the inadequacy is mainly due to the basic aesthetic rationale. The major assumption is

that art, in its representation of reality, can offer insight into the nature of essential reality. Artistic insight constitutes one of the naturalistic elements of art; in other words, it is a constituent reflecting concern with the whole of our experience. But it is, after all, just one of many elements in literature. Consequently, I believe that the basic assumption of the theory perpetuates a single, narrow interest in literary works. There is also another complicating factor. Because essential reality is such a broad concept and because there is a variety of theories about its nature, the norm that literature should present a vision of essential reality is likely to be defined in accord with the critic's personal beliefs. And this means that the critic's experience with a literary work may be even further constricted because of his preference for deriving a certain doctrinal message.

As my analysis of Hardy's essence imitation critics indicates, most of the critical interpretations and judgments are not based on attention to a variety of artistic phenomena. Hence my small esteem for most of the criticism. I have, however, attempted to discriminate degrees of critical adequacy, which usually depend on the critic's individual sensitivity and procedure: in specific terms, how he defines essential reality, whether he allows personal belief to dictate a single absolute version of reality, and whether he can see its expression in literature as related to other than doctrinal interests.

The first category of critics, the ideal imitationist critics, usually fails to enrich our understanding of Hardy's philosophy. Because they are so intent on finding their own beliefs echoed in literature, these critics are unable to experience, interpret, and

judge the philosophical implications of Hardy's novels. In several examples, namely, the criticism of Johnson, Kettle, and Lawrence, some worthwhile individual interpretations emerge. They are valuable because the ideal doctrines on which they are based possess some degree of truth-to man's existence as verified in life experiences. But many other of their interpretations reveal a preoccupation with their own ideal doctrines. Moreover, the judgments of these same critics are not always acceptable since they are often based on the critic's belief in the absolute truth of his doctrine.

The second category of critics, those who explore the artistic insights in Hardy's works according to correspondence to the novelist's typical philosophy, likewise contributes little to our understanding of the philosophy of the novels. They assume that Hardy possesses a unique vision of the nature of man and reality and that this will be present in his works. The problem with the approach is that the critic handles the writer's unique vision in a normative manner: he delineates Hardy's typical philosophic vision and uses this so-called characteristic vision as a norm for commenting on the nature and value of the philosophy in a given novel. Potentially, the critic could pay attention to a variety of artistic phenomena, but he rarely does. In the literary experience, his attention is limited by his fixed idea of Hardy's philosophy (an idea gleaned from a variety of sources and reflecting the critic's selection, interpretation, and occasionally manipulation of data). Of the critics in this group, Webster ignores the aesthetic element, Matchett makes a perceptive formal analysis and interpretation of The Woodlanders that are

essentially separable from his theoretical assumptions about Hardy's realistic philosophy, and Morrell gives attention both to selected aesthetic and naturalistic elements but forces an interpretation to correspond to his delineation of Hardy's existential vision.

In the final category of essence imitationists, we discover some critical commentary that is suggestive of the complexity involved in experiencing and judging the philosophical aspect of Hardy's novels. These critics attempt to relate the novels' philosophical insights to certain inherent literary elements. Thus they succeed in expanding their basic aesthetic norm to include both naturalistic and aesthetic components. Although even the best critics in this group have not totally eliminated the influence of their own beliefs or of pre-conceived notions of Hardy's personal philosophy, their concern for the literary work prevents these factors from exerting the kind of excessive influence that results in obvious distortion of the philosophical implications of Hardy's novels. As a result of their refinement of basic essence imitation theory, several of the critics in this group contribute enriching and judicious interpretations and judgments of Hardy's philosophic insights.

Pure essence imitation criticism is peculiarly limited by its overemphasis on a single naturalistic element--the capacity of literature to convey insight into the nature of essential reality. In its pure form, the theory is particularly vulnerable to the critic's individual sensitivity and attitude toward art. Thus when it is adopted by a critic with a bent for fixed philosophical doctrines, the resulting criticism is apt to be worthless. When, however, a critic

takes a more flexible approach to this basic aesthetic assumption, the adequacy of his criticism increases. To be more precise, when he is able to perceive artistic insights in terms other than as simple doctrinal message, and when he attempts to eliminate the influence of his own philosophic beliefs and those of the artist on his perception of artistic insights, his criticism is strengthened. And when he perceives the relationship of artistic insights to major aesthetic elements, the resulting criticism often does justice to the complexities involved in our understanding of literary philosophies.

NOTES

CHAPTER 4.

IMITATIONIST CRITICISM OF HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

¹"Thomas Hardy--Optimist or Pessimist?" Current Literature, LIII (July, 1912), 101-103.

²Joyce Kilmer, "Introduction," The Mayor of Casterbridge (New York, 1917), pp. xi-xv.

³Patrick Braybrooke, "Thomas Hardy," in Philosophies in Modern Fiction (1929; Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, Inc., 1955), pp. 35-41.

⁴John H. Fowler, The Novels of Thomas Hardy, English Association Pamphlet No. 71 (Oxford, 1928).

⁵Carl J. Weber, "Virtue from Wessex: Thomas Hardy," American Scholar, VIII (April, 1939), 211-222.

⁶Henry C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and "The Dynasts" (Manchester, 1916).

⁷M. O. W. Oliphant, "The Anti-Marriage League," Blackwood's Magazine, CXIX (January, 1896), 135-149.

⁸P. T. Forsyth, "The Pessimism of Mr. Thomas Hardy," The Living Age, CCLXXV (November 23, 1912), 458-473.

⁹W. J. Dawson, "Thomas Hardy," in The Makers of English Fiction (New York, 1905), pp. 213-240.

¹⁰Dom David Knowles, "The Thought and Art of Thomas Hardy," Dublin Review, No. 367 (October, 1928), 208-218.

¹¹Robert Shafer, "Thomas Hardy," in Christianity and Naturalism (New Haven, 1926), pp. 235-281.

¹²Duane Williams, "The Teaching of Thomas Hardy," The University Magazine, VIII (June, 1897), 253-258.

¹³Herbert L. Stewart, "Thomas Hardy as a Teacher of His Age," North American Review, CCVIII (October, 1918), 584-596.

¹⁴E. S. Bates, "The Optimism of Thomas Hardy," The International Journal of Ethics, XV (July, 1905), 469-485.

¹⁵Such beliefs possess the kind of truth defined by John Hospers as the truth-to our experience that is verified by our contacts with life and the world. Obviously, the experiences that one has in life depend to some extent on individual temperament and belief. For further discussion on this definition of truth, see Chapter 1, p. 25.

¹⁶Lionel Johnson, The Art of Thomas Hardy (London, 1894).

¹⁷See Note 15 above.

¹⁸Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel, 2 vols. (London, 1951).

¹⁹According to Scholes and Kellogg, many readers feel that the allegorical aspect of the novel conveys genuine knowledge about ethical and metaphysical truth while its representative aspect conveys knowledge about historical, psychological, and sociological truth. For further discussion, see Chapter 1, p. 26.

²⁰D. H. Lawrence, "Study of Thomas Hardy," in Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Edward D. McDonald (New York, 1936), pp. 398-516.

²¹Harvey C. Webster, On a Darkling Plain (Chicago, 1964). Cf. by the same author "Hardy as a Thinker," Tiger's Eye, I (December, 1947), 49-60.

²²William H. Matchett, "The Woodlanders, or Realism in Sheep's Clothing," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XI (March, 1955), 241-261.

²³Roy Morrell, Thomas Hardy: The Will and The Way (University of Maylaya Press, 1965). The author sets forth in greater detail his rationale for Hardy's philosophical position as evolutionary meliorism in "Hardy in the Tropics: Some Implications of Hardy's Attitude Towards Nature," Review of English Literature, III (January, 1962), 7-21.

²⁴Joyce Weiner, "Four Novels of Hardy: Some Second Impressions," Contemporary Review, CXLII (August, 1932), 229-236.

²⁵F. Brompton Harvey, "Coincidence and Its Use by Thomas Hardy," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, CXLII (January, 1937), 11-26.

²⁶William R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background (New York, 1938).

²⁷Helen Carwood, Thomas Hardy: An Illustration of the Philosophy of Schopenhauer (Philadelphia, 1911).

²⁸See Note 15 above and the discussion of Krieger's theory in Chapter 2, p. 94.

²⁹Bonamy Dobrée, "Thomas Hardy," in The Lamp and the Lute (Oxford, 1929), pp. 21-44.

³⁰Morton D. Zabel, "Hardy in Defense of His Art: The Aesthetic of Incongruity," Southern Review, VI (Summer, 1940), 125-149.

³¹Jacques Barzun, "Truth and Poetry in Thomas Hardy," Southern Review, VI (Summer, 1940), 179-192.

³²See Note 15 above.

³³Herbert J. Muller, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy Today," Southern Review, VI (Summer, 1940), 214-224.

³⁴Lascelles Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study (New York, 1912).

CHAPTER 5
HEDONIST, EXPRESSIONIST, AND TRANSCENDENTALIST
CRITICISM OF HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

Theorists have suggested several broad classification systems for distinguishing types of aesthetic theories. I have already mentioned one system, the naturalistic-aesthetic dichotomy, as particularly useful. But there are others that may facilitate our understanding of theories and critical methods. For example, according to M. H. Abrams, most major aesthetic and critical theories emphasize either the work, the artist, the audience, or the universe.¹ On the basis of Abrams' classification system, the purely imitationist criticism discussed early in Chapter 4 emphasizes the work's relation to the universe, since it is concerned with the representation of man and his reality.

Among the Hardy critics, there are only a few whose commentary reveals sole reliance on either the hedonist, expressionist, or transcendentalist aesthetic theories. If we apply Abrams' classification system to these three theories, it appears that they all emphasize the artist or the audience or both. And with this emphasis, one would suspect that all three theories are probably too narrow in scope to allow for adequate critical attention to a variety of artistic phenomena. And, indeed, much of the Hardy criticism falling into these theoretical categories possesses but small value; the criticism approaches adequacy only when the critic interprets the theory in such a way as to expand

and refine its basic emphasis. In the discussions that follow, I indicate both the inherent limitations of the three aesthetic theories as reflected in the Hardy criticism and the extent to which individual critics overcome these limitations.

Hedonist Criticism of Hardy's Philosophy

In considering hedonist criticism, it is necessary to recall the two major principles of Hedonism: first, the function and value of art are to give pleasure, which is usually associated with a positive emotional reaction; and second, the determination of value is a function of the individual consciousness, and consequently the definition of what constitutes pleasure must also be determined by the individual.

Analysis of these two principles immediately suggests certain limitations of the hedonist aesthetic. The first limitation is that the theory emphasizes the response of the audience to art; yet our experience with literature, for example, tells us that the aesthetic experience comprises more than a simple and separable concept to be labeled the audience's response. For example, there is the expressionistic element to be reckoned with in that the work has emerged from an individual consciousness and has done so for a variety of reasons. And in a very significant yet complex way, the work has reference to the objective universe as well as to the subjective visions of it which the work evokes in the audience. Finally, there is the reality of the work itself as an autotelic entity. Ideally, all of these aspects of the aesthetic experience may be encompassed in the audience's

response to a work of art, but hedonist theories do not typically account for all of them. The second limitation is that the hedonist criterion of artistic excellence has to be designated by each individual, since only each person can decide for himself what gives him pleasure in art. Thus it is possible that a critic might define aesthetic pleasure in such narrow terms that would result in his ignoring many aspects of the work of art. In Chapter 3, I suggested that an adequate theory of art possesses sufficient scope to allow critical attention to a variety of artistic phenomena and that it will account for a meaningful relationship between the aesthetic and naturalistic components of art. Basic Hedonism fails to meet these criteria, since according to the theory, only the individual determines whether his pleasure derives from a variety of artistic phenomena and whether a relationship between aesthetic and naturalistic elements is part of his definition of artistic pleasure. Consequently, the adequacy of a hedonist rationale can only be judged on the basis of the individual's delineation of the theory.

It is necessary at this point to consider how Hardy's so-called philosophy figures into hedonist criticism of the novels. We have seen that philosophy was a major concern of the imitationist critics who were continually involved in labeling Hardy's philosophic stance and in disputing the truth that it represented about essential reality. There are six important characteristics of the hedonists' approach to Hardy's philosophy. First, hedonist critics, like the imitationists, use the term philosophy very broadly to refer to general attitudes about man, his life, and his destiny.² Second, hedonist critics, like

the imitationists, tend to speak of the philosophy as "Hardy's philosophy," not as the philosophy or idea embodied in given works. Third, these critics are less concerned than the imitationists with labeling Hardy's philosophy and disputing its truth. Fourth, hedonist critics are interested in their own emotional response to the philosophy expressed in the novels. Fifth, they employ their own individual means for evaluating Hardy's philosophic insights, with the value depending on the critic's definition of aesthetic pleasure or pleasing aesthetic emotions. And sixth, some hedonist critics limit their interest in Hardy's novels solely to their own emotional reaction to expressed philosophic attitudes, whereas others attempt (with varying degrees of success) to respond to other elements in the novels as well.

I have mentioned several limitations that are apt to diminish the value of practical criticism that is based on hedonist theory. But in order to make precise judgments about hedonist criticism, one must evaluate each critic's definition of aesthetic pleasure, the usefulness of the definition for explaining our response to literary works, and the general critical procedure. I will deal with several examples of criticism that illustrate the extremely narrow and idiosyncratic responses which certain critics equate to aesthetic pleasure. I will also discuss one example that gains value from a broad, sophisticated definition of aesthetic pleasure and from the critic's adherence to high standards of critical practice.

I

The majority of Hardy's hedonist critics defines aesthetic pleasure very narrowly and thus inadequately. Among these, I have detected two groups. The first group emphasizes philosophy and equates aesthetic pleasure to the arousal of feelings of satisfaction, comfort, and stability in regard to their own personal attitudes toward life. The second group does not emphasize philosophy but specifies the kinds of valuable emotions that they expect literary works to evoke. Represented in this group are those who value the powerful or sublime emotions and those who favor the pathetic or sentimental emotions.

Let us look at a few examples from the first group, those critics who equate aesthetic pleasure to the arousal of feelings of satisfaction with their own views of life. They expect a literary work to fulfill a sort of stabilizing function, that is, to concur with or to reinforce their personal outlook on life. In so far as novels do this, they afford pleasure and thus possess value. As one might expect, the individual critic's outlook on life, which he expects literature to support, may be totally idiosyncratic, or it may derive from a formulated, even popular, doctrine. Because of this fact, the hedonist critic who defines aesthetic pleasure as the comfortable feelings aroused by the philosophy in a literary work is closely related to certain ideal-imitationist critics. I am referring here to those critics who demand that literature imitate their ideal doctrine but who offer no justification for the doctrine beyond an implied personal preference due to the pleasure, solace, or inspiration that it affords.³ The difference between the two categories is simply a matter

of emphasis. If a critic stresses the "truth" of a writer's philosophy in comparison to his own favored and thus "true" doctrine, the result is inadequate ideal imitation criticism. If he stresses his own emotional response to the writer's philosophy, that is, the pleasant or unpleasant feelings it arouses when he compares it to his own views of life, the result is inadequate hedonist criticism. It is the latter kind that we are considering at this point.

Prosser Hall Frye⁴ is one of Hardy's early critics who pays about equal attention to the "truth" of Hardy's philosophic attitudes and to his own feelings about the attitudes. Frye rejects Hardy's philosophy for two reasons. First, the vision falls short of what the critic conceives of as the true or complete view of life, for according to Frye's own attitude, man must maintain faith in "the spirit of the perfect whole," which must remain unproved because man possesses only a partial view of reality. Frye's other reason for rejecting Hardy's philosophy is that it causes unpleasant feelings because of the grimness and the maliciousness it shows towards man's happiness and dignity. Although the critic concedes that Hardy's vision may contain a "half-truth," he warns against dwelling on Hardy's train of thought, for "this way madness lies"; and one must not indulge in such unpleasant or unhealthy feelings (p. 1659). Frye, then, sees little aesthetic value in Hardy's philosophy because of its failure to comply with what he considers to be a "true" vision of reality and because it evokes unpleasant and unwholesome emotions that threaten mental stability.

Another of Hardy's early critics experiences feelings of anxiety because of the novelist's philosophy. In Modern English Books of

Power, George H. Fitch⁵ devotes a chapter to Hardy and reacts especially to his "pessimism." But the critic also indicates that there are other qualities in the novels that counteract the unpleasant feelings they evoke. The problem with Fitch's criticism is that while he has a rationale for designating the source of his unpleasant feelings he has no specific criteria for designating and explaining the nature of the pleasing elements. He is able to identify very concretely the elements of Hardy's philosophy that give rise to feelings of anxiety. For example, he is specifically repulsed by Hardy's insistence on Tess's purity, by the morbidity used in the development of Jude, by the emphasis on animalism in Arabella's character, and by Hardy's "curious ideas about marriage" (p. 138). In spite of the fact that Hardy's philosophy does not provide him many comforting feelings about his own preferred view of life (it appears that the sexual aspects of Hardy's views are particularly disturbing), Fitch believes that there are artistic elements to counteract the major ill effect. But he cannot be very specific about Hardy's achievement. He refers to the pleasing elements in general terms and in terms of the unpleasantness:

Literary genius can work no greater miracle than this-- to make the reader accept as a transcript of life stories in which generous, unselfish people are dealt heavy blows of fate, while the mean-souled sordid men and women escape their just deserts.

(p. 133)

W. W. Trent's⁶ criticism of Hardy represents a slight improvement over that of Fitch for two reasons. First, Trent is aware of the hedonistic basis of his commentary and attempts to support his theoretical rationale.⁷ And second, he notes the pleasure-producing power

of other elements (besides philosophy) and thus broadens somewhat his definition of aesthetic pleasure.

Trent focuses on Hardy's philosophy or attitudes toward life, which differ considerably from his own and which arouse certain unpleasant feelings. In an attempt to support his position on aesthetic grounds, Trent states that the poet should possess a philosophy that goes beyond the visible facts of reality, that such a philosophy will likely contain an ennobling concept of man (in spite of visible facts to the contrary), and that such a philosophy represents wisdom about life (p. 12). Although he indicates that certain attitudes about life are truer or wiser than others, he does not dwell on the truth of Hardy's attitudes but on the unpleasant feelings that they arouse. For example: (1) The Return of the Native is not a thorough success "because our pleasure at the artist's triumph is overbalanced by disagreeable sensations caused by the repulsiveness of many of his characters and of the environment in which they move" (p. 11). (2) Of Two on a Tower: "Natural and true to life in many respects this story may be, but its truthfulness is not the truthfulness of great art, because repulsiveness forms no element of the truth of art" (p. 15). (3) Calling The Mayor of Casterbridge the "least attractive of all Mr. Hardy's novels," Trent concludes that Henchard is "a remarkable character from the point of view of a psychologist or sociologist, but that does not make him a proper hero for a novel . . ." (p. 16). (4) Of Tess: "What does it matter, from the point of view of art, whether she is pure or not, provided she does not repel us?" (p. 20).

Trent's definition of aesthetic pleasure includes other literary elements besides philosophic attitudes. Specifically, he mentions the overall pleasing effect of Hardy's "sense of the mystery and passion of nature, his rural characters, his closely-knit and powerful actions, his humor, and his power of characterization. From the critic's comments on these isolated literary elements, one may derive his definition of the kind of pleasure they provide. For Trent, Hardy's handling of these elements contributes to the power of his novels to command the reader's interest and attention, to carry him along, to keep him entertained. Although this definition of literary pleasure may seem somewhat vague, its meaning for Trent emerges in one final statement: "The writer of a great novel must be enough of an optimist to impart a spring to his work" (p. 12). Trent is aware of his hedonist aesthetic and attempts to justify it, but his definition of aesthetic pleasure remains extremely narrow; and he ultimately allows his response to the underlying philosophical attitudes to overshadow his response to all other literary elements in Hardy's novels.⁸

In my second grouping of inadequate hedonist criticism are those critics who do not particularly stress philosophy but who do suggest certain specific kinds of emotions that literature should evoke.

In a chapter on Tess, which appeared in his Excursions in Criticism, William Watson⁹ implicitly defines aesthetic pleasure in terms of the power of the emotions that a literary work arouses in the reader. It is as if he does not care what artistic elements cause the feelings or what kind they are so long as they are powerful. Watson summarizes the great theme of Tess as "the incessant penalty paid by

the innocent for the wicked, the unsuspecting for the crafty, the child for its fathers" But he does not object to the novel's "direct arraignment of the morality of this system of vicarious pain" (pp. 73-74). Instead, he praises the unsurpassed emotional power of Tess, the awe, the terror it arouses: " . . . as the tragedy climbs toward its last summit of desolation and doom, criticism in the ordinary sense must lie low in the shadow of so great and terrible a conception." The critic suggests that the novel's "disturbing power" is likely due to Hardy's own sincere "despairing of any satisfactory solution of the problem." Watson defends Hardy against critics who denounce his failure to propose a remedy; he argues that Hardy is not supposed to offer a remedy. "He is content to make his readers pause, and consider, and pity" (p. 80). From Watson's criticism of Tess, it appears that he equates aesthetic pleasure to the arousal of powerful feelings, especially those that have been labeled sublime.

We may proceed to another definition of aesthetic pleasure that is implied by one of Hardy's critics. In an essay on Jude, May Tomlinson¹⁰ apparently equates aesthetic pleasure to the arousal of emotions specifically embodying pathos, tenderness, and sweetness. Her experience in reading Jude allows her to indulge in these feelings, and thus she values the novel highly. For example, she admires the exquisite charm of Jude's and Sue's personalities, especially Jude's noble, tender-hearted nature. Although conscious of the "pathetic" and "deeply-sad" quality of the novel, she feels the end was "glorious" after all. And for the critic, the tragic theme is brightened by "an all-pervading sweetness"; the coarseness and vulgarity emphasize "the

sweet and ethereal"; and the love scenes "are a revelation of sweetness" (p. 344). Of the relationship between Jude and Sue, Miss Tomlinson perceives only its appealing aspects, noting in particular the perfection of their comradeship: "We see their pride and delight in each other; we see his never-failing tenderness, of a sort that every sweet woman craves but seldom enjoys" (p. 344). Most of the critic's comments reveal that she places greatest value on the capacity of literature to evoke the kinds of feelings that are now called sentimental.

In analyzing the two groups of inadequate hedonist criticism, I noted as a major characteristic a preference for a single kind or class of feelings. In the first group, the critics were most concerned with the philosophical aspect of Hardy's works. Their comments implied that they value literature to the extent that it arouses emotions that make them feel comfortable or satisfied with their own general views about life. Specifically, these critics disapproved of Hardy's philosophy because it evoked in them feelings of anxiety or conflict when they compared Hardy's views with their own. In the second group, the critics were not particularly concerned with philosophy, but they too singled out a specific kind of feeling and defined aesthetic pleasure in terms of the arousal of this feeling. I dealt with only two kinds of feelings--the sublime and the sentimental--but obviously there are many other kinds that individual critics might set up as aesthetic desiderata. We may conclude that if the hedonist critic defines aesthetic pleasure in a narrow manner, that is, in terms of a single kind of emotion, his criticism will have

little value, except for himself and for those sharing his peculiar aesthetic-emotional preference.

II

Having indicated that the hedonist aesthetic bears some inherent limitations, I believe it is important to consider whether good literary criticism can result from a hedonist rationale. The answer is that the sophisticated hedonist critic can conceive of his theoretical rationale in such terms that he overcomes some of the limitations of the general theory. Lord David Cecil is such a critic. In Hardy the Novelist,¹¹ he avoids the narrowness usually attributed to hedonist critics by means of a broad definition of aesthetic pleasure, one which many intelligent readers accept because it describes an essential aspect of their own experience with fiction. The definition encompasses "form" and "idea," but these elements receive less emphasis than the pervasive hedonistic aspect of fiction, that is, the aspect which the critic designates as constituting the unique pleasure of fiction.

Cecil is aware of his aesthetic rationale, attempts to justify it, and generally adheres to high standards of critical practice. He believes that there must be the individual response to art, noting that we do not read books for instruction or edification but because "reading them is in itself a satisfying experience." Yet he also acknowledges the importance of the critical response to literary works, and thus he speaks of the critic's "function to illuminate our appreciation of them, to define the nature of the satisfaction they give, to

analyze the circumstances conditioning their production and the arts by which they make their impression" (p. 12).

It is necessary to present Cecil's definition of the nature of art before explaining his definition of aesthetic pleasure. According to the critic, art is the result of a double impulse: the author's desire to express a "personal vision" and his more creative impulse "to construct a pleasing object" (p. 13). He argues that it is wrong to judge a book as purely personal expression but that it is also wrong to judge it according to abstract generalizations about form. He concludes: "The only test of a book's merit is the effect it makes on the reader" (p. 14).

In accord with his definition of art, Cecil suggests some very specific guidelines about the critic's response to a novel. The first duty of the critic is to realize the author's range, which depends on two things: his creative vision as determined by his own life experiences and his creative powers. Because of these predetermined factors, the critic must remain open and receptive to the writer's vision or philosophy; he cannot dispute or quarrel about this element since the writer cannot be other than what he is. The second duty of the critic is to focus on the writer's conventions, as well as on his range (p. 53). The critic must take into account these two influencing factors, but he must know that the actual work of art is what the writer's creative imagination produces by operating within the limits imposed by his range and conventions. The critic must realize, then, that the unique value of the work of art is the imaginative illusion that it offers the reader; it is this element that gives the reader his pleasure.

According to Cecil, the imaginative illusion of a literary work provides many things, but the pleasure we take in it derives from its imaginative power. The critic speaks of this power in a variety of contexts; hence, he offers an expansive definition of aesthetic pleasure. Most often he characterizes the power of imaginative illusion as the power to command or arrest the reader's attention, to carry him along with the illusion, to keep his interests engaged (p. 87), to strike an impression on him (p. 128), to cast a spell over him (p. 147). Obviously, this kind of power may be associated with any one or any number of literary elements. Fortunately, Cecil elaborates on a variety of means by which Hardy's novels manifest the power of imaginative illusion. For example, he mentions Hardy's talent for visualizing scenes that both make us see and stir our imaginations (pp. 85-87). He speaks of Hardy's poetic inventions, broadly defined as "the expression of the same concentrated activity of the imagination as a brilliant metaphor or a moving cadence of verse" (p. 93). He notes the power and vividness of Hardy's characterizations (pp. 128-130). He mentions also his power of suggesting atmosphere (p. 138), the intensity and range of emotions dealt with in the novels (pp. 147-148), and finally, Hardy's ability to penetrate, via any of his creative inventions, beyond vividness, beauty, and poetry to the very soul of things, to their ultimate meaning (p. 109).

It is apparent that Cecil equates the aesthetic pleasure that we derive from literature to the power of its imaginative illusion, which depends on a variety of artistic elements and which thus commands our attention to the same variety of elements. There is no emphasis, in Cecil's account, on the correspondence of the imaginative illusion to

some concept of what the world is or should be. We may determine his exact emphasis from his summary of Hardy's art:

Humour, character, landscape, vividly depicted scenes, tales brilliantly opened and eloquently ended--it is by means of these that Hardy's imagination casts its spell upon us. But behind them all, heating his apprehension of them to an extraordinary intensity, lies something else--an unusual emotional force. His books communicate a much higher temperature of feeling than most novels do. . . . his emotional range is not narrow in the sense that his range of character is; for it embraces both the heights and the depths of the emotional scale, from black despair to ecstatic joy.

(pp. 147-148)

According to Cecil, a flaw or weakness in a literary work is anything that tends to interfere with the created imaginative illusion. He mentions several of Hardy's practices that sometimes tear "the delicate fabric of imaginative illusion in tatters" (p. 166), for example: Hardy's using imaginative themes much too simple for the form of the novel (p. 159), allowing his imaginative conception to take too great a precedence over laws of probability (p. 167), and allowing a propagandist tendency to overpower his imaginative sense (p. 184).

Cecil's study of Hardy represents an achievement for hedonist criticism, but the achievement is more due to the skill and acumen of the individual critic than to the nature of his hedonist aesthetic.¹² Cecil equates the aesthetic pleasure provided by literature to the power of its imaginative illusion. (This concept in itself is broader than other hedonist rationales discussed earlier in which pleasure was defined in terms of the arousal of a single kind of emotion.) The critic then presents his definition of what the illusion consists of, and it is an expansive one including many aspects of the literary work,

all of which contribute to the spell which the work casts over us. According to his theory, then, the critic's interest is directed to his initial general response to the literary work and to the variety of elements that produce the response. Consequently, his hedonist critical method succeeds because he requires so much from the literary work in order for it to sustain the power of its imaginative illusion. There is, however, nothing in Cecil's basic aesthetic rationale that would prohibit another critic from defining the nature of the imaginative illusion in narrower terms.

Cecil's criticism of Hardy can be valued for several reasons. His delineation of a hedonist aesthetic rationale is such that it allows him to consider many aspects of Hardy's novels. He acknowledges a relationship between the aesthetic and naturalistic components of literary works. (See his comments above about the contribution made to the illusion by such naturalistic components as scene, character, emotion, and probability.) His criticism shows that the individual critic may overcome some of the limitations of basic Hedonism. But one must note some very real limitations in Cecil's unique interpretation of the theory. First, excessive attention is placed on the reader's response to the literary work. To place major emphasis on the individual reader's response is to suggest that the existence, meaning, and value of a literary work must be largely conceived of in subjective terms, yet these attributes also possess an objective dimension. The second limitation of Cecil's interpretation of hedonist theory is that the pleasure of the response depends on the so-called power of the imaginative illusion, a rather broad concept, the definition of which involves considerable subjectivity.

In spite of the limitations of his general theoretical base, Cecil is impressive in his individual approach to the critical task. He presents an aesthetic rationale, convinces us of its partial value, adheres to it, and attains numerous perceptive and precise interpretations by means of it. He is definitely successful in conveying how a powerful imaginative illusion affects the reader. For example, in considering the extraordinary intensity of the emotional force of Hardy's novels, he touches on a quality that many people will recognize from their experience with the novels: "His books communicate a much higher temperature of feeling than most novels do . . . ; his emotional range is not narrow in the sense that his range of character is, for it embraces both the heights and the depths of the emotional scale, from black despair to ecstatic joy" (p. 148). Finally, one cannot help but be impressed by the air of judiciousness and integrity that characterize Cecil's criticism, for example: "I feel that I have still not got to the heart of my subject, that I have not finally elucidated the spell he casts" (p. 218).

Except for Cecil's study, the achievement of Hardy's hedonist critics is practically nil. Part I of the discussion indicated the narrow terms with which the hedonist aesthetic is often defined; the critics cited defined their pleasure solely in terms of experiencing satisfying feelings about their own philosophies and in terms of other specific types of emotions, such as sublime or sentimental ones. Literary interpretation and judgment, if they are to be meaningful and worthy of the attention of intelligent people, must be based on an aesthetic rationale that allows the critic to experience the actual complexity of the work of art. In other words, we want to be convinced

that a complex critical response is involved in the criticism. This does not mean that we may specify certain aesthetic theories as adequate ones that will automatically produce good criticism. But it does mean that we must look at what the critic does with his aesthetic rationale, consider his translation of it into a unique critical method, and judge whether that individual method enables him to make the kinds of interpretations that will enrich our understanding of the philosophy of a literary work, that is, an interpretation that allows for all the complex experiences and responses offered by literature.

Expressionist Criticism of Hardy's Philosophy

Expressionism, like Hedonism stresses emotion, but it differs from Hedonism in that value is placed on the communication of emotion from artist to audience instead of on the arousal of emotion in the audience. There are three basic premises of modern Expressionism. First, the art object is viewed as a symbol of the artist's particular state of mind or emotion, with the art object serving to communicate to the percipient and to create for him the same state of mind or emotion that the artist experienced. Second, the value of the art object is determined by the success of the expressive attempt. And third, artistic value is also linked to other specific factors (by some theorists), such as; the propriety of the communicated feelings (Tolstoy) and the quality of the mediated experience (Richards). The third premise holds the potential of creating certain specific guidelines for assessing the worth of the emotion or the experience communicated. But in the second premise, which calls for evaluating the

success of the communicative and recreative capacity of the art object, there is no specific guideline. The individual can only make an impressionistic judgment as to how successful the work is in allowing him to know and experience an author's feeling or emotion. He can only record impressions about what he thinks he knows and feels, and he can only make guesses about the author's experience. To determine the value of a work on the basis of duplication of artist's and the audience's emotion is a difficult task, since there is actually no way of measuring the similarity between the audience's response to a work and the artistic emotion that produced the work. Moreover, there is reason to believe that the artist's and the audience's emotions cannot be identical.

A careful consideration of the premises of Expressionism suggests its limitations as an aesthetic basis for literary criticism. While the emphasis of Expressionism is broader than that of Hedonism, since it involves both the audience and the artist and the communication that takes place between them, the resulting critical interpretations are likely to be even more subjective than those deriving from a hedonist aesthetic. The subjectivity in interpretations is due to the presence of the reader's personal impressions about his own experience, about that of the author, and about the actual communication of it. The expressionist critic determines for himself what emotion or experience the literary work affords him, whether it is the same thing experienced and intended by the writer, and whether such a feeling or experience is to be valued and on what grounds. It is apparent that basic Expressionism does not meet the two criteria set forth in Chapter

3 for judging the adequacy of aesthetic theories. Like Hedonism, expressionist theory has to be delineated by the individual critic. It is up to the individual theorist to determine whether he perceives the communicated experience of a literary work via a number of artistic phenomena and as encompassing both aesthetic and naturalistic elements and whether he will judge the quality of the experience on broad or narrow grounds.

It is necessary to consider at this point how Hardy's expressionist critics react to the philosophical aspect of his works. As noted earlier, most critics, regardless of their espoused aesthetic basis, conceive of the philosophy of a literary work in general terms that include attitudes and concepts held about man, his life, his destiny, and his universe.¹³ One detects among the expressionist critics an interest in philosophy, but it is an interest different from that of both imitationists and hedonists. There is not present the imitationist concern with the absolute truth of the philosophy nor the hedonist concern with the emotional response provoked by the philosophy. Three significant characteristics may be noted about the expressionist treatment of literary philosophy. First, the critic is interested in philosophy because it is part of the writer's intellectual and emotional experience and part of what he wants to communicate in his work. Second, the critic thus perceives it as "Hardy's philosophy" not as the philosophy or idea embodied in a given work. Third, the expressionist critic may dwell on the sincerity of Hardy's philosophic expressions and assign them value not because they are absolutely true but because they are true for Hardy.

None of Hardy's critics provides an example of a comprehensive expressionist aesthetic. At most, several pursue certain interests emphasized by the general theory. Of three critics to be discussed, the first two confine their attention to Hardy the man, and the third attempts to evaluate Hardy's achievement in terms of his success in communicating his experience. The overall contribution made by these critics is not great. None of them offers a broad or sophisticated delineation of the expressionist elements which they deal with. For example, the criticism that attempts to explore the nature and source of Hardy's communicated experiences and emotions ultimately sounds more like biography than criticism of literary works. And even in the one attempt to judge the success of the communication of Hardy's novels, the critic reveals a need for more precise and objective critical tools than those implied in his expressionist approach. The real value in considering Hardy's expressionist critics is to remind us that literary works do embody in some way an expression of the writer's personal emotion, experience, and vision. But pure expressionist theory accords excessive attention to this element of art.

Edward Wagenknecht explores the question as to whether Hardy and Conrad were pessimists.¹⁴ He rejects the label as inapplicable to both writers and continues to argue that the assigning of philosophic labels to writers in order to prove their didactic function constitutes a misguided critical interest. Wagenknecht specifically aims to demonstrate that neither writer was greatly influenced by philosophic systems and that philosophic systems should not be deduced from their writings (pp. 551-552).

Wagenknecht's expressionist tendency is evident in his general view of artistic creation. He believes that a writer's so-called philosophy results not from a didactic or scholastic impulse but rather from the creational impulse. It is the temperament of the writer that produces his philosophic vision or "impressions," as Hardy called them. He offers the following account of the artistic temperament:

For what is the artist in this particular incarnation? He is an almost abnormally sensitive and sympathetic man--a man (for some reason or other) inclined temperamentally toward a dark brooding over the mystery of life.

(pp. 553-554)

Wagenknecht further declares that we are concerned with the philosophy of a literary work precisely because it represents the impression of the writer and that we can only require that "he shall embody for us, in forms precious through their exceeding beauty, his impression of this thing called life as it appears to a man of such temperament" (p. 554). Noting that writers may express indiscriminate or inconsistent philosophic impressions, he justifies this practice by stating that it is what one might expect from a man of extraordinary temperament (p. 554). In other words, the critic must not look for unity or consistency in a writer's "ideas"; instead, " . . . the unifying principle is always to be sought in the man's temperament, not in some 'system' which he learned from a book and thereafter gave himself to propagate" (p. 554).

In judging Wagenknecht's contribution to our understanding of Hardy's philosophy, one must conclude that his expressionist account of artistic creation is likely to foster a narrow critical interest

and lead to inconclusive speculations. He focuses attention on one characteristic of the writer, his temperament, and this in itself is a most elusive quality. Moreover, he suggests that the unity of a writer's work may be found in this same quality. Yet he can offer only his own impressions to support his observations about Hardy. He does not say anything very precise about Hardy or his works. And he fails to present any convincing or intriguing evidence that would justify dropping the pessimist label assigned to Hardy and his works. He merely cites details from Hardy's life that are meant to prove that the novelist's temperament was the source of his respect for humanity and an all-embracing pity and love.

In an essay titled "Was Thomas Hardy a Pessimist?" Granville Hicks¹⁵ pursues certain expressionist interests in his critical method. Hicks believes that Hardy's so-called pessimism is an outlook that grew out of his experience as well as from his temperament. He is much more convincing than Wagenknecht in arguing for the close relationship between the writer's experience in life and his artistic achievement. He specifically attempts to establish Hardy's sincerity and thus to demonstrate that his artistic achievement is due to qualities stemming from the novelist's sincerity. The critic pays little attention to individual works; instead, he devotes himself to the task of showing that Hardy could not have expressed any view of life but that which he expresses in his novels.

The two aspects of expressionism appearing in Hick's essay are the importance of establishing the artist's sincerity and the valuing of the artist's expression of his unique view of things. According

to R. G. Collingwood's theory of expressionism, artistic sincerity is equivalent to artistic truth, and expression of the artist's unique vision is the function of art. When the audience experiences the art work, they come to understand his emotion and are able to experience it themselves. Hicks explores the issue of whether Hardy should be considered a meliorist or a pessimist and finds support for use of both labels, yet he does not consider the philosophical inconsistency that characterizes Hardy to be a fault. In fact, he argues that Hardy's unique literary traits essentially derive from this philosophical inconsistency and the opposing tendencies in his personal situation. In support of the meliorist label, Hicks cites Hardy's own acknowledgement of meliorism, his stated pleas that we do away with man's inhumanity to man, his literary presentation of society's remediable ills, and his emphasis on telling the truth in art on the premise that man's lot can be improved by facing the truth (pp. 60-62). Regarding the value of truthfulness, Hicks makes several statements in support of Hardy's sincerity; for example, he notes that Hardy "practiced what he preached." And he defends Hardy against charges of a seeming insincerity due to the variance between his great despair and his professed meliorism. Hicks acknowledges that the label of pessimist fits Hardy as well as the meliorist label, but he feels that such philosophical inconsistency is not unnatural. He argues that pessimism is more of an attitude toward life than a philosophical doctrine and that one may hold this attitude at times, regardless of professed philosophy.

Hicks views the apparent inconsistency in Hardy's vision as a challenge to pursue a deeper understanding of the artist. He declares

that " . . . our problem is to see how Hardy's attitude, in all its complexity, originated" (pp. 62-63). He argues that Hardy's own temperament and experiences in life were more responsible for his moods of despair than were nineteenth-century scientific theories. As evidence, he mentions Hardy's widely publicized sensitivity, his dissatisfaction with his profession and living in London, and his consciousness of class distinctions. He suggests that Hardy actually wished to participate in the practical struggle for the improvement of man's lot and that his very first novel, The Poor Man and the Lady, consisted of social and political protest but that he abandoned the attempt at protest writing and began writing novels with extensive plot complications. Hicks believes that Hardy's novel-writing experience throughout his life proved as much a source of disappointment as of satisfaction: "Honesty, he knew, was essential to literature, and honesty was impossible for an English author." The critic concludes that the complexities of Hardy's life kept him from actual involvement in humanity's struggle for improvement, which he believed in; and his sensitive temperament caused him to remain aloof and isolated and thus further intensified his moods of despair (pp. 63-65). Nevertheless, Hicks argues, we must not criticize these inconsistencies in Hardy's life nor speculate whether he would have been a better writer had he been more involved in social and political activities. It is from his unique personal situation that the main qualities of his novels are derived: "his intimate knowledge of the Dorsetshire countryside, his warm sympathy with country people, the completeness of his mastery of his little world" (p. 66).

Hicks' essay illustrates the major problem confronted by the expressionist critic who wants to explore the nature of a writer's experience and its expression in his works. As Hicks indicates, the critic comes to understand that a writer's experience with life is a very complex matter (as was Hardy's), and to do justice to this aspect, one must delve into biographical data and speculation and then posit certain subjective impressions. The result is that the critic tends to move further and further from the literary work itself. And ultimately, the main critical commentary that emerges is the generalization that the work obviously reflects the sincerely felt emotions and intimately experienced events of a uniquely complex individual.

John Middleton Murry's article titled "The Supremacy of Thomas Hardy"¹⁶ provides the final example of criticism based on expressionist interests. The specific aspect of expressionism that Murry pursues is evaluation of the artist's success in communicating his experience so as to afford readers with the same experience. The critic also attempts to judge the qualitative value of the experience; but, unfortunately, he does so by means of a simple chauvinistic standard. Murry's thesis is that Hardy succeeds in the expression of his feelings and ideas by virtue of sincerity and his great creative power; the evidence of success resides in his great popularity with the common reader, who shows appreciation of his novels in spite of some painful elements in Hardy's philosophic vision. This vision Murry terms Hardy's "austere philosophy."

Murry's evaluation of Hardy rests on a circular argument--that the novelist's great creative power is the source of the successful expression of his vision, and that his successful expression of his vision is evidence of his great creative power. The critic begins his praise of Hardy by listing the similarities that he shares with Shakespeare: "sheer creative power," "steady increase in the capacity to envisage the problem of human life," and expression of "the quality of England itself" (p. 220). Murry offers little explanation of the nature of Hardy's creative power except to say that it enabled him to bring characters alive in the reader's mind and that it easily compensates for any minor imperfections in the novelist's works (pp. 220, 223). Of Hardy's vision and contemplation of life, Murry notes that it is never abstract, that he expresses "the concrete and particular reality of human life," and, most importantly, that he expresses the truths of life as he experienced them.

Murry evidently values Hardy especially for his truthful expression of his own experience; for example, he notes that Hardy "claimed no more than to have rendered, with a minimum of falsification, the substantial truths of life as he has experienced it." He cites the fact that Hardy responded most profoundly to the somber aspects of life as further evidence that the novelist was true to his conscience: "A true artist must tell the deepest truth he knows; therefore he must represent life by the medium of those aspects and happenings which for him contain the maximum universality and significance." Murry somehow equates the true expression of Hardy's experience with his creativity; for example, he remarks that Hardy's

work is based on the "sure foundation of the utter veracity of a creative soul." He mentions as a further sign of the truly creative mind that as Hardy "rendered the undeserved pains of suffering humanity," he also rendered "the joyousness of his instinctive response to the physical beauty of life" (pp. 223, 224). Apparently Murry sees in the expression of the paradoxical extremes of Hardy's experience the sign of creativity. The final aspect of Hardy's own experience that appears in his works is the quality of England itself. And it seems the critic particularly values expression of this quality for itself. Noting especially how Hardy captures the beauty of the English countryside and "the loveliness of the simple creatures and things of earth," he gives praise to Hardy as a poet "of the English soil and English soul" (pp. 220, 224).

Murry's essay presents many laudatory but rather general and vague impressions and evaluations of Hardy's art; the quality of the criticism is probably typical of what can be expected in an overall evaluation of a writer's works on the basis of the expressionist criterion of success. If the reader feels that a work of literature succeeds, it is because it allows him to experience what he assumes to be the writer's emotions and attitudes, but his evidence can only be what he knows of his own reactions and what he can infer and guess about the author's experience. According to R. G. Collingwood's expressionistic theory, one assumes that the artist utters his own secrets, and if they are true, they will be the secrets of the audience as well, who will recognize them as such. This particular kind of reasoning can be detected in Murry's high esteem for Hardy, but one is

not easily convinced by his highly subjective impressions, nor is his chauvinistic criterion for judging the quality of the experience mediated by Hardy's work a satisfactory one.

None of the expressionist critics is able to pursue his aesthetic interests in such a way as to avoid a narrow critical response and an excessive amount of impressionistic speculation. Perhaps it is possible for an individual critic to delineate an expressionist theory in terms that demand attention to a variety of aesthetic elements and that would therefore be convincing to intelligent readers. But there is no such delineation of the basic theory among Hardy's critics. The general inadequacy of the expressionist criticism points to the necessity of exploring other critical systems that will allow more precise and more meaningful interpretations of the significance of a writer's personal emotions, experience, and vision and of their transformation into a literary work that possesses value in itself.

Transcendentalist Criticism of Hardy's Philosophy

The basic principle of Transcendentalism is that the aesthetic experience mediates to the audience a knowledge of some sort of ultimate reality. To be more precise, the art object embodies in some way (subject to individual interpretation) the potentiality for giving the audience an intuitive and direct knowledge of transcendent reality. Transcendentalism rarely constitutes the sole aesthetic basis of criticism, but its criterion of aesthetic excellence often permeates much critical commentary. That criterion places value on the capacity of literature to provide intuitive insight into the nature of ultimate

reality. The work possesses this capacity by serving as a springboard for the imagination: it allows one to jump from a level of awareness of ordinary reality to an upper level from which ultimate reality may be perceived. Most interpretations of transcendentalist theory see the potential springboard in the metaphorical or symbolic structures of the work. Thus the theory stresses a single, elusive aspect of literature, but attention is focused on the work itself to the extent that metaphor is regarded as source of potential insight. It is important to note that there is a highly individualistic component involved in a critic's interpretation of what constitutes insight into ultimate reality and in his designation of the kinds of artistic elements that serve as the means for acquiring insight.

Harold Osborne has noted that the transcendental or revelatory theory of art "is exceptionally recalcitrant to close definition and difficult to pin down by narrow formulae and phrases. Yet it is far commoner than most people are apt to suppose" (Aesthetics and Criticism [London, 1955], pp. 199-200). I am much inclined to agree with this statement. For example, there can be only an arbitrarily sustained difference between "imitation of essential reality" in a literary work, which enables one to become aware of a transcendent reality and the direct or intuitive apprehension of transcendent reality via the aesthetic experience. I distinguish the transcendentalist aesthetic by the emphasis given to the art object itself or to its symbolic structures as the springboard for the imagination to seize knowledge of a reality beyond ordinary appearances.

Because transcendentalist theory emphasizes a single, elusive aspect of literature, its usefulness as the foundation for a critical method must appear very limited. The criterion for judging literary merit will be extremely subjective, since the individual critic identifies for himself, first, the artistic elements that serve as the means to insight or knowledge; second, the nature of the knowledge; and third, the value of the knowledge. If the two criteria for judging the adequacy of aesthetic theories are applied to Transcendentalism, it is apparent that only the individual critic can determine for himself whether intuitive insight is mediated by a variety of artistic phenomena and whether the valued insight encompasses both naturalistic and aesthetic components of the literary work. As we saw in the discussion of hedonist and expressionist criticism, the critic defines most of the components of the basic aesthetic theory. This process is necessary because all three theories in the basic form are very general, and all three emphasize the audience's response to the art object. As the individual critic as audience defines the nature of his response to the art object and its valuable elements, he essentially creates his own version of the theories. Therefore, to judge the achievement of transcendentalist criticism, one must consider the individual critic's definition of the theory, determine if and what other aesthetic rationales are involved, and then judge the usefulness of the critical method and the quality of the general critical procedure.

Since knowledge is a principle element in transcendentalist theory, one would expect the philosophical aspect of literature to be

of special interest to transcendentalist critics. But with the Hardy critics who show evidence of a transcendentalist rationale, philosophy does not receive an inordinate amount of attention because most of the critics pursue other interests besides the revelatory aspects of literature. There are five characteristics of the approach taken to philosophy by the Hardy critics who display a transcendentalist interest. First, the philosophical implications of their discussions appear in their references to the so-called intuitive knowledge of ultimate reality revealed by Hardy's novels.¹⁷ Second, for the most part, the critics do not refer to the philosophy as some predetermined entity to be called "Hardy's philosophy"; instead, they view it in terms of ideas or attitudes about reality embodied in a given work. Third, the critics are not concerned with labeling the philosophy. Fourth, the transcendentalist critics locate or discover the philosophy in the symbolic or metaphorical structures of the works, not in Hardy's explicit philosophical statements. And fifth, the critics do make reference to the truth of the philosophical insights; and to some extent, their criticism reveals that aesthetic value is linked to the truth which the critic accords to the insights, and that this, in turn, may be influenced by the critic's personal beliefs.¹⁸

The significant transcendentalist characteristic that I have detected in two of Hardy's critics is their demand that art transcend the limits of realism. And transcendence of realism is the quality in Hardy's work which they concentrate on. They emphasize those novelistic elements that might be called supra-realistic or anti-realistic. It is by means of the artistic functioning of such elements that the reader is able to seize a knowledge of ultimate reality. Both of the

critics to be discussed exhibit similar ideas about the revelatory element in Hardy's novels. They have their critical shortcomings, but they do contribute to our understanding of the philosophy of Hardy's novels. We will consider the usefulness of the transcendentalist aspects in critical studies by Frederick Karl and Albert Guerard.

Both Karl and Guerard seem to have incorporated into their critical responses to Hardy a real sympathy with the Symbolist-Surrealist interpretation of transcendentalist aesthetics. Although these critics obviously employ other aesthetic criteria, my major purpose is to note the approval which they give to the concept that insight can be mediated in literary works, especially by means of certain anti-realistic, unconscious, and non-conceptual elements. Attention to Karl's and Guerard's responses to the Symbolist-Surrealist qualities in Hardy is merited for several reasons. First, these qualities have been significant in several modern aesthetic movements which have ultimately influenced the nature of criticism. But more importantly, we are seeing in much contemporary art a resurgence of the same qualities in a variety of new forms (for example, the extensive use of absurdity, violence, incoherence, chaos, grotesquery, and eroticism in drama, poetry, and fiction as well as in the plastic arts). There appears to be a brand new flurry of artistic effort to bypass and distort all traditional artistic attributes in order to free the imagination, the unconscious, the emotions, and the body in order to create new dimensions for artistic experiencing. Some of these aesthetic attempts are concerned with the conveying and apprehension of direct knowledge of an ultimate reality. Thus I feel that it is worthwhile to look at Karl and Guerard as examples of the effect which the transcendentalist

elements in the Symbolist-Surrealist aesthetic have had on criticism (and will probably continue to have).

Frederick Karl believes that The Mayor consists of artistic elements that allow its meaning to pass beyond the meaning of realism. In "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined,"¹⁹ Karl proposes that Hardy is not a realist at all. He believes that The Mayor presents not just the realistic experiences of a particular man, but that it presents certain extreme aspects of a man's life-- aspects that might be labeled unusual or abnormal. Karl detects these aspects in the psychological delineation of Henchard's personality, in the fairy-tale atmosphere, and in the extreme emphasis on Chance. All of these elements contribute to Hardy's anti-realism. The critic remarks, for example, that Henchard is not the traditional hero of the novel; he is a marked man, different from others, "a grotesque figure of wasted energies and misdirected will" (p. 206). He notes of Hardy's use of Chance that it "was his weapon to strike through surface reality to areas where the poetry of man offers resistance to the drab starkness of a malevolent universe" (p. 202). Moreover, he sees the simple structure of The Mayor, evocative of Greek drama, as contributing to the anti-realism, that is, the chorus, the reappearance of key people, folk superstition, the aura of fatalism, and the guilt and isolation themes. One should note that Karl mentions a number of different kinds of anti-realistic elements.

According to the critic, the anti-realism of The Mayor adds up to a vision, one which allows the reader to get beyond mere appearances and gain insight into the nature of ultimate reality. The vision is

obviously not a particularly pleasant one. Yet Karl recognizes it as a meaningful account of things, an account that recognizes the absurdity of the world. He explains the vision in terms of Henchard's experience:

A split individual, a mysterious universe, a misdirected will--all these elements help define a new type of nineteenth-century man.

(p. 201)

(And twentieth-century man as well, for Karl sees The Mayor as the prototype of the modern novel.) Karl perceives the insight afforded by the novel in moral terms, particularly, salvation and destruction.

Hardy recognized that idealism is a component of egoism, and that the true idealistic hero is not one who conquers as Christ did, but one who can destroy himself in muddle and non-comprehension.

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In his perception of the great grotesque depths lying beneath conventional morality, Hardy, in The Mayor of Casterbridge and his other major novels, wrote a parable for our times. The lesson is that life itself destroys even when man is basically good.

(p. 213)

Karl's essay is an interesting, perceptive one, and his transcendentalist interest is balanced by the organicist concern for the literary work in all its variety and unity. He accounts for both the naturalistic and aesthetic components of the novel, especially in the relationship he perceives between such naturalistic elements as Henchard's unique psychological makeup and the novel's anti-realistic structure. He is also precise and convincing in his interpretations of The Mayor and in his generalizations about the "new novel." Thus his overall critical achievement is great. But one should be aware

that the critic's views on realism, anti-realism, and transcendence of ultimate reality may be influenced by his own beliefs. And it seems that Karl personally accepts the belief that man and his universe are characterized by a large segment of absurdity and confusion, a belief deriving in part from contemporary existential philosophy and Freudian psychology. This belief also affects certain of Karl's aesthetic criteria, for he admires especially symbols of abnormality, grotesquery, and confusion for their potential of conveying insight into ultimate reality.²⁰ There are other ramifications of the possible influence of the critic's personal belief on transcendentalist criticism which I will deal with in the discussion of the other example in this category of criticism--Guerard's study of Hardy.

Albert Guerard's Thomas Hardy²¹ reveals transcendentalist aesthetic assumptions similar to those of Karl. Guerard, however, has the larger aim of providing a comprehensive appraisal of Hardy's achievement.²² He displays organicist tendencies in his commentary, but he also judges Hardy's works by a criterion that derives from a Symbolist-Surrealist interpretation of transcendentalist theory.²³

In the opening section of the study, Guerard sets forth some of his aesthetic guidelines. The most pervasive assumption is that anti-realism constitutes a criterion of literary excellence. In presenting his argument against realism, he does not dwell on its aesthetic limitations but on the limitations it places on modern beliefs; in other words, from the modern point of view, realism is outdated. For example, he rejects the assumptions of a previous generation of critics that led them to believe that realism was the

"proper medium of fiction." These assumptions were that life should be "placid, plausible, and reasonably decent." Guérard feels that the present generation can no longer accept such beliefs and can thus no longer value their expression in fiction (p. 2). The critic's specific aesthetic criteria emerge in his explanation of the Hardy study as part of a larger intention to record a movement among novelists away from "orthodox realism . . . toward the sombre and ironic distortions, the psychological explorations, the dislocations in form of many novelists writing in the middle of the twentieth century" (p. vii). Guérard acknowledges that Hardy is not in the mainstream of this movement, but believes that he shows certain tendencies "toward the symbolic use of the absurd" (p. ix). The critic intends to reassess Hardy's achievement mainly in terms of his Symbolist-Surrealist criterion.

Guérard's major justification for the Symbolist-Surrealist criterion is that it implies a truer account (than Realism) of what the modern world believes about man and his universe. That is, anti-realism in art affords us a vision that we believe contains insight into ultimate reality. He regards Hardy's "juxtaposition of implausible incident and plausible human character" as deliberate anti-realism. He argues that we now accept the novelist's extreme conjunctions "as highly convincing foreshortenings of the actual and absurd world" (p. 3). Besides its absurdity, Guérard mentions certain other concepts about life which, for modern man, contain insights about ultimate reality. For example, he notes our rediscovery of "the demonic in human nature" and our acceptance of the ideas that "a cosmic absurdity pervades all appearance, that evil has an aggressively real existence,

and that experience is more often macabre than not" (p. 4). It seems, then, that Guerard values anti-realist structures in art because they embody a vision of life that modern man can accept as true. Thus it is specifically the anti-realist quality in Hardy's art that Guerard seeks to explore, for he sees evidence in certain works that Hardy " . . . distorted actuality to achieve a kind of truth . . . " (p. 19).

According to Guerard, Hardy's achievement as a symbolist is limited because his anti-realism serves mainly artistic aims. He believes the greatest symbolist art presents an integration of artistic and ethical aims. This integration adds up to a distinct vision of things, including, in particular, a moral definition of human nature. Hardy's anti-realism, Guerard argues, is motivated by the artistic impulse to tell an arresting, strange, or beautiful story; and in this he often succeeds. He is considerably less successful when it comes to incorporating his vision of human nature and destiny into symbol or myth (pp. 84-85). Hardy usually attempts to convey his vision by realistic means and usually fails because of his use of didactic, mechanical, and abstract approaches. Sometimes Hardy succeeds in spite of his consciously realistic attempts to philosophize. For example, Jude is a good novel, but not because Hardy deals with seven different problems, which are neither subtly nor originally thought out. Guerard praises Jude because it "leaves a dominant and in a sense truthful impression of the world in which we live. This impression of unrest and isolation and collapse, rather than the diverse problems discussed, makes the book still seem true." In elaborating

on the nature of Jude's truth, Guerard essentially attributes it to the extremity and abnormality of Jude's story. He cites "the rectilinear starkness and truth of Jude's personal history; the history is the truer even, for its omission of Jude's rare happy hours" (p. 33). I believe that the truth which Guerard ascribes to Jude is the sort of truth-to experience described by John Hospers;²⁴ the critic essentially argues that modern man's experience verifies the extremity, absurdity, and starkness of life.

In evaluating Guerard's critical achievement, we confront some difficult issues. It is necessary first to look at his other aesthetic assumptions. To repeat, the aesthetic assumption with which I am concerned derives from a Symbolist-Surrealist interpretation of transcendentalist theory. That assumption holds that the greatest art contains anti-realistic elements--in narrative structure, in character, in action, in myth, etc.--and that these elements serve both aesthetic and ethical functions. That is, whatever vision emerges of man's ethical nature and destiny does so via the anti-realistic conception of the total work. Another of Guerard's aesthetic assumptions implies an organistic concern for the whole work; this concern is supported in his announced intention to face up to the complex work of art instead of reducing literary meaning to a paraphrasable commentary on some philosophy of life (p. 6). And he does attempt to consider a variety of elements in Hardy's novels. But he is not able to do this without also invoking his transcendentalist aesthetic, which, I believe, influences his perception of the various literary elements. For example, he objects to Hardy's obvious architectural structure because it does not conceal his art; he apparently sees no value in such a structure

because it is motivated by logic and realism (p. 11). And there are times when he praises Hardy's fantastic, elaborate, or melodramatic plotting not so much because it is functionally integrated with the whole work but because it meets the anti-realistic criterion. Guerard seems particularly vague in his discussion of Hardy's use of this element. He states:

The planning and execution of a complicated or melodramatic plot may enervate rather than excite; it may even take the entire place of a genuinely creative impulse, may provide a comfortable relaxing substitute.

Of Hardy's plotting, he remarks that in some books, "the impulse to fantastic or elaborate plotting is in fact an impulse to create life or express an attitude, and as such is highly energizing." Guerard tends to react favorably to this element without demonstrating its function in the whole work. Of A Pair of Blue Eyes, he remarks that the plotting "made credible this view of life as essentially grotesque; Ethelberta, he states, comes to life by means of the "melodramatic conclusion; and A Laodicean is "redeemed at last by the hilariously absurd plotting" (pp. 51-53).

We may also note the same anti-realist emphasis in Guerard's discussion of Hardy's realism. He remarks that Hardy was a realist "in his ability to convince us that his dramas are true" and in creating plausible men and women reacting to the ordinary claims of life. Guerard's real praise, however, goes to the kind of realism that takes on transcendental value, for example, the realistic details of the dairy atmosphere of Tess: "This atmosphere is a triumph of realistic art constructed from the simplest of everyday things. And like any triumph of art, it is something more than realism" (p. 81).

Guerard's general aesthetic theory is somewhat similar to the mystical organicism of Murray Krieger, yet there appears a certain narrowness in Guerard's critical method that one does not detect in Krieger's ideas. Guerard expects the literary work to embody some sort of vision of man's existential nature and destiny. Krieger expects the same. But whereas Krieger acknowledges a realistic or imitative stage in the aesthetic experience in which things are just what they seem, Guerard implies that realistic elements in themselves possess small potential for being transformed in the context of the whole work so as to embody a vision of ethical existence. To be more precise, Guerard's implication is that the modern reader can place but small value on the realistic element in art, since so much of his own experience in life verifies its absurd, extreme, and chaotic nature. In his emphasis on anti-realism, Guerard reveals a distinct preference for interpretations of human nature that perceive man in the context of an absurd world. Now, one may argue that such an interpretation, for modern man, seems to embody considerable truth, that is, truth-to experience; for the modern world certainly furnishes us with a variety of experiences that suggest the absurdity of life. But Guerard seems intent on taking this one aspect of truth-to man's experience and its expression via anti-realistic structures and setting it up as a major criterion of artistic excellence.²⁵

My analysis of Guerard and Karl is not meant to suggest that their criticism is inadequate. In fact, both present thoughtful and enriching interpretations of Hardy's works, and both pay attention to qualities in his novels that were previously ignored or denounced.

Their criticism does, however, cause one to consider certain theoretical issues. First, do their aesthetic criteria possess breadth and flexibility that would result in meaningful commentary about other kinds of literary works and novelists, for example, Jane Austen's novels? Another issue pertains to the possible excessive influence of the critic's beliefs on his perception of a literary work--in its various aspects. A critic cannot totally eliminate the influence of his own beliefs on his aesthetic experience, but it is possible for the good critic to minimize this influence. Specifically, he must be aware that his preferred beliefs may color his perception not only when he judges the so-called philosophic content of a work, but also when he judges the aesthetic value of the whole work. It seems that Guerard and Karl are concerned with total works and with particular artistic elements, yet their Symbolist-Surrealist aesthetic favors a world view that involves both the nature of reality and certain artistic forms by which that reality is revealed. In fact, any aesthetic theory ultimately implies a world view, and it is likely that a critic will adopt an aesthetic theory that complies with his espoused general philosophy of the world.²⁶

To summarize, one can expect from the good critic an awareness of the influence of his beliefs about reality and art on his aesthetic judgments, an awareness of other beliefs that may also be brought to bear on aesthetic judgment, and awareness of the drawbacks of equating any one belief with the "true" interpretation of reality. Critics with interests deriving from the transcendentalist aesthetic must show particular caution, since the theory itself implies a particular view

of reality, one that penetrates to an ultimate meaning of things. And it is up to the critics to determine the exact nature of the artistic structures that provide insight into ultimate reality, that is, symbol and metaphor, broadly or narrowly conceived, or the total work. The critic limits his response to the literary work if he demonstrates a narrow preference for a single kind of artistic structure as holding the monopoly on conveying insight into reality.

The analysis of the hedonist, expressionist, and transcendentalist criticism demonstrates the typical limitations of these aesthetic rationales, but it also points up the importance of the individual critic's interpretation of an aesthetic theory. Lord David Cecil's study represents a significant achievement for hedonist criticism. He defines aesthetic pleasure in such a way that he is responsive to a variety of elements that make up Hardy's novels. The limitation of his study stems from the emphasis placed on the reader's own response to the imaginative illusion created and from the fact that definition of this aspect must involve considerable subjectivity. None of the expressionist criticism is really adequate since it contains an excessive amount of impressionistic speculation about the novelist's personal emotion and vision and about how these elements are communicated to an audience. The critical studies by Karl and Guerard reveal a significant transcendentalist interest, but the interest is tempered with the organicist's attention to the variety and unity of individual works. Thus their critical commentary is generally enriching and meaningful. Their transcendentalist assumption enables them to concentrate on elements in Hardy's novels that have not been adequately interpreted. But the influence of personal beliefs on interpretation

seems to be operating in their criticism because of the specificity of their preference for anti-realism. One wishes that these critics would simply acknowledge that the anti-realist perception of the world presents one account of ultimate reality, or an account of what reality often seems to be, or the account that modern man is capable of perceiving reality to be.

The analysis of the transcendentalist influence in two of Hardy's critics has significance for several reasons. I believe that a so-called transcendentalist attitude toward art is fairly common among readers and critics and that it would be helpful to increase awareness of its influence. The attitude often leads critics to make vague remarks about the intuitive insight into ultimate reality which the literary work affords. For those interested in the basis of criticism, there are important implications in such remarks. The critic has the responsibility to suggest how the intuitive insight is conveyed and apprehended. For instance, which literary elements make insight possible, is achievement of insight due to a certain kind of element itself, or is it due to an interrelationship between elements? The critic should also indicate whether apprehension of insight from a literary work is affected by one's personal beliefs about the nature of essential reality. Finally, the critic should clarify the exact nature of the reality revealed in the work and acknowledge whether his personal beliefs enter into either his apprehension of the insight or his interpretation and judgment of the work.

All of these ramifications will raise doubts as to the usefulness of the concept that literary works can tell us about the nature of essential reality. Chapter 4 dealt with certain essence-imitation

critics who were obsessed with the visions of essential reality that are represented in Hardy's novels. I concluded that such criticism possessed little value unless it demonstrated how the specific aspects of the novels functioned so as to represent or imitate a vision of reality. My conclusion about the critics who display transcendentalist interests is similar. Those critics who believe that a literary work reflects and can convey an immediate awareness of some aspect of ultimate reality must be able to demonstrate how this happens. And if they can explain the process convincingly in terms of the metaphorical functioning of the work, their criticism will be useful. As Murray Krieger indicates in A Window to Criticism, it is only by means of the operation of metaphor that one can explain any of the so-called mystical qualities which our experience with literature seems to involve.

NOTES

CHAPTER 5. HEDONIST, EXPRESSIONIST, AND TRANSCENDENTALIST CRITICISM OF HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

¹"Orientation of Critical Theories," in The Practice of Criticism, eds. Sheldon P. Zitner, James D. Kissane and M. M. Liberman (Chicago, 1966), p. 283.

²Cf. the general definition of philosophy in literature discussed in Chapter 1.

³See the discussion of ideal imitationist criticism in Section I, Chapter 4.

⁴Prosser Hall Frye, "Nature and Thomas Hardy," Independent, LIV (July 10, 1902), 1657-1659.

⁵George H. Fitch, "Thomas Hardy: His Tragic Tales of Wessex," in Modern English Books of Power (San Francisco, 1912), pp. 131-139.

⁶W. W. Trent, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," Sewanee Review, I (November, 1892), 1-25.

⁷See in Chapter 3 criterion #1 for adequate critical practice.

⁸Another example of criticism that may be placed in the same category as Trent's is W. M. Conacher's "Jude the Obscure--A Study," Queen's Quarterly, XXXV (Autumn, 1928), 529-540.

⁹William Watson, "Mr. Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles," in Excursions in Criticism (London, 1893), pp. 73-80.

¹⁰May Tomlinson, "Jude the Obscure," South Atlantic Quarterly, XXIII (October, 1924), 335-346.

¹¹Lord David Cecil, Hardy the Novelist (New York, 1943).

¹²See criteria for adequate critical practice in Chapter 3.

¹³Cf. the general definition of philosophy in literature discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁴Edward Wagenknecht, "'Pessimism' in Hardy and Conrad," College English, III (March, 1942), 546-554.

¹⁵Granville Hicks, "Was Thomas Hardy a Pessimist?" Educational Forum, II (November, 1937), 58-67.

¹⁶John Middleton Murry, "The Supremacy of Thomas Hardy," New Adelphi, I (March, 1928), 219-224.

¹⁷Cf. the general definition of philosophy in literature discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁸In this characteristic, one is reminded of the limitations of essence imitation theory. One difference is that transcendental theory holds that the nature of ultimate reality is such that it transcends the appearances of ordinary reality. Another difference is that in transcendentalist aesthetics, the usual vehicle of insight is not considered to be imitation of reality but the metaphorical potential of the work.

¹⁹Frederick Karl, "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined," Modern Fiction Studies, VI (Autumn, 1960), 195-213.

²⁰See the Symbolist-Surrealist interpretations of Transcendentalism in Chapter 2.

²¹Albert Guerard, Thomas Hardy (Norfolk, Conn., 1964). Originally published in 1949.

²²One should note that my discussion of Karl's and Guerard's studies is not in order of their publication. Karl acknowledges the influence of Guerard's study which appeared first.

²³See the Symbolist-Surrealist interpretations of Transcendentalism in Chapter 2.

²⁴See the discussion of Hospers' concept of the truth of artistic insights in the section titled Artistic Truth in Chapter 1.

²⁵My position is that Guerard gives assent to the philosophical beliefs underlying the Symbolist-Surrealist interpretation of transcendentalist aesthetics. To clarify this point, it is helpful to compare his criticism to that of Frederick C. Carpenter, who also gives considerable attention to the anti-realistic elements in Hardy's fiction. Though drawing on Guerard's study of Hardy, Carpenter possesses a degree of objectivity that enables him to see that anti-realism in art is related to tastes and beliefs. Carpenter's major critical framework consists of Organicism prudently tempered with an awareness of the influence of taste in both literature and criticism. In his Thomas Hardy (New York, 1964), he acknowledges employing a "judicious balance" of several critical approaches "which seem necessary to a just appreciation of Hardy's work" (p. 5). Carpenter's objectivity about the anti-realistic quality in Hardy is readily demonstrated in the following comments. Speaking of "The Romantic Adventures of a Milkmaid," he

notes: "Perhaps the reason it has not been more often appreciated is the typical Hardy blend of apparent realism with obvious unrealism or expressionism-obvious, that is, if one is willing to admit its existence in the first place" (p. 77). Analyzing the praise extended to The Woodlanders for its detailed setting, for its plot, for the characterization of the noble Marty and Giles, and for its geometric balance, Carpenter concludes: "While we must pointedly disagree with the extravagant enthusiasm which greeted a novel characterized by such qualities, they are not in themselves disreputable. They have not, to be sure, managed to keep The Woodlanders in its former position of esteem among the Wessex novels, but some of them do contribute to its effectiveness" (p. 115). Yet the critic also remarks subsequently that the "mythic dimension of The Woodlanders, which makes it more appealing to a contemporary taste than its description or its analysis of the different faces of love, runs all through the book" (p. 123). Of Tess, he notes: "Myth is, of course, not the rich body of the tale, but rather its soul or spirit. Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a fine novel from the realistic point of view as well as from the symbolic (although too narrow a construction of that realism has often left critics unable to cope with its symbolism)" (p. 137). The same critical approach and tone is also evident in Carpenter's "Hardy's 'Gargoyles,'" Modern Fiction Studies, VI (Autumn, 1960), 223-232.

To reiterate my point in contrasting Carpenter's criticism to that of Guerard: both critics are interested in the Symbolist-Surrealist elements in Hardy's fiction, but Guerard seems to give personal assent to the philosophical assumptions underlying these aesthetic elements, whereas Carpenter personally stands apart from the philosophical assumptions, relates the aesthetic elements to shifts in taste, and ultimately is interested in their function in the total literary work.

²⁶William Chace Greene, The Choices of Criticism (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), passim; Stephen Pepper, The Basis of Criticism in the Arts (Cambridge, Mass., 1945), passim.

CHAPTER 6

ORGANICIST CRITICISM OF HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

The organicist criticism of Hardy's novels is most impressive. There is in this category criticism that is mediocre, but there is also much that is adequate and even outstanding. In general, the organicist criticism of Hardy, more so than any of the other categories discussed, meets the criteria for adequacy of aesthetic theory and critical practice. To say that the criticism approaches the ideal standards does not mean that the interpretations and judgments are valid ones that the reader completely and readily accepts. It does mean, however, that the criticism is worthy of the attention of intelligent people and that regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the expressed opinions, he can respect the critic's aesthetic rationale and his general critical procedure.

Before considering the particular strengths of Organicism, it is necessary to review the basic principles of the theory. The organicist theory that I am concerned with has been labeled mature Organicism, with this label intended to distinguish it from its immediate forebears, formalism and pure Organicism. The latter theories typically discount the value of what is called the "naturalistic" element of art, which is that aspect that suggests a distinctly human relevance or context. Other terms used to designate the naturalistic

element are: the imitative, the realistic, the existential, and the expressive. These terms commonly refer to that aspect of art pertaining to human life and vision as contrasted to purely aesthetic aspects.¹ In Formalism and pure Organicism, the naturalistic element is denied value in favor of the purely formal or aesthetic element. One formalist interpretation proposes that the unique value of artistic form lies in its capacity to reveal essential reality as totally dissociated from human needs and percepts.² In contrast to such an extreme interpretation, the mature organicist aesthetic denies neither the presence nor the value of the naturalistic element in art.

Organic theory offers an account of art that is inclusive and expansive. The first principle is that the art object is valued as a self-sufficient entity existing to be experienced in and for itself. Its value obviously cannot be separated from human consciousness and perception but this principle does stress the unique value of the art object aside from whatever personal or utilitarian values an individual may ascribe to it. Thus a poem, for example, possesses a unique value, aside from the message a person may extract from it, or the personal feelings it may arouse, or the information it seems to reveal about its author. The second principle is that the value of the art object depends on the integration of its various elements. This principle suggests the complexity of the art object in its construction from many components. There is in mature organic theory no extreme emphasis on the naturalistic element as in Imitationism and no extreme emphasis on the formal element as in Formalism. Emphasis is placed on the integration of all elements. In accord with this aesthetic, the reader must devote his attention to the work itself, to all of its many

aspects, to both naturalistic and aesthetic elements, if he is to experience it in all of its variety and unity. Organic theory, therefore, meets the two criteria for an adequate aesthetic rationale as set forth in Chapter 3.

Because of the value that Organicism places on the integration of all aesthetic components, the theory is especially relevant to the aspect of art and criticism under discussion in this study, namely, philosophy in literature. We have seen that the basic tenets of Imitationism, Hedonism, Expressionism, and Transcendentalism do not provide an adequate account of the philosophic element in art and its significance in criticism. Imitationism accords extreme emphasis to the philosophical aspect of literature, with the result that aesthetic elements are overlooked; moreover, it includes no safeguards against the excessive influence of the critic's preferred beliefs on his aesthetic judgments. The exact theoretical tenets of Hedonism, Expressionism, and Transcendentalism must be defined by the individual critic; and thus whatever importance is accorded to philosophy in literature depends on the individual's ideas. Obviously, there is no guarantee in these theories that the philosophic element will not be either overemphasized or totally excluded or that it will not be judged according to the critic's preferred beliefs. Organic theory, on the other hand, in meeting both the major criteria for adequacy of aesthetic theory, provides a meaningful account of the philosophic aspect of literature.

I have suggested throughout the present study some of the problems that arise in connection with the issue of philosophy in

literature. Organicist theorists have paid particular attention to these problems. Morris Weitz, for example, offers a comprehensive account of them.³ First, the philosophic element as an abstraction is considered one of the naturalistic components of art. Weitz acknowledges that a philosophical element is present in literature and that its presence creates the problem of truth claims that literature seems to make (pp. 62, 137). According to Weitz, truth claims may be made in the form of surface statements or in the form of depth meanings, in which case, they are contained in the work although they do not appear as statements (pp. 141-144). Literature is thus able to say things about the character of man's emotional existence that the sciences are not interested in saying. And what it says seems to be "wisdom" in the sense of being "the evaluation of the human scene"; such wisdom inevitably involves truth claims about the nature of life and experience (pp. 161-162). Organic theory explains the philosophic aspect and the concomitant truth claims as one of the artistic elements in literature. The theory holds, however, that aesthetic response must be to the whole work, not to any one element; and when the reader responds to the whole work, he does not give isolated or undue emphasis to any one element. Furthermore, even though truth claims may be present in the literary work, the proper aesthetic attitude is one of detachment; in other words, the reader should not allow his own beliefs to influence his perception and judgment of the work's philosophy:

The true appreciator--the well-wrought reader--ought to treat rejected albeit tolerated themes or truth claims as favorably as he does those he accepts.

. . . we ought not to allow our cognitive attitude to enter into appreciation.

(pp. 164-165)

The aesthetic attitude required by Organicism is certainly an ideal one and one that the ordinary reader may not attain. But the concept of art that it implies is sufficiently complex to do justice to the actual nature of aesthetic experience. And though one may not attain the ideal aesthetic attitude, it suggests certain safeguards against an oversimplified approach to philosophy in literature that other theories do not possess. Organic theory forbids extreme attention to philosophy as an isolated element. It precludes the tendency to equate the value of literature to this one element and the tendency to equate philosophy to surface philosophical statements. It attempts to eliminate the influence of the critic's own beliefs on his aesthetic perception and judgment. And it suggests that there can be no actual aesthetic difference between the various kinds of philosophic or expressive elements; aesthetic value can only be determined in the context of the total work. To clarify this last point, one cannot accord inherent aesthetic value to any one of several philosophic viewpoints, whether rationalist, traditionalist, symbolist, etc. They all possess aesthetic possibilities, and one must allow free play to different expressive qualities of different works of art (pp. 198-199).

Although Organicism seems an adequate rationale for criticism, the precise worth of criticism based on the theory depends on the critic's

individual procedure. Among Hardy's organicist critics, there are certainly some who produce only mediocre critical commentary, but there are also those who write adequate and outstanding criticism. The differences in the quality of the criticism are largely due to the critic's use of organic theory and to his individual critical practice.

It is important to consider in specific terms the manner in which Hardy's organicist critics approach the philosophical element in his works. There are certain general characteristics that distinguish their approach from that of the other categories of critics. First, the organicist critics do not use the term philosophy as often as the critics in other categories do, but when they use the term it is to refer to general ideas about man, his destiny, and his place in the universe.⁴ Second, the organicist critics usually perceive the philosophical element as the theme or thematic interest of a given work; consequently, they do not typically refer to the philosophical element as "Hardy's philosophy" and they are not particularly concerned with philosophical labels. Third, the organicist critics tend to explore the philosophical theme via its expression in a number of literary elements and structures. Fourth, when dealing with philosophical themes, the critics display a degree of hesitancy about stating the total theme of the work; they suggest the tentative and partial nature of their interpretations. Fifth, when organicist critics make precise aesthetic judgments about Hardy's philosophical themes, the judgments are based on the extent of the integration of the philosophical element in the whole work. (One may recall other aesthetic judgments about Hardy's philosophy that were based on such standards as its "truth,"

its power to produce a desired emotional response, or its "sincerity.") Sixth, in general, the organicist critics' judgments of Hardy's philosophical themes do not reflect any obvious or excessive influence of the critic's own beliefs. And seventh, the organicist critics devote considerable attention to both implicit and explicit theorizing about the proper approach to Hardy's philosophical themes. Consequently, the most outstanding examples of organicist criticism enlarge the reader's understanding of aesthetic and critical theory as well as enrich his understanding of Hardy's novels.

I wish to explore three levels of achievement among Hardy's organicist critics: the mediocre, the adequate, and the outstanding.

I

The nature of mediocrity in organicist criticism is difficult to explain, yet certain pieces of criticism leave one with the feeling that the critical effort and procedure are directed toward an imprecise or narrow goal. It may be difficult to justify this feeling since a legitimate activity for the organicist critic is to explore a single aspect of a literary work.⁵ The rationale for this procedure is that there is so much to experience in a literary work and that every aspect of it contributes to its complexity; consequently, there is need to demonstrate how one element works and contributes to the whole. One may accept this rationale, but he may also require that the critic be precise about the significance of his exploration and that his exploration should actually have broad significance.⁶

In an article titled "The Return of the Native as Antichristian Document," John Patterson⁷ ultimately reveals that he is not certain as to the precise significance of his critical interpretation. Initially, the critic suggests that his interpretation is indicative of the novel's major theme: "In its central action, in the suffering and death of Eustacia Vye, in other words, The Return of the Native dramatizes the tragic humiliation, in the diminished world of the modern consciousness, of an heroic prechristian understanding of life" (p. 113). Patterson discusses the various elements that support this thematic interpretation of the novel, for example, the Mummerys' play, the character of Eustacia and Clym, subsidiary characters, and the peasant community. Yet he does not adequately account for conflicting interpretations of these same elements, although he is aware of them. To illustrate, in his analysis of Clym, Patterson diminishes the complexity of his character by arguing that Clym stands for "Christian self-renunciation. The scientific humanism he is alleged to have imbibed in the schools of Paris only thinly disguises the Christian martyr" (p. 16). Moreover, he dismisses the authorial commentary about Clym that conflicts with his own interpretation by saying that Hardy was deceived by his hero and thus failed to delineate him with proper emotional distance (pp. 117-118). Only at the end of the article does Patterson acknowledge that his interpretation of the novel's theme may be narrow: "To consider The Return of the Native as purely and simply a diatribe against Christianity may well be, then, to dishonor the complexity of the novel as a dramatic representation of Hardy's mixed feelings" (p. 126). But the critic at this point does not offer any precise interpretation as to how the

antichristian aspect of the novel fits into a more comprehensive reading of the theme. His ideas on this prospect are noticeably vague:

"In the end, then, the novel is as much a dramatic exploration and exposition of the pagan-Christian polarity as an unqualified denunciation of the Christian outlook" (p. 127). After purporting to offer a major thematic interpretation, the critic concludes that his reading may not constitute the major theme but that it must obviously figure into an interpretation of the whole novel. He does not, however, suggest such an interpretation. We know that many modern critics are reluctant to state a novel's theme in precise terms because they do not wish to give the impression of reducing the meaning of a literary work to a paraphrase. Yet I think it is important for a critic to attempt a precise statement of a work's outstanding theme, the theme that emerges from a variety of the novel's aspects, and one that either accounts for or reconciles the disparate aspects.⁸

I previously noted that mediocrity in organicist criticism seems due to a critical aim that is either too imprecise or too narrow. In Julian Moynihan's essay, "The Mayor of Casterbridge and the Old Testament's First Book of Samuel: A Study of Some Literary Relationships,"⁹ we encounter an example of an extensive critical effort directed toward a narrow goal. Moynihan wishes to establish the presence in the novel of "extensive parallels between Hardy's account of the Henchard-Farfrae rivalry and the Biblical account of the Saul-David conflict" (p. 127). He believes that these parallels constitute "a kind of framing action for the main dramatic situation of the novel" and that this framing action contributes to the emergence of the

"permanently possible, endlessly recurrent relationship between successive generations," in other words, to the emergence of an archetypal pattern (p. 129). Most readers would certainly agree that the archetypal pattern of the succession of generations is highly significant in The Mayor. But almost every aspect of the novel contributes to this pattern, for example, dramatic structure, development of character, symbolic actions, atmosphere, and setting. Yet Moynihan devotes twelve pages to establishing the presence of just one set of literary relationships. This kind of goal seems especially narrow when applied to the nineteenth-century novel, a form distinguished by its loose, conglomerate, and expansive nature. One feels the critic might pursue his interest in its proper perspective by considering how numerous aspects of the novel contribute to the archetypal pattern and by suggesting the significance of the pattern in our experience with the whole. The kind of critical analysis that Moynihan provides has value for the reader, but few would feel it worthy of the twelve pages which catalog the novel's every allusion to Saul and David.¹⁰

The criticism of Patterson and Moynihan is useful and capable of enriching the reader's experience with Hardy's novels and is certainly more integrated than much of the criticism in the previously discussed categories. While both critics are too prudent to make broad claims for their interpretations, the reader is left with the feeling that certain claims are implied but not supported. Patterson leaves us with a vague statement of the possible thematic significance of the antichristian element in The Return of the Native. And it is only at the end of his study that Moynihan notes that other elements in The

Mayor, besides the Saul-David allusions contribute to the framing archetypal pattern.¹¹

II

The adequate organicist criticism of Hardy is that which meets the basic criteria set for judging aesthetic theories and individual critical practice.¹² In general, this grouping of criticism concentrates on individual novels, provides analyses that reflect attention to the whole work and to its various parts, and derives from such analyses meaningful interpretations of philosophic themes.

Howard Babb's "Setting and Theme in Far From the Madding Crowd"¹³ furnishes a typical example of adequate organicist criticism. The critic's statement of his aim reveals a knowledge of the organic rationale and awareness of the limitations of his critical inquiry. According to Babb, Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd

shows--with something approaching the obviousness of a textbook example--how setting can be used to reinforce and indeed at times to render theme. What I want briefly to bring out in the following pages is both the number and variety of relationships that Hardy creates between setting and theme here: a host of interconnections that serves--along with the story's other structures, some of which I shall be glancing at--to saturate Far From the Madding Crowd with its theme.

(p. 147)

Babb believes that understanding the extent of the novel's saturation with its theme can help explain some "scenes of more or less questionable plausibility in which the natural setting plays a dominant part" (p. 143).

The critic begins his analysis with a statement of the novel's theme as reflected in the barest outline of the narrative: "The most general impression created by the narrative, then, is of a running contrast between dignified naturalness and the feverish pursuit of selfish ends" (p. 149). Babb finds further support for his statement of the theme in other elements of the novel. For example, Hardy uses the position of omniscient author to establish the superiority of the natural world (p. 149). In addition, characters are ordered in such a way to express this same theme. Specifically, Hardy does this through the actions and motives of his characters, but he also "articulates it through relating his characters to the setting" (p. 150).

Babb analyzes three ways in which setting expresses the theme. First, characters are so named as to indicate their thematic significance; for example, Oak is contrasted to Troy as the strength of nature is to the weakness of the city. The second way, Babb declares, may seem impressionistic, but he detects that the introduction of major characters places them in a scene in which the natural world provides "an oblique commentary of the person, the sense of which is verified in the rest of the novel" (p. 150). He cites the example of Troy's introduction against the setting of the irregularities of the moor and low suffocating snow clouds and his subsequent association with cavernous images.¹⁴ The third way in which setting renders theme may be found in Hardy's use of the natural world in particular incidents. In certain isolated incidents, the natural world seems a being in its own right, one capable of sympathizing with specific characters and acting as a moral judge. Citing three such scenes, Babb notes

that they have often been criticized as implausible, melodramatic, and sentimental. These are the scenes in which the dog helps Fanny, the storm breaks after the party, and the flowers planted by Troy are washed away. Babb believes that in our actual experience with the novel we are probably so conditioned to the theme by the time we approach these incidents that we come to terms with them almost instinctively and do not question their authenticity in the story (pp. 158-159).

Babb's criticism provides a typical example of an adequate use of the organicist aesthetic and of good critical practice. One of the strengths of the essay is due to the critic's perception of the relationship between a variety of artistic elements and the thematic significance of setting. His summary statement suggests the complex functions which a single element, setting, can perform in a novel:

The setting . . . impinges upon the consciousness of the reader in many ways then; in some incidents as mere setting, or as symbol, or as a being in its own right; often through the relationship of various sorts established between it and the characters; sometimes as a complex whole more or less explicitly evaluated for us by Hardy.

And all of these functions keep mediating the novel's theme (p. 160). Another strength of the essay stems from the critic's realization of the limitations of critical analysis in comparison to the whole work. Babb is able to communicate that our experience with a literary work involves a kind of power and complexity that are not to be equated to a statement of its theme:

So while the foregoing analysis does make clear Far From the Madding Crowd's saturation with its theme, it remains ultimately as limited as any formal analysis: which is capable of showing how the piece of literature works, but

incapable of showing that it works, of closing with the essential vitality that allows the piece of literature to possess us.

(p. 161)

The final strength of Eabb's criticism is that he makes the reader aware that it is meaningless to label specific literary elements as implausible, sentimental, or melodramatic without considering whether they are in harmony with the whole work as one actually experiences it.¹⁵

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III

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There are several examples of organicist criticism that I would designate as outstanding. In addition to providing excellent literary criticism, the kind that reflects a wise interpretation of an adequate aesthetic rationale and an admirable critical procedure, these studies excel in the capacity to enlarge the reader's understanding of aesthetic and critical theory. The critics in this group display a greater than usual degree of responsibility toward their audience in making them aware of the aesthetic assumptions being used, their values, and their limitations. The modern reader of criticism is particularly in need of this additional theoretical awareness since he is barraged with diverse, conflicting, and constantly changing opinions not only of specific literary works but also of the nature of art itself.

The outstanding organicist critics make an important contribution to our understanding of the philosophic element in Hardy's novels. As is evident throughout this study, there is a large body of criticism devoted to what is generally termed Hardy's philosophy. And all of

the categories of criticism discussed furnish examples of the various and often conflicting opinions about the philosophic element. There are many sources of the critical disagreement. For example, one can predict differing opinions if the critic judges the philosophy according to his own preferred beliefs, according to traditional doctrines, according to emotional reactions, according to the author's sincerity, or according to a work's capacity to disclose the nature of ultimate reality. All of these criteria are subject to highly individual interpretations. There is still another reason for the critical disagreement about Hardy's philosophy. In conjunction with the critics' use of highly subjective criteria, there appear in many of Hardy's novels actual contradictory elements. Thus critics have found it easy to draw from the novels specific statements to support a number of different interpretations. This practice occurs when there is no premise in a critic's aesthetic foundation that precludes his emphasizing and responding out of context of the whole novel to specific philosophic elements.

Even when critics have attempted to approach the philosophic theme of one of Hardy's novels in the context of the whole work, disagreement has resulted. We are all familiar with this more recent kind of disagreement. For example: some critics believe that Hardy's novels fail because the action dramatizes one philosophical theme while the author's commentary sets forth another; other critics consider the novels to be weak because they express contradictory or unsophisticated philosophical impressions in a variety of aspects; others conclude that the novels are strengthened because the vitality of the dramatic action

risks above the narrow confines of the philosophic commentary; and finally, some critics believe the contradictory philosophical impressions may ultimately express a unified theme. These various opinions can be found among Hardy's organicist critics.

The major contribution of the outstanding organicist critics is that they offer some general guidelines for approaching the philosophy of Hardy's novels. Although their guidelines may not eliminate different interpretations of philosophic themes, they help to eliminate as much as possible the purely individualistic reactions to philosophy that are so evident in much imitationist, hedonist, and expressionist criticism. These guidelines also require that the burden of proof for any critical opinion be rooted in the concept of a detached experience with the whole novel. I would like to consider the particular contributions of three of Hardy's contemporary critics: Robert Schweik, Frederick P. W. McDowell, and Robert Heilman.

Robert Schweik is concerned with what he calls the different "perspectives" in Hardy's novels; these perspectives, he believes, are significant to an understanding of the themes of the novels.¹⁶ In his criticism of Tess, Schweik acknowledges that the novel conveys different viewpoints according to whether one looks at the author's general moral and philosophical arguments, at the dramatic structure, or at characters' differing expositions of moral issues. The critic argues that one cannot consider the philosophical or moral arguments as "structural excrescences"; nor can one "assume that any one or other of them epitomizes Hardy's defense of Tess" (p. 14).

Pursuing a strongly organicist position, Schweik attempts to determine the pattern expressed by the whole novel, and he concludes that each of the different perspectives in Tess reveals "a world of different dimensions and different moral implications" (p. 16). To explain the significance of the different and often contradictory perspectives, the critic sets forth the view that the perspectives reveal only "partial insights into a much more complex moral reality revealed by the novel as a whole" (p. 18). And thus the major theme expressed by the novel is a sense of the complexity of moral issues, of the limitations of moral vision and formulae, and of the general inadequacy and needlessness of such explanations in the face of human compassion and tenderness (p. 18).

In his study of The Return of the Native, Schweik deals again with the so-called inconsistent points of view in the novel. He suggests that some of the extreme critical emphasis on the seeming inconsistency is due to the critic's failure to distinguish major and minor elements of the novels. He notes that critics have found Hardy to be inconsistent in his treatment of Clym, for example, in his doubting at the end of the novel the value of Clym's newly found ministry. They have blamed this inconsistency on Hardy's usual inept handling of intellectual problems. Schweik believes this conclusion to be mistaken. He argues that Hardy's novels are not as inconsistent and confused as they appear if one considers the major constituents and total effects of his novels. In clarifying this point, he mentions Hardy's unevenness as a novelist and in particular his "unfortunate presuppositions about the novel," especially, the need for

"unusual incident and striking characters." He suggests that we must discriminate what is worth serious attention in Hardy's best novels. To fail to do this is "to run the risk of missing precisely those issues which his novels do raise." In this explanation Schweik touches on several topics important in critical theory. First, he acknowledges that one may expect but does not always find perfect integration of all elements in a literary work, especially in works such as Hardy's, which we know were motivated by a variety of impulses. And second, criticism of works of this kind should essentially center on the major elements of the work and its total effect (pp. 758-759)..

Schweik believes that the different perspectives in The Return of the Native contribute to the expression of a unified theme. He starts his argument by considering the treatment of Clym and states "that the question implicit in Hardy's final treatment of Clym is in fact appropriate to a large treatment of the problem of validity in human insight which Hardy develops obliquely in The Return of the Native by a systematic manipulation of perspective in his treatment of three main characters." The various shifts in perspective in the novel ultimately "make an implicit comment on the scope and limitations of human understanding" (p. 758). According to the critic, the different perspectives of Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright, and Clym represent man's intellectual history, particularly the slow and gradual development of human insight. The time of the novel is suggestive of a transitional period between a more carefree past and a more somber, restrained future. The varying degrees of man's insight as represented in the three leading characters are also located in psychological time. For example,

Eustacia is associated with the "sensuous paganism of the past, Mrs. Yeobright with the commonsense conventionality of the present, and Clym with the thoughtful asceticism of the future." There is still a further linkage of these characters in that each is presented in both ideal and ironic terms. Schweik believes that Hardy's development of character in the novel "suggests a more complex view of the development of human understanding than is apparent from the simple Darwinism of his more explicit comments" (pp.758-759). The critic's concluding statement is suggestive of the novel's philosophical theme which emerges in the total effect created by the complexities of both character and perspective:

The doubts which Hardy raises about Clym's new insight at the conclusion of The Return of the Native do no more than reinforce the pessimistic view of man's intellectual development that is implicit in his treatment of Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright and Clym: for Clym's fate--to remain the victim of a partial delusion which effectively distorts partial insight--is an appropriate final symbol for what Hardy pictures in The Return of the Native to be the common fate of humanity at all times.

(p. 767)

Schweik's major contribution to our understanding of critical theory relates to the reader's capacity to perceive the unity of apparently disparate elements. He implies in his own approach to Hardy's novels that the reader or critic must free himself from the cage of set philosophical categories and expectations if he is to enter into a meaningful aesthetic experience. More specifically, the reader must not let any one set of philosophical expressions predispose him to expect the exact same thing throughout a novel. Schweik suggests that a novel may contain several different, even contradictory, points of view and that these may all come from the omniscient author. But such

an occurrence need not be labeled inconsistency, for the theme of a novel may be expressive of doubts and contradictions and may, in fact, be perceived as an open-ended entity.¹⁷ This is a rather common idea, but readers and critics with a strong imitationist heritage can profit by it. One may not agree with Schweik's conclusion that there is unity in the philosophical themes of Hardy's major novels, but he certainly contributes to the reader's understanding of the extent of the demand that organic theory places on the critic. And his interpretations of both Tess and The Return are enriching ones.

In two critical studies of Hardy, Frederick P. W. McDowell explores the aesthetic value of Hardy's uses of naturalistic and symbolic elements. The underlying organicist assumption of McDowell's criticism is that naturalistic and symbolic elements work together to give a novel expanded significance. His thesis about Jude is that it is more than a naturalistic novel, precisely because it is filled with symbols that are organic and that have, moreover, a poetic dimension as well as a rational one.¹⁸ McDowell's contribution to our understanding of literary and critical theory is to elucidate the aesthetic power of a work in which the naturalistic and symbolic (aesthetic) elements are integrated. He also indicates the significance of failures to integrate these elements.

It is evident that in McDowell's opinion the so-called naturalistic novel falls short of the category of great art. This viewpoint is at first implied as the critic explains Hardy's acceptance of the idea that a work of art is more than the objective recording of the ordinary events of an ordinary man's life.

Thomas Hardy departed from naturalistic convention in Jude the Obscure in being unable to efface his temperament from his work. Jude the Obscure thus illustrates Hardy's view that a writer should be free to select his materials, to give shape and form to them, to explore their poetical and metaphysical implications, and to declare his belief, however tentative or qualified, in values which he deems to have some permanent validity in experience.

(p. 234)

The limitations of the naturalistic novel are further suggested in McDowell's explanation of the interweaving of symbols with naturalistic threads to produce a unified texture. Specifically, the symbols take on a poetic dimension.

In an ineffable and poetic dimension, they give nuance, resonance, and intensity to action, psychology, and idea, and carry the fabric--of which they form part--away from an objectively rendered and obviously typical reality.

(p. 235)

In his study of Jude, McDowell specifically aims to relate the images and clusters of images to the actual lives of Jude and Sue in society. Throughout the article he demonstrates how images, symbols, and symbolic and parallel incidents deepen and reinforce the realistic and psychological aspects of the narrative, impressions of characters, and the development of action. He explores, for example, the expansive functions of groups of sexual, musical, Biblical, classical, and natural images. The final effect of the merging of symbolic and naturalistic elements is to give the naturalistic world a broadened scope and wider relevance and to give expression to certain philosophical ideas and values.

McDowell's concluding remark reflects his high evaluation of Jude, but it also contains important ideas about the critic's approach to literary works. He points out the complexity of the aesthetic experience in general. He suggests the necessity for the reader not only to remain open and receptive to emerging aesthetic patterns but also to seek them through analysis. And finally, he notes that our subsequent experiences with a literary work result in a growing sophistication that heightens awareness of the centrifugal thrust of the work's meaning. The implications of his ideas for critical theory and practice are obvious:

. . . the details of the composition and the relationships among them are not immediately available to the critic. Similarly the full ramifications of pattern emerge in Jude the Obscure only after these details have been studied, that is, only after an exhaustive analysis has been made of the images and parallel situations in it. New chains of connection among these subsidiary and component elements of the book are continually being suggested to the contemplative inquiring intelligence. In spite, then, of its somewhat rigid structural lines and philosophical framework, Jude the Obscure, as a pulsating organism within such limits, is continually alive with ever-expanding significance. This novel is, as it were, a kind of kaleidoscope: the pattern formed by image, event, character, and idea continually changes with the angle from which it is viewed. The fluid contours of the novel reform and reshape to furnish changing vistas of meaning; new impressions of the whole which are yet related to our previous impressions continually emerge.

(p. 250)

Employing the same organic assumption of the integration of symbolic and naturalistic elements, McDowell considers in another article a specific aspect of Jude.¹⁹ In this case, the approach enables him to detect Hardy's failure to integrate the naturalistic and symbolic components of Arabella's characterization. In other words, the imagery

associated with Arabella is often in actual contradiction to the dramatic presentation of her character. McDowell thinks that the realistic portrayal of Arabella renders her a believably complex person, whereas the symbolic portrayal oversimplifies her nature, forcing her into a narrow allegorical function. Specifically, ". . . the animal and other ranges of symbolism so insistently connected with Arabella debase her or unduly emphasize certain elements in her nature" (p. 274). Because of this tendency in the novel, McDowell asserts that the critic must pay attention both to the development of character by symbol and to its development by means of dramatic action and explicit analyses of psychology and motivation. If one looks at both aspects of Arabella's characterization, she is actually shown to be "an antagonist of some stature." She emerges as "a natural force so strong that she produces strong effects upon others and herself" (p. 276). Noting examples of the dramatic presentation in the novel, the critic mentions that Jude is more than tolerant of her and that "Sue admits that one cannot help liking her 'just a little bit,' since she is genuine and not 'ungenerous'" (pp. 276-277). McDowell also notes that Hardy often takes a humorous and tolerant attitude toward her, though at times "the requirements of his art . . . sometimes distorted his view of her as a person." Her humor, impudence, wit, and unabashed hypocrisy are usually presented "objectively, rather than with scorn or contempt" (pp. 277-278). She has a limited vision and obviously behaves despicably, but she possesses certain shrewd intuitions. Even at the end of the novel she emerges as a fairly complex character:

If in her desertion of Jude on his deathbed Arabella represents a hostile fatality, still at the end of the novel she is again a voice of wisdom. She perceives

that Sue's existence with Phillotson is a sham, she realizes that the lovers are forever tied to one another by the deepest affinities, and she asserts what cannot be denied, that Sue has had no peace from the time that she left Jude's arms and will have no peace until she joins Jude in death. Arabella thus possesses more insight, more of the human attributes, and more praiseworthy qualities than the animal symbolism of the novel would intimate.

(pp. 279-280)

The value of McDowell's implicit theorizing about criticism is to refine the reader's understanding of the organicist approach to a literary work. For example, the critic must not be overwhelmed by the effect of one element, such as one means of characterization; the warning is especially relevant when there seem to be inconsistencies between, say, allegorical functions and dramatic or observed actions. When such inconsistencies are present, one should consider their total significance. McDowell seems to warn against the practice of seizing on a given bit of inconsistency in a novel and seeing it as an index of the writer's skill instead of examining the relevance of the inconsistency to the work itself. He suggests that the critic himself may be able to reconcile the inconsistencies:

In interpreting Hardy's characters, the critic should, I feel, balance Hardy's use of symbol and image, as such aspects of his art reflect on his characters, with his explicit analyses of psychology and motivation.

(p. 275)

In other words, a lack of perfect integration of elements may point to other more meaningful conclusions than that the author was confused in intention. McDowell, for example, concludes that Hardy no doubt intended the character of Arabella to offend, but he adds:

Certainly he also intended something else: an analysis of human passion in which none of the actors would be negligible. Despite the constricting implications of his symbolism, he would not have wished readers and critics to translate completely into abstractions the multiform impressions of reality and the complications of motive he was trying to record in *Arabella*.

(p. 280)

McDowell makes reference to the artist's intention, and one might question the sense in which he speaks of Hardy's intention. In the next study to be discussed, Robert Heilman adds significantly to our understanding of the "problem of intention" in literary works as he explores the problem in relation to Hardy.

Heilman's essay, "Hardy's Mayor and the Problem of Intention,"²⁰ seems to be motivated by two factors: the fairly common critical opinion that Hardy's works reveal "a discrepancy between intention and execution" and the whole problem of intention that has caused a wide divergence of critical opinion. Heilman believes that although the school of thought outside of academe holds that intention is irrelevant in literary study, the "intentional dogma" is actually well entrenched inside academe (p. 199).

It is evident that Heilman is not satisfied with the simple concept of the writer's intention and proceeds to develop the basis for rejecting it. He accepts that a work of art reflects two broad aims or impulses, and he explains these in terms of the dichotomy with which John Bayley analyzes character types. Bayley notes two types--characters drawn from "Nature" and those construed as elements of design:

Drawing characters from nature means yielding to them, acknowledging their autonomy, letting them get unruly, whatever may happen to plans. . . . Design implies a

subjection of character to role, whether this be the maintenance of a certain ordering of parts (the novel as formal garden) or the illustration of a chosen point of view or sensibility (the novel as treatise).

Heilman aims to establish the fact that there are two seemingly contradictory impulses or constituents of art--the natural and the contrived. (These two categories refer essentially to naturalistic and aesthetic components that are mentioned throughout the present study.) The two kinds of constituents are important in Heilman's analysis of the problem of intention. He speculates as to whether the modern age is "more than usually committed to design--to the working out from a prescriptive intention." If so, then, "the Hardy of the later novels is a modern by anticipation: he is constantly 'designing' a fiction in terms of some special aim or philosophical preoccupation." Heilman proceeds to use the example of Hardy to develop his views on narrow interpretations of the concept of the writer's intention. Specifically, he sets forth the thesis that Hardy "unconsciously surrendered constricting intention to artistic need; or in other terms . . . , his 'imaginative intention' replaced his 'intellectual intention'" (p. 200).

The critic ironically and explicitly deplores those who approach a literary work with an oversimplified interpretation of the writer's intention. He notes that this practice is widespread and easily applied to novelists such as Hardy, who "at least helps out the intentionalist by making a commitment." Since it was a convention of the Victorian novel for the author to state his intention, Hardy "comes into the narrative again and again as idea pusher, overt director of the proceedings, composer of program notes, or commentator of an almost cracker-barrel sort" (pp. 201-202). Heilman obviously thinks the

critic should possess a more sophisticated concept of the writer's intention than that implied by the authorial commentary of the Victorian novel. To be exact, the critic must consider the writer's stated intentions or a priori design, but he must also consider the total effect of the work. Heilman is particularly interested in re-examining Hardy's works because critics have often taken his interpolated statements of intention at face value. More importantly, he believes that if careful analysis reveals that such statements do not "square with what the narrative texture is 'doing' or 'saying,'" it may add strength to the case against the "intentional dogma" and lead to consideration of "various theoretical aspects of the interpretive problem" (p. 202).

Heilman chooses to examine The Mayor because Hardy is less intrusive in it than in his other novels and because it holds together. He notes several of Hardy's explicit intentions that may be detected in The Mayor, but argues that the narrative action does not support them. For example, Susan is to be "mild, nice, mousy, confused, and dull to the verge of stupidity"; yet she emerges as the opposite as she rids herself of an unsatisfactory mate, recaptures a former mate and secures his devotion to the other one's daughter, and works for a marriage that eventually takes place. In the case of Elizabeth-Jane, Hardy intended her to be very complex, but "his intuition of character saves him by making her less complex." Then there is Hardy's intention to make Elizabeth-Jane's life representative of the grimness of life in general, but the evidence is definitely against his suggestion that her life had been sad and underprivileged. And though he ascribes to her at the end a grim view of life, both she and Farfrae are depicted as

finally triumphant (pp. 203-207). Heilman concludes that the novel illustrates a sharp divergence between intention and artistic performance and that this sort of cleavage between a priori design or intention and the vitality of a work of art is fairly common.

The critic proceeds to consider the implications of his analysis of Hardy's intentions in The Mayor. Such analysis undoubtedly affects our evaluation of Hardy. It enables us to detect two impulses, the impulse of the storyteller and the impulse of the rigid man of doctrine. Heilman feels that in reading Hardy's novels one usually does get an adequate sense of character from dramatic presentation. But readers tend to "pay excessive attention to Hardy's nobody-can-fool-me and even querulous philosophic asides," because it is easier to deal with aphoristic saws than with artistic wholes. To give excessive attention to the "intrusive marginalia" results in a "distorted sense of Hardy's vision of reality," which, the critic believes, is actually an adequate one:

Hardy treats characters far less as victims than as moral beings whose histories are congruent with their natures, and his sense of characters is profound and many-sided enough to forbid any inference of a rigid, single-valued cosmology.

(p. 208)

He concludes that Hardy's artistic stature is actually due to "the discrepancy between intentions and performance" (pp. 207-208).

Heilman notes several implications of his analysis for aesthetic and critical theory. He doubts the "reliability of 'intention' as a clue to a literary work" (p. 209) and suggests that there are two possible courses to pursue. One is to discard the concept of intention

and regard the work "as a self-sufficient entity independent, once it is given final form, of the man who wrote it." This would be the pure organicist approach, but Heilman offers a second course that may be aligned with mature organicist theory. That course is to redefine the concept of intention so as to distinguish between "intellectual intention" and "imaginative intention." Intellectual intentions would refer to those designs that constitute the artist's "inaugural stance," (pp. 209-210) while imaginative intentions would refer to those formulated and knowable "only through the literary structure that executes them" (p. 204). In more precise terms, imaginative intentions refer to

. . . the subtle, nearly or actual subliminal decisions that constitute a great deal of the composing process; to the innumerable back-and-forth meditations between forming mind and substance achieving form; to the tentative steps from hypothesis, or the arbitrary leaps in the dark, by which incremental advances are made, advances that then undergo assaying, possibly by overt examination, more probably by an intuitive feeling out of an almost formless sort, and eventual acceptance, modification, or rejection; to the making of commitments and the recognition of their consequences, that is, the acquiescing, with whatever degree of consciousness, in the necessary adjustments of what we might call the "inaugural stance."

This concept "enables us to conceive of a 'guiding vision' without eliminating the 'autonomy of the work.'" Hence, mature organic theory does not eliminate the presence of a writer's intention; the intention is what the whole work says (p. 210).

Another theoretical issue that Heilman's analysis points to is the necessity of focusing on the work, on the text itself, in order to make an interpretation. The critic is aware of the common fear that emphasis on the text will lead to multiple readings of a given work. Although he believes that the presence of multiple readings may not

be such a bad thing, he is also convinced that extreme or idiosyncratic readings exert no primary or permanent influence. Moreover, he argues, we cannot demand a single "right" reading for every literary work because not every text itself possesses "absolute unity--a singleness of being and meaning that is compulsory for all readers." And finally, Heilman concludes, since it is not possible to designate the right reading by appealing to simplistic interpretations of the writer's intention, it is certainly better to have diverse interpretations than to reduce meaning to intellectual intention (pp. 212-213).

The tone of Heilman's concluding remarks on the importance of the literary text is suggestive of a mature organicist aesthetic. He maintains that "there is an ideal right reading for each work, though it is not easy to get at and may not often be got (if ever)." Yet the critic need not be obsessed with reaching the one perfect interpretation. Multiple interpretations may indicate the extent of a writer's achievement. And there are constants of form and meaning that balance individual perspective, historical individuality, and personal idiosyncrasy: "In interpretation, conscience and experience and maturity will eventually pay off" (p. 213).

Heilman's essay is particularly valuable both for refining our understanding of organicist aesthetics and criticism and for illuminating the nature of Hardy's artistic achievement in The Mayor. The theoretical implications of his criticism are particularly relevant to the complexities we confront in trying to interpret the philosophy of a literary work in relation to the artist's intention. He points up the fallacy of equating Hardy's philosophic intention with the direct

philosophical commentary that one may extract from the novels. Such an approach is not likely to result in a meaningful interpretation of a novel, its vision, or its aesthetic value. In differentiating between intellectual intention and imaginative intention and in demonstrating that both are evident in the text, Heilman adds further support to the adequacy of mature Organicism as an account of art and criticism.

There is undoubtedly a considerable amount of effective organicist criticism of Hardy's philosophy. Sometimes the line of critical exploration may seem narrow, and, indeed, the mediocre critic often fails to see any large or precise purpose for his investigation. But even such criticism may have instrumental value. For if the analysis actually consists of a thorough and judicious consideration of a single element in the work, then other, more competent, critics may determine the precise significance of the element to the whole work. Although one finds among the organicist critics a variety of interpretations of Hardy's novels, they do not necessarily conflict. In fact, critics in this category quite often refine and corroborate previous analyses.²¹ And in the truly outstanding organicist criticism, one finds an additional quality--a knowledge of the complex implications of the organicist rationale and an ability to communicate this knowledge to the reader.

NOTES

CHAPTER 6. ORGANICIST CRITICISM OF HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

¹See the discussion of the naturalistic-aesthetic dichotomy in Chapter 3.

²See the discussion of Clive Bell's formalist theory in Chapter 2.

³Philosophy of the Arts (Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

⁴See the general definition of philosophy in literature in Chapter 1.

⁵Harold Osborne, Aesthetics and Criticism (London, 1955), pp. 34-35.

⁶See criteria #1 for adequate critical practice in Chapter 3.

⁷John Patterson, "The Return of the Native as Antichristian Document," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XIV (September, 1959), 111-127.

⁸In an article to be discussed subsequently, Robert Schweik integrates important aspects of Patterson's interpretation of The Return into a more comprehensive treatment of the thematic elements of the novel.

⁹Julian Moynihan, "The Mayor of Casterbridge and the Old Testament's First Book of Samuel: A Study of Some Literary Relationships," P. M. L. A., LXXI (March, 1956), 118-130.

¹⁰It may be useful to note another organicist study that exemplifies aims and methods similar to Moynihan's. Langdon Elsbree's "Tess and the Local Cerealia," in Philological Quarterly, XL (October, 1961), 606-613, consists of a short analysis of the significance of the May Dance in the novel. The critic is explicit in showing how this single element serves several functions and contributes to development of the philosophical theme of Tess.

¹¹I wish to mention at this point a critical study that is adequate but not totally satisfying. Irving Howe's Thomas Hardy (New York, 1967) is based on an eclectic critical rationale which allows the critic to incorporate much of the good Hardy criticism into his own interpretations. Although Howe seems to accept the basic tenets of

Organicism, many of his responses and interpretations are based on other aesthetic assumptions. A few of Howe's opinions will serve to indicate the several aesthetic assumptions that he employs. He accepts the values of imitation of reality and occasionally shows a preference for a particular version of reality that meets a personal need. For example, he considers the earth of The Woodlanders to be "real" not "emblematic," (p. 102) and he holds that the novel can be taken as a novel of manners; moreover, he finds the passivity of Marty and Giles to be "a decided relief from the endless clatter about individuality which fills modern literature and life" (p. 104). Many of Howe's comments about Tess suggest the operation of certain hedonistic criteria, especially those which emphasize the power of a literary work to command attention and involve us in the story. He remarks that the novel "begins to mobilize and direct large masses of tension which, until the last page, will make the reading of it an experience slow and grueling, a drain upon emotion" (p. 115); he speaks of yielding "oneself to the momentum of the book" and of our acceptance of the murder of Alec as both a traditional element and as a relief that we await (p. 127). Howe seems to accord some degree of aesthetic value to the expressionistic element in Hardy's works. Specifically, he notes that "in regard to Hardy's claims as a voice of pessimism . . . what he lacked in intellectual finesse he made up in emotional strength," that he felt his ideas "with an incomparable depth and sincerity," that his "true power derives far less from his ideas as such than from his intuitive grasp of what their triumph might mean for the nerves of sensitive men," and that though he is sometimes an awkward philosopher, he often offers us "something far more valuable than any philosophy, his own deeply considered and contemplative wisdom" (pp. 29-31). Throughout his study of Hardy, Howe refers to the unity and integrity of the total work, but his eclectic approach often keeps him from doing real justice to the effective organicist's concerns.

¹²See the criteria listed in Chapter 3.

¹³Howard Babb, "Setting and Theme in Far From the Madding Crowd," Journal of English Literary History, XXX (June, 1963), 147-161.

¹⁴It is important to note that Babb does not overemphasize the importance of these two kinds of images in the novel; he suggests their function in the whole work; but he does not neglect the fact that a variety of elements also reinforces that function. His treatment of certain specific images in a novel suggests a balanced response to them, whereas Moynihan's lengthy study of the Saul-David images and allusions in The Mayor exaggerates their significance.

¹⁵Another study that is typical of adequate organicist criticism in John Danby's "Under the Greenwood Tree" in Critical Quarterly, I (Spring, 1959), 5-13.

¹⁶Robert Schweik, "Moral Perspective in Tess of the D'Urbervilles," College English, XXIV (October, 1962), 14-18; "Theme, Character, and Perspective in Hardy's The Return of the Native," Philological Quarterly, XII (October, 1962), 757-767.

¹⁷Cf. Murray Krieger's view on the centrifugal thrust of a work's meaning (Chapter 2, p. 100 above). A similar view is offered by Robert Heilman in a study to be discussed subsequently.

¹⁸Frederick P. W. McDowell, "Hardy's 'Seemings or Personal Impressions': The Symbolic Use of Image and Contrast in Jude the Obscure," Modern Fiction Studies, VI (Autumn, 1960), 233-250.

¹⁹Frederick P. W. McDowell, "In Defense of Arabella: A Note on Jude the Obscure," English Language Notes, I (June, 1964), 274-280.

²⁰Robert Heilman, "Hardy's Mayor and the Problem of Intention," Criticism, V (Summer, 1963), 199-213.

²¹For example, McDowell asserts that one of his purposes in his study of Jude (See note 18 above) is to amplify "Guerard's view that the lasting impression produced by Jude is its spiritual 'trueness' for a time of moral, intellectual, and spiritual dislocation" (p. 236). And as noted earlier, Robert Schweik's essay on The Return incorporates some of the antichristian elements analyzed by John Patterson.

PART III

IMPLICATIONS OF THE METHOD

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I am convinced that the diversity of critical opinion and method that is so evident among Hardy's critics is characteristic of criticism in general, and that this kind of diversity gives rise to a considerable amount of confusion and controversy. The present study offers one method for making sense of the many critical attempts to elucidate the nature of literary works. This particular method is aimed at facilitating our understanding and evaluation of critical studies that focus on philosophy in literary works, and I have applied it to selected criticism of the philosophy of Thomas Hardy's novels.

The intelligent reader wants criticism that will enrich his understanding of the so-called philosophical implications of literature. In order to be able to distinguish easily the criticism that is worthwhile, one must know what he is looking for. The reader must come to understand that philosophy in literature is a complex issue, that there are several aesthetic and critical approaches to it, that these may be evaluated, and that the critic's unique adaptation of them will influence their usefulness and thus the quality of his criticism. In other words, to determine what criticism is actually valuable, one must ultimately assess its foundation. The specific criteria proposed in my method emphasize three factors: an aesthetic basis that does not negate the complex nature of literary works and the experiencing of

them, an approach that minimizes the influence of the critic's personal beliefs on interpretation and judgment, and a critical procedure that is reasonably judicious, precise, and consistent.

The method has proved adequate to the challenge presented by the Hardy criticism, and the conclusions which it allows us to reach about this body of criticism are also suggestive of some implications for criticism in general.

Conclusions about the Hardy Criticism

The analysis of the Hardy criticism serves to clarify a number of significant issues involved in the criticism of the philosophic element in literature. The method proves useful in several capacities. It allows discrimination of minute as well as large differences in the critical approaches to Hardy's philosophy. It enables us to determine how a critic's views on philosophy in literature relate to aesthetic theories. It permits us to detect the possible influence of personal beliefs on interpretation and judgment. And it enables us to assess both the critic's individual interpretation of his aesthetic rationale and his general critical procedure.

Among Hardy's imitationist critics, there is considerable reliance on essence imitation theory. Criticism based on this theory concentrates on artistic insights into the nature of reality as these are conveyed by literature's representation of essential reality. From analysis, I detected two major limitations of basic essence imitation theory. First, it tends to overemphasize a single naturalistic aspect of literature--its capacity to offer insight into essential reality.

And second, it permits the critic's personal beliefs to exert an excessive influence since the basic norm of essential reality is so broad that the critic must necessarily define it for himself. Consequently, when he defines the nature of essential reality, his beliefs may dictate a restrictive definition that further narrows his interest in the literary work.

There are three major trends among Hardy's essence imitation critics. In the first group are critics who define the aesthetic norm in accord with their personal beliefs. Moreover, they often equate artistic insights to simple doctrinal messages and apply the ideal doctrine based on their own beliefs as if it represented absolute truth and the absolute criterion of artistic excellence. The resulting criticism is mostly worthless. In the second group are imitationists who set up an aesthetic norm for judging artistic insights that demands correspondence to Hardy's so-called characteristic philosophy. Their criticism reveals that a large measure of the critic's personal beliefs and impressions contributes to definition of the characteristic philosophy. The value of this kind of criticism is similarly limited by a narrow and subjective aesthetic foundation. In the last group are critics with a major interest in exploring Hardy's insights into essential reality but who tend to evolve more comprehensive aesthetic norms. Their norms reflect the critic's awareness that artistic insights are integrally connected to certain formal elements in literary works. These critics attempt to pay attention both to the naturalistic and aesthetic components of Hardy's novels; consequently, their interpretations and judgments are sometimes worthwhile and occasionally outstanding.

Hardy's hedonist critics interpret and judge his novels on the basis of the aesthetic pleasure they evoke. Like basic essence imitation theory, Hedonism proposes an aesthetic norm that is so broad that the individual critic essentially determines his own norm, one that is based on his definition of aesthetic pleasure. Hence the major limitation of the theory is that it emphasizes a single facet of the aesthetic experience--the audience's response--and allows the individual to determine what constitutes a valuable and desired response. And a critic may define his aesthetic norm in narrow or comprehensive terms; the definition may or may not do justice to the complex nature of our experience with literature.

I designated two categories among the hedonist criticism of Hardy. In the first group are critics who define aesthetic pleasure in terms of single, specific kinds of emotional responses; for example, some value evocation of feelings of satisfaction with their attitudes towards life while others show preferences for either sentimental or sublime feelings. Their preference for specific emotional responses directly influences their perception and judgment of the philosophical implications of Hardy's novels. Obviously, criticism dictated by a narrow definition of aesthetic pleasure, that is, one that values the capacity of the novels to provoke a certain emotional reaction, can hardly enrich our understanding of Hardy's philosophy. Represented in the second group is a critic who defines aesthetic pleasure in fairly expansive and complex terms. Lord David Cecil proposes that our pleasurable response to literature is due to its power to command our attention by means of an imaginative illusion produced by many literary

elements. His aesthetic rationale permits him to explore a variety of literary phenomena and effects in Hardy's novels, and his study represents an achievement for hedonistic criticism.

There is involved in Expressionism, as in Imitationism and Hedonism, a highly individualistic component. Basic expressionist theory places value on the communication of emotion or experience from the artist to the audience; artistic excellence depends on the success of this communication. Thus in reading a literary work, the expressionist critic determines from his own impressions what experience the work gives him, infers from this and perhaps other data what the artist's experience was, and from these impressions and inferences, he judges the success with which the work affords him the same experience that the writer had. He may also link aesthetic value to the qualitative nature of the experience (presumably on the basis of his own or another's standards, which may either be restrictive or expansive).

Among Hardy's expressionist critics, I noted two tendencies. The first is to concentrate on Hardy's intellectual and emotional background with the major intention of demonstrating that the novelist held a sincere belief in a particular vision of life that necessitated its expression in his works and that the sincerity of the vision is the source of its artistic truth and aesthetic value. Because there is in this critical approach a considerable amount of speculation about and interpretation of autobiographical facts and very little attention to Hardy's works themselves, we cannot place much value on this kind of criticism. To concentrate solely on establishing the genuineness of a writer's personal philosophic attitudes and to assign artistic value to this quality surely imply an oversimplified account of the

philosophical implications of literary works. The other expressionist tendency reveals a similar weakness. In the criticism of Murry, the intention is to measure the success of the communicated experience and judge the quality of the experience. The standards proposed by the critic are highly impressionistic ones; for example, he cites Hardy's great sincerity as the source of his creative power, his popularity with the common reader, and his communication of the quality of England itself. One can only conclude that Murry's aesthetic standards are based on personal preferences for certain specific beliefs and experiences. Neither tendency of Hardy's expressionist critics contributes to an understanding of the philosophy of the novels.

Transcendentalism rarely constitutes the sole aesthetic basis of criticism, but its criterion of artistic excellence often permeates much critical commentary. That criterion places value on the capacity of literature to allow for intuitive insight into the nature of ultimate reality. The work possesses this capacity by serving as a springboard for the imagination: it allows one to jump from a level of awareness of ordinary reality to an upper level from which he perceives ultimate reality. Most interpretations of transcendental theory see the springboard as the metaphorical or symbolic potential of the work. The theory stresses a single, elusive aspect of literature, but attention is focused on the work itself to the extent that metaphor is regarded as the source of potential insight. There is a highly individualistic component involved in a critic's interpretation of what constitutes ultimate reality and in his designation of the kinds of artistic elements that serve as the means for achievement of insight.

I discussed two Hardy critics who displayed a transcendentalist interest in his novels. Karl and Guerard show a tendency to associate aesthetic value with purely anti-realistic literary structures, especially grotesque, absurd, and alogical ones, as in themselves suggesting to the imagination that ultimate reality is characterized by man's struggle for meaning in a chaotic and absurd universe. These critics offer enriching interpretations that the reader can further pursue and test in his reading of Hardy's novels. But there is the possibility of distortion that may result from the tendency to over-value certain kinds of metaphorical structures as embodying in themselves the insight into ultimate reality.

Organicism serves as the aesthetic foundation for some of the best available criticism of Hardy's philosophy. The basic theory meets the criteria for an adequate aesthetic rationale. It places value on the art object as a self-sufficient entity existing to be experienced in and for itself. Aesthetic excellence depends on the integration of all the work's various elements--both formal and naturalistic (including philosophy). The proper aesthetic attitude is characterized by attention to all aspects of the work and by particular care to minimize the influence of one's own cognitive interests and beliefs. Hardy's organicist critics generally adhere to the three principles stated above and interpret them prudently; consequently, they produce worthwhile criticism.

The organicist criticism of Hardy's philosophy may be placed into three groups--mediocre, adequate, and outstanding. The mediocre criticism is characterized by an explication of a single literary element that fails to suggest the precise or the significant function of that

particular element in the whole work. The adequate organicist criticism is characterized by analyses and interpretations of philosophical themes as embodied in the various aspects of total works. Several of Hardy's organicist critics make a truly outstanding contribution because their studies not only enrich our understanding of the philosophy of his novels but also enlarge our understanding of important aesthetic and critical issues.

Implications for Criticism

The designation of the problem to be investigated in the present study, the explication of its background, and the evolution of the method described for understanding and evaluating literary criticism all serve to sharpen our perception of the complexities involved in the criticism of the philosophical element in literature. It might be helpful to reconsider some of these factors. There are several basic ways in which readers and critics may react to philosophy in literature. For example, they can respond according to what the philosophy seems to reveal about the universe, about themselves as audience, about the author, or about the work itself.¹ All of these responses are, I think, understandably involved in our experience with a literary work.

It is apparent that the so-called philosophy, whether it is labeled artistic truth, insight, wisdom, idea, or theme, is a very important aspect of the literary experience. And rightly so. There is a significant power in the naturalistic element in literature, the element that pertains to the whole of human experience, that is, to man and his universe. When we begin reading a novel, for example, we

are instinctively interested in the human experience presented. Its philosophical implications arise when we inevitably begin to think about the universal significance of the experience. At this point, we enter the realm of abstraction and find ourselves involved in irreconcilable disputes about truth, knowledge, and belief. Theorists have been speculating from the beginning of time about the nature of man and his universe. And as soon as a reader attempts to pursue the large significance of the literary rendering of an individual human experience, that is, the significance it holds for man in general, he faces the problem of deciding about the essential meaning of reality. The problem is greatly complicated by the critical tendency to equate artistic value to the truth of the work's insight into essential reality. Since there is a variety of accounts about essential reality, it is hardly reasonable to expect that the expression of any one or even all of them can be in itself a meaningful standard of literary excellence. Consequently, there is little to be gained from the critic's attempt to judge philosophy in literature solely in terms of its capacity to enlarge our understanding of the nature of the universe.

Perhaps the most instinctive reaction to the philosophical aspect of literature is for the individual to relate it to his own personal experiences, emotions, and beliefs. In other words, the large significance of the human experience presented in a novel is perceived in terms of the particular meaning it holds for the individual. The reader essentially asks himself whether there is meaning or truth in the portrayed experience that has relevance to himself. In this reaction, artistic value is determined by the degree to which the literary work reveals insights the reader accepts as true on the basis

of his own experiences and beliefs. The instinctive predilection toward perceiving and judging the philosophic element in terms of personal experiences and values is understandable and probably a necessary stage in aesthetic experience. But even the simplest analysis of criticism based on this kind of response reveals the gross limitations of using such a subjectively derived entity as the criterion of literary excellence.

Critics have attempted to handle the problems involved in interpreting and judging philosophy in literary works by a kind of final appeal to the writer's personal philosophy. They suggest that the artistic truth or insight of a work is the same as the writer's personal philosophy and that it has value precisely because it represents his own sincere vision of things. This approach presents several difficulties. First, the writer as man and the implied author of a literary work are not identical.² Second, determining a writer's personal philosophy involves the critic's selection, interpretation and judgment of facts and opinions. And third, the philosophy expressed in a literary work is bound to be influenced by a variety of other naturalistic and aesthetic components of the work. Thus the critic who approaches the philosophy of a literary work with the idea that it is the same as the writer's personal philosophy possesses an oversimplified notion of the philosophical aspect of art.

No relevant attitude to the philosophic element in literature emerges from attempts to relate its significance solely to the universe, the audience, or to the writer. We can understand the instinctive attraction to the experiential aspect of art and to the desire to perceive and explain its large significance. But we cannot

accept commentary that explains philosophical insight in terms of an absolute truth, or in terms of a critic's idiosyncratic beliefs and feelings, or in terms of the writer's personal philosophy.

The approach that proves most fruitful in explaining literary philosophy is based on what might be called the aesthetic response. Specifically, the philosophic aspect is perceived, explained, and judged in relation to the literary work itself and all that comprises it. What is needed, then, is not merely the most instinctive kind of response but the most complex kind of response--the aesthetic response. It may incorporate elements from the other kinds of responses mentioned above, yet it is ultimately a response to the philosophy perceived in the context of the whole work, which possesses value in itself as an art object.

We may further explore the implications of this idea for criticism. The major principle is that the aesthetic response to a literary work must not be conceived of in narrow terms. In other words, it must not be explained either in narrow naturalistic terms or in narrow formalistic terms. In criticism that emphasizes the naturalistic qualities of literature, we see major value placed on such criteria as the accuracy of the work's representation of reality (however it is defined), its capacity to instruct, inspire, or titillate, its capacity to reveal the writer as a man, or its relevance to our own personal, social, moral, or cultural existence. Attention to these kinds of interests reveals the expectation that a literary work will possess implications for the whole of human experience. And one cannot deny that literature speaks to us of human experience, but there is the possibility that excessive interest in the naturalistic aspects of

a literary work may result in a failure to respond to the work as art. On the other hand, in criticism that stresses formalistic qualities, that is, specific structures and relationships that comprise the work of art, there is often the tendency to dissociate it from any relevance to human experience. It is almost as if the formalist critic denies his own humanity so as to perceive form in a vacuum; as if he fears involvement with the messy existential dimension of literature that is so fraught with uncertainty and tentativeness. Obviously, if criticism does not convey the presence of an individual human consciousness responding to art, it will be sterile and it will diminish our aesthetic experience. The truly aesthetic response comes to terms with both naturalistic and formal elements. And criticism must somehow reflect that kind of response. It must convey that the naturalistic and formalistic elements are in one sense separable, mainly because of the nature of human consciousness, but that in another sense they are not separable, mainly because of the existence of the literary work as an art object.

If we go to criticism for an understanding and appreciation of the so-called philosophical aspect of a literary work, then we may judge the value of the criticism according to the quality of the aesthetic response that it reveals. If the response fails to reconcile naturalistic and formalistic interests, then the criticism based on it will have gross limitations. The present study proposes to help modern readers and would-be critics to recognize and understand the various possible approaches to the philosophic element in literature. This kind of awareness will indicate to them the nature of their own reactions in a literary experience. They will be able to analyze a

critical interpretation according to the quality of the literary experience on which it is based and according to the efficacy of the methods that it implies. With this kind of awareness, it becomes possible to strive consciously to reach the richest stage of aesthetic experiencing.

Another important implication suggested by the present study is the importance of the critic's unique adaptation of a theoretical system. The individual critic can either strengthen or weaken his aesthetic foundation, regardless of its particular emphasis. Effective criticism is based on an aesthetic rationale that enables the critic to do justice to the uniquely rich experience that literature offers. And such a foundation may result from the critic's wise interpretation of a theory, from effectively combining the significant principles of theories, or from adopting an aesthetic theory that offers in itself an adequate account of art and the aesthetic experience.

One of the trends in organicist criticism has considerable significance. We are seeing more and more criticism that deals in great detail with single aspects of a literary work. This kind of critical activity is, of course, justifiable. But it also suggests that art is so complex that one may never fathom its complete meaning, and this premise too is justifiable. Nonetheless, such criticism often seems narrow and over technical and causes skepticism about the capacity of criticism to say anything really meaningful about literature. Perhaps we should support and pursue attempts to integrate critical interpretations. It is apparent, from the Hardy criticism, that many interpretations have the potential of being integrated into more comprehensive critical studies of specific works. The integrative approach

in criticism would seem to be especially valuable for a fluid and expansive literary form such as the novel.

The final implication of the study pertains to the whole relationship between aesthetics and criticism. The critic is essentially an aesthetician whether or not he realizes it. That is, his criticism implies his views on art and artistic value, regardless of whether he explicitly acknowledges them. But the accomplishment of the final group of organicist critics gives evidence to the fact that better criticism results from the critic's conscious awareness of aesthetic theory and specific issues and from his explicit intention to elucidate them. It is likely that contemporary criticism will become more and more theoretical because of the increasing exposure to a plurality of aesthetic and critical theories. The problem is whether a highly theoretical criticism can also succeed in conveying the unique power of literary works so as to enrich the reader's understanding of them. All of this means that criticism will become more and more complex. It will have to do many different things, yet it should never be perceived as any kind of substitute for the literary work itself.

NOTES

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

¹M. H. Abrams uses these four categories to distinguish theories. They are also useful for describing different stages of our response to literary works. See note 1 in Chapter 5.

²Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961), pp. 71 ff.

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