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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA -- ÉCOLE DES GRADUÉS

LITERARY REALISM AND MORALITY

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Philosophy of the University
of Ottawa in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.



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PREFACE

This thesis has taken for its title and theme the relation existing between two branches of philosophy: aesthetics and ethics. It attempts to re-examine their relationship in an effort to demonstrate that to the extent that any art offends morality, to that same extent it loses the right to call itself "art". The particular interest of this thesis, however, is not art in general, but a particular branch of art: literature.

The problem tackled by the thesis is among the most highly contested subjects of modern time. Literature today has set itself outside the pale of morality, claiming that, having its own raison d'être, it is responsible to no moral critic. There is a necessity, in the author's mind, to indicate that, not only has this not been the contention of the majority of artists or theorists in the past, but also that such a theory of literature as art is self-destructive.

The nature of the thesis explains the order of the chapters. The first task accomplished is the positioning of literature among the arts and explaining just what it is. In doing this, the question of imitation is taken up, since it is maintained that literature, treating as it does of human life and human behavior, is a form of imitation. The type of imitation which should characterize this art is then explained as being a true realism, not a naturalism.

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The next three chapters proceed to speak of how literature is related to ethical norms. In this an historical approach is adopted. It is obvious that in a work of this nature no exhaustive study is at all practicable. For that reason, the author has chosen to deal only with representative figures in the field of art theory and practice. The oldest, and most persistent, theory has intimately linked the two realms of ethics and aesthetics. Sometimes called, Hebraism, this theory holds that art must serve life and life's causes. At an opposite extreme is the view that art must be freed from service to any cause. Sometimes called Hellenism, it is, in its extreme form, a rival to morality itself. The second and third chapters deal with these views respectively. In the fourth chapter a middle position, which the author calls Realism, is brought forward.

Desiring to be practical in a field which today needs so much more than abstract philosophizing, the last chapter also attempts to set down some guidelines which would logically follow from the middle position presented. It is hoped that an application of these guidelines would assist a reader in sifting the chaff from the wheat in the literary harvest.

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I would like to express my gratitude to Father Jacques Croteau, O.M.I. and M. Jean-Marc Poliquin for their encouragement and assistance in the preparation of this work.

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CHAPTER I

THE ART OF LITERATURE

A. PLACE OF LITERATURE AMONG THE ARTS

Although there are some who would dispute the fact, most philosophers of art would seem to admit that there is a common bond uniting the various arts. Henry James of modern times seconds Cicero ("All the humane arts share a sort of common bond, and are held together by a sort of mutual kinship"),¹ in writing:

The analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same, their success is the same, and the honor of one is the honor of another.²

But while they may have this common substance, though they may have a common origin in the faculties of man: his intellect, imagination and emotions, it is obviously true that one type of art differs from another. Thus Paul Weiss writes:

1 Cicero Pro Archia I. 2, ed. by A.L. Parker, Toronto, Canada Publishing Co., 1881, p. 2.

2 Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", in The Future of the Novel, ed. by Leon Edel, New York, Vintage Books, 1956, p. 5.

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...no one is so much a contextualist that he refuses to distinguish between different types of art, not merely in terms of what the culture recognizes to be distinct, but in terms of a more comprehensive understanding of the essential features of the different arts. Though a culture may have no words enabling one to distinguish a poem from a dance, it would be folly to forget that the one makes use of words and silences and the other of movements and rests, which we, with our larger vocabulary, ought to remark.³

Thus, merely considering the media in which the artistic intuition is expressed reveals the differences among the arts. The matter of sculpturing is tri-dimensional; the forms of painting are in two-dimensional media; while the sounds have no dimensions at all, being but vibrations in time.

One of the most common of classifications, according as they use space or time as their continuum, is the division into plastic and expressive arts. The former deals with matter extended in space, including in their ambit, sculpture, painting and architecture. Their object of imitation is natural figure, "natural and geometrical shapes, light, shade and color, arrangements and configurations."⁴ By the nature of their media, these arts are immediately

³ Paul Weiss, Nine Basic Arts, Carbondale, Southern Illinois U. Press, 1961, pp. 28-29.

⁴ Mortimer Adler, Art and Prudence, New York, Longmans-Green, 1937, p. 461.

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representative more of mass than of motion. They are able to represent movement by suggestion only. Such arts are permanent, static.

Those arts designated as expressive deal with sensations in time. Music, the dance, poetry have as their proper objects, action and motion. They are unable to represent mass directly, since their medium is unextended in space. Such arts are truly dynamic and thus more perfectly than the plastic arts, can apply to themselves the Aristotelian canon for art as the "imitation of men in action."⁵ In his recent work, Weiss deviates slightly from this common classification by including a third continuum: energy, which he envisages as informing the so-called performing arts: music, theater and the dance.

All three also have temporal components, Indeed so obtrusive are the latter that these arts are often taken to be merely temporal arts. But they are all more than spatial or temporal: they are dynamic, energetic, creating new modes of becoming.⁶

Among the fine arts, literature stands, as it were, in the middle. Related to music by the notions of movement

⁵ Aristotle Poetics II. 1, in S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 4th ed., New York, Dover, 1951, p. 150.

⁶ Weiss, op. cit., p. 37.

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and rhythm, it can be linked to the plastic arts as well, through the medium of space and color.⁷

In searching for what it is that specifically distinguishes literature from the other expressive arts, first place must be assigned to its material cause. Whereas the material cause in the case of music is sound, and in the case of the dance, mime, in the case of literature it is words, language. While this use of language gives literature a distinct advantage over the other arts from one point of view,⁸ from yet another viewpoint it quite definitely limits the universal appeal of this art form. For words are divided into languages, and a language understood in one part of the world is not infrequently unknown in another. Moreover, even in translation, the exact appeal of a particular piece of art cannot be the same: sometimes

7 For a comparative study of the arts done with the intention of positioning literature among them, cf. Paul F. Speckbaugh, C.P.P.S., Some General Canons of Literary Criticism Determined From An Analysis of Art, Washington, The Catholic University of America, 1936, pp. 38-44.

8 "... the literary art has the biggest potential for greatness among the arts, simply because language is its material and because the form of language is closest to being our form of life." Virgil C. Aldrich, Philosophy of Art, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963, p. 103.

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perhaps, it is better,⁹ more frequently, it is worse:
 "traditor, proditor."

The most frequent and obvious subdivision of literature is into prose and poetry. The earliest manifestations of literature in nearly every country appear to have been in poetry. Of the poetic presentations, the most popular seem to have been in the form of drama. By Plato's time, this literary form was already in the final stages of its second period of development. The end or purpose of this form was that of telling a story. As Aristotle wrote: "The plot is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of drama."¹⁰

Prose began to appear as a literary form towards the end of the Middle Ages. Its obvious advantages of making it possible to do away with actors, equipment and the sometimes burdensome invention of rhyme, appealed to artists intent upon expressing themselves in words. The first prose pieces were understandably loosely connected and without elaborate design. Morte d'Arthur could be cited

⁹ Thus Aldrich believes that the English translation of Rabelais by Thomas Urquhart amplifies, deepens, renders more intelligible the author's intended meaning than did the original text. Cf. Aldrich, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁰ Poetics XI, 14; in Butcher, op. cit., p. 27.

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as an example of this. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the ever-since-popular novel was developed.

B. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROSE AND POETRY

It is not difficult to see the ways in which prose differs from poetry. An author able to express himself by the mere denotation and connotation of words will do so in a prose form. That author, however, who feels that the literary impulse within him needs more than mere words, will add rhythm, metre, and, perhaps, rhyme. The poet has a definite feeling for the "sonority" inherent in certain words. A sonority which can be enhanced in certain word combinations and made more impressive by such technical devices as alliteration, consonance, rhyme, etc. In this case the tonal values of the language are capitalized upon. It is the intention of the poet that his work be intoned and not merely pronounced correctly. (Think of the chasm separating the rendition of a poem by a school boy and by an accomplished orator). Combining accents, intervals, etc., with this intonation and, where it adds to the poet's expression, putting the work into a determined meter, we realize the musical qualities of a language.

Once in a while a poet will declare that that is all there is to poetry: "It's not what you say, so much as how it is said." Gilson points out how modern poetry,

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freeing itself of all imitative aspects, has taken on this extreme attitude:

First poetry forbade itself to teach, then to say anything that might be said equally well in prose; in the process of eliminating all its non-poetical elements it has finally reached a point where it no longer says anything, but this is of little matter, for its essence is safeguarded, provided it attests man's power to create formally beautiful combinations of words; only the readers are missing.¹¹

"Only the readers are missing." Whenever the denotation and connotation of words are snubbed, poetry becomes indistinguishable from music. While it certainly is not necessary to demand that a symphony "say something," we will demand this of even the most avant-garde poem. For the matter of poetry is language, and "meaningless language" is quite simply meaningless. J. Maritain quotes his wife as saying that a poem's "poetic sense cannot be separated from the verbal form it animates from within."¹² And he comments later on that "A poem must only be, yes, but it cannot be except through the poetic sense; and some intelligible meaning, subordinate or evanescent as it may be,

¹¹ Etienne Gilson, The Arts of the Beautiful, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, p. 121.

¹² Raisa Maritain, "Sens et Non-sens en poésie", Situation de la Poésie, p. 14, cited by Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, New York, Meridian Books, 1955, p. 191.

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at least some atmosphere of clarity, is part of the poetic sense."¹³

There are some arts in which there is no question of searching for a meaning. Kant, for example, writes

...deliniations à la grecque, foliage for borders, or wall-papers, mean nothing in themselves; they represent nothing--no Object under a definite concept,--and are free beauties. We can refer to the same class what are called in music phantasies (i.e. pieces without any theme), and in fact all music without words.¹⁴

The very reason why Islam, so jealous as it is of the pure worship of God, would permit such "free beauties" in its religious art is that they cannot give rise to a false meaning, to a worship of themselves for themselves, since they have no meaning at all.

But a poem is not just a musical composition of vowels and consonants. It may be clear or it may be obscure, but that it might be at all, it must be an expressive portrayal in words of some theme presented for contemplation or aesthetic experience. A poet skillfully combines the words of language "in a way that enhances rhythms, sonorities and alliterations...a way that requires you to go beyond merely pronouncing the words correctly to

¹³ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement, Part I, Div. I, #16, trans. by J.H. Bernard, 2nd ed. rev., London Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1931, p. 81.

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intoning them, while it freshens the meanings and their ordinary values in the new combinations."¹⁵

It is all of this that makes poetry a much more personal form of factivity than prose. According to Weiss this hinders poetry as a story-bearing vehicle:

For story, poetry is overpersonalized, a part of the total situation which the story exhibits. In contrast to story, poetry verges on being the language of only one man,...(Poetry) is more personal than musicry, and less involved in human affairs.¹⁶

While there is some truth to what Weiss says, he does not take into sufficient account such "story-poems" as the classical Illiad or Odyssey. Yet, it remains true that when the literary artist is able to express himself in prose he ought to do so. To force rhythm, metre or rhyme to his thought would cloud over his artistic ideal.

C. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

Now while it is true that the material cause of literature is language, we must bring out that language, taken in itself, is not necessarily artistic. This will have much greater meaning when, at the end of this chapter, Naturalism is considered. Darwin used language in expressing himself in the Origin of Species, but few would call

¹⁵ Aldrich, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁶ Weiss, op. cit., p. 36.

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that opus a work of art, but of science. On the other hand, there are those who would hold that Teilhard de Chardin's Phenomenon of Man, precisely because of its style, is less a work of science than of poetry. The true difference between works made of words, then, lies not so much between poetry and prose as between poetry and science.

"Poetry is not the proper antithesis to prose, but to science. Poetry is opposed to science, and prose to metre."¹⁷ For Wordsworth, as for Coleridge, there is no essential difference between prose and poetry, while such a difference can be found between poetry and science.

"Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science."¹⁸

Cardinal Newman brings out this difference between the use of language by science and literature:

17 S.T. Coleridge, "Definition of Poetry", in Literary Remains, quoted by W. Knight, Philosophy of the Beautiful, Part II, London, John Murray, 1914, p. 98.

18 Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads, in The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, London, Frederick Warne & Co., n.d., p. 324.

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...science uses words merely as symbols, but literature uses language in its full compass, as including phraseology, idiom, style, composition, rhythm, eloquence and whatever other properties are included in it.¹⁹

The language of literature, then, is of a special type. To be used properly, the words must have the power not merely of conveying ideas. In one sense, literature abstracts from this utilitarian aspect of language. It cannot, however, escape the fact that it is of the nature of words to express meanings. A writer, scientific or artistic, dare not prostitute his medium by refusing to permit the meanings of the words he uses to show themselves.

The meanings the literary artist wishes to convey are such as will evoke vivid images expressive of human feelings, human experiences, human desires and loves. Like the scientist or reporter, an artist should be desirous of having order and clarity present in his works, yet, as an artist, he wants even more than that. His words must be so chosen and so arranged as to appeal not only to the intellect, but to the imagination, the emotions, the will as well.

19 J.H. Newman, "Literature", The Idea of a University, New York, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910, p. 275.

This whole discussion of the difference between literature and science is a specific instance of the more general distinction to be made between art and knowledge.

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The difference, of course, is not so much in the words themselves. The words of the literary artist will most frequently be the same dull and prosaic words in use in the business world.²⁰ It is the way in which the matter is used in the total work that makes the difference. Words which, in isolation, are flat stereotypes become arresting when put into a truly literary context.

An analogy used in a recent work by Dr. Paul Marcotte helps bring out this distinction between science and literature even more, and also serves to lead into our next point concerning the art of literature.²¹ The terminology used by Dr. Marcotte is based upon that of Jacques Maritain in his latest and definitive work on art, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry. While he does not explicitly state it, his division is based upon the assumption that, by any essential philosophical definition, literature must be considered as the expression of human nature, or personality, in language. "In Art and Poetry, personality is everything"

In his activity, the literary artist is, as it were, a piece of colored glass through which reality passes, being

20 For a short note on this matter, cf. W.K. Wimsatt, "The Domain of Criticism", in Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, VIII (1950), p. 217 ff.

21 Paul J. Marcotte, The God Within, Ottawa, the Runge Press Ltd., 1964, xv, 139 pp.

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altered in the process by the "colors which are the writer's non-individuated, non-idiosyncratic Self." It is not, then, "ut in rerum natura" that reality is represented in the art work, but rather reality as it affects the artist in a significant way. The non-literary author, on the other hand, is as a piece of clear glass through which reality is presented "as it is," not as it affects the author. Actually, the literary author in this view is, by his work, discovering his own reaction to reality as much as revealing it to others. For in Dr. Marcotte's thesis the poetic inspiration or intuition aroused in an author by his contact with reality, brings forth a conscious need to express this significant reaction, while just exactly what it is he wants to express is unconscious. It becomes conscious only in the expressing it.

To put it quite simply, the literary artist feels the need to create a work, the aesthetic contemplation of which will enable at least himself to say: "Yes, this is just what I have felt; this is my significant reaction to the reality in question." The artifact produced must, if it truly accords with his artistic ideal, mirror back to the artist his significant emotion. When it does not do so, the artist goes through the sometimes agonizing ordeal of revising, omitting, editing his work.

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The word "mirror back" may not be a particularly happy choice here for expressing what Dr. Marcotte has in mind. For it is not as though the author had an emotion, then went to work composing a poem or novel which expressed once more that prior emotion. Rather, the "significant reaction to reality," the emotional experience, is worked out and expressed as the author works with his materials. This explains why it so frequently happens that an artist feels a need to express his reaction to reality, while not knowing just exactly what this reaction is. "The final cause of his work is to know a poetic intuition by expressing it."²²

This interpretation of Maritain does much to refute Arthur Little's objection to Maritain's thesis concerning the function of art. Fr. Little's major concern is not so much how the artist creates, but why.²³ He gives as a complete list of possible reasons that the artist creates (1) to assure himself of the power to do so; (2) to recall a beautiful object for delight; (3) to communicate his experiences to others. He positively excludes the possibility of

22 Ibid., p. 69.

23 Arthur Little, The Nature of Art, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1946, x, 264 pp., esp. Chap. 5: "Humanism".

Cf. also Little, "Jacques Maritain and His Aesthetic, a review of Art and Scholasticism", in Studies, XIX, (1930) pp. 467-480.

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creation for the simple end of creating, because "no man creates or acts at all but with the hope of deriving some good from his art."²⁴ Then he declares that only the third possibility, communication to others, is the true function of art. Thus, without an Eve to communicate with, Adam could never have become an artist.

What Fr. Little has done is to interpret too narrowly the meaning of "deriving some good" from something. In deducing that the end of art must be to communicate to others, he overlooks the possibility that the mere expression of himself, the simple bringing into being a work expressive of his own significant reaction to reality, can be derivative of much good for the artist.

Fr. Little thus seems to have fallen into the error of supposing that the artist already has a clear idea, a sharp forma exemplaris, of his work, an idea later infused just as it is into concrete matter. Maritain goes more deeply into the act of artistic creation and suggests that the idea, or forma exemplaris, is not at all clear, that that idea itself takes shape as the work makes progress. The function of art, then, is not so necessarily a matter of communication to others, as Little thinks, as an attempt on the artist's own part to know a poetic intuition by

24 Little, "Jacques Maritain and..." p. 473.

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expressing it. Public or no public, the artist will create in order to bring into consciousness something up to that time hidden in his spiritual unconscious.²⁵

This explanation of literature has much in common with the so-called emotionalist theory of art, exemplified by such men as Ducasse and Véron. The last-mentioned point is thus expressed by Ducasse:

The usual state of affairs is rather that the feeling which the work of art finally comes to embody is born in the artist only gradually, its growth preceding by but little the process of its objectification.²⁶

It is sometimes objected that a theory of literature which places the emphasis upon self-expression makes it possible for only the author himself to finally judge whether or not what he produced was a "work of art". For only he could finally say: "Yes, this is the expression of what I felt." While there is a grain of truth to the objection, as a whole it rests upon a false assumption, namely, that

25 Much the same answer as I have given to Fr. Little's objection can be found in Vagn Lundgaard Simonsen, L'Esthétique de Jacques Maritain, Munksgaard, Copenhagen, Presses Universitaires de France, 1953, xv, 156 pp. The author does point out that Little's difficulty with Maritain's view is understandable since he only had on hand the 1930 English translation of Art and Scholasticism. Really, it has been only in later works that Maritain has made his position clear enough for this answer to his critic.

26 Curt J. Ducasse, The Philosophy of Art, New York, Dial, 1929, p. 128.

the personality expressed by the author is his own individualized personality.

No doubt many of the modern artists and philosophers of art have that particular assumption in mind. Veron, for example, certainly means this when he writes: "(The) influence of man's personality upon his work . . . is the unique and solid basis of all aesthetics."²⁷ That this is his meaning becomes clear from what he says later on: "(We) should preserve a sufficiently lively recollection of (the artist) to prevent ...the subject of our contemplation from absorbing the whole of our attention."²⁸

In defending the thesis that all the "fine" artists express personality in their works, we are not saying that it is the expression of the artist's particular, individual personality (his idiosyncratic personality, to use Dr. Marcotte's expression), but rather of being a person in general -- an expression of full human organization. Thus Arthur Little writes:

27 Eugene Veron, Aesthetics, trans. by Armstrong London, Chapman and Hall, 1879, p. 104, n. 1.

28 Ibid., p. 337.

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...A work of significant art is one which when contemplated is communicative of experience formally significant of the common spiritual nature of the artist's soul. By formally significant is meant experience sought out by the artist's mind, deliberately or instinctively, because it is peculiarly adapted to reveal the nature of the soul in the exercise of its faculties.²⁹

Literature has, it seems to me, rightly been called one of the highest expressions of human personality. For, unlike the other arts it does not merely go to human life for its elements, but actually forms, molds, develops human life itself. But in order to do this successfully, it must correspond to life as it is.

Charles Lamb's argument for artificial comedy, that art has a world of its own, and is thus free from the bonds of conventional life, is quite true. It is obvious that if the artist desires to deal with a fantasy world (Alice in Wonderland, Gulliver's Travels, Cinderella, etc.), we will accept Mad Hatters, lilliputian beings, and fairy godmothers. If he writes a gothic novel we will delight (if our fancy goes for that sort of thing), in Draculas and Wolf Men. If its a swashbuckling adventure that he presents, his public should not be surprised or disappointed at finding the hero possessed of a strength undreamed of by Samson. In all of these cases, there is no real deception on the part of the

29 Little, The Nature of Art, p. 77.

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author. There is, rather, on the part of the reader, a conscious self-deception, a "willing suspension of belief."

What the reader will demand and what he has a right to expect in such cases, is not a truth of correspondence, but rather a truth of consistency. That is, once the author has established his fictitious world, he must make certain that his characters act consistently with their imagined natures.³⁰

When, however, the author purports to deal with reality as it is, then Lamb's argument falls apart. No longer is truth of consistency sufficient. The author's vision and presentation of man in such cases must be a correct vision: he must see man as truly human. Such literature, and this includes most novels, to be truly art, must first of all be true.

D. LITERARY REALISM IN GENERAL

When I say that literature must be true, I take it in this restricted sense, that it must be realistic. Restricting my meaning even further to the novel, I mean to say

³⁰ Cf. Poetics XXV, where Aristotle demands that a probable impossibility be preferred to a possible improbability. Or again, chap. XXIV, 10, where he says: "The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts, ... But once the irrational has been introduced and an air of likelihood imparted to it, we must accept it in spite of absurdity." Butcher, pp. 95-97.

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that if an author either implicitly or explicitly sets out to create a world which deals with real men and women, we shall be able to judge his work as good or bad art according as how it gives a true or false picture of actual reality. We should, in other words, expect to find a certain "truth of correspondence" in the work.

This idea of "truth of correspondence", of course, must be qualified. Very few aestheticians would think of calling an exact replica of real life "art". The time when serious critics misconstrued Aristotle's insistence upon "imitation" to mean exact replication is by and far gone now.³¹ To be considered as truly art, as fine art, an object must be organized and made significant, it must be presented in such a way as to be able to enchant us. "Real life" most usually lacks the form that we look for in art. For actuality is made up of many elements spread out in space and time.

³¹ The "common man" no doubt sticks to this erroneous view, insisting that when he stands before, e.g., a painting, he wants to feel that he is standing before nature herself. As a matter of fact, Paul Weiss points out that artists themselves sometimes fall into this error in regard to those arts which they themselves do not practice. He cites as an example of this an encounter between Neil Welliver and a jazz musician. The latter complained that he "never could dig this abstract art. A picture ought to be about a girl and a boy, a tree and a sky." Welliver smiled, "I see what you mean, I listen in music only for the sound of kisses, birds, and the wind." Paul Weiss, The World of Art, Carbondale, Southern Illinois U. Press, 1961, p. 142.

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It is rarely an orderly affair. A.A. Milne rather humorously brings out this point.

Imagine yourself putting your head in at the window of a strange house and listening to the conversation for three-quarters of an hour. There would be long silences; people would go in and out without explanation; there would be references to unknown Johns and Marys; private unintelligible jokes; and even if the scene suddenly became intensely dramatic the cook would spoil it by putting her head into it, and asking . . . whether there were any orders for the butcher.³²

What the artist does to his models, then, when they happen to exist in nature, is to alter and modify them for his creative purpose. In this he orders much more rigorously than life itself: rearranging masses, manipulating light and shade, omitting, adding, or altering contours and lines. In the art of literature hardly anything could be more boring than the stenographic reports of dialogue, or catalogue inventories of furnishings. The author who hopes to attain any degree of aesthetic value in his work will find himself vivifying, intensifying, ordering the sound and rhythm of his lines, the thoughts, words and actions of his characters.

A character in Aldous Huxley's Point Counterpoint attacks Shelley's Ode to the Skylark for its lack of realism: "Blithe spirit: bird thou never wert." This is rubbish, says the character, a lark is a bird--not a spirit; the poet

³² A.A. Milne, Year In, Year Out, New York, Dutton, 1952, p. 71.

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is idiotic to picture it otherwise. But the point is that the poet's desire is to capture the inner form, the idea of which the outer form of the lark's physical flight embodies. He has eliminated all that in the outer form of the real bird would interfere with this significant form which expresses the idea of pure joy. Indeed, Shelley's lark is not a real bird; it is a significant form of aesthetic delight as reflected in one aspect among countless others of that bird as known to an ornithologist. This same capturing of significant form can be seen in the one-time controversial sculpture, Bird in Space, by Brancusi, which was refused duty-free entrance into the U.S.A. because the customs official declared that it bore no resemblance to a real bird. Note that even in this formalistic sculpture we must reject any contention that aesthetically to admire it we need bring with us nothing from life. Were it not for our life experiences this marvelous sculpture would be meaningless to us, valueless. It is precisely because its isolation and refinement of life-elements which we can recognize, present to us a clear and incisive impression of a bird's flight through space, that this abstract sculpture presents "life" to us in a vividness real life rarely exhibits.

An old proverb has it that "truth is stranger than fiction." The main reason for this is the fact that fiction, to be good fiction, cannot permit the irrelevant, the

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inappropriate, the extraneous, the lucky accidents which really do occur at times in actuality. As art, it can delight only if it presents an order and harmony and proportion seldom found in real life. This interaction of reality and poetic art is emphasized in the following passage from Maritain's Frontiers of Poetry:

It is by the way in which he transforms the universe passing into his mind, in order to make a form divined in things shine on a matter, that the artist imprints his mark on his work. For each work, he recomposes, such as into itself at last poetry changes it, a world more real than the real offered to the sense.³³

A reader would not have to be overly perceptive to have seen that we are leading up to the question as to what we should think of the hoary formula that art must be an imitation of nature. The formula itself, in many versions, has been re-iterated by almost every artist and philosopher up to the innovation of the school of formalism.

Although intimately connected with his name, Aristotle did not originate the term "imitation" for application to what we today call the "fine arts". While in literature

³³ Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and Frontiers of Poetry, trans. by Joseph W. Evans, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962, p. 127.

Cf. also: "The Artist's representation is always selection, in which the irrelevancies which in nature obscure the expression of significant form are eliminated. The work of art, therefore, displays the significant form, and therefore expresses the idea, of the object better than the object itself." E.I. Watkin, A Philosophy of Form, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1935, p. 363.

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it can be traced back to Plato, it was probably in vogue in Greek thought and language for some time. As we know, it has received disparaging overtones: lack of creative freedom, slavery to models. It is in this latter sense that Plato usually took it.

Plato used the fact that "all works of art are but "thrice removed from the king and from the truth,"³⁴ as one of the basis for his condemnation of the arts. If it were true that art should imitate nature in the sense of giving a photo-copy of it, we could not but conclude with Plato that then "the real artist who knew what he was imitating would be interested in realities, not in imitations; and would desire to leave as memorials of himself works, many and fair, and instead of being the author of encomiums, he would prefer to be the theme of them."³⁵ But even Plato, forgetting for the moment his strict copy formula, says that a statue is no worse for being more beautiful than a man³⁶ since it is in the nature of things that fiction should be truer than fact.³⁷

34 Plato Republic X 596, trans. by B. Jowett, The Dialogues of Plato, New York, Random House, 1937.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., 473.

37 Ibid., 402; 500.

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In the analysis made by Aristotle the term "imitation" took on a different meaning. He focussed upon the problem in the Poetics. It should be recalled that neither in this work, nor in any other, did Aristotle ever explicitly formulate a complete theory of art. One will look in vain, also, to find in him a full classification of the different kinds of art, or a discussion about the organic relationship of one art to another. The answers to such problems frequently attributed to him should be laid at the feet of his sometimes over-zealous disciples.

Aristotle does, indeed, write that "art imitates nature."³⁸ To understand him it is necessary not only to consider that word "imitates", but also to see what he means by "nature" itself. And looking at his other works it is evident that nature has for him a far deeper connotation than the universe which we see about us. Nature, to Aristotle, is the creative force, the well-spring, the productive principle resident in the very bosom of the visible universe.

Thus in the Physics, where Aristotle compares art with nature, the basis of comparison is the structure of the two: both art and nature are structured of matter and form.

38 Aristotle, Poetics II 1 ff.

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One who wishes to know either, whether he be philosopher, physician or architect cannot neglect either component.³⁹

In the Meteorology, the basis of comparison becomes the method of operation. Here Aristotle speaks of the art of cooking which produces results like those of nature as revealed in the spontaneous action of heat in the physical world.⁴⁰ This use of the word "art" obviously refers to the practical art, as it does in yet other places. For example, Aristotle writes of how nature aims at producing healthy animals and men. In order to learn the art of curing, a physician should study the ways of nature. Such study will

39 "But if on the other hand art imitates nature, and it is the part of the same discipline to know the form and the matter up to a point (e.g. the doctor has a knowledge of health and also of bile and phlegm, in which health is realized, and the builder both of the form of the house and of the matter, namely that it is bricks and beams, and so forth): if this is so, it would be the part of physics also to know nature in both its senses." Aristotle Physica II 2. 194 a 21-25. (All quotations from Aristotle, with the exception of Poetics, are from The Works of Aristotle Translated into English, W.D. Ross (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928-1952, 12 vols.).

40 "Now broiling and boiling are artificial processes, but the same general kind of thing, as we said, is found in nature too. The affections produced are similar though they lack a name; for art imitates nature. For instance, the concoction of food in the body is like boiling, for it takes place in a hot and moist medium and the agent is the heat of the body." Meteorologica IV 3. 381 b 6.

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enable him to make good her defects by using her very own resources.⁴¹

In the Poetics, Aristotle makes use of the term "art imitates nature" more in application to the imitative or fine arts. In the first chapter he writes that the objects of aesthetic imitation are three: (a) ἦθη, or the characteristic moral qualities of a man; (b) πάθη, or the passing emotions of man; (c) πράξεις, or man's actions, meaning here not so much the simple exterior performance of deeds, as the inner activity proper to man as man.⁴² "Men in action", here is what the poet sets out to capture. On this principle, landscapes and animals are to be brought into a work of art only in so far as they can highlight the human personality.

But it is not in an exact, blow by blow, word by word reproduction of human activity, that art consists. "Imitative art in its highest form, namely poetry, is an expression of the universal element in human life."⁴³ "...it is

⁴¹ "It is absurd to suppose that purpose is not present because we do not observe the agent deliberating. Art does not deliberate. If the ship-building art were in the wood, it would produce the same results by nature. If, therefore, purpose is present in art, it is present also in nature. The best illustration is a doctor doctoring himself: nature is like that." Physica II, 8. 199 b 25-30. Cf. also: Metaphysica VI, 7, 1032 b, 6.

⁴² Poetics I, 5.

⁴³ Poetics IX, 3.

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not the function of the poet to relate what has happened.

... (Poetry) is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history, for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular."⁴⁴

In a piece of truly fine literature we are presented with a form more complete, more fully developed, than is to be found in nature herself. S.H. Butcher, commenting upon this contribution of Aristotle, writes:

...fine art eliminates what is transient and particular and reveals the permanent and essential features of the original. It discovers the form (εἶδος) towards which an object tends, the result which nature strives to attain, but rarely or never can obtain.⁴⁵

It is thus the artist's function to attain what nature fails to attain. Again we see how his product is not a mere copy, but a new creation. It is a conjuring up in sensible forms the ideal, the universal elements of human life so far different from the original in nature that it might be considered "a rivalry of nature, a completion of her unfilled purposes, a correction of her failures."⁴⁶ It is thus summed up in Aristotle's own words: "the ideal type must surpass the actual."

⁴⁴ Poetics IX, 3.

⁴⁵ Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry... p. 150.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

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Now, many critics reading this passage, took it to mean that literature, for example, must therefore portray the activities which a certain type of man would perform according to probability or necessity. Such an interpretation could logically lead to a belief that literature should treat of "type characters": characters such as Everyman, or the exemplification of Virtue so often found in John Bunyan.

That such an interpretation of Aristotle was, in fact, made, is shown by several of Shakespeare's critics. Thus Thomas Rymer complains about the characterization of the soldier, Iago:

But what is most intolerable is Jago. He is no Blackamoor Souldier, so we may be sure he should be like other Souldiers of our acquaintance; yet never in Tragedy, nor in Comedy, nor in Nature was a Souldier with his character... Shakespeare knew his Character of Jago was inconsistent... but to entertain the Audience with something new and surprising, against common sense, and Nature, he would pass upon us a close, dissembling, false, insinuating rascal, instead of an open-hearted, frank, plain dealing Souldier, a character constantly worn by them for some thousands of years in the World.⁴⁷

Dr. Samuel Johnson, taking issue with John Dennis' contention that Shakespeare's senators are not sufficiently senatorial, admits that the bard's senators might easily be seen coming from the Senate-house. They are therefore

⁴⁷ Thomas Rymer, "A Short View of Tragedy", The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer, Curt A. Zimansky (ed.), New Haven, Yale University Press, 1956, pp. 134-135.

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characters which cannot really please, because they are just too real-to-life. Only general natures should be portrayed if pleasure is to be given.⁴⁸

But is this necessarily the way Aristotle is to be interpreted? Certainly not! If it were, then the vast majority of literary works of great value, judged by his standards, would have to be discarded as of little worth. The characters conceived by an author must be individuals, unusual and complex characters. Their universality will consist solely in this, that their actions are like those which persons of their own type would perform. If Don Quixote is a type, he is a type of all the Don Quixote's and of no one else. Santayana is of the same mind:

...The great characters of poetry--a Hamlet, a Don Quixote, an Achilles--are no averages, they are not even a collection of salient traits common to certain classes of men. They seem to be persons--that is, their actions and words seem to spring from the inward nature of an individual soul.⁴⁹

For Aristotle, fine art has an end and purpose, the revelation of the ideal form aimed at by nature, the perfect

⁴⁸ Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare", The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., London, Jones and Co., 1825, Vol. II, pp. 327-328. Cf. also "Rasselas: A Tale": "The business of a poet", said Imalc, 'is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances.'" Ibid., Vol. II, p. 11.

⁴⁹ George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty, being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory, New York, Dover Publications, 1955, p. 110.

form which nature strives to bring into being, not always successfully.

It must be recalled that for Aristotle, unlike Plato, reality is found in this world. The universe is not a shadowy realm of unreality, a mere fragmented picture of some other real world of Ideal Types. Not at all! This world of concrete, individual beings is reality. So, while Shakespeare's critics might be correct in their criticism claiming a Platonic basis, they cannot find such a foundation in Aristotle. Fine art is an expression of a universal element, yes. But it is the expression of a universal element inextricably bound up with the individual, the particular. Fine art, as described in the Poetics and interpreted in the light of Aristotle's philosophy, is not a representation of a Universal Type (Everyman), nor of an Exemplified Ideal (Virtue Personified), but the representation of perfected reality, which reality in turn, is individual (Hamlet, Don Quixote, etc). In a note to the second edition of his The Theory of Beauty, E.F. Carritt writes:

The universality rightly ascribed to a successful artistic communication is not that it has drawn a portrait like many people, but that it has really expressed and communicated a real human feeling. If we find it expressed that must be because it expresses a potentiality of our own; and we thereby recognize the kinship of our minds to the artist's, both in feeling and expression, a kinship which ideally extends to all humanity.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ E.F. Carritt, The Theory of Beauty, 4th ed., London, Methuen and Co., 1931, p. 92, n. A.

The ideas concerning art which are found in Aristotle can be found also in his thirteenth century Christian commentator, St. Thomas. Many of the ideas concerning art and nature are nearly identical in the thought of the two men.⁵¹

For St. Thomas, as for his predecessor, artistic activity is defined primarily according to the creative activity of God as revealed in nature, His chief work. The activity of art is described as being based upon the activity of nature and this, in its turn, upon creation.

Sicut Philosophus docet in secundo Physicorum, ars imitatur naturam. Cujus ratio est, quia sicut se habent principia ad invicem, ita proportionabiliter se habent operationes et effectus. Principium autem eorum quae secundum artem fiunt est intellectus humanus, qui secundum artem fiunt est intellectus humanus, qui secundum similitudinem quamdam derivatur ab intellectu divino, qui est principium rerum naturalium.⁵²

The idea here is that the artist is God's disciple and in acting should pattern himself after his Master. Nature is the sensible "art" in which the ideas of God can be discovered. It is from a knowledge of nature, then, that the artist will discover how his own creations should be made. The workings of God in creation are the products of

⁵¹ For a detailed analysis of this similarity, cf. Edgar De Bruyne, Etudes d'Esthétique Médiévale, Brugge (België), De Tempel, 1946, 3 vols. Vol. III, pp. 316-346.

⁵² St. Thomas, In Polit. I, Prologus S. Thomae.

His Divine Intelligence; the working of the artist in his artifacts is likewise the product of "recta ratio".

Again, as nature, now existing, cannot act but with pre-existing matter, so too is the artist incapable of producing something out of nothing. In any activity, of nature or of artist, a form is produced.⁵³ In order to obviate any claim that, for this reason, creatio ex nihilo must be possible for nature or the artist, since a form is created out of nothingness, because matter has no part in it, St. Thomas replies that this is not at all necessary, for new forms are produced from the combining of pre-existent elements, a combining proper to nature's activity.⁵⁴ Forms, then, are not created independently of the whole, but are produced with the whole. Nature, here, is seen as a source of activity which prolongs the influence of God who makes things to be and to act.

What is said here can now be applied to the artist. Not being divine, he does not have a causal creative

53 "Videatur quod creatio admisceatur in operibus naturae et artis. In qualibet enim operatione naturae et artis producitur aliqua forma... Ad primum ergo dicendum quod formae incipiunt esse in actu, compositis factis, non quod ipse fiant per se, sed per accidens tantum." S. Th., I, q. 45, 1 et ad lum.

54 Nature is thus seen as a source of activity which prolongs the influence of God who makes things both to be and to act. Cf. An. Post. I.5; Phys. II, 2; II 4, 5.

intelligence.⁵⁵ The forms which he produces in his activity do not come solely from himself; they have been potentially present in the artistic media prior to their "in-corporation". The forms expressed in any particular art-work are the results of some striking and meaning-laden contact the artist has had with nature.

Note that the imitation of nature spoken of here is not a mere copy of nature. It brings out the personal and unique character of each art-product. For while an act of knowledge in which the artist makes contact with the world is absolutely necessary for a created human artist⁵⁶ the actual "creative activity" takes place after this act of knowledge. In that "creative activity" the artist does his re-combining and re-arranging of the elements gained by knowledge and brings into existence a new thing. The process itself we briefly described above in commenting upon Dr. Marcotte's contribution.

⁵⁵ Gilson treats of this matter in The Arts of The Beautiful, pp. 59-60, and more extensively in Painting and Reality, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957, ch. 4, "Ontology of Painting".

⁵⁶ "Ejus autem quod ars imitatur naturam, ratio est, quia principium operationis artificialis est: omnis autem nostra cognitio est per sensus a rebus sensibilibus et naturalibus accepta; unde ad similitudinem naturalium in artificialibus operamur. In Physic. II, 4.

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Yet another allied way of seeing how art imitates nature in her operation is to ponder upon how nature "ut in pluribus" proceeds in an orderly manner in the working out of her plan for things. Contemplating the dynamic order of nature, the artist discovers what are the ends she pursues and what methods she employs to realize her plan. By art, man conceives analogous ends and thus in imitation brings forth his own plan.

What makes natural things imitable by art is that all nature is ordered to its end by an intellectual principle, so that the work of nature appears to be the work of intelligence, in that it proceeds by determined means to fixed ends. This is what art imitates in its procedures.⁵⁷

St. Thomas' view of art's imitation of nature is thus seen as very Aristotelian. The artist is a man who, putting to use the habitus of art within him, imitates nature in her operation. He devines the end towards which nature works and then realizes or illustrates that operation in another medium. The author, for example, takes some incident from life and, excluding the uncertainties and transitory elements which surround it in real life, makes explicit the end and principles inherent in the incident.

This demand for imitation of nature has, in one form or another, been insisted upon by artists and

57 St. Thomas, In Phys. II, 4.

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philosophers alike throughout history. Among the Idealists, for example, Hegel writes:

It is, indeed, an element essential to the work of art to have natural shapes for its foundation; seeing that its representation is in the medium of external and therefore of natural phenomena... External appearance in the shape of natural reality constitutes an essential condition of art."⁵⁸

Hegel thus claims that every great artistic work must have Nature for its basis and starting point, even though he continues to demand that it rise from this foundation. His view is so close to Aristotle's in wording that there is little to wonder at that many have interpreted Aristotle according to Hegelian tenets, as Butcher complains. Unfortunately, the rest of Idealistic theory on the Ideal which art seeks to present in order to capture beauty, cannot be so easily brought into line with Aristotelianism. Aristotle would never have admitted the Ideal as some sort of "self-conscious aspect of the Absolute", or a complete "creation of the artistic mind, drawn from his brain by a sudden inspiration."

The Western world is not alone in its view of art as an imitator of the operations of nature. Jiro Harada, in a

⁵⁸ Hegel, The Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art, trans. by Bernard Bosanquet, 2nd impr., London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1905, pp. 122-123.

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study of the art of Japanese gardening, quotes from the Tsukiyama Teizo-den (1525 A.D.):

Everything in this universe is correlated. This is a natural law pre-ordained. When one is about to make a garden, one should not be absorbed merely by the pattern, or carelessly plant even one tree, or place one rock without careful discrimination... A plant which grows in the heart of a high mountain should not be planted by the pond.⁵⁹

E. LITERARY REALISM: IN PARTICULAR

In saying then that literature must be true, we mean that it must be realistic: based upon actual reality, upon nature. As art, it should aim for the truth. "The Fine Arts," wrote Carlyle, "divorcing themselves from truth, are quite certain to fall mad, if they do not die."⁶⁰ We should, in other words, expect to find in the work a certain "truth of correspondence". We do not demand a representation of truth (copy-theory), but we do demand a truthful representation.

In literature this general notion of "imitation" is of greatest import in the distinction made between realistic and naturalistic writing. Between realism and naturalism we find much the same antimony as found in the literal

⁵⁹ Jiro Harada, Japanese Gardens, London, Studio Publications, 1956, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Thomas Carlyle, "Jesuitism", in Latter Day Pamphlets, London, Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1894, p. 273.

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transcript of reality imitation theory, and the essential or ideal imitation theory.

In very general terms, the idea of realism in the art of fiction involves the use of such elements as local scenery, references to current events, descriptions of activities, reproduction of speech and mannerisms. Almost anything, in fact, which gives the air of actuality to the story being told, is part of realistic fiction.

Considering fiction from this viewpoint, we can reasonably say that just about all the literature of the ages could be labelled "realistic", with the exception of fairy tales and extreme gothic novels.

When speaking of an author's "realism" we are primarily concerned with the way in which he presents his story to us. Notice that it is not the material which he uses that attracts our attention. The whole ambit of human life is open to him. In speaking of literary realism, we are concerned with the manner in which the author treats his materials.

What is the literary style we have called Naturalism? Perhaps the best way to get into its spirit is to go back to the era in which it was conceived and brought forth. It was into the world of industrialism and scientism that this literary theory was born: the era which saw the publication of Charles Darwin's The Origin of the Species, the

sociological works of the Englishman, Herbert Spenser, the writings of Ernest Haeckel, the discoveries of Pasteur. Comte's positivism had glorified this world to the actual exclusion of any other. Artists, along with the savants of the age turned their eyes from another world and set their gaze resolutely upon this one. The spirit of the age became increasingly materialistic, positivistic, deterministic. "Determinism animates everything",⁶¹ wrote Zola in the first explicitly formulated statement of the naturalistic novelist, The Experimental Novel. The subject matter of the author does not change, rather the method of treating his matter undergoes a revamping. "And this is what constitutes the experimental novel: to possess a knowledge of the mechanism of the phenomena inherent in man, to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations under the influence of heredity and environment."⁶²

The "philosophy", if it can be called such, behind this new extreme form of realism, holds that the variety of human qualities are traceable to purely physical sources. This philosophy was common in the late nineteenth century due largely to the popularization of scientific and evolutionary concepts. And it is the scientific spirit which

61 Zola, Le Roman Expérimental, Paris, G. Charpentier, Editeur, 1880, p. 32.

62 Ibid.

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animates the literary naturalist. His approach to man is the coldly objective approach of the laboratory technician. It follows that his work will manifest, almost as a prime analogue, a truth to nature. And this is, in fact, the boast of the school. In a very good article on literary trends, T. Rankin summarizes the position quite neatly:

[The naturalist's] chief ideal is to set forth his experience of nature precisely in terms already given him, in the forms of outward nature itself... the factualist attempts to strip from the object of his experience every idiosyncrasy which is purely individual to the artist... and to reproduce in sensuous form that part of the world of experience as it objectively is.⁶³

The tenets according to which naturalism operates are quite clear, quite simple, --and quite desolate. They are summed up in three points by Mr. Hartwick: "(a) Nature is a self-running, self-perfecting machine, with neither divine origin nor direction; (b) in the whole of nature the rule is the survival of the fittest; might makes right; (c) human ethics are mere imaginings."⁶⁴

It can readily be seen what this view of life would do to the method of a literary artist. According to Aristotle, the proper subject of the poem is human action.

⁶³ T. Rankin, "Leading Tendencies in Literary Art", Sewanee Review, XXII (Ap. 1914), pp. 187-188.

⁶⁴ H. Hartwick, The Foreground of American Fiction, New York, The American Book Co., 1934, p. 18 ff.

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This same subject matter is assigned to the novel by modern scholars such as Brander Matthews, Bliss Perry and Clayton Hamilton as well as by common opinion. Hamilton, for example, defines a novel as "the embodiment of the truths of human life in a series of imagined facts."⁶⁵ Now, human actions, in the Aristotelian tradition, are well defined by St. Thomas:

I call those actions human which proceed from the will of man according to the order of reason. For if there are found in men operations which are not subject to will and reason they are not properly called human...⁶⁶

"Actions which proceed from the will of man". Actions, therefore, involving decisions, sometimes agonizing decisions involving the rightness and wrongness of activities, but always decisions made by the man himself. In the animalistic or mechanistic view of man held by the naturalists, there can be no such human actions. Man's activities are but animal drives or impulses, mind is but the epiphenomenon of bodily reflexes. In the hands of such artists, "Man must take his chances with the rest of matter, live minute by

⁶⁵ Clayton Hamilton, A Manual of the Art of Fiction, New York, Doubleday, Page, 1918, p. 3.

⁶⁶ "Dico autem operationes humanas, quae procedunt a voluntate hominis secundum ordinem rationis. Nam si quae operationes in homine inveniuntur, quae non subjacent voluntati et rationi, non dicuntur proprie humanae." St. Thomas, In Ethic. I, 1.

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minute, can capitulate to every prompting, (good or bad), without attempting or being able to modify it."⁶⁷

This tendency of naturalism to treat of man merely from his animal side is its sin of defect: it fails to give a true picture of man as man. There is about it a depressing atmosphere consequent to its vision of human possibility--one of compartmentalization, strict limits, and of little or no possibility for real growth.

There is yet another fault in this brand of writing: the fault of becoming wrapped up in a detailed description of the minutiae of life. Again, we see manifested the scientific spirit. In attempting to give the impression of a completely objective method, the novelist proceeds to catalogue a photographic account of the details of life. And more frequently than not, those details are the very ones better left undescribed: point by point accounts of drunken stupors, violence, hatreds, the very intimate details of the act of love, or perversions of it.

This chapter has attempted to position literature among the fine arts and to sketch its nature and the two main lines of literary realism. A fuller critique of these in the light of morality must be postponed till the last chapter.

⁶⁷ Hartwick, op. cit., p. 18.

INTERLUDE

So much has been written concerning the respective comprehension of the spheres of art and morality, that actual confusion has resulted. Cunningham's formulation of the problem helps to clear away a bit of the fog of verbiage. For him, the problem comes down to meaning "either that truly beautiful art must point a moral, or that the products of artistic creation are rightfully subject to ethical considerations in our final appraisal of them."¹ Actually, this is but a declaration of the old question: What is the esthetic value of morality and what is the moral value of art?

It seems apparent, then, that this twofold question involves two separate branches of philosophy: aesthetic principles, which must be invoked to decide whether or not morality should be an essential element in an art-work; ethical principles which will determine if the work should be subordinated to some higher end.

Turning to the first question, we find two divergent views presented by philosophers. In resolving it, appeal is necessarily had to one's theory concerning beauty's essential conditions. (a) To a mind which conceives beauty to be a

¹ G.W. Cunningham, "Problems of Aesthetic Values", Problems of Philosophy, New York, 1936, p. 367.

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"modus vivendi" of the good, both in the physical and the moral order, a work of art can be truly beautiful only when linked inseparably to a moral lesson. Something in the work must strike the spectator in such a way as to incite him to acts of virtue or knowledge. (b) To one, however, who conceives of a real distinction between the beautiful and the good, art can be dissociated from morality. The artist need concern himself only with producing in his spectators the sentiment of beauty, and this can be done without any attention being paid to morality.

In our presentation, we will consider first of all the view which tends to identify art and morality in such a way that it is to be considered as essential to art that it be, in some way, a teacher: Art for Life's Sake. In the next chapter we will consider the opinions of those who maintain that there must be an absolute divorce of art from morality. Not only are the two separable, of them, art is the superior in value: Art for Art's Sake, or even, Life for Art's Sake. Finally, in our last chapter we will expose our own view on the matter, giving what we believe to be a truly middle way between these two extremes, and drawing some vital conclusions for the literary art.

CHAPTER TWO

ART FOR LIFE'S SAKE

A. PRE-PLATONIC AND PLATONIC VIEWS

In this chapter we shall consider the first of the two divergent views concerning the relation of aesthetic and ethical values. In this view we find an identification of those values. Investigation serves to show that an intimate connection between literature and morality was not only assumed, but actually emphasized throughout the history of artistic and philosophical thought until relatively recent times.

Going back to the founts of Western thought, we find that this moralistic opinion of art was common to the ancient Greeks who were ever prone to identify moral goodness and beauty.

This tendency is a result of the identification made of the ontological and psychological relations of the beautiful and the good. To their minds, the "imitative" arts necessarily affect men in much the same way as reality itself does. "What we learn to like or dislike in the semblance for

its mere form, we shall similarly like or dislike in the reality."¹

From such a position it would follow that were an artist to represent something immoral to his spectators, he would necessarily double the examples of immorality in the world and, consequently, double the incitements to actual immorality. With no clear distinction made between real object, there is little room for belief that beauty (in art) and reality can affect the mind in different ways. So intermingled in Greek thought concerning art were these two concepts of goodness and beauty, that they were often wedded in one term: "kalokagothia".

Strabo (c. 24 B.C.), however, gives indications that there was even at his time a minority opinion on the matter. While most felt that poetry had a directly moral purpose, that it should be didactic by its very nature, there were some who believed that the end of poetry was simply to give emotional delight. Erasthenes, he says, held that the aim of the poet is to charm the mind and not to instruct. Strabo's own view is against this, for "poetry is a kind of elementary philosophy, which introduces us early to life, and gives us pleasurable instruction in reference to

¹ Bernard Bosanquet, A History of Aesthetic, New York, The Meridian Library, 1957, p. 17.

character, emotion, action."² The poet, then, should aim partly at pleasing, but only for the sake of more easily instructing. Most revealing of Strabo's mind and reflective of the predominant opinion of his age is his argument that poetry is an art which imitates life through the medium of speech. A poet, therefore, must be well instructed in those things dealing with life as pursued by human beings. For this reason no one can be a good poet who is not first of all a good man:

Nor can we assume that any excellence of a poet whatever is superior to that which enables him to imitate life through the means of speech. How, then, can a man imitate life if he has no experience of life and is a dolt?... The excellence of a poet is inseparably associated with the excellence of the man himself, and it is impossible for one to become a good poet unless he has previously become a good man.³

That education was practically synonymous with the study of the poets is clearly seen from Plutarch: "Poetry is the preparatory school of philosophy". The young must "as a kindly and familiar friend, be conducted by poetry into the presence of philosophy."⁴ In his most significant work on

2 Strabo, The Geography, trans. by Horace L. Jones, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960, i, 2-3, Vol. I, p. 55. Strabo adds: "And our school goes still further and contends that the wise man alone is a poet."

3 Ibid. i, 2, 5, p. 63.

4 Plutarch, Moralia, trans. by Frank Cole Babbitt, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1960, Vol. I, p. 81.

the question, De Audiendis Poetis, Plutarch discusses the question as to how the young are able to read (hear) the base and immoral subjects treated by poets without being morally injured.⁵

For Aristophanes, even the comic poet must not only entertain his audience, but at the same time educate their taste, be to them a teacher of morality and politics. The condemnation and punishment of Euripides were made on moral grounds. In the Frogs, Aristophanes has Aeschylus say that the poet is the instructor of grown men as the teacher is of youth.⁶

The mind of Plato on this question is perhaps better known than any other. The paradox of this great poetic mind banishing the poets from his perfect Republic has fascinated and frustrated writers throughout the ages.

To tell the truth, Plato's position has frequently been falsified by those who would put more emphasis on the passages of condemnation which they find in Plato's works

5 Ibid., pp. 75-81.

6 Aristophanes, The Frogs, trans. by Benjamin Bickley Rogers in Five Comedies of Aristophanes, New York, Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955, p. 123. "Tales of incestuous vice the sacred poet should hide from view, nor ever exhibit and blazon forth on the public state to the public ken. For boys a teacher at school is found, be we, the poets, are teachers of men. We are bound things honest and pure to speak."

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than Plato himself would probably do. There can be no doubt that very frequently Plato shows himself in sympathy with the poets.

Thus, his attitude towards them in the Symposium is singularly benign. Together with philosophers and inventors, they are represented as expressors of noble thoughts which show them capable of begetting the spiritual progeny of wisdom and virtue.

But souls which are pregnant...conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or contain. And what are these conceptions? --wisdom and virtue in general. And such creators are poets and all artists who are deserving of the name inventor.⁷

Then again, in the Phaedrus, the poet is allied with the prophet and priest and love as one afflicted with a divine, and thus most happy madness.

The third kind is the madness of those who are possessed by the Muses; which taking hold of a delicate and virgin soul, and thence inspiring frenzy, awakens lyrical and all other numbers; with these adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity. But he who, having no touch of the Muses' madness in his soul, comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the Temple by the help of art--he, I say, and his poetry are not admitted.⁸

⁷ Plato, Symposium, 209, The following quotations from Plato are all taken from B. Jowett's translation, The Dialogues of Plato, New York, Random House, 1937, 2 vols.

⁸ Phaedrus, 245.

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In the Apology⁹ and in the Meno¹⁰ Socrates tells us that because of this affliction, the poets themselves do not understand what they are writing.

This divine madness is touched off by the property of beauty which the fortunate ones discover in things; and by it, they are freed from the concerns of the here and now and set on the road towards wisdom and her fruits. This same property of beauty discovered in things has the power of giving pleasure to a person through his senses, especially through the sense of sight, the keenest of all sense powers. In Plato's theory, beautiful things are completely harmonious, their effect upon one is such as to cause "pleasure" by stirring up a sympathy with one's own internal harmony. It would thus seem to follow that good men alone (those with an abundance of inner harmony) are able to appreciate beauty; bad men (presumably at discord with themselves) have a deficient sense of it.

9 Apology, 21: "Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them. The poets appeared to me to be much in the same case."

10 Meno, 99: "And may we not, Meno, truly call those men divine who, having no understanding, yet succeed in many a grand deed and word?... Then we shall also be right in calling divine those whom we were just now speaking of as diviners and prophets, including the whole tribe of poets."

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And surely the art of the painter and every other creative and constructive art...in all of them there is grace or the absence of grace. And ugliness and discord and inharmonious motion are nearly allied to ill words and ill nature, as grace and harmony are the twin sisters of goodness and virtue and bear their likeness.¹¹

In early Greek thought it was held that basic to man's character are the three necessary appetites of eating, drinking and sex. If one is to survive in the community-- and, thus, ensure the survival of the community itself-- a positive response to the promptings of these appetites is indispensable. Plato recognized the necessity of channeling these "wild beast appetites". Among the ways in which this could be accomplished, three were most effective: vigorous athletics,¹² public opinion,¹³ and community education.

It was in the third way, through community education, that the arts should be employed usefully. In the Phaedrus there is planted the seed of the doctrine later to be systematized by Plotinus, that beauty in art is in some way a nursing-mother to truth and goodness in man. Art, then, is able to prepare the soul of man for philosophy and the moral life. It is, as it were, the bottom steps of a staircase

¹¹ Republic, III, 401, cf. also Ibid., 399, 402. Timaeus, 35-36, 42-44.

¹² Republic, III, 404, 458; Laws, 835.

¹³ Laws, 647, 663, 836.

leading up to Wisdom and Virtue. The reasoning here is that

...beauty, and in particular the visible beauty of form and grace and the audible beauty of rhythm and melody, especially if any of these be found in nature, dispose men towards right conduct.¹⁴

The earlier books of the Republic (the third in particular), consider poetry from this aspect of its influence upon the young: as, in other words, one political method of forming yet-maleable characters. Like Strabo, he argues that no man can be good as an artist without being good as a man¹⁵ and, moreover, that a work of art can in no wise be judged technically good unless it is at the same time ethically sound and beneficial to the community in its moral and political effects.¹⁶ Admitting that Homeric poetry is beautiful, Plato nevertheless censures certain passages concerning the tales of the wars of the gods as harmful to the characters of their readers.

And we must beg Homer and the other poets not to be angry if we strike out these and similar passages, not because they are unpoetical, or unattractive to the popular ear, but because the greater the poetical charm of them, the less are they meet for the ears of boys and men who are meant to be free, and who should fear slavery more than death.¹⁷

¹⁴ E.F. Carritt, The Theory of Beauty, 4th ed., London, Methuen and Col, Ltd., 1931, p. 49.

¹⁵ Republic, III, 395-7.

¹⁶ Ibid., 401.

¹⁷ Ibid., 387; cf. also II, 377, 378.

While hints of coming events are found elsewhere, it is particularly in the tenth book of the Republic that the antipathy to the poets is shown. Thus, Plato says that we have a right to ask of the artist what State was ever better governed as a result of aid given by artists:

...let us tell her that there is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry... Notwithstanding this, let us assure our sweet friend and the sister arts of imitation, that if she will only prove her title to exist in a well-ordered State we shall be delighted to receive her--we are conscious of her charms.¹⁸

Plato's most telling argument against art is that its illusions are deliberate deceptions. They are, on this account, vicious on both moral and metaphysical grounds. "And the tragic poet is an imitator, and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth."¹⁹ The skilled artist is thus a menace because he induces false beliefs about reality. The menace is compounded on the moral count that art has within it the power to degrade man by arousing his meaner passions: "Poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she

18 Ibid., X, 607.

19 Ibid., X, 597.

lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue."²⁰

What Plato had written earlier concerning the necessity of poetry to teach, to be useful for a well-ordered life, he reiterated with a passion in the Laws. In this work, the older Plato recommends that the State supervise not only art, but even the very games of children. Here in the Laws, too, Plato admits Tragedy into the State. But because tragedians are "imitators" of the best life, they cannot practice their art without first submitting their works to the magistrate. If the tragedy is found to support right attitudes towards life, then it may be accepted.

For a state would be mad which gave you this licence, until the magistrates had determined whether your poetry might be recited, and was fit for publication or not. Wherefore, O ye sons and scions of the softer Muses, first of all show your songs to the magistrates, and let them compare them with our own, and if they are the same or better we will give you a chorus; but if not, then, my friends, we cannot.²¹

In the accepted work, the poet must always represent the perfect requital of vice and virtue.

²⁰ Ibid., X 606; cf. also X, 605: "And therefore we shall be right in refusing to admit him (the poet) in to a well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason."

²¹ Laws, VII, 617.

And similarly the true legislator will persuade, and, if he cannot persuade, will compel the poet to express, as he ought, by fair and noble words, in his rhythms, the figures, and in his melodies, the music of the temperate and brave and in every way good men.²²

And if I were a lawgiver, I would try to make the poets and all citizens speak in this strain; and I would inflict the heaviest penalties on anyone in all the land who would dare to say that there are bad men who lead pleasant lives, or that the profitable and gainful is one thing, and the just another.²³

It would thus appear that to Plato the poet, inspired by a divine madness is able to reveal in a delightful manner truths about life which are not given in other ways. Because it is able to make us believe in falsehoods it is a dangerous thing. If, however, it is put under the guidance of philosophy, it can be made a useful servant to mankind. His attitude towards the poets, then, seems to have been like the tide with its ebbs (in the tenth book of the Republic and in the Laws) and its flows (in the Phaedrus, the Ion and in the Symposium).

I.M. Crombie makes note of those instances in which Plato would condone the poet:

22 Ibid., II, 660.

23 Ibid., II, 662; cf. also, Republic, III, 392.

Firstly, literature can represent the truth about human and divine affairs in a form acceptable to children and the uneducated. Secondly by being expressions of the right kind of harmony all works of art can assist in the reconstruction of our own inner harmony. Thirdly poetry and the allied arts can express, and, I suppose, evince in others something of the unmercenary spirit of "divine madness". To make these contributions, the arts must be supervised.²⁴

The seriousness of the matter is emphasized by Plato himself:

...great is the issue at stake, greater than appears, whether a man is to be good or bad. And what will anyone be profited if under the influence of honour or money or power, aye, or under the excitement of poetry, he neglect justice and virtue?²⁵

The paradox involved in this, that one of the world's finest poetic spirits should so severely restrict poetry, has been lost on very few artists or philosophers. Nietzsche, commenting upon Plato's condemnation, finds that his very works were the means of art's salvation:

Platonic dialogue was as it were the boat in which the shipwrecked ancient poetry saved herself together with all her children...In very truth, Plato has given to all posterity the prototype of a new form of art, the prototype of the novel.²⁶

24 I.M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines, Vol. I: Plato on Man and Society, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 195.

25 Republic, X, 608.

26 Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, ed. by Dr. Oscar Levy, trans. by Wm. A. Housmann, 2nd ed. Edinburgh and London, T.N. Foulis, 1910, p. 109.

But it was John Milton who put the paradox into verse:

But thou Eternal light of Academe,
If to the schools thou first didst give this theme,
This figment passing all in song or ditty,
Recall the poets from exile to thy city,
Or thou, the greatest fabler of them all,
By thine own law art banished past recall.²⁷

Throughout the centuries this side of Greek tradition, maintaining that poetry's first duty is to convey moral truths was carried on. It is true that immediately after Plato, Aristotle deeply modified this position, but he was not followed by any noteworthy writers. The Platonic doctrine dominated the artistic atmosphere. It became, for example, the doctrine of the Roman world.

One of the most influential Roman works affecting the early Renaissance writers in regard to poetry was Horace's Ars Poetica. Poetry is not bad, he reasoned, and indeed is good for instruction and giving pleasure. But above all, and this is the point which would later be used as a defence for poetry, a laurel should be placed upon the Poet's brow for bringing civilization to mankind. It is the poet who, as sage and prophet, handed over to men culture and the sciences.

27 "At tu perenne ruris Academi decus
(Haec monstra si tu primus induxit scholis)
Jam jam poetas urbis exules tuae
Revocabis, ipse fabulator maximus,
Aut institutor ipse migrabis foras."

John Milton, "De Idea Platonica, quemadmodum Aristoteles intellexit", in Works, Columbia University Ed., New York, Columbia University Press, 1931, Vol. I, p. 268.

Orpheus, seer and bard in one, weaned savage forest-tribes from murder and foul living; whence the legend that he tamed tigers and fierce lions. It was said, too, that Amphion, founder of Thebes, moved stones by the sound of his lyre and drew them where he would by the magic of his entreaty. This was the poets' wisdom of old--to draw a line between the Man and the State, the sacred and the common; to build cities, to check promiscuous lust, to assign rights to the married, to engrave laws on wood. Thus did praise and honour come to divine poets and their lays.²⁸

B. EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The thought and spirit of Christianity, too, have always been marvellously harmonious to Platonic influences. Many analogies have been found and discussed between Plato's conception of life and that of the early Christians. The gulf separating them is wide and deep, but the many similarities to be found make it easier to understand why early Christianity looked kindly upon Platonic dicta.

In regard to the "fine arts", primitive Christianity reacted much as did Plato. To Plato the emotions are noble only in so far as they are sublimated through philosophy. The arts of their very nature excite the emotions more than actual life itself, and stir up ignoble passions better left subdued; they tend to turn the passions towards the corruption and evils of a godless society. That very early

²⁸ Horace, Art of Poetry, ed. and prose trans. by Edward Henry Blakeney, London, Scholastic Press, 1928, p. 56.

"esthete", Nero, was the incarnation of all that art of the time stood for--and Nero was Anti-Christ.

The major objection to the arts in the first era of Christianity, therefore, was based upon the argument that they introduced moral laxity, which usually meant sexual laxity, but extended itself as well to such other evils as blasphemy and sedition.

The reasoning of the Fathers of the Church was frequently based upon the Scriptural warning that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it on the day of judgment." What, they argued, could be more idle than the amusements provided by the circuses, the theatre, the poets. Add to this the positive inducements to take pleasure in the allurements of the world, the frequently obscene language, the glorification of the passions contained in so many of the entertainments, and the hostility of the Church Fathers to the arts can be appreciated. Christian pleasure, Christian delight, should be sought and found solely in the worship of God, in the contemplation and meditation upon the Word of God. Christian song and Christian poetry should reflect the Christian life: concentrating on Christ.

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Likewise, we renounce your public shows just as we do their origins which we know were begotten of superstition, while we are completely aloof from these matters with which they are concerned. Our tongues, our eyes, our ears have nothing to do with the madness of the circus, the shamelessness of the theater, the brutality of the arena, the vanity of the gymnasium... We reject the things that please you.²⁹

So wrote Tertullian. No less insistent in the matter was Clement of Alexandria, who countered the argument that such amusements give innocent recreation to a person by declaring that such amusement is not so amusing.

As for the theatre, the Educator, guide of little ones, certainly does not lead us there; one could--not unreasonably--call the stadium and theatre "seats of pestilence" ... Leave the theatre alone, then, and recitals, full of coarse jokes and of gossip... Even if people say they attend the theater only for entertainment and amusement, I should say the cities in which such pastimes are so much sought after are not chaste... No one in his right senses would even prefer what is more entertaining to what is worthwhile.³⁰

Lactantius might be thought to have Plato's own words before him when he wrote:

²⁹ Tertullian, Apologetical Works, trans. by Sr. Emily Joseph Daly, New York, Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1950, Vol. I, p. 97. (Hereafter this series will be referred to as F.O.C.)

³⁰ Clement of Alexandria, Christ the Educator, trans. by Simon P. Wood, C.P., F.O.C., 1954, Vol. 23, pp. 257-258.

In plays, too, I know not whether there is more vicious corruption. Even the comedies speak of the defiling of virgins or the love-affairs of harlots, and the more eloquent are those who have fashioned those tales of crime, the more do they persuade by the elegance of their sentences.³¹

One great danger that Lactantius fears from poets is that by accustoming men to their polished verses they will succeed in luring them away from the plain speech of God.

One thing remains to be refuted by us...the well composed song or an oration running along with smoothness, seizes the minds and impels them where it will. Thus men of letters who have approached the religion of God, being confounded by some unskilled instructor, believe the less. For accustomed to sweet and polished speeches and songs, they spurn the simple and direct speech of the divine writings as mean.³²

Isidore of Seville is no less vehement in his denunciation. Christians must not read the poetic works "because by the amusements of the foolish stories they excite the mind to libidinous thoughts."³³

³¹ Lactantius, The Divine Institutes, trans. by Sr. Mary Francis McDonald, O.P., F.O.C., Vol. 49, pp. 453-454.

³² Ibid., p. 455. Cf. also: "All spectacles, then, ought to be avoided, not only lest any of their vices seep into hearts which ought to be quiet and peaceful, but lest the customariness of this pleasure charm us and turn us away from God and good works." Ibid., p. 454.

³³ Saint Isidore, Sententiarum iii, 13. in Jean-Paul Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina, Paris, 221 vols., 1844-1855, Vol. 83, col. 685: "Ideo prohibetur Christianus figmenta legere poetarum, quia per oblectamenta inanum fabularum mentem excitant ad incentiva libidinum."

St. John Chrysostom insists upon the subtle dangers involved in attending the theatres:

Again, to go to the theatres...does not seem to most men, to be an admitted crime; but it introduces into our life an infinite host of miseries. For spending time in the theatres produces fornication, intemperance, and every kind of impurity.³⁴

And St. Jerome warns us that "we must decline the theatres and all other dangerous diversions which stain the innocence of the soul, and slip into the mind through the senses."³⁵

In a passage of the Confessions, St. Augustine draws a distinction between the pernicious lie believed and the innocent lie found in poetry which is only a "willing suspension of unbelief."

³⁴ Saint John Chrysostom, "Homilies addressed to the people of Antioch", (On the Statues), Homily 15, 11, in Vol. IX of The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, ed. by Philip Schaff, Grand Rapids, B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 9 vols., 1956, p. 442.

³⁵ Saint Jerome, Commentariorum in Ezechielem, vi, 20, 226, in Migne, J-P., op. cit., Vol. 25, col. 189: "A spectaculis quoque, immo offensionibus Aegypti, removeamus oculos, arenae, circi, theatorum, et omnibus quae animae contaminant puritatem, et per sensus ingrediuntur ad mentem."

How much better are the fables of the grammarians and poets than these deceptions [Manichaeian]... and though I did sing of a flying Medea, I did not say it was true, and, though I listened to such singing, I did not give credence to it--but I did believe those other things, unfortunately.³⁶

In spite of this distinction, however, St. Augustine is outspoken in his rejection of the arts. Regretting the part played by literature in his early education, he comments:

"Perhaps the palm should be given to the Greek Plato. In conceiving the constitution of the ideal State, he thought it proper to exclude from the city the poets, as enemies of the truth."³⁷ The theatres he does not hesitate to call "cages of uncleanness and public schools of debauchery."³⁸

It should not be thought that all condemnation of literature was based upon moral or political criteria. Again following in the footsteps of Plato, many Fathers

³⁶ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, iii, 6., trans. by Vernon J. Bourke, *F.O.C.*, Vol. 21, 1953, pp. 59-60.

Cf. also: "The difference between deceivers and fabulists is this: every deceiver wants to deceive, but not everyone who tells a fable has the desire to deceive. For, farces and comedies and many poems are full of fables whose purpose is to give pleasure rather than to deceive." *The Soliloquies*, ii., 9, trans. by Thomas F. Gilligan, O.S.A., in *The Writings of St. Augustine*, New York, Cima Publishing Co., 1948, Vol. I, p. 399.

³⁷ Saint Augustine, *City of God*, ii, 14, trans. by Demetrius Zema, S. J., and Gerald Walsh, S.J., *F.O.C.*, 1950, Vol. 8, p. 93.

³⁸ Saint Augustine, *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, i, 33: "caveae turpitudinum et publicae professiones flagitarum." in Migne, J.-P., *op. cit.*, Vol. 34, col. 1068.

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invoked the criterion of reality. Thus, as Plato had looked down upon the arts as being thrice removed from the truth, so, too, does Tertullian say

The Author of truth hates all the false; He regards as adultery all that is unreal. Condemning, therefore, as He does of hypocrisy in every form, He never will approve any putting on of voice, or sex, or age; He never will approve pretended loves, and wraths, and groans and tears.³⁹

Obviously there is little hope for finding recorded comments pro or con on the matter of art and morals during the so-called "Dark Ages". The era of barbaric invasions and domination furnishes but meagre knowledge of the state of civilization, religion or education at all. Not even the period of Charlemagne in which the spark of learning brightened furthers our inquiry.⁴⁰

³⁹ Tertullian, The Shows, or De Spectaculis, xxiii, trans. by Rev. S. Thelwall, in The Anti-Nicene Fathers..., Alexander, R.,-Donaldson, J. (ed.), Buffalo, The Christian Literature Co., 8 vols., 1885-1886, Vol. III: Tertullian, p. 89.

⁴⁰ It must be noted, however, that ecclesiastical history furnishes us ample evidence of a great distrust of all pictorial art during those times. When in the sixth century the iconoclastic bishop of Marseilles destroyed the sacred images in his diocese, Gregory the Great dissented from his violent action and made the distinction between worship of sacred images and the use of such images for the instruction of the ignorant. Charlemagne adopted this moderate line of thought, a line which became traditional in the Western Church.

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C. RENAISSANCE

The next historical spot to search for opinions on this matter is the period of Italian Humanism and the era of the Renaissance.

Spingarn writes that the fourteenth and fifteenth books of Boccaccio's De Genealogia Deorum have been called "the first defence of poesy in honor of his own art by a poet of the modern world."⁴¹ But his defence of poetry, with its frequent appeals to St. Augustine's distinction between the lying of fiction and the real lie, still bears the traditional stamp. Thus, even Boccaccio bowed down to the principle that "the poet's function...was to hide and obscure the actual truth behind a veil of beautiful fictions: "veritatem rerum pulchris velaminibus adornare."⁴²

Allegghieri Dante, perhaps the greatest artist of his day, if not of all times, likewise held to the view that the function of poetry was to act as a veil for deeper truths. For his own Divine Comedy he claimed four meanings: the literal, the typical or allegorical, the moral or philosophical, and the mystical or so-called anagogical.

⁴¹ J.E. Spingarn, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, 2nd ed., 3rd impr., New York, Columbia University Press, 1912, p. 9.

⁴² Ibid., p. 9.

For the clarity of what is to be said, one must realize that the meaning of this work [the Commedia] is not simple, but is rather to be called polysemos, that is having many meanings...The first is called the literal, the second allegorical or moral or anagogical.⁴³

The Comedy itself is a superb example of the twofold moral function then assigned to poetry, namely, the removal of vice (the punishments of the Inferno are such as to make a reader resolve to flee any wrongdoing which could occasion his assignment to such a place of torture), and the inducement to virtue (the glories of the Paradiso encourage a reader to act virtuously so as to be a recipient of such rewards).

Boccaccio's and Dante's explanation of poetry is in full accord with the medieval way of conceiving true being as hidden behind a veil or symbol. This truth-behind-the-veil, of course, is found in many writers both ancient and recent.

The dangers in reading poetry are exemplified in the Divine Comedy by the tale of Paolo and Francesca whom Dante meets among the souls of those damned for sins against chastity. Their sin was committed after the reading of a book recounting the adventures of Sir Lancelot.

⁴³ Allegghieri Dante, Epistle to Can Grande, trans. by Alan Gilbert, Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, New York, American Book Co., 1940, p. 202.

Sometimes our eyes, at the word's secret call,
 Met, and our cheeks a changing colour wore.
 But it was one page only that did all.
 When we read how that smile, so thirsted for,
 Was kissed by such a lover, he that may
 Never from me be separated more
 All trembling kissed my mouth. The book I say
 Was a Galahat to us, and he beside
 That wrote the book. We read no more that day.⁴⁴

The new defenders of poetry tended to justify its existence on the grounds that it is a kind of theology. Petrarch, for example, writing to his brother, Gherardo, says:

Poetry is very far from being opposed to theology. ...One may almost say that theology actually is poetry, poetry concerning God. To call Christ now a lion, now a lamb, now a worm, what pray is that if not poetical? And you will find thousands of such things in the Scriptures, so very many that I cannot attempt to enumerate them. What indeed are the parables of our Savior in the Gospels, but words whose sound is foreign to their sense, or allegories, to use the technical term? But allegory is the very warp and woof of all poetry.⁴⁵

In other words, in the early Renaissance the arts were defended, and their defence centered upon their having the value of being instruments for the exaltation of God's glory. The path to the emancipation of art from a strict

⁴⁴ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, v, 130-139, trans. by Laurence Benyon, in *The Portable Dante*, ed. by Paolo Milano, New York, Viking Press, 1947, p. 30.

⁴⁵ J.H. Robinson and H.W. Rolfe, *Petrarch*, New York, 1898, pp. 261-262, quoted by K. Gilbert and H. Kuhn, *A History of Esthetics*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1956, p. 168.

didactic purpose led through this defence of art as bringing one ever closer to the source of all Goodness. The Platonic notion also remains and is enlarged upon, that the truly good artist must likewise be a good man--a pious person. An artist's work will mirror his life. There is no reason to question Leonardo da Vinci's sincerity when he reiterates Dante's declaration that "in art we may be said to be grandsons unto God"⁴⁶, and that observation of his paintings should lead men to the love of God.

But the secular spirit crept slowly into the writings of the Renaissance. Hairline cracks began to appear in the traditionalist wall. In his treatment of the early humanists, W.H. Woodward says that such men as Mantuan, Bruni and Guarino, while continuing to hold to the necessity of having basic doctrines beneath the literal expressions, nonetheless, introduced a distinctly aesthetic criticism of poetry apart from its moral aspects. Thus, Leonardo Bruni speaks of poetry as "so valuable an aid to knowledge and so ennobling a source of pleasure."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Leonardo da Vinci, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, arranged and trans. by Edward MacCurdy, London, Johathan Cape, 1938, 2 vols., Vol. II, p. 228.

⁴⁷ W.H. Woodworth, Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators, Essays and Versions, Cambridge, University Press, 1897, p. 175.

As the Renaissance era advanced, the shifting opinions concerning poetry continued. At one time it was praised for its cultivating influence (à la Horace), at another it was condemned for its debasing tendencies (à la Church Fathers). Outstanding among those condemning the arts was Savanorola. It should be noted however, that the arts he condemned were not such things as paintings by Fra Angelico or the moralistic poetry, but the increasingly naturalistic art circulating among the Medici. In reply to a request from a friend, Savanorola wrote a small treatise, De Divisione ac Utilitate Omnium Scientiarum, which contains a section on "An Apology for the Art of Poetry." His general conclusion is that poetry has a value as a vehicle for philosophical thought and a way of teaching by example. He finishes, however, with a castigation of classical poets in the manner of Plato.⁴⁸

In spite of the "Vanity fires" of a Savanorola, the secularization of the age continued with the secularization of art keeping pace. The marriage of aesthetics to morality continued to be maintained by most of the writers. Men like Traversari, Vittorino de Feltre, Ficino, Pico and Manutius were outstanding for their devotion, appeals to morality and

⁴⁸ Cf. William Knight, The Philosophy of the Beautiful, London, John Murray, 1916, p. 47.

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consciousness of the necessity for educating the public. But in actual fact there were many who paid scant attention to these theories in their practice. Of the artists and arts of the age, John Symonds has written:

They had no country but the dreamland of antiquity, no laws beyond the law of taste and inclination... The study of the classics and the effort to assimilate the spirit of the ancients, undermined their Christianity without substituting the religion or the ethics of the old world... It is not, therefore, a marvel that, while professing Stoicism, they wallowed in sensuality, openly affected the worst habits of Pagan society, and devoted their ingenuity to the explanation of foulness that might have been passed by in silence. Licentiousness became a special branch of humanistic literature.⁴⁹

So it was that the Renaissance saw glimpses of an insipient Art for Art's Sake. The practice itself of the theory was amply illustrated in the widely accepted Herma-
phroditus of Antonio Beccadelli. "This book", writes Symonds, "which Strato and Martial might have blushed to own, passed from copyist to copyist, from hand to hand. Among the learned it found no serious adversaries."⁵⁰

The spirit behind this practice was echoed in the words of some of the theorists. Bernardo Tasso, for example, exclaims: "I have spent most of my efforts in attempting to

⁴⁹ John A. Symonds, The Revival of Learning, New York, G.P. Puttnam's Sons, Capricorn edition, 1960, pp. 380-381.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

please, as it seems to me that this is more necessary, and also more difficult to attain; for we find by experience that many poets may instruct and benefit us very much, but certainly give us very little delight."⁵¹

In more than complete agreement with this view is the more freely rebellious L. Castelvetro. He insists that delight is the sole aim of poetry; should utility enter in at all, it is merely accidentally. Not only must poetry aim at giving delight, it must even delight the common folk:

Poetry (was) invented exclusively to delight and give recreation, I say to delight and give recreation to the minds of the rough crowd and of the common people, which does not understand the reasons, or the distinctions, or the arguments--subtle and distant from the usage of the ignorant--which philosophers use...⁵²

In spite, however, of these maverick voices, the views of the Italian critics of the Renaissance era can be summarized in Spigarn's words: their conception of poetry's function was an ethical one.

⁵¹ B. Tasso, Delle Letere, aggiuntavilli Rogionamento della Poesia, Padua, 1733, Vol. 2, p. 195, quoted by Spigarn, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵² Castelvetro, Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta, Vienna, Steinhoffer, 1570, 29:36, quoted by B. Weinberg, "Castelvetro's Theory of Poetics", in Critics and Criticism Ancient and Modern, ed. R.S. Crane, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1952, 2nd imp., 1954, p. 352.

For with the exception of such a revolutionary spirit as Castelvetro, by most theorists it was as an effective guide to life that poetry was chiefly valued. Even when delight was admitted as an end, it was simply because of its usefulness in affecting the ethical aim.⁵³

The works of these authors and others of the sixteenth century Italy were the well-springs of the critical doctrines of most of the rest of Western Europe. It is evident, therefore, why most of the early ideas in other countries paralleled those of Italy.

Thus, for example, in France, Ronsard praises the poetic office and extols the nobility of poetry. It was in its origin allegorical theology (a notion previously held by Boccaccio). It is highly moral and must proceed from a virtuous man:

Now since the Muses do not cease to lodge in a soul unless it is good, holy and virtuous, you should try to be of a good disposition, not wicked, scowling and cross, but animated by a gentle spirit; ...you should have, in the first place, conceptions that are high, grand, beautiful and not trailing upon the ground; for the principle part of poetry consists of invention, which comes as much from a beautiful nature as from the reading of good and ancient authors.⁵⁴

53 Spigarn, op. cit., p. 58.

54 Ronsard, L'Art Poétique Cinq Préfaces, Cambridge, University Press, 1930, p. 2: "Or pour-ce que les Muses ne veuillent loger en une ame si elle n'est bonne, sainte, et vertueuse, tu seras de bonne nature, non meschant, renfragné, ne chagrin: mais animé d'un gentil esprit,... Tu auras en premier lieu les conceptions hautes, grandes, belles et non trainantes à terre. Car le principal point est l'invention, laquelle vient tant de la bonne nature, que de la leçon des bon et anciens autheurs."

Early English criticism was no less insistent upon the intermingling of the two values. One early discussion of the subject came in William Webbe's Discourse of English Poetrie, published in 1586. It is his opinion that "the perfection of poetry is this, to mingle delight with profit, in such wise that a reader might by his reading be a partaker of both."⁵⁵ To the charge that art is but a facade under which writers are able to express themselves in obscenity and blasphemy, Webbe counters by saying that poetry is to be moralized or read allegorically; where vice is portrayed by an artist, it is in order to deter sensible men from committing it by showing its evil consequences. If obscenity appears in poetry, it is to be regretted as an abuse in no way essential to the art itself.

Sir Philip Sidney's Defence of Poesy is considered to be an answer to the puritanical condemnation of poetry found in Gossens's School of Abuse (1579). Sidney's defence is the traditional one, meaning that in defending poetry he subordinates it to morality. Poetry is first defined as "an Art of Imitation...that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth to speak Metaphorically.

⁵⁵ W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetrie, 1586, quoted by Knight, op. cit., p. 91.

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A speaking Picture, with this end to teach and delight."⁵⁶
 To the objection that one wastes one's time reading poetry,
 he replies that poetry, better than any science or art,
 teaches virtue and since virtue should be the aim of all
 learning, a man could find little more profitable to do than
 to read it.⁵⁷ Poetry is not a mother of lies, as some have
 maintained, for the poet never pretends that the fables he
 presents to his public are to be taken for facts.⁵⁸ Nor
 does poetry turn man's mind to wantonness, or make him ef-
 feminate. The descriptions of battle and the exhortations
 by example to heroicity, belie that charge.⁵⁹ And to the
 objection that the great philosopher, Plato, was an enemy of
 poetry, Sidney counters that Plato was himself a great poet,
 and that it argues ingratitude in him that he should have
 contemned the fountain from which he drank. Moreover, it
 was actually more the abuse of poetry that Plato condemned.⁶⁰

Francis Bacon expressed himself on the matter in the
 second book of the Advancement of Learning (1605). Bacon

56 Sir Philip Sidney, "A Defence of Poesie", in
The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney, Vol. III, Cambridge,
 University Press, 1923, p. 9.

57 Ibid., p. 28.

58 Ibid., p. 29.

59 Ibid., p. 30.

60 Ibid., p. 31.

ridicules the idea of the allegorical interpretation of poetry, saying that the fictions were written first and the allegory worked out later rather than vice versa. In spite of this turning from the traditional position, Bacon nevertheless holds that poetry is a vehicle for delightful teaching. He calls it "feigned history", and declares its purpose to be the allaying of man's desire for a more perfect view of goodness, nobility and variety than exists in actuality. In thus creating actions nobler than those to be found in reality, poetry conduces to magnanimity.

Therefore, because the acts or events of true history have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical: because true history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence. ...poetry serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation.⁶¹

Ben Jonson is a good representative of the spirit of seventeenth century literary criticism. As the neoclassical spirit strengthened, the allegorical conception of poetry weakened. The story, fable or plot became more important as an end in itself. The influence of Aristotle became stronger. For Ben Jonson, poetry is the most noble and ethically significant of all the arts. Containing as it

⁶¹ Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, London, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1934, p. 82.

does the best of philosophy, politics and theology, it is able to convince men of the beauty of virtue in a pleasant, delightful way. Poetry presents to mankind the pattern of good living in society.⁶²

In much the same spirit, Dr. Samuel Johnson insists that, since in all areas of life "the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong", therefore, "it is always a writer's duty to make the world better."⁶³

In 1668 John Dryden wrote his An Essay of Dramatic Poesie. It was followed in the same year by "A Defense" of the essay, prefixed to the Indian Emperor's second edition. In the Defense he boldly states that "delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy; instruction can be admitted but in the second place; for poesy only instructs as it delights."⁶⁴ This bold statement is followed with "moral truth

62 Ben Jonson, Timber or Discoveries, ed. by Ralph S. Walker, Syracuse, University Press, 1953, pp. 34-35.

63 Samuel Johnson, Works, London, Jones & Co., 1825, Vol. II, p. 330. Immediately afterwards, discussing Shakespeare, Johnson comments: "His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." "Preface to Shakespeare", Works, Vol. II, p. 330. Both quotations enlarge upon Johnson's general principle: "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." Ibid., p. 329.

64 John Dryden, Of Dramatic Poesy, and Other Critical Essays, 2 vols., ed. by George Watson, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1962, Vol. I, pp. 113-114.

is the mistress of the poet as much as of the philosopher. Poesy must resemble natural truth, but it must be ethical."⁶⁵ This opinion comes the closest of any to a truly Aristotelian position on the matter and is, as shall be seen, almost exactly our own position.

In 1674 Nicholas Boileau wrote L'Art Poétique. It was translated by John Dryden and William Soame and published in 1683. After a lengthy instruction on the necessity of hard work, revision, application of reason's rules and numerous other hints on how to acquire renown in the arts, Boileau writes:

In prudent lessons every where abound;
With pleasant join the useful and the sound;
A sober reader a vain tale will slight;
He seeks as well instruction as delight.
Let all your thoughts to virtue be confined,
Still offering nobler figures to our mind:
I like not those loose writers, who employ
Their guilty muse, good manners to destroy;
Who with false colours still deceive our eyes,
And show us vice dressed in fair disguise.

A virtuous author, in his charming art,
To please the sense needs not corrupt the heart:
His heat will never cause a guilty fire:
To follow virtue then be your desire.
In vain your art and vigour are exprest;
The obscene expression shows the infected breast.

Never debase yourself by treacherous ways,
Nor by such abject methods seek for praise:
Let not your only business be to write;
Be virtuous, just, and in your friends delight.

65 Ibid., p. 120.

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Before kind reason did her light display
 And government taught mortals to obey,
 Men, like wild beasts, did nature's laws pursue,
 They fed on herbs, and drink from rivers drew;
 Their brutal force, on lust and rapine bent,
 Committed murder without punishment:
 Reason at last, by her all-conquering arts,
 Reduced these savages, and tuned their hearts;
 Mankind from bogs, and woods, and caverns calls,
 And towns and cities fortifies with walls:
 Thus fear of justice made proud rapine cease,
 And sheltered innocence by laws and peace.
 These benefits from poets we received.

Thus useful rules were, by the poet's aid,
 In easy numbers to rude men conveyed,
 And pleasingly their precepts did impart;
 First charmed the ear, and then engaged the heart;
 The muses thus their reputations raised,
 And with just gratitude in Greece were praised.⁶⁶

I have quoted this extract in length because there is contained within it a summary of just about all of the arguments ever brought forward throughout the ages in the defense of poetry.

D. EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw this same theme continued. That the attitude in which beauty is to be appreciated for its own sake was breaking through, however, is shown in Lord Shaftesbury's demand for the education of a sense of art, and by his detailed description of

⁶⁶ Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux, The Art of Poetry, trans. by William Soame and John Dryden, 1683, reprinted in A. Sesonske (ed.), What is Art?, New York, Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 108-109.

the phenomena of art. It is, in fact, to Lord Shaftesbury that the cornerstone of the more modern aesthetic theory can be traced, namely, the notion of "disinterested pleasure":

When we have thoroughly searched into the nature of this contemplative delight, we shall find it of a kind which relates not in the least to any private interest of the creature, nor has for its object any self-good or advantage of the private system. The admiration, joy or love turns wholly upon what is exterior and foreign to ourselves.⁶⁷

However, this great admirer of Plato was not at all so very far removed from him in his judgments. For Shaftesbury, as for the other theorists, we have examined, the terms "beauty" and "sense" are extended to the goodness of morality and that faculty by which we make moral appraisals:

And thus, after all, the most natural beauty in the world is honesty and moral truth. For all beauty is truth... In Poetry, which is all fable, Truth still is the perfection. And whoever is scholar enough to read the ancient philosopher, or his modern copyists, upon the nature of a dramatic and epic poem will easily understand this account of truth.⁶⁸

In France, according to Gilbert and Kuhn, Victor Cousin is representative of the period:

⁶⁷ Shaftesbury, Anthony, Earl of, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, ed. by J.M. Robertson, 2 vols., Gloucester, Mass, Peter Smith, 1963, Vol. I, p. 296.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

Cousin, combining his somewhat vague Platonism with ideas derived from French eighteenth century moralists, emphasizes the ethical implications of his concept of beauty,...In a formula that reminds us of Shaftesbury he defines the purpose of art as the "expression of moral beauty with the help of physical beauty."⁶⁹

As will be seen in the next chapter, however, Cousin could also speak from the other side of his mouth. He fell into the pit which yawns before most eclectics.

For the Italian, Lodovico Antonio Muratori:

Moral philosophy has found another daughter or minister, even more delightful and useful than history: poetry, an art that partakes both of history and rhetoric... Poetry, as an imitative art and composer of poems, has for its end delight; as an art subordinate to moral philosophy or politics its end is to be of service to others.⁷⁰

And in the mind of Gottfried Leibnitz: "The chief end of poetry should be to teach prudence and virtue by examples."⁷¹ But it should also be noted that Leibnitz showed his appreciation of the opposite doctrine of disinterested pleasure: "The contemplation of beautiful things is

⁶⁹ Gilbert and Kuhn, op. cit., p. 474.

⁷⁰ L. A. Muratori, The Perfection of Italian Poetry, i, 4, reprinted in E.F. Carrit, Philosophies of Beauty, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931, p. 60.

⁷¹ G.W. Leibnitz, Theodicy, ii, 148, ed. by Austin Farrer, trans. by E.M. Huggard, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951, p. 217. The full quotation runs: "The chief end of history, as also of poetry, should be to teach prudence and virtue by examples, and then to display vice in such a way as to create aversion to it and to prompt men to avoid it, or serve towards that end."

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agreeable in itself, and...a picture by Raphael touches him who looks at it with enlightened eyes, though he draws from it no profit."⁷²

Towards the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century a false dawn of aestheticism shone in England. Its rays were reflected in the works of such Romantics as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Shelley. Most resplendant, however, was the figure of John Keats, who, more than any of the others was a type of what later would be called "Art for Art's Sake."

This was only a false dawn, however, for the moralism of the age soon obscured it. The works of Macaulay and Mill, of Dickens and Carlyle, each in its own way and each for its own purpose overshadowed the aesthetic lights of early Romanticism. John Ruskin sums up the prevalent attitude in his traditional moralizing phrases. Once again, it is the man who proclaims the highest truths who can lay claim to the title of greatest artist. The contemporary French culture, particularly that section sporting the maxims of Art for Art's Sake, was anathema to him. He directly attacked the principles of the movement, declaring bluntly that beauty, to be such, must appeal to the moral part of man. All of his

72 Quoted by Gilbert and Kuhn, op. cit., p. 229.

artistic judgments bear the imprint of that conviction. Thus, in Modern Painters, Claude and Poussin are condemned because they have worked more for the beautiful than for the true, but especially because, lacking the "christian sentiment", they have not proclaimed even a single mention of truth in their works.

But I say that the art is greatest, which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas... If this then be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied in the sum of his works, the greatest number of ideas.⁷³

Ruskin himself, however, was a man deeply imbued with the lofty ideals of the Romantic movement. He acknowledges his deep indebtedness to Wordsworth and, especially to Carlyle, a man so read by him that he found himself frequently using his very phrases. The pages of Modern Painters shows how truly involved in the cares and concerns of the common man he was. His comments on art are seldom cut off from his appreciation of social conditions and moral states. Ruskin's theories bind together the ethical, the social, and the artistic into one great category. Yet he cannot be said to look down on art, far from it: he gloried in it. He saw it, however, as intimately bound up with life and forced to

⁷³ John Ruskin, Modern Painters, The Works of John Ruskin, New York, Thomas Cromwell & Co., Vol. I, ch. 2, p. 84.

face and incorporate into itself moral problems. Late in life he declared that the clearest truth he had learned was that art cannot be abstracted from life as it is lived, but that it is, on the contrary "but...a visible sign of national virtue."⁷⁴ Artists should bring to the consciousness of men that real beauty presupposes justice, modesty, honesty, etc.:

Keep the temper of the people stern and manly;
make their association grave, courteous and for
worthy objects; occupy them in just deeds; and
their tongue must needs be a grand one.⁷⁵

Paradoxically enough, Ruskin's very dedication to art drew to him at the University of Oxford a large number of young men who would be enkindled by his love for art, but would spurn his high moralism.

All history is open to you, all high thoughts
and dreams that the past fortunes of men can sug-
gest, all fairy-land is open to you--...and all
Paradises open to you--yes, and the works of Para-
dise.⁷⁶

Enthusiastic outbursts such as this filled many of his students with that thirst of beauty which is the mainspring of hellenism. But these same students refused to acknowledge the linking of an aesthetic system with ethical ideals.

⁷⁴ John Ruskin, The Relation of National Ethics to National Arts, Vol. 19 of The Works of John Ruskin, ed. by E.T. Cook & A. Wedderburn, 39 vols., London, p. 164.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 174.

⁷⁶ John Ruskin, The Two Paths, The Works of John Ruskin, New York, Thomas Cromwell, & Co., p. 97.

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Despite himself, then, Ruskin, the despiser of Art for Art's Sake, was counted by the new aesthetic wave on English shores as its master. For a new wave was coming in, pulsating stronger than ever before. The Pre-Raphaelites picked up the theme dropped by Keats and proclaimed aloud the ideals of pure art. Strangely enough, one of the outstanding members of that brotherhood, William Morris, for all of his emphasis on beauty, allowed himself to be guided by Ruskin and put his art at the service of society.

The waves continued pouring in. One which rose above the others in the purity of its "Art for Art's Sake" was found in the works of Algernon Charles Swinburne. But he, too, was swallowed up by Tennyson, Arnold and the optimistic and very moral Trollope. It is true that some would attempt to read between the lines of Empedocles on Etna or certain passages in Idylls of the King and find the germs of disquietude, but it cannot be doubted that on the whole, the authors were satisfied with the established order and respected their traditions. Thus, in an unpublished poem of Tennyson, quoted by his son in the second volume of his Memoirs of his father, the very notion of Art for Art's Sake is condemned as immoral:

Art for Art's Sake ! Hail, truest Lord of Hell !
 Hail Genius, Master of the Moral Will !
 "The filthiest of all paintings painted well
 Is mightier than the purest painted ill !"
 Yea, mightier than the purest painted well,
 So prone are we toward the broad way to Hell !⁷⁷

But in 1873 a work appeared which signalled that the new aesthetic tide was no longer a mere ripple on the English shores. The Renaissance of Walter Horatio Pater was the beginning, in England, of a flow that was already pulsating strongly on the continent. It was followed by the works of George Moore and that ultimate "artsakist", Oscar Wilde. From this time on, in every country where literature was written and read, the forces of "pure art" had to be countered.

Countered, of course, it was. There will always be critics to denounce artists who declare themselves free of all religious or philosophical commitment. They will condemn them for callously cutting themselves off from social movements and religious problems and remind them that they have a duty to perform toward their fellow man.

⁷⁷ Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1898, 2 vols. Vol. II, p. 92. Hallam Tennyson comments on this poem: "These lines in a measure expressed his strong and sorrowful conviction, that the English were beginning to forget what was in Voltaire's words, the glory of English literature--'No nation has ever treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the english nation.'" And in a footnote he adds that his father, in writing the poem, quoted George Sand: "L'art pour art est un vain mot: l'art pour le vrai, l'art pour le beau et le bon, voilà la religion que je cherche."

In France the spirit of Quatremere de Quincy, the influential permanent secretary of the Academy of Fine Arts until 1839, remained entrenched in the attitudes of many. That spirit was well summed up in a paragraph of his Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art:

My purpose is to show that the moral utility of works of Art, or their application to a noble, fixed use, is the most important condition necessary for the artist and the art lover to produce and to judge; for the public to sense and to taste the beauties of imitation.⁷⁸

That spirit animated Nissard's attacks on the adherents and defenders of the new aesthetics, in the pages of the Revue de Paris, as well as Armand Carrel's opinions in le National. The latter, for example, wrote:

The error into which certain innovators fell, in our opinion, was to believe, to use one of their ways of talking, that they were making l'art pour l'art... There has not been any purely artistic literature... One thing more, if there exists today a school that cultivates art as an end and not as a means, the fact should be blamed on the history of things. That seems the more reasonable view to us [the editor, Carrel] for after the July Revolution we saw that group of writers disperse, the group that had founded the former Globe in that view, in our opinion narrow, which separates literature from what is always and everywhere its true end, propagating ideas and fighting for them.⁷⁹

78 Q. de Quincy, Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l'art, 1815, quoted by John Wilcox, "The Beginnings of L'Art pour L'Art", in Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XI, (1953), p. 366.

79 A. Carrel, in le National, Jan. 2 and 3, 1834, quoted by Wilcox, op. cit., p. 373.

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Meredith, in England, expressed the more average reaction of his nation to the extreme form of "Art for Art's Sake", Naturalism. He was commenting upon a French novel written according to the tenets of that school:

I have gone through the horrible book of Mendès, with the sensation of passing down the ventre de Paris and out at the anus into the rat-rioting sewers, twisted, whirled, tumbled amid the frothing filth, the deadly stench, the reek and roar of the damned... It is the monsterization of Zolaism. O what a nocuturient, cacaturient crew has issued of the lens of the Sun of the mind on the lower facts of life! --a sheer Realism, breeder at best of the dungfly.⁸⁰

But perhaps none of the voices raised to demand that art maintain the subservient position it had held throughout Western tradition was stronger or more respected than that of the great artist, Leo Tolstoy.

Many of Tolstoy's criticisms of art echo those of Plato. Thus, art which deals with degrading or ignoble subject matter should be outlawed, as should be anything which could arouse the lower emotions.⁸¹ Moreover there can be no self-justification for beauty--it must be judged not on the grounds that it gives a disinterested pleasure, but on moral grounds:

⁸⁰ George Meredith, Letters Collected and Edited by His Son, 1921, Vol. I, p. 20. quoted by E. Arthur Robinson in "Meredith's Literary Theory and Science: Realism Versus the Cosmic Spirit", PMLA, LIII, (1938), p. 858.

⁸¹ Leo Tolstoy, What is Art and Essays on Art, trans. by Aylmer Maude, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 152.

The more utterly we surrender ourselves to beauty the farther we depart from goodness. I know that to this people always reply that there is a moral and spiritual beauty, but this is merely playing with words, for by spiritual and moral beauty nothing else is understood but goodness. For the most part, beauty of soul, or goodness, not only does not coincide with what is ordinarily understood as beauty but is opposed to it.⁸²

As with Ruskin, Tolstoy's major concern in art is for the common man. He deplores the hours and hours that artists and art students must spend in perfecting their art. The display of art works, moreover, falls upon the shoulders of those who are not artists themselves, which means that the artists are actually a parasite upon the society. "(Fine) art can arise only on the slavery of the masses of the people, and can continue only as long as that slavery lasts."⁸³ This is especially true since, in Tolstoy's view, there is no useful value in fine art taken in itself. And even if it were not prostituted by being made to serve such lecherous masters as the enriched few, modern art would still stand condemned because of its obscurity. Written for an elite, it has become meaningless: "The style is very high flown, the feelings seem to be most elevated, but you can't make out what is happening, to whom it is happening, and where it is happening."⁸⁴

82 Ibid., p. 141n.

83 Ibid., p. 146.

84 Ibid., p. 173.

Art has a purpose, a moral purpose of stirring those emotions which will advance the well-being of society. But modern art has chosen to appeal to pleasure, especially to sex pleasure. It has thus turned upon what should be its most important aim: the fostering of the brotherhood of man united in love and equal before the God of Christianity.⁸⁵ Since the measure of art's greatness is in the degree to which it furthers religious feelings, Baudelaire, Wagner, Brahms, even at times Beethoven must be judged poor artists. Don Quixote, Pickwick, etc., are likewise examples of poor art, while Uncle Tom's Cabin merits the laurel of praise.

Leo Tolstoy, asking himself whether it would be better to take all of modern art, both the good and the bad, or to do without art altogether, presents us with the perfect note upon which to end this chapter since it sums it up so well:

I think that every reasonable and moral man would again decide the question as Plato decided it for his Republic, and as all the early Church-Christian and Mahommedan teachers of mankind decided it, that is, would say, Rather let there be no art at all.⁸⁶

85 Ibid., p. 238.

86 Ibid., p. 261-262.

CHAPTER III

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

A. ROMANTIC BEGINNINGS

The last chapter attempted to sketch in rather bold strokes one extreme in the problem of Art and Morality. As we skimmed through the centuries of thought on the matter we found no difficulty at all in discovering witnesses to attest to the didactic function of art. Quite the opposite. It was the rare exception to find a poet or philosopher who did not at least identify aesthetic values with ethical values. Many even went so far as to demand that art be a propaganda vehicle for morality.

To find an outright denial of this moral quality in art we have to come to modern times.

I am interested to notice how modern this anti-ethical prepossession really is. It would have seemed nonsense to any serious Roman... Upon his faith in the power of poetry to humanize, to moralize, to mould character, to inspire action, the Roman built his whole system of education.¹

What Professor Garrod says of the Roman holds true, as we have seen, of the Greek, the Frenchman, and the Englishman as well. Indeed, in the last analysis, what would be well-nigh impossible would be to find somewhere a great poet

¹ H.W. Garrod, Poetry and the Criticism of Life, Cambridge, Harvard Press, 1931, p. 8.

or man of letters who would not link up his art with that of virtue.

The now-popular phrase, "Art for Art's sake", is actually a very recent arrival on the intellectual plane. Lalande reports that it was first used as such by Cousin in his Sorbonne lectures of 1818 in a perfectly orthodox and traditional sense.² But Miss Rose Egan has shown that it had already been used as early as 1804 as a summary of the aesthetic theory of Kant.³

Certainly no one would be rash enough to insist that in the whole of history before the nineteenth century there was never a trace of what today we call Art for Art's sake. It would, indeed, be quite strange if, at the height of Greece's power or of the Italian Renaissance, such an

2 "Lorsque Cousin l'employa pour la première fois, en 1818, dans ses leçons à la Sorbonne, le terme l'art pour l'art avait un sens tout à fait naturel: 'Il faut de la religion pour la religion, de la morale pour la morale, de l'art pour l'art.' Ce n'est que bien plus tard que ces derniers mots devinrent le programme d'une école et un sujet de dispute entre les partis." André Lalande, Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1956, p. 80.

3 Rose F. Egan, "The Genesis of the Theory of 'Art for Art's Sake' in Germany and England", Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, II, 4 (July, 1921), pp. 5-61; V, 3 (April, 1924), pp. vi-33.

attitude were not found. What does appear definite from the sources at hand is that, while the attitude might be present, while the reality might even have been practiced, the theory was never proposed, worked out or clung to as a manifest way of life. The artist and the theorist acknowledged at least implicitly the supreme importance of morality, duty or religion. Theoretically at least it would be hard to prove that art was not held to be subordinated to morality for the first eighteen hundred years of comment about the affair.

The era into which the movement of "pure art" was born was one in which art was being called upon to work for the advantage of society. It was told to justify its existence by proving itself "useful". Prominent among those calling upon art to put itself at the service of mankind were the Positivists. Appalled by the plight of the poor and suffering, they were impelled to work out a system which would change the economic and social structure which had brought about such abominable conditions. Their plan, as outlined by Saint-Simon, was to engage scholars in the working out of a perfect social scheme which industrialists would then put into effect. The artist, because of his special power to influence minds and sensibilities, was to

become an important member in this plan. His art was to be the instrument raising society to a higher plane.⁴

This same point, that the artist should strive to produce works which would hasten the coming of a new and better world was picked up and developed by the chief philosopher of Positivism, Auguste Comte. Man's intellect and moral faculties can most effectively be trained, he reasoned, by that intermediate mental faculty employed by the artist:

Consequently all esthetic study, even if purely imitative, may become a useful moral exercise, by calling sympathies and antipathies into healthy play. The effect is far greater when the representation, passing the limits of strict accuracy, is suitably idealized. This indeed is the characteristic mission of art. Its function is to construct types of the noblest kind, by the contemplation of which our feelings and thoughts may be elevated.⁵

Comte is emphatic that artists should have no part at all in political authority: "The mental and moral versatility which makes them so apt in reflecting the thoughts and feelings of those around them utterly unfits them for being our guides. ...His special function is to idealize and to stimulate."⁶ At the same time he makes it quite

4 Cf. Henri de Saint-Simon, Social Organization, The Science of Man and Other Writings, ed. & trans. by Felix Markham, New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

5 Auguste Comte, A General View of Positivism, trans. by J.H. Bridges, New York, Robert Speller and Sons, 1957, p. 315.

6 Ibid., p. 310.

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clear that artists should deem it their duty to subordinate their talents toward the improvement of the social phenomenon. Art "should regulate the formation of Social Utopias, subordinating them to the laws of social development as revealed in society."⁷ For this, and for several other reasons, "Art, in the Positive system, is made the primary basis of general education."⁸

So it was that the artist brought up in a world of Saint-Simon and Comte found himself not only invited but actually pressured into subordinating his talents to the demands of sociologists and politicians. It should cause little surprise, then, that artists and writers, being human, should overreact to these stifling demands. Taking a firm stand against the prostitution of art by social workers and philosophers, they rallied around the slogan "Art for Art's Sake" and uncompromisingly proclaimed art's complete freedom from any restraint - its total uselessness.

The aesthetic movement which thus flaunted art's unconstrained, free-flowering nature in the face of those who demand that it be useful, is proximately French in origin. Its roots, however, go deeper than Albert Cassagne would allow. In the second chapter of his study of the

7 Ibid., p. 317.

8 Ibid., p. 353.

movement, Cassagne traced quite well its early development, even referring back to its German source.⁹ However, he immediately denies that it has any direct dependence upon German thought: "Never has the art for art's sake of the romantics been inspired by German philosophy."¹⁰ As if in rebuttal to this declaration, Rose Egan, in 1921, traced the doctrine directly to its origins in Germany and showed that as early as 1804 the French writer, Benjamin Constant, had used the expression in summarizing his impressions of Kantian aesthetics.

The late eighteenth century saw flourishing in Germany two related but independent trends: idealism and romanticism. There can be little doubt that the two influenced one another. Fichte and Schelling imbibed the spirit of the romantics just as they borrowed much from the idealists. It is true that Fichte had some sharp words even for those who used his ideas for their inspiration, and that Hegel also criticized aspects of romanticism, yet it remains true that there are many points of similarity between the two

9 "Le fond de la doctrine est un scepticisme d'origine germanique venu en France avec les alliés, après un essai d'importation par Mme de Staël." Albert Cassagne, La Théorie de l'art pour l'art en France..., Paris, Lucien Dorbon, [1906], p. 42.

10 "Jamais l'art pour l'art des romantique n'a été inspiré...par la philosophie allemande...", Ibid., p. 43.

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spirits - as is only natural when one reflects that the same culture produced both.

Just what Romanticism is is not easy to say. As Albert Guerard comments,

If Art for Art's Sake is an elusive formula, Romanticism is even more Protean. Both are not so much doctrines as attitudes - and we are not excluding the least favorable interpretation of the word attitude, namely a pose.¹¹

It is nonetheless possible to trace aspects of that attitude. Primary among these is the opposition to the analytical spirit of the Enlightenment in favor of the spontaneous energy of the creative imagination and the dynamic role of feeling. The age seemed ripe for the dissemination of views glorifying the expansion of the human personality with its creative potentialities, its intuition, its deeply personal originality. The artistic genius was taking the place of "le philosophe". Schelling's philosophical speculations on the metaphysical signification of art and the nature of artistic genius, plus his preoccupation with Nature, link him directly with the romantic spirit with its interest in, and susceptibility to, the beauty of the

¹¹ Albert Guerard, Art for Art's Sake, Boston, Lathrop, Lee and Shepard Co., 1936, p. 35.

physical world.¹² Rousseau's conception of the naturally good man encouraged an exaltation of the impulses of such a "natural person". The poetry and musings of Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Keats and Shelly evidence the existence of the same desire to give rein to a freer and more spontaneous life in England.

The popularization in France of the tenets of German idealism and Romanticism came about especially from Mme de Staël's praise of the literature of North Germany as opposed to the more "classical" South, in her De l'Allemagne.

It was primarily on an exposition of Kant's Critique of Judgment that Mme de Staël took her stand. This remarkable work, intended by Kant to be the bridge between his Critique of Pure Reason, written to justify the conception of a natural order, and the Critique of Practical Reason, written to justify the conception of a moral order, attempted to justify the conception of the compatibility of the two orders. It is in this work that the first systematic presentation of the idea of "aesthetic disinterestedness" was made, although the notion itself had already been

¹² Friedrich W. Schelling, On The Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature, trans. by J. Elliot Cabot, in Alexander Sesonske (ed.), What is Art, New York, Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 275-290.

introduced into the philosophy of art as early as 1711 by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.

Kant's Critique of Judgment was eagerly received by Weimar society, a group including such notables as Schiller, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Schiller particularly was struck by Kant's distinctions between judgments of taste and judgments of perfection, as well as his notions of free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) and dependent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*).¹³ He applied Kant's dicta on beauty to art itself.

The greatest possible good in Schiller's mind was freedom. His interpretation of Kant put the stress on this point. He conceived of man as caught between two limiting forces: Appetite, controlling sensibility and feeling, and Reason, imposing the constraints of the moral law. Art gives man his freedom by situating him "...in a middle disposition in which sensuousness and reason are active at the same time, but just because of this they are mutually destroying their determining power and through their opposition producing negation... we must call this condition of real and active determinacy the aesthetic."¹⁴

¹³ Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgment, trans. by J.H. Bernard, 2nd ed. rev., London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1931, # 15, p. 79 and # 16, p. 81.

¹⁴ Friedrich Schiller, On the Aesthetic Education of Man, trans. by Reginald Snell, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954, letter 20, p. 98-99.

This free aesthetic state of the world of art is:

wholly indifferent and sterile in relation to knowledge and mental outlook... for Beauty gives no individual result whatever, either for the intellect or for the will; it realizes no individual purpose, either intellectual or moral; it discovers no individual truth, helps us perform no individual duty, and is, in a word, equally incapable of establishing the character and clearing the mind.¹⁵

No less self-contradictory is the notion of a fine instructive (didactic) or improving (moral) art, for nothing is more at variance with the concept of beauty than that it should have a tendentious effect upon the character.¹⁶

The net result of Schiller's reasoning is that art is to be likened to play. Nor is this any ignoble state of affairs. As a matter of fact, it is the best thing that could be said of it since "in every condition of humanity it is precisely play and play alone, that makes man complete and displays at once his twofold nature... For to declare it once and for all, Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a Man, and he is only wholly Man when he is playing."¹⁷ The tremendous value of art, therefore, is that it snatches man from any determinate state (sensitivity or reason), and makes him fully determinable. This is the state in which he is supremely free and, therefore, supremely human.

15 Ibid., letter 21, p. 101.

16 Ibid., letter 22, p. 107.

17 Ibid., letter 15, p. 79.

It is then no mere poetic licence, but also philosophical truth, to call beauty our second creator. For although she only makes humanity possible for us, and for the rest leaves it to our own free will to what extent we wish to make it actual, she has this in common with our original creator Nature...¹⁸

Schiller's speculations, based upon Kantian approaches to aesthetics, with their insistent emphasis upon freedom, really make up the core of the theory which was about to take over the field of aesthetics for the next century and a half. It was further refined, with additions and subtractions of their own, by other outstanding German theorists: Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.

German aesthetics in this form seeped into French thought primarily through the influence of two visitors to the Weimar area, Madame de Staël and her close friend, Benjamin Constant de Rebecque. These two carried the favor of the literati and through their reports back to their friends in France aroused interest in the speculations of the Germans. Constant, it should be noted, was not duly impressed with either the "new German philosophy" or the philosophers themselves. It is, as was already mentioned, in his sketchy diary that the rubric "l'art pour l'art" makes its public appearance:

¹⁸ Ibid., letter 21, p. 102.

Schiller calls. He is a man of keen mind in his art but almost wholly the poet. It is true that the fugitive poetry of the Germans is of a completely different kind and depth from ours. I have a visit from Robinson, pupil of Schelling's. His work on the Esthetics of Kant has some very forceful ideas. L'art pour l'art without purpose, for all purpose perverts art. But art attains the purpose that it does not have.¹⁹

Actually, Constant's contribution to the matter was probably very small. There are few extant comments from him in the field, and the really pitiable amount found in his diary shows that he was not overly interested in either aesthetics or philosophy.

So it is more to the De l'Allemagne of Mme de Staël that France owes its reception of the current of ideas flowering in the German circles. She spent ten years preparing this work.²⁰ Its first edition (1810) was confiscated

19 "J'ai la visite de Schiller. C'est un homme de beaucoup d'esprit sur son art, mais presque uniquement poète. Il est vrai que les poesies fugitives des Allemands sont d'un tout autre genre et d'une tout autre profondeur que les nôtres. J'ai une conversation avec Robinson, élève de Schelling. Son travail sur l'Esthétique de Kant a des idées très énergiques. L'art pour l'art, sans but, car tout but dénaître l'art. Mais l'art atteint au but qu'il n'a pas." Benjamin Constant, Journal Intime et lettres à sa famille et à ses amies, with introduction by D. Melagari, Paris, Albin Michel, (1928), p. 8.

20 The Publiciste (Jan. 25) in the section "Nouvelles littéraires", furnishes an interesting note on the De l'Allemagne: "On attend avec impatience en Allemagne l'ouvrage de Mme de Staël, qui doit être pour ce pays le pendant de ce qu'est Corinne pour l'Italie. Les libraires, les plus accrédités, font à l'auteur les plus brillantes propositions." Quoted by D.H. Carnahan in "The Romantic Debate in the French Daily Press", PMLA, Vol. LIII, 1938, p. 489, n. 14.

and destroyed by the government. Its printing was then accomplished in England in 1813 and smuggled into France. In 1820 a Paris edition was finally brought out. The book contains thirteen chapters of comment upon German philosophy with primary emphasis given to Kant. The very word "aesthetics" (introduced by Baumgarten and further developed by Kant), she presents by defining it as: "Kant, Goethe, J. de Müller, the greatest writers in Germany... Schiller is the first, among the disciples of Kant, to apply his philosophy to literature."²¹ Her presentation of Kant may not be the most accurate, but it did succeed in popularizing such notions as "absolute disinterestedness", "noble uselessness", "spontaneous activity" under Kantian garb. Concerning the relation of art to morality she says:

In separating the beautiful and the useful, Kant proves clearly that it is not at all in the nature of the fine arts to give lessons. No doubt everything beautiful ought to give rise to generous feelings and these feelings stimulate virtue; but as soon as one undertakes to place a moral precept in

²¹ "Kant, Goethe, J. de Müller, les plus grand écrivains de l'Allemagne... Schiller est le premier, parmi les disciple de Kant, qui ait appliqué sa philosophie à la littérature." Mme de Staël, De l'Allemagne, tome second, Paris, Ernest Flammarion, ed., (n.d.) p. 92.

evidence, the free impression that the masterpieces of art produce is necessarily destroyed, for the purpose, whatever it may be, when it is known restricts and hinders the imagination.²²

B. MADAME DE STAEL'S INFLUENCE

The influence of Mme de Staël, through her book as well as through her acquaintances and appearances cannot be overestimated. Alone or through admirers she can be credited with being the importer of much of the spirit of the French Romantic movement. As one author has put it: "In 1814, people spoke of the five great powers, Austria, England, Prussia, Russia, and Madame de Staël."²³ Marcellino Pelayo, citing such passages from De l'Allemagne as "Romantic literature is the only type which completely admits of perfection," "the poetry of the Germans is the Christian era of Fine Art", comments: "It appears useless to underestimate

22 Kant, en séparant le beau de l'utile, prouve clairement qu'il n'est point du tout dans la nature des beaux-arts de donner des leçons. Sans doute tout ce qui est beau doit faire naître des sentiments généreux, et ces sentiments excitent à la vertu; mais dès qu'on a pour objet de mettre en évidence un précepte de moral, la libre impression que produisent les chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art est nécessairement détruit; car le but, quel qu'il soit, quand il est connu, borne et gêne l'imagination." Ibid., p. 187.

Mme de Staël is commenting on Kant's declaration that "Beautiful art is a mode of representation which is purposive for itself and which, although devoid of (definite) purpose, yet furthers the culture of mental powers in reference to social communication." Kant, op. cit., p. 187.

23 Albert Guerard, op. cit., p. 51.

the historical importance of these pages. With them there begins a new era."²⁴

What is this new era? It is in large part an era of "pure art", characterized by reaction against the restraints of tradition or reason, and ruled, not by anything exterior to the artist, but by his own immediate, personal inspiration. The key terms, such as "enthusiasm", "the sublime", and especially Kant's "genius", which crop up continuously, testify to its non-conformist character. Early French Romanticism challenged society, morality, and even God Himself.

It was mentioned earlier that many credit Victor Cousin with first introducing the slogan "l'art pour l'art" into French circles. While this is not true, it is nevertheless a fact that Cousin must be given some credit for spreading the new philosophy behind the slogan. This very popular Sorbonne lecturer was no great philosopher; he was, nonetheless, an outstanding popularizer and, apparently, an infectious educator. His lectures of 1815-1820 were published by former students some twenty years later. It is in the notes of 1818, in Adolphe Garnier's edition that his

²⁴ "Parece inútil encarecer la importancia histórica de esta página. Con ella comienza una nueva era." Marcelino Pelayo, Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España, Santander, S.A., 1946, vol. 5, p. 279.

first notions of beauty are found. It was in this edition that his famous rubric for the new aesthetics appeared:

Art is no more in the service of religion and morality than in the service of the agreeable and the useful. Art is not a means; it is itself an end... Il faut de la religion pour la religion, de la morale pour la morale, comme de l'art pour l'art.²⁵

Pelayo says that this phrase is actually the only positive contribution of Cousin to aesthetics, a contribution, moreover, which is only in words, not in thought. Pelayo is merciless toward Cousin, accusing him of being consistently inconsistent and self-contradictory. For while he defended the absolute freedom of art at one time, at another he unhesitatingly bound it to morality.²⁶ It has already been stated, in our last chapter, that Cousin was

²⁵ Cours de philosophie professé à la faculté des lettres pendant l'année 1818 par M.V. Cousin, sur le fondement des idées absolues du vrai, du beau et du bien, Adolphe Garnier, ed., p. 224, quoted by John Wilcox, "The Beginnings of L'Art pour L'Art", in Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XI, (1953), p. 368.

²⁶ "¿Pero como pasar en silencio la más evidente y la más grave de todas, tal que parece imposible que en ella no reparara su propio autor? Cousin, que tuvo la fortuna de encontrar la fórmula del arte por el arte, o sea, de la belleza por la belleza, dice y repite de todas maneras posibles que el fin supremo del arte es la expresión o manifestación de la idea moral, y al este solo criterio subordina sus juicios artísticos. Cualquiera diría que al escribir el elegante profesor cada una de sus lecciones, perdía la memoria de todo lo que en la anterior había dicho." M. Pelayo, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 24.

as emphatic as Shaftesbury that the proper end of art is to express morality.

The enthusiastic proclamation of the liberation of art from all external influences was evident in the Preface to Victor Hugo's Hernani,²⁷ and was made even more manifest by the tumultuous demonstration made at that controversial play's premiere by those revolutionary authors who called themselves the Jeunes-France, or the Bouzlingos. Much more representative of the new movement, however, was the young leader of that demonstration, Theophile Gautier. Two years after he had so dramatically made his public stand for the new aesthetic philosophy, in the Preface to his own Premières Poésies, Gautier vigorously defended art's "uselessness", its freedom from bondage to economic problems, political pressures, or the social responsibilities assigned to it by the saint-simonists and other positivists.

What does it serve? It serves by being beautiful. --Isn't that enough? As the flowers, as perfume, as the birds, as everything that man has not been able to divert and deprave to his own use.

27 To be more specific, it should be noted that Hugo is more of a Romantic than a full fledged proponent of Art for Art's Sake. His Preface to Cromwell is a summation of the Romantic credo as Gautier's Preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin became the credo of true Art for Art's Sake.

In general, once a thing becomes useful, it ceases being beautiful... Art is freedom, luxury, flowering, it is the blooming of the soul in indolence.²⁸

Declarations like this placed Gautier in the forefront of the new freedom in art. He may not have been the originator of the theory, but there can be no doubt that he was the chief formulator and spirit for many years. Hardly any other proponent put the aesthetic viewpoint at odds with the ethical with such vigor and force.

As a matter of fact, in spite of all their protestations in favor of art's freedom, most of the Romantics were satisfied with fleeing from the contemporary scene to poetry, essays and novels treating of the fanciful or the extravagant. Their art was characterized by escapes into an imaginary Greece or, more frequently, to a highly imaginative Middle Ages. Their's was a reaction to the cold formalism of the neo-classicists. As a matter of fact, especially after 1830, a moralizing strain can even be

28 "A quoi cela sert-il? Cela sert à être beau. --N'est-ce pas assez? comme les fleurs, comme les parfums, comme les oiseaux, comme tout ce que l'homme n'a pas détourné et dépraver à son usage.

En général, dès qu'une chose devient utile, elle cesse d'être belle.--Elle rentre dans la vie positive, de poésie elle devient prose, de libre, esclave.--Tout l'art est là.--L'art, c'est la liberté, le luxe, l'efflorescence, c'est l'épanouissement de l'âme dans l'oisiveté." Théophile Gautier, Poésies complètes, Tome premier, Paris, Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1905, pp. 4-5.

detected in some passages. Thus even Victor Hugo, in the Preface to *Lucrece Borgia* (1833) wrote: "There are many moral questions in the literary questions. The theater is a tribunal, the theatre is a throne. The drama without leaving the impartial boundaries of art, has a national mission, a social mission, a human mission."²⁹

The Bouzingo Movement, of which Gautier was an early member, began the movement away from official Romanticism. That movement came into full flower when Gautier began writing. He had declared art's complete uselessness in that first volume of his poems. In 1835 he set the standard for the Art for Art's Sake Movement in the Preface to his notorious Mademoiselle de Maupin. The attack upon any useful motive for art, the scathing attack upon Christianity, and the attack against the old form of Romanticism with its sentimentalism, became the fashion to be followed. His novel itself is, for the most part, a projection of his philosophy on life, love and literature.³⁰

29 "Il y a beaucoup de questions morales dans les questions littéraires. Le théâtre est une tribune, le théâtre est une chaire. Le drame, sans sortir des limites impartiales de l'art, a une mission nationale, une mission sociale, une mission humaine." Victor Hugo, Lucrece Borgia, quoted by Enid Starkie in From Gautier to Eliot, London, Hutchinson University Library, 1960, p. 27.

30 Théophile Gautier, Mademoiselle de Maupin, trans. by Professor F.C. de Sumichrast, Cambridge: University Press, 1900, Vols. 1 & 2 of The Works of Théophile Gautier.

There is evidenced in Gautier no compromise, no innuendoes, no "open windows". There is, then, no reason to wonder why that most controversial work of the day, the ordo of Art for Art's Sake poetry, Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal, has on its dedicatory page: "To the faultless poet, the perfect magician in French literature, my very dear, my revered master and friend, Theophile Gautier, with sentiments of most profound humility, I dedicate these evil flowers."³¹

In England as well as in France the Art for Art's Sake Movement had its roots in Romanticism of the type fostered by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Byron. Of the early nineteenth century Romantics, Keats, no doubt, stands out supreme as a disciple of Art for Art's Sake. Even before Gautier and Flaubert, Keats declared that the very center of an artist's life is his sensations, the openness of every fibre of his sense life to the pulsations of life around him. To these sensations the artist must completely surrender himself so as to be able to procure the highest possible aesthetic pleasure.

³¹ "Au Poete Impeccable au parfait magicien en lettres Francais a mon très-cher et très-vénéré Maitre et ami Théophile Gautier avec les sentiments de la plus profound humilité Je dédie ces fleurs malades." Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal, edition critique, Paris, Librairie José Corti, 1942, Dedication.

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As to the Poetical Character itself...it is not itself--it has no self--it is everything and nothing. --It has no character--it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated.--It has as much delight conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the camelion Poet.³²

Without being explicitly stated, there can be found in Keats that notion of the absolute autonomy of art from any other value which will later be formulated by Gautier or Baudelaire. Of all the English poets, he approaches most closely the later French school of pure art. He can in truth be called the precursor of English aestheticism.³³

But Keats' voice was truly "one calling in the wilderness". It was almost obliterated by the cries of protest from such men as Carlyle and Ruskin. Yet it was picked up by Dante Gabriel Rossetti who then passed it on to the first of the really great proponents of Art for Art's Sake as such in England, Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Anti-God, Anti-Christian, Anti-religion of any kind, Swinburne was in reality the Baudelaire of Britain. Nor did he shy away from that reputation. His admiration for the

32 John Keats, The Letters of John Keats, ed. by Maurice B. Forman, 4th ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1960, letter 93, pp. 226-227.

33 Cf. Albert J. Farmer, Le Mouvement Esthétique et "décadent" en Angleterre 1873-1900, Paris, Champion, 1931, p. 10ff.

author of Les Fleurs du Mal was evident not only in an article he wrote on him in the Spectator (6 Sept., 1862), but even more so in the nature of his own verses. Swinburne's subject matter, unlike Baudelaire's was less urban, more medieval. But a like preoccupation with abnormal sexuality, sadism, and delight in pleasures of the senses is present.

Britain, of course, was still not prepared for such an attack on its ethical system from any source, much less the aesthetic. Critics reacted violently to Poems and Ballads, just as, in France, they had reacted to Les Fleurs du Mal. In a rebuttal to his critics which sounds suspiciously like the Preface to Gautier's Premières Poesie, Swinburne attempted to justify himself.³⁴ For the first time in England the doctrine of Art for Art's sake demanded an audience. It was stated even more explicitly two years later in a penetrating study of William Blake, a study which ended with the cry:

34 "When England has again a school of poetry as she had at least twice before, or as France has now, if such a day should ever rise or return, it will once more be remembered that the office of art is neither puerile or feminine, but virile; that its purity is not of the cloister or the harem; that all things are good in its sight, out of which good work can be produced." A. Swinburne, "Notes on Poems and Reviews", Sept. 1866, quoted by E. Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot, London, Hutchinson University Library, 1960, p. 48.

Art for art's sake first of all, and afterwards we may suppose all the rest shall be added to her (or if not she need hardly be overmuch concerned); but from the man who falls to artistic work with a moral purpose shall be taken away even that which he has--whatever capacity for doing well in either way he may have at starting.³⁵

Of William Blake, John Cassidy has said:

Written under the aegis of Baudelaire and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and at a time (1862-1865) when Swinburne was steeped in l'art pour l'art, the book is one of the most emphatic statements of the principles of "art for art's sake" in English literature.³⁶

Swinburne's enthusiastic appeal for pure art was drowned in the uproar that followed, and, maybe because of age, maybe because of wisdom, by the time Songs Before Sunrise was published (1871), he himself had modified his views, called for a moral art. A few years later he joined his voice in the condemnation of the evolved product of the new aestheticism, Naturalism.³⁷

For a short time, then, the British scene was quiet. But the lull did not last long. In 1873 Walter Pater published The Renaissance. George Moore, in his out-and-out imitation of Baudelaire went further than even Swinburne had

³⁵ A. Swinburne, The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Bonchurch ed., London, Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas J. Wise, 1925, Vol. XVI, pp. 137-138.

³⁶ John A. Cassidy, Algernon C. Swinburne, New York, Twayne Publishers Inc., 1964, p. 105.

³⁷ Cf. Albert Farmer, op. cit., p. 27f.

dared to go. Moore's sponge-like absorption of every word of Zola, Goncourt, de Maupassant, et al, culminated in his own A Modern Lover. Lover may not have been as naturalistic as Zola's theory would have liked, but its realism surpassed anything ever read before in Victorian England. Finally, Oscar Wilde took up the Art for Art's Sake banner and became the uncontested master and theoretician of the movement. Especially with Wilde that movement entered into a new phase.

It must be recalled that, even at its highest point, Art for Art's Sake was not welcomed by all: not in France, England, Germany or the United States. No, the moralistic attitude remained, as no doubt it always will. But it remained no longer as a virtually unchallenged aesthetic theory. As Nietzsche, complaining that in the whole of philosophy the artist was lacking because of its domination by ethics, proclaimed: "Art now wants its revenge."³⁸ Henceforward, the moralistic aesthetician could expect to find himself countered by declarations such as Stanislavsky's:

³⁸ This is not a direct quotation, but an expression of what Nietzsche conveys. Cf. The Birth of Tragedy, 2nd ed. trans. by Wm. A. Hausmann, Edinburgh: and London, T.N. Foulis, 1910, p. 157 and p. 185. Cf. also p. 182: "But he who would derive the effect of the tragic exclusively from these moral sources, as was usually the case for too long in aesthetics, let him not think that he has done anything for Art thereby; for Art must above all insist on purity in her domain."

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"The very least utilitarian purpose or tendency, brought into the realm of pure art, kills art instantly."³⁹

The early period of Art for Art's Sake, then, was characterized by a revolt against any tendency to make art serve a master outside of itself. And in this, attention was re-focussed upon the intrinsic merit of art itself. It insisted that the artist was not a missionary, a policeman, or an advertiser for political or social wares. He may be one or even all of these, but his art should not be made to serve any of those roles.

It can justifiably be argued that, understood in those terms, the meaning of Art for Art's Sake is perfectly valid. It helped to restore balance to a puritanical culture which willed to turn art into a means of edification and to a positivistic society which willed to force it to propagate its values.

C. LIFE FOR ART'S SAKE

But the movement did not stop at that meaning. As the spirit of Gautier and Baudelaire, Swinburne and Moore began calling like spirits to itself, the movement began taking more extreme leaps forward. No longer did it stand

³⁹ Constantin Stanislavsky, My Life in Art, New York, Meridian Books, 1956, p. 380.

merely as a defence of aesthetic disinterestedness, it stood now for a whole way of life. The pendulum swang from the extreme of moralism, "art for life's sake", to aestheticism, "life for art's sake", or, to be more specific, to life devoted to intrinsic enjoyment. In this phase art became the supreme work of life. Ralph Barton Perry once wrote:

The protagonist of art for art's sake is not discussing a question of beauty or taste. He is affirming something about the relation of beauty and taste to moral rectitude. Such a boundary dispute usually leads to claims of autonomy by both parties, or to rival claims of annexation in which morality is reduced to beauty or beauty to morality.⁴⁰

In this new signification of pure art, it was morality which was sacrificed to beauty. Beauty became a religion with no other serious contenders for the role of Absolute. "If one loves art at all," wrote Oscar Wilde, the high priest of this new religion, "one must love it beyond all other things in the world, and against such love, the reason, if one listened to it, would cry out."⁴¹ The

⁴⁰ Ralph B. Perry, General Theory of Value, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 8.

⁴¹ Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", in Intentions and the Soul of Man, Toronto, Musson Book Co., c. 1905 by G.P. Puttnams Sons, p. 196. Cf. also p. 174: "Ernest: Must we go, then, to Art for everything? Gilbert: For everything...It is through Art, and through Art only, that we can realize our perfection; through Art, and through Art only, that we can shield ourselves from the sordid perils of actual existence."

worshippers at this shrine of beauty held as their first commandment that all experience should be approached and valued aesthetically, and that every moment of life must be lived intensely for the aesthetic satisfaction it affords.

The various approaches to the temple might be said to merge in the mind of Walter Pater. His conclusion to The Renaissance is the very epitome of what the new trend desired to preach. Its impassioned pleas so sums up this phase of Art for Art's Sake that it merits a more extended quotation:

Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us--for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself is the end. ...To burn always with this hard gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life... While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or face of one's friend... For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life...Only be sure it is passion--that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the

love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.⁴²

It is obvious that in this phase of the cult of pure art a new form of didacticism has appeared. This time art is enlisted to preach the theory of aestheticism: that all actions and experiences are to be judged solely for the aesthetic beauty they engender. It is the "beau geste" that counts. This is the mentality that would have little trouble in taking de Quincey's Murder as One of the Fine Arts seriously, or that could approve of Lafcadio's thrusting a fellow passenger from a train, solely to perform a "pure act". Art for Art's Sake. In this, as Guerard rightly observes, it "is a refusal to serve, but not a refusal to act. Indeed it is a motive of action and a claim to leadership. The artist does not want to withdraw from the world: he wants to use the world for artistic purposes."⁴³

⁴² Walter Pater, The Renaissance, New York, Random House, (n.d.), pp. 194-199 passim. Cf. also what Nietzsche says in commenting upon his own The Birth of Tragedy: "Already in the foreward to Richard Wagner, art--and not morality--is set down as the properly metaphysical activity of man; in the book itself the piquant proposition recurs time and again, that the existence of the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon." op. cit., p. 8.

⁴³ Albert Guerard, op. cit., p. xiii.

D. NATURALISM

One of the paradoxes to be discovered in a study of the development of this theory of Art for Art's Sake is struck when one compares its beginnings with its later forms. The roots of this modern theory of art are sunk, it has been seen, in the Romantic Age. It was the free and easy spirit of Romanticism which conceived, gave birth to, and nourished the "pure art". But when art set itself up in its ivory tower and began to demand the full allegiance of its followers, a change took place. Many of the worshippers at the tower no longer found their inspiration in the larks or clouds that so captured the fancy of their brother-under-the-skin, Percy Bysshe Shelley. In their striving for disinterestedness they took on a new objectivity. They began to borrow from the methods of science.

At first it was not too noticeable.⁴⁴ Flaubert retained a delicate balance between art and science; he remained a realist. But with Zola, in his theory if not in

⁴⁴ Albert Bargerhoff has traced the roots of realism in the early Romantics, showing that it is an outgrowth of, rather than a reaction to, Romanticism. "Realisme and Kindred Words: Their Use as Terms of Literary Criticism in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", PMLA, LIII, (Sept., 1938), pp. 837-843.

his actual practice,⁴⁵ the triumph of science was assured. The movement of Art for Art's sake had evolved into Naturalism, the spirit of which still operates strongly in artists of the present day.

The tenets of this phase have already been examined in the first chapter. A judgment of it, as well as of the other theories of the relation of literature and morality will be tackled in the next, concluding chapter. Here it remains necessary only to note that not every practitioner of Art for Art's sake was prepared to enter into the spirit of Naturalism. Their Romantic temper was too strong for the cold objectivity which would be demanded of them. Hence Pater, Wilde and Moore inveighed against the naturalists, agreeing with them only on the score that art and morality must be completely separated.

The reputation of the Naturalists in Victorian society was attacked by the philosophical critics, who, unlike the moralists, objected not so much on the grounds that Naturalism dealt with "the seamy side of life" as that it dealt with "the seamy side of life" in a way that was neither truthful nor beautiful. The aesthetic revolt represents an assault upon the major premises of Naturalistic dogma. It does not deny the importance of using the whole of human experience as fit material for fiction.

⁴⁵ For the truth of the matter is that Zola was too good an artist, too imaginative and, yes, too Romantic as well, to actually put his theory into full practice.

But it does insist that experience must be clarified and interpreted, that the work of the artist can never be objectively scientific.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Clarence R. Decker, "The Aesthetic Revolt Against Naturalism in Victorian Criticism", PMLA, LIII, (Sept. 1938), pp. 855-856.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIDDLE WAY: REALISM

In the first part of this chapter I will go over ground already covered so ably and so often by such Neo-Scholastic writers as Jacques Maritain, Maurice de Wulf, and Mortimer Adler, to mention but a few. This is the question of art in its primary definition and its distinction from prudence. In the exposition of their theories all of the writers rely for their principles upon what St. Thomas had to say concerning the matter, although, in their interpretations, they may differ from one another on certain points.

Many of the ideas of St. Thomas on art are to be found in his Commentary on the Nichomachaen Ethics (1261-1264). What he had to say there is reiterated in the Summa Theologica (1267-1268). Throughout, his exposition follows the general Aristotelian lines.

When St. Thomas uses the word "art" it is not at all in the sense that we commonly think of it today: a statue, a painting, or a novel. Art, in his mind is a principle of spiritual activity, a habitus, a virtue of the practical intellect; a stable disposition by virtue of which an artist perceives rational principles of making something, along with the way in which the principles can be applied in some

particular instance. "Nihil enim aliud ars esse videtur, quam certa ordinatio rationis, qua per determinata media ad debitum finem actus humani perserviunt."¹ Or, to put it in the more popular brief form: "Ars est recta ratio factibilium."²

This intellectual nature of art springs from the rational nature of man. Being of a spiritual nature, as well as of an animal one, man manifests three principle operations: knowing, acting and making. Of these three, knowing pertains to the speculative intellect whose object is knowledge for the sake of knowledge alone. Knowing is governed principally by three virtues: Science, Understanding and Wisdom. Acting and Making both pertain to the practical sphere of operation, in which the aim is to do something with knowledge, to perfect the understanding in respect to matters other than pure knowing. The sphere of acting, or doing, concerns itself with what man does with his freedom. This is the realm of morality, and its guiding virtue is Prudence. The sphere of Making is not concerned with how well man uses his freedom, but with how well he produces objects. This is

1 Thomas Aquinas, Comm. Post. Analy. I, 1. 1.

2 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, q. 57, a. 4c. Cf. also: I-II, q. 57, a. 5, ad ium; q. 58; a. 2, ad ium; Summa Contra Gentes, I, 93; II, 24. (The Summa Theologica will hereafter be referred to simply as S.Th.)

the realm governed by the virtue of Art; it includes all of man's productive activities: building, baking, healing, painting, etc. St. Thomas did not make the modern day distinction between the artist and the artisan.

This distinction between what man knows, does and makes is an important one, and one which all too frequently is overlooked. To many, art is little other than a form of knowing, an expression and communication of some message from one person to another. It was primarily to clarify this fact that Etienne Gilson published his recent work, The Arts of the Beautiful, in which he says among other things:

Indeed, knowledge takes for granted that its object is given and aims only at conceiving it such as it is. Action is creative in its own way, inasmuch as it is the efficient cause of certain effects which, because they are the acts of the subject, cannot be distinguished from him. Factivity, on the contrary, has for its effect to produce beings or objects distinct from their cause and capable of subsisting without it for a more or less long time.³

St. Thomas himself presented his exposition of the nature and aim of art together with his exposition of the virtue of prudence. To understand what he thought of either, it is best to discuss them together.

³ Etienne Gilson, The Arts of the Beautiful, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965, pp. 17-18.

A. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN ART AND PRUDENCE

Art and Prudence are alike in that each is a habit (habitus: ἕξις), "an inner quality or stable and deep-rooted disposition that raises the human subject and his natural powers to a higher degree of vital formation and energy."⁴ Moreover, each is a virtue, i.e., a habit of good operation, "a quality which, triumphing over the original indetermina-
tion of the intellectual faculty, at once sharpening and tempering the point of its activity, draws it, with reference to a definite object, to a certain maximum of perfection and thus of operative efficiency."⁵ Both art and prudence, then, perfect a faculty of the soul, each, however, in its own way and to its own degree.

Art and Prudence are alike in this also, that both perfect the practical intellect. From this it follows that they have an entirely different relationship to the appetite than do the speculative virtues. For, whereas in the case of the speculative virtues, the appetite is necessary only

4 Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, New York, Pantheon Books, 1953, p. 48.

5 Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry, by Joseph W. Evans, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962, p. 12. Cf. also, S. Th., I-II, q. 55, a. 3c.

to initiate the inquiry of truth, it plays an essential role in the operations of the practical intellect.

...truth, in the speculative knowledge, is the adequation or conformity of the intellect with Being, with what things are... [but] truth in the practical knowledge is the adequation or conformity of the intellect with straight appetite, with the appetite as straightly tending to the ends with respect to which the thing that man is about to create will exist.⁶

Another similarity between these two virtues lies in the fact that both are concerned with means and ends in the order of good, although each in its own way.

As directive of means to an end, both art and prudence are infallibly correct.⁷ This infallibility belongs solely to the formal element of the operation, namely, the regulation of the act-to-be-performed, or the work-to-be-made, by the mind. So that, in the carrying out of an operation, the hand, e.g., of the artist may falter and the work thus be spoiled, or the moral action may fail in its performance, but this in no way implies that the virtues of art or prudence were themselves incorrect. Thus, formally, as a regulation flowing from the mind, art and prudence are rooted in certitude, even though materially, contingency and fallibility may enter in.

⁶ Maritain, Creative Intuition..., p. 47. Cf. also, S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 5 ad 3um.

⁷ S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 3, ad lum.

For our last example of the similarity between the two virtues, we shall mention how both are concerned with the application of knowledge in particular cases. As de Bruyne points out, a prudent man represents to himself a determined situation and, reflecting upon principles drawn from the experience of wise men, applies them to an individual, particular case. The artist, likewise, thinking of a good work (a building, for example), represents to himself the operations to be performed in order to bring this particular building into being.⁸

B. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ART AND PRUDENCE

One immediately apparent difference between these two virtues is in the nature of their operations themselves. For pure acting is an immanent activity, beginning and remaining essentially in the subject. For what is essential in regard to this virtue is not so much that man actually performs some exterior activity, as that he wills to do so. Pure making, however, terminates in individual exterior works, and is thus seen to be a transient activity. There

⁸ Edgar De Bruyne, *Etudes D'Esthétique Médiévale*, Brugge (België), De Tempel, 1946, Vol. III, pp. 327-328. Cf. also: "Prudentia magis convenit cum arte quam habitus speculativi, quantum ad subiectum et materiam. Utrumque enim est in opinativa parte animae et circa contingens aliter se habere." *S. Th.*, I-II, q. 57, a. 4 ad 2 um.

is truth in the old adage that our acts remain with us while our works survive us. It is in this regard that St. Thomas writes:

Now making and doing differ, as stated in Metaph. ix, text. 16, in that making is an action, passing into outward matter, e.g., to build, to saw, and so forth; whereas doing is an action abiding in the agent, e.g., to see, to will, and the like. Accordingly prudence stands in the same relation to such like human actions, consisting in the use of powers and habits, as art does to outward makings: since each is the perfect reason about the things with which it is concerned.⁹

All truly human activity is characterized by its reasonableness. It is directed by reason to certain ends. It is in respect to their respective ends that we discover another difference between these two virtues of the practical intellect.

Whereas prudence aims at the general or ultimate end of all human life, and thus is for the good of the person who acts, art tends to the good of some particular work.¹⁰ From this it can be seen that where prudence perfects a man simply, i.e., perfects him as a man, art perfects him but

⁹ S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 4c, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York, Benzinger Brothers, Inc., 1947, 3 vols.

¹⁰ "Bonum artis consideratur non in ipso artifice, sed magis in ipso artificiatio, ...factio enim in exteriorem materiam transiens non est perfectio facientis, sed facti, sicut motus est actus mobilis." S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 5, ad lum.

relatively, i.e., in some particular line: as a musician or a physician, a novelist or a logician.

It is this distinction which sets art up as supreme in its own realm. Directed towards the good of the work being produced, it is, of itself, subject to neither prudence, nor science, nor even to Wisdom. There can be only one question asked of it: Is it being made well?

At the same time it must be admitted that there is no such creature walking the face of the earth as an "artist as such." All artists are men before they become logicians, or musicians, sculptors or novelists. Hence that virtue which directs the man toward his ultimate end, to his final destiny, must be sovereign over every other sphere in which he may be engaged. Thus, "as used by man's free will, art enters a sphere which is not its own, but the sphere of moral standards and values, and in which there is no good against the good of human life."¹¹

This difference in ends leads us to point out the difference of these two virtues in relationship to the will. We pointed out that it was because of this relationship that these two virtues were to be found in the practical rather than in the speculative intellect. Now, because of their

¹¹ Jacques Maritain, Responsibility of the Artist, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960, p. 39.

different relationships to the will, we are able to distinguish them from one another. We find here that art is more intellectual than prudence.

As was said, the good pursued by prudence is the good of the human will itself. It requires as a necessary prerequisite for proper functioning, that the will should be straight and undeviating with respect to its own ends, the ends of human life. The truth striven for by the practical intellect through the dynamism of its virtue of prudence is a truth adequated with a will made straight by the moral virtues. As M. Maritain has written: "Prudence perfects the intellect only presupposing that the will is straight in its own lines as human appetite, that is to say, with regard to its own proper good, which is the good of the whole man."¹²

Art, however, pursues not the good of the human will, but the good of the thing to be made. "Bonum autem artificialium non est bonum appetitus humani sed bonum ipsorum operum artificialium. Et ideo ars non praesupponit appetitum rectum."¹³ The role of the straight appetite in

¹² Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 16.

¹³ S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 4c. Cf. also: "Non enim pertinet ad laudem artificis, inquantum artifex est, qua voluntate opus facit, sed quale sit opus quod facit: sic proprie loquendo ars sit habitus operativus." S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 3c.

respect to the virtue of art, then, is that it works for the good of the work being brought into being by means of rules ferreted out by the intellect. Art, aiming at a good outside the sphere of the properly human good as it directs the making of a work, is thus more closely allied to the speculative than to the moral virtues.¹⁴

While other points of distinction between these two virtues could be examined, I believe that we have dealt sufficiently with the matter to make the point clear. Art is not prudence, nor prudence art. The two realms are clearly two and not one. Against the position of the didactic school it can be said that morality has no right to demand that the good intrinsic to art be subordinated to its own intrinsic end. At the same time, against the position of the extreme proponent's of "art for art's sake" art has no right to aggrandize to itself that which is properly the good of human life. There is merely a passing from one monomania to another in attempt to exempt aesthetic experience from moral controls.

14 "Et tamen in aliquo convenit cum habitibus speculativis, quia etiam ad ipsos habitus speculativos pertinet, qualiter se habeat res quam considerant, non autem qualiter se habeat appetitus humanus ad illam. Dummodo enim verum geometra demonstret, non refert qualiter se habeat secundum appetitivam partem, utrum sit laetus vel iratus, sicut nec in artifice refert." S. Th., I-II, q. 57, a. 3c.

This is the way matters stand when the nature or essence of art is considered in itself, and the nature or essence of prudence is considered in itself. But reality is not so composed of naked essences. In actual existence, essences are embodied in concrete reality. Art, first of all, exists in man, the artist. Thus there is a deep and fast relationship between art and morality, a relationship which is quite necessary. Nor, considering the matter from the point of view of the experiencer of an art-work, can the question of morality be ignored. Finally, especially in the realm of the art of literature, there is a moral dimension which, if overlooked, will undermine any possibility of its possessing beauty, of its being truly art. It now remains to treat of each of these relationships singly.

C. MORALITY AND THE LITERARY ARTIST

In a few terse lines in Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, M. Maritain brings out how the moral life of the artist is of great import to the quality of his work. A vicious moral life can vitiate a work of art. These ideas receive amplification in a later work of his, The Responsibility of the Artist.

In its efficient causality, then, there can be little doubt that the literary work must be moral. For it is through the novelist's own subjectivity, through his own

emotion, that he expresses his poetic intuition. His personal ethical standards, forming what Dr. Paul Marcotte terms the "objective correlatives" which determine the quality of his poetic intuition, will likewise influence the expression of that intuition in his art. Moral vices are a poor filter for the novelist who is to present humanity to mankind. Such vices can only warp a novelist's power of vision of truth and goodness, a distortion which will have automatic repercussions upon his vision and reflection of beauty. As Plotinus has commented:

As it is not for those to speak of the graceful forms of the material world who have never seen them or known their grace--men born blind, let us suppose--in the same way those must be silent upon the beauty of noble conduct and of learning and all that order who have never cared for such things, nor may those tell of the splendour of virtue who have never known the face of justice and of Moral-Wisdom, beyond the beauty of Evening and of Dawn.¹⁵

Perversion or destruction of the ethical life in man will lead to destruction of the human in man. In the long run, art itself would be destroyed in such a one, for once the man is gone, so, too, is his art.

Morality does, then, enter into literature in the order of material or dispositive causality. In Responsibility of the Artist, Maritain called morality's influence

¹⁵ Plotinus, The Enneads, I.6, trans. by Stephen Mackenna, 2nd ed. rev. by B.S. Page, London, Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1930, p. 59.

"extrinsic and indirect and subject to any kind of contingency."¹⁶ But certainly if it is in the order of material causality, this influence must be more than extrinsic. And, indeed, this is just what M. Maritain himself held back in 1935 when he first wrote:

No doubt the formal object of art is not subordinate in itself to the formal object of morality. Nevertheless it is not only extrinsically and for the good of the human being that morality can influence the activity of the artist; it also concerns this activity intrinsically--in the order of material or dispositive causality... because the artist expresses and must express himself in his work according as he is--well then, if he is morally deformed, his art itself, the intellectual virtue which is perhaps what is purest in him, runs the risk of paying the costs of this moral deformity.¹⁷

In these lines M. Maritain expressed negatively what Pope Pius XII later expressed more positively:

The greater the clarity with which art mirrors the infinite, the divine, the greater will be its possibility for success in striving towards its ideal and true, artistic accomplishment. Thus, the more an artist lives religion, the better prepared he will be to speak the language of art, to understand its harmonies, to communicate its emotions.¹⁸

Besides this effect that morality has upon the literary artist's virtue of art, other bonds relating morality to art can also be pointed out.

¹⁶ Maritain, Responsibility..., p. 92.

¹⁷ Maritain, Art and Scholasticism..., p. 146 and 148, italics mine.

¹⁸ Pope Pius XII, The Function of Art, NCWC, Washington, [1952], p. 4.

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The exercise of his virtue in the creative process is for the artist a deliberate human act, not a reflex or mechanical act, nor yet the act of some Muse, demon or demiurge. It proceeds from man's free will under the direction of his intellect. As such it has a moral value and is to be judged by morality.

It might be objected that, taken simply in itself, the incarnation of beauty in a material medium is an indifferent affair--neither good nor bad. In a similar way it might be said that the pursuit of knowledge is neither good nor evil in itself. Yet in practice there can be no such thing as an indifferent act. Every deliberate human act is a choice, and every deliberate choice implies the virtue of prudence. For each such choice is going to be directed either away from or towards the destiny for which man has been created. Even knowledge can be used shamefully or pursued for some shameful reason, thus sending the knower to perdition. The same is true of art.

The position of the followers of the "Art for Art's Sake" school was examined in the last chapter. The choice made by these artists has been to make of art a God. To substitute artistic activity for the pursuit of the one, true final end. Art became their idol-god; their activity was centered on the production of "beauty for its own sake". This is quite simply, quite tragically wrong. The artist

may not damn his soul to hell even in order to give to the world of art its greatest masterpiece. The destiny of man is infinitely far superior to the destiny of art. As Mr. Victor Hamm writes:

The proponents of the cult of hedonism, "Art for art's sake", attempt to make of literature pure expression of beauty, but beauty so conceived is an unreality, and actually they are attempting rather to make a religion of beauty than to purify art, and so fall into a sort of didacticism which is not only empty but often immoral.¹⁹

It is not difficult to become worked up when considering the value and beauty of art to such a point that one's view is narrowed to that beauty. But such moments of exaltation must yield to the more fully human panorama. For man does not live moment by moment as though each of his moments were self-contained, affecting and affected by none other. Every truly human activity has both its progenitors and its progeny. And because man lives in society, his human acts are influential not only upon his own, but upon others's lives as well.

For this reason any theory of Art for Art's Sake which enjoins upon its practitioners the carefree abandon to the sensations of the moment for the moment's sake is fatal. Contrary to anything Pater might think, life is not a series

¹⁹ Victor Hamm, The Pattern of Criticism, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1951, p. 89.

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of disconnected happenings. That man would not be acting morally, i.e., humanly, who proceeded under the assumption that art is so good that "we need not trouble ourselves about any other of its possible consequences."²⁰ Art is good, it possesses its own intrinsic form of goodness, but this does not justify a theory which, therefore, puts it beyond the pale of morality. The bringing of the beautiful into the world is a magnificent thing, but we cannot forget that:

Beauty is added to the other transcendentals as a supererogatory grace, which is like the flowering of being. Our whole life is enhanced by it, yet life would be possible without it. If nature were not beautiful, but only true and good, the world would be a less happy place, but it would remain substantially what it is.²¹

There is yet another way in which art may come under the purview of prudence: this is in relation to the circumstances surrounding the creative process. Should the novelist, in the creation of his literary world, find himself endangered in any way by the work he is creating, he must put down his pen until such time as he feels spiritually fortified to continue his work. No man, for any reason at all, may enter into what constitutes for him a non-necessary proximate occasion of sin. In this respect, all the principles

20 Clive Bell, Art, New York, Capricorn Books, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958, p. 84.

21 Gilson, The Arts of the Beautiful, p. 154.

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governing man in relation to occasions of sin should be applied. For once again, while the expression and development during expression of this virtue of art is of great value to the artist, as well as to the world, it is but a relative perfection. Literature is not essential to salvation, morality is. Santayana put it this way:

Every impulse, not the aesthetic mood alone, is innocent and irresponsible in its origin and precious in its own eyes; but every impulse and indulgence, including the aesthetic, is evil in its effects, when it renders harmony impossible in the general tenor of life, or produces in the soul division and ruin.²²

The artist, then, who in any way would damn himself for the sake of his art, would have effected a terrifying reversal of values. Speaking truly, such a state of affairs would turn out to be a degradation rather than an exaltation of art. For what greater judgment could be levelled against art than that it corrupted its source?

From the point of view of the efficient cause there is yet one more point that should be considered. The seventeenth century poet, John Donne, wrote that "no man is an island." No man lives alone; what is done by one man will influence his fellows. This is certainly true of the artist in regard to his creations. And today this is true of no

²² George Santayana, The Philosophy of George Santayana, Paul A. Schilpp (ed.), New York, Tudor Publishing Co., 1951, pp. 20-21.

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artist more than of the novelist. As a human being, in the human condition, the artist must think of his work's influence upon his fellow man.

This is, of course, one of the thorniest of the facets to be mentioned. On the one hand, it must be recognized that few novelists write for children, nor do we have least right to demand or even expect that they should. Moreover, it is a solid moral principle that an action, indifferent or good in itself, may be posited for a sufficient reason, so long as the one positing it does not intend doing harm by it.

On the other hand, there are certain situations, certain activities, certain slices of life which cannot be described, particularly cannot be described minutely, without causing a large number of people to consent to the evil portrayed, or to the evil feelings aroused by such portrayals. For the novelist to produce such a work may be for him no sin at all; for him to publish it could be a great sin. A.C. Bradley once maintained that no subject, noble or ignoble was exempted from the poet's repertoire. Whether the poet should later publish his work was, however, another question--a question no longer of art, but of ethics. Bradley cited the case of Rossetti who, according to Tennyson, once suppressed one of his finest poems because he considered it too fleshy. "One may regret Rossetti's judgment", wrote

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Bradley, "and at the same time respect his scrupulousness; but in any case he judged in his capacity of citizen, not in his capacity of artist."²³

The novelist, we said, is not writing for children. He may assume that his audience is mature and may thus use mature standards to measure his work. He need not restrict himself to the nice and innocuous. In fact, by its dealing maturely with mature situations, the novel may be of great indirect boon in helping to mature and strengthen the character of its reader, by exposing him to life-realities which test and try it.

D. MORALITY AND THE LITERARY READER

We have seen how the novel is related to morality in respect to the activity of the writer, its efficient cause. We must now briefly deal with the reader of novels. The activity involved in experiencing a novel is also a human act, hence it, too, has a moral dimension.

If we have insisted that art is of great value to the artist, we must likewise insist that the product of the artist's hands is important to the experiencer as well. The most immediate value that comes to mind, of course, is the

23 A.C. Bradley, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake", in The Oxford Lectures on Poetry, London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1963, p. 5.

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relaxing power that art has over man. But this is by no means its sole value. Indeed, it is one of the least. Fine art is able to entrance, enrichen, perfect and uplift the soul of its experiencer. Beyond that, it is able to stir up a reader's thoughts, providing him with new insights into life and approaches to the complex problems of his time. A reader of such a novel as Alan Paton's Cry, the Beloved Country is able to grasp in a way that no news report, sermon or lecture could ever present to him, the horror of racial discrimination based upon color. Novelists such as Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Flannery O'Connor or Morris West (at least in The Devil's Advocate) are able to present a reader with a challenge to investigate the meanings of human life in a large variety of circumstances. In none of this do I say that the novel is an instrument of didacticism. I do say that, if it is well written, a good novel will be of value to a reader in these ways--hence well worth his while.

Should it happen, however, that in his enjoyment of the novel, a reader discovers himself moved in a way which he recognizes to be disturbing to his moral life, he then owes it to himself to lay the book aside, or, at least, to breeze through the offending passage. It is no more permitted for him to permit sentiments of hatred, pride, despair or sensuality to be aroused in his heart by deliberately

continuing the reading of such passages, than it is for the artist to knowingly and willingly put such passages in his work. Even were the work itself one of the outstanding classical pieces of world literature, acclaimed by critics of several centuries and countries, it could not be read if it proximately threatened the moral life. Should such dangerous emotions be aroused, the work, great though it may be, must be laid aside until the reader is spiritually fortified enough to take it up unharmed. Here, again, the virtue of prudence, with all its concomitant acts must come into play to lead the reader towards his final end. Santayana, having praised the worth and dignity of art, along with its power to enchant a man, yet reminds his reader that there are limits to what can be experienced:

To be bewitched is not to be saved, though all the magicians and aesthetes in the world should pronounce it to be so... The man who would emancipate art from discipline and reason is trying to elude rationality, not merely in art, but in all existence.²⁴

E. MORALITY AND THE NOVEL ITSELF

There can be no doubt concerning the separation of the two habits of art and prudence. The point of the Neoscholastics that the two are dissociated one from the other

²⁴ G. Santayana, Reason in Art, New York, Collier Books, 1962, p. 116.

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in the pursuance of their respective ends, seems clear. The fact that art goes for the work, while prudence goes for the worker, makes it quite clear also that in any individual case where the worker may suffer by following the end presented him by art, he must bow to prudence, for the worker is of inestimably more value than his work.

This is all very good, and one brought up in a scholastic tradition should not find too much difficulty nodding assent to all that has been said. Yet it remains true that many still have an uneasy feeling that something, somewhere is wrong when all this reasoning is applied to the literary art.

Even in the case of the representation in statuary or painting of the nude there is little trouble in giving assent to the scholastic theorists. So long as the nude is presented well, skillfully, even realistically, the beauty of the statue or painting will shine through and be the cause of great aesthetic delight to all but the most blue-nosed of Puritains. The artist, working under the dynamism of his virtue of art, "recta ratio factibilium", will be a good artist if he produces a beautiful nude; and while the moralist may have some judgment to make about it, that judgment will remain exterior to it: it will not be passed off as an artistic judgment.

But in this thesis it is the novel that is being considered, not statuary, or painting or music. It is the "recta ratio factibilium" in regard to literature that is in question. And it is my contention that there is very little of the "right reason concerning the making of things" when the novel presents characters purporting to be real men and women, acting like animals; or when it goes into a scientific detailing of situation or activities which are not absolutely necessary for the furtherance of plot or characterization.

In the other arts it might be argued that as the whole being of the artist: imagination, memory, sensation, emotion, all guided by the intellect, presses an idea upon matter, something amoral is produced. Even here, however, distinctions must enter in. M. de Wulf, for instance, admits that when the subject of a painting is a human act, then the impression of morality produced by such a work must enter into the artistic evaluation of it. This accounts, he reasons, for the fact that even unbelievers are struck with admiration for a painting such as Rubens' Descent from the Cross. The noble human being's death adds to the impact of the art. In this line, it could be said that the nude in art will certainly become immoral and thus inartistic when portrayed in a lewd way. The effect would be such as to

make impossible an aesthetic state of disinterested contemplation--hence inartistic.²⁵

Much the same reasoning must be applied to the novelist. The very substance of his art is human nature and human activity. The artistic norm used to judge whether the artist has succeeded or not in his portrayal must be whether or not he has rightly portrayed human beings engaged in human affairs; or whether or not he has treated of human activities in a way which maintains sufficient aesthetic distance. In other words, in the artistic judgment of the novel there necessarily exists a moral dimension.

Dr. Paul Marcotte would seem to deny this. There is no moral judgment which can be intrinsic to the novel itself, he claims. Why? Because, he argues

A piece of literature is a thing, a fine artifact; it is not a human act. A piece of literature is the result of a human act. Consequently, a piece of literature, viewed as literature, cannot be either morally good or morally evil... a piece of literature viewed apart from its maker and apart from the experiencer has nothing to do with morality! Morality is the relation of human acts to their norm. A piece of literature is not a human act. Therefore, a piece of literature, so viewed, has nothing to do with morality. It is neither morally good nor morally evil.²⁶

²⁵ Maurice de Wulf, Art et Beauté, 2nd ed., Louvain, Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, E. Warny, imprimeur-éditeur, 1943, p. 120.

²⁶ Paul Marcotte, The God Within, p. 104.

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The spirit of the above quotation seems very close to something T.S. Eliot once wrote: "the greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards, though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards."²⁷ Quite clear; quite clean-cut; quite distinct. But also quite missing the mark.

Why does it miss the mark? Simply because the literary artist is dealing with humanity as the very stuff of his art. Strictly speaking, of course, it must be admitted that only real men are moral or immoral. This we concede to Dr. Marcotte. However, human life is of the essence in the novel. For that reason we cannot avoid speaking analogically when we make judgments concerning the artist's characters. This explains why those who insist upon pure Art for Art's sake can never understand questions about morality in the novel. They fail to realize the full meaning of the analogy which must be drawn between the world of the novel and the real world.

If humanity is not portrayed humanly, therefore morally, the artist has failed as an artist. In the case of the novel, "literary standards" must have this dimension about them. The novel is not concerned merely with the

27 T.S. Eliot, Essays Ancient and Modern, quoted by V. Hamm, op. cit., p. 69.

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"how" of saying something (so important an element in lyric poetry); it is inextricably related to the "what" which is said. The very idea of literature must include reference to content. Morality enters into the very object of this art form and can no longer be judged as extrinsic to it. All too briefly, in a note attached to Art and Scholasticism, M. Maritain hints at this very truth without, unless I have misread him, admitting its consequences:

Unlike other literary forms, the novel has as its object not a thing-to-be-made that would possess its own beauty in the world of artifacts, and of which human life furnishes only the elements, but human life itself to be moulded in fiction, as providential Art moulds human life in reality. The object it must create is humanity itself--humanity to be formed, scrutinized, and governed like a world.²⁸

These words are strong ones and demand more attention than heretofore received by scholastic philosophers writing on art and morality. If the author is to his novel as God is to His creation, then there can be no separating the field of making from the field of acting in judgment of the final result: the artistic judgment here is at one and the same time a moral judgment, for the object of the judgment is the same: human nature "to be formed, scrutinized, and governed like a world." It must have been this realization that prompted Dr. Moulton to write:

²⁸ Maritain, Art and Scholasticism..., p. 221, n. 163.

It is impossible to construct a story touching things human which does not involve underlying conceptions of life. Story by the manner of its execution connects with art; by its matter with philosophy. The concrete life, resolved into its abstract principles must always yield thought that is philosophical.²⁹

The full, complete and critical evaluation of a novel, then, comprehends a moral dimension. There is no sense in asking, "Is this novel artistically well done?" and then, in a mental sommersault, asking, "Is it morally well done?" The first question supposes and demands an answer to the second. Morality is of the essence of human life, it enters vitally into every moment of decision in man's life. The novel is precisely a representation of these decisive moments in man's life. William Lynch, having dealt extensively with the nature of the "analogical imagination" in regard to art, comments that art itself

is in its best forms full of decision and judgments and is prophetic. But the decisions are not extrinsic, the judgments are not conceptual; the decisions involve the very substance of the poetry, and the judgments involve a logic of sensibility and awareness which is deeper than the conceptual. Thus understood, it surely makes much sense that poetry, if it is to reverberate in the soul and is to reach that order of subjectivity toward which modern poets lean so strongly, must pass through the ethical if it is to achieve the thing called beauty.³⁰

²⁹ Richard G. Moulton, The Modern Study of Literature, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1928, p. 336.

³⁰ William F. Lynch, Christ and Apollo, Toronto, New American Library of Canada, Ltd., 1963, pp. 191-192.

F. ARISTOTLE'S VIEW

The viewpoint which I have just described is, I feel, the proper, middle way to deal with the question of the relation of art and morality. It is, moreover, in accord with Aristotelian thought on the matter.

Aristotle broke with the tradition embodied in Plato by demanding that art first of all give emotional delight and pleasure rather than be enlisted as a teacher. In the Politics, he admitted that poetry could be of use in the instruction of the young and, furthermore, that a certain censorship for youth should be exercised. But he did not want art to be judged solely on the grounds that it might harm the immature. He made the distinction between the didactic function and aesthetic pleasure. Literature, for the adult, is not supposed to teach, but to delight. If it teaches, it is but per accidens.

The Poetics, in which Aristotle is seen as the literary critic, sets up no ethical norms or demands for art. In fact, in Chapter XXV, 3, he explicitly states that "the standard of correctness in poetry and politics is not the same, any more than in poetry and any other art."³¹

31 Aristotle, Poetics, xxv, 3.

The name of Euripides crops up frequently in the Poetics, and almost always in a censorial way. But Aristotle does not pass judgment on the dramatist for the possible immoral influences he may have had on others. Nor when he praises a tragedian does he concern himself with the purity of morality or religious significance.

All of this being admitted, it must still be underlined that morality could never be a matter of indifference to the author of the Nichomachean Ethics, either in an author or in an author's work. Morality being part of the very texture of human life, and literature being an imitation of that life, there can be no doubt that, for Aristotle, true aesthetic pleasure could not be divorced from moral appreciation. The author may not be didactic in intention, but if his products are not suffused with a high ideal of life and a correct interpretation of human destiny, he cannot expect to induce aesthetic enjoyment.

Moral depravity certainly may be exhibited in a drama, but only on condition that the plot truly demands it. To introduce vice merely for effect is strictly taboo--as is evidenced by the condemnation of Menelaus in the Orestes:

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The element of the irrational, and similarly, depravity of character, are justly censured when there is no inner necessity for introducing them. Such is the irrational element in the introduction of Aegeus by Euripides and the badness of Menelaus in the Orestes.³²

Butcher, while feeling that Aristotle is too rigorous on the ethical side, does him justice in bringing out how necessary to the Stagirite's thought this portrayal of the nobility of man in art is. Thus, while admitting that such terms as "σπουδαίους" and "φαύλους" can sometimes be emptied of moral meaning--as some aristotelian aestheticians would like to do--he makes it clear that whenever Aristotle used the terms for man as such, they could only have the meaning of morally good or morally bad. In confirmation of what he says, he cites the Nichomachean Ethics, ix, 4: 1166a 12; x, 6. 1176b 25. It is quite clear that Aristotle intended to distinguish the higher from the lower types of art upon the grounds of the moral characters represented by them. The grandeur demanded by Aristotle of the characters of tragic poetry is without any doubt a moral grandeur.³³

Aristotle, then, has separated art from morality. And in this we are in perfect agreement with him. But he

32 Ibid., xxv, 19.

33 S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 4th ed., Dover Publications, St. Martin's Press, 1951, pp. 233-234.

continues to view the aesthetic representation of character under ethical lights. And, while he does not allow the moral intention of the poet, or the moral effects upon the reader, to take the place of artistic ends, he nonetheless demands that human characters be truly human, i.e., moral.

G. SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

We turn, finally, to a more positive approach to morality and literature. In this last section a few guidelines will be advanced to assist in the judgment of a novel from the viewpoint just expressed.³⁴

(a) Judge method, not subject matter. This guideline is the most general of all, and is actually specified by the other three. In the first chapter it was stated that a judgment as to the artistic merits of a novel must be based upon the method used by the author rather than upon the subject matter the author chooses to treat. In other words, a novelist should not be condemned because he presents a picture of fallen man. Man is, in fact, a fallen creature. Rape, murder, envy, pride, lust, wrath: these form part of the very sinew of the novel. These are the data which an author meets in his experience as he sees men making

³⁴ The inspiration for these guidelines comes from Harold C. Gardiner, Norms for the Novel, New York, The America Press, 1953.

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decisions; it is these data to which he reacts in a significant way and expresses in his work. There is no justification in declaring inartistic a work which presents immorality. Nothing whatever in human experience should be barred from the novelist's consideration, for nothing human is foreign to the novel. The question, however, is how is this human activity presented? The author's selection, idealization and interpretation of the data of life are what fall under the scrutiny and evaluation of the judge.

To appreciate more fully the limits that must be observed in this affair, it is useful to consider the different ways of treating human activity in literature. Such a consideration will enable one to judge better whether or not a certain work falls under the censure of this (as well as the next two) criterion.

Generally speaking, there are three ways in which obscene material can be treated: as bawdy, scatological, or erotic.

The first division is amply illustrated by such works as the Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Tom Jones, and many passages in Shakespeare. In such instances many of the coarsest aspect of human sexuality are presented with such down-to-earth ribaldry that the reader is moved, not to lust but to laughter and innocent delight. Farces and comedy, as well as many forms of light satire revel in this form of

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treatment. The bawdy treatment brings out many of the humorous aspects of human life without implying that such a view is the total consideration of human life; much less does it imply the futility of human purposes or endeavors.

The scatological presentation is of a different type. Many aspects of human life are presented as disgusting and repellant in this treatment. At the same time, the treatment is such as to exorcise one's feelings of horror or disgust at many of the more excremental features of our being. The mordant satire of Swift, and many passages of Joyce's Ulysses, demonstrate this style.

What should be noted here, is that while both types deal with very delicate subject matters, the style in which they present their matter is not such as to arouse prurient interest nor, by its overall treatment, to invite or excite venereal pleasure by an appeal to the sensitive appetite alone. Their approach is novel, yet it is evident that there is a healthy attitude suffusing their view of human nature. The authors may be bitingly critical of man's mores, but they are obviously on the side of mankind. Their presentation can be a therapeutic aid, by helping to purge the emotions in a decent and non-injurious manner.

The third classification, however, demands closer attention. For the erotic is not so evidently a cathartic agent as are the bawdy or scatological; nor is it so patently

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a "human" view of mankind. Erotic realism is of such a more complex nature that it might all too easily place the sexual aspect of human experience in an injurious manner. A distinction is in place here between that form of literature which treats of erotica in what can be called a "spiritual-sensitive" manner, and that which treats of it in a purely "carnal-sensitive" manner. The former corresponds to our prior description of literary "realism", whereas the latter fits into the category of "naturalism".

In this sense, it can be said that erotica can be found throughout the whole of literary history. In its finest sense, Eros has always implied the spiritual-intellectual love which also contains an aspect of Venus, the carnal-sexual element. C.S. Lewis has shown how, while it contains the dangers of the carnal-sexual, the love of Eros has, in its deepest essence, always been the expression of a spiritual desire: the desire of one human person for another human person.³⁵ This is the type of erotic that novelists such as Greene and Faulkner, or poets such as John Donne or Yeats have given to the world.

The treatment of erotica in the second sense has also been on the literary scene for many centuries. It is to be found in the Hermaphroditus of the Italian Renaissance

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves, London, Bles, 1960, 159 p.

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writer, Beccadelli, as well as in other lesser works. But it is doubtful that any era has produced so much of it as has the era fathered by Naturalism.

Wherein lies the difference? What rule of thumb can be applied to distinguish the "spiritual-sensitive" erotica from the "carnal-sensitive" type? The answer is not easy. Yet aesthetic principles can be found to assist in finding it. The criterion is to be found in the style of the author: a style which either will or will not provide the absolutely necessary element of aesthetic distance. As was declared in this first guideline, the point turns, not upon the subject matter itself, as upon the treatment of the subject matter. The very same situations, the very same details, the very same experiences can be described in either of the two manners. The whole gamut of human life is open to the novelist. The question is, how close can he come to it in his treatment?

No better way to bring out this difference can be found than by presenting an illustration which demonstrates how two styles, despite superficial similarities, can be antithetical in character; how one can determine its product as a work of "art", while another can be judged only as a

piece of trash.³⁶ The extracts used here are from a recent best-seller, The Carpet-Baggers (1961) and William Faulkner's Sanctuary. What is to be noticed is how in the first extract all detail, all choice of adjectives, of "picture-words", is turned directly and immediately towards the physical-carnal act itself. In the second extract Faulkner's metaphors, his phrasings, his images keep the meaning open to more than the physical act itself, more than the moment itself and suggest by their own complexity, the very complexity of the situation described.

a) From The Carpetbaggers,

"You cock-teaser!" he yelled, swinging his free hand. The blow caught her on the side of her face, knocking her back against the bed. She stared up at him with frightened eyes.

"You bitch!" he said, tearing his belt from his trousers. He raised her arms over her head and lashed her wrists to the iron bedpost. He picked up the half-empty bottle from the bed where it had fallen. "Still thirsty?"

She shook her head.

He tilted the bottle and began to laugh as the orange soda ran down over her. "Drink!" he said. "Drink all you can!"

The bottle flew from his hands as she kicked it away. He caught at her legs and pinned them against the bed with his knees. He laughed wildly. "Now, my darling little sister, there'll be no more games."

³⁶ I have hesitated at approaching the matter in this way. But reflection convinces me that all too often discussions of the type we are engaging in have remained in the abstract. What sounds convincing in the abstract, however, appears quite different when concrete cases are mentioned. This approach has also been followed by Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, London, Chatto and Windus, 1957, pp. 210-223.

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"No more games," she gasped, staring up into his eyes. His face came down and his mouth covered hers. She felt herself begin to relax.

Then the fierce, sharp pain penetrated her body. She screamed. His hand came down heavily over her mouth, as again and again the pain ripped through her.

And all that was left was the sound of her voice, screaming silently in the confines of her throat, and the ugliness and horror of his body on her own.³⁷

b) From Sanctuary:

He waggled the pistol slightly and put it back in his coat, then he walked towards her. Moving, he made no sound at all; the released door yawned and clapped against the jamb, but it made no sound either; it was as though sound and silence had become inverted. She could hear silence in a thick rustling as he moved towards her through it, thrusting it aside, and she began to say Something is going to happen to me. She was saying it to the old man with the yellow clots for eyes. "Something is happening to me! she screamed at him, sitting on his chair in the sunlight, his hands crossed on the top of his stick. 'I told you it was!' she screamed, voiding the words like hot silent bubbles into the bright silence about them until he turned his head and the two phlegm-clots above her where she lay tossing and thrashing on the rough, sunny boards. 'I told you! I told you all the time!'.³⁸

Obviously, of these two selections, the last one alone exhibits the skill of the truly creative imagination. The first has committed the aesthetic blunder of confusing act with fact. The author has been dominated by his

³⁷ Harold Robbins, The Carpetbaggers, Montreal, Pocket Books of Canada, Ltd., 22nd printing, 1964, p. 235.

³⁸ William Faulkner, Sanctuary, New York, Modern Library, 1937, p. 82.

material, rendered incapable of contributing little positive to it. Faulkner, on the other hand, has treated the same event in a creative manner. As Hoggart, commenting upon another passage of the same novel, writes:

The Faulkner passage has had to discover this texture so as to convey the sense of a larger pattern. He sees beyond the rape. The horror is real, and the more real because there is, implicit in the passage, a sense of a saner world outside, of sunlight and sanity. That sense gives a moral perspective to the whole passage. We see the horror as it is, without intermediate moral comment, but we see it for what it is only because of this larger sense, embracing and surrounding it all the time, of an order without.³⁹

The next two judgments will further specify what enters into the determination of an author's style.

c) Judge the attitude towards the subject matter. An author's attitude towards vice and morality will necessarily manifest itself to the reader, although such manifestation will be implicit (unless, of course, we deal with an obviously didactic work). A good novel can be written about vicious persons, so long as vices are recognized as vices and not as objects for admiration and emulation, and so long as in some way, no matter how obliquely, the essential nobility of man is indicated in the depths to which the characters sink.

³⁹ Hoggart, op. cit., p. 220.

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The judgment here is an aesthetic one because the very essence of serious literature is conflict, tension between recognized values of right and wrong. If this pervading attitude or sense of values is entirely lacking, there can be no such thing as conflict--hence no serious novel.

In this, it is not necessary that the characters of the novel themselves recognize clearly that sin is the evil it is. While extreme cases are rare, moral blindness can overcome men and women, and it is legitimate for the novelist to portray such persons. Certainly many of the characters in Hemingway's fiction are of this type--the animal values of masculine strength and sexual aggression are strong. While it is not true to say it is always the case, it should be recognized that frequently there is little evidence of moral fiber in his characters. It is this very fact that opened Hemingway to the criticism such as that made by M.F. Maloney:

Hemingway's naturalism is always promising to break through its isolation and to link up with the world of spirit. But the promise is never quite achieved. It is this failure which will go heaviest against him in the final summing up... The obliqueness of his characters derives from his refusal or inability...to give evidence to that potential in man which either raises him above or sinks him below the rest of the animal world.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ M.F. Moloney, "Ernest Hemmingway: The Missing Third Dimension", in Harold Gardiner (ed.), Fifty Years of The American Novel, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, p. 196.

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If his work is to possess significance, a novelist must at least see in sin an element of confusion and disorder, of disturbance and imbalance. The attitude engendered by his novel must not lend credence to the belief of Joad in the Grapes of Wrath: "There ain't no such thing as sin or virtue. There's just the stuff folks do." Sin cannot be allowed to be considered as normal in the sense of a value norm, even though in a particular time in a particular society, it may be so as a statistical norm. The competent writer, the artist, without breaking his artistic tone, can show that sin is a violation of the human order, of the conscience of mankind.

Such a judgment may be explicit, though it need not be so. Evelyn Waugh, in Brideshead Revisited gives us an example of how a character recognizes her moral predicament when he has Julia Flyte say to her lover:

I've always been bad. Probably I shall be bad again, punished again. But the worse I am the more I need God. I can't shut myself out from his mercy. That is what it would mean, starting a life with you, without Him.⁴¹

Frequently, however, it would destroy the plausibility of a character if such an explicit moral judgment were made in a novel. Actually the judgment must shine throughout the whole

⁴¹ Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1946, p. 340.

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story by implication. Arthur Little says of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, which is certainly a narration of immoral experience, that "[it] is so far from being immoral that [the poem] leaves the mind morally strengthened. It does so, not by homiletic argument or indictment of the vice described, but by faithful presentation of all the relevant facts."⁴²

The author's novel, then, while dealing with sin and vice must in some way leave us with the impression that something is wrong about evil. Unless this bare minimum impression is allowed the novelist commits literary suicide. The philosophy of life expressed by the whole tone of the work must be one in which man is presented as being able to choose between what is really right and what is really wrong, not one in which he is but the pawn of environment and heredity.

And, in fact, the philosophy of life according to which the naturalistic writers create denies the very realism it professes to present. In refusing to open themselves to the whole man, rational as well as animal, they have missed the whole point of man. Cut off from super-sensible values, the works produced cannot give a full picture of human conflicts, human loves and hatreds, human destinies. The result

⁴² Arthur Little, The Nature of Art, p. 243.

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is a picture, not of "human actions", but of "animal antics". And while it may be entertaining for awhile, like the frolickings of monkeys in a zoo, or while it may sell because it scintillates, like the atmosphere of a burlesque hall, it cannot be really engaging as art. As Guérard writes:

You can extract a pseudo-artistic effect from the erotic. There is a market for Amatoria, Curiosa, and the like; a dash of that element is a good selling point. Art for Art's Sake, when invoked in such a case, is but a diaphanous veil for the suggestive, the abnormal, and the obscene.⁴³

Quite simply, it fails as art. One cannot really care about characters in such circumstances. The very point that makes good literature interesting, namely, that it deals with human beings acting humanly, is lacking. In speaking more generally of the duty of an artist to produce a "whole" work, E.I. Watkin says:

...the artist should not shew us sufficient of the distinctive form of an object to bring its image before us, yet insufficient to display its inner nature... Suppose, for instance that an artist displays sufficient of the form of a chair to make it plain that it is a chair which he is depicting, but with such distortion of outline that the chair is obviously one in which it would be impossible to sit. To our bewilderment and annoyance, the artist at once presents and denies the form of the chair. For a chair is essentially a seat, it belongs to its distinctive form to be a seat, and he is attempting to represent a chair which is not a seat. He is thus guilty of an aesthetic self-contradiction, and in so far the work of art fails.⁴⁴

⁴³ Guérard, Art for Art's Sake, p. 223-224.

⁴⁴ E.I. Watkin, A Philosophy of Form, 2nd imp. London, Sheed and Ward, 1938, pp. 382-383.

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The same thing must be said of the novelist in respect to his presentation of humanity. Eric Gill once wrote that the maker of pins who omits their points cannot really be a maker of pins, for the point about pins is their points. Likewise, the depicter of human conflicts who omits the human is not a depicter of human conflicts because he no longer depicts a conflict. And the novelist, as E.M. Forster has written is a depicter of human conflicts:

The intensely, stifflingly human quality of the novel is sogged with humanity; there is no escaping the uplift or the downpour, nor can they be kept out of criticism. We may hate humanity, but if it is exorcised or even purified the novel wilts, little is left but a bunch of words.⁴⁵

The naturalist, considering such elements of humanity as conscience, morality or ethics, supernatural standards, etc., as chimeras or at least as unimportant, will present us with characters made after the image and likeness of their creator.

If the purpose of the novelist is the believable creation of human behavior in a recognizable context, then like it or not, the novelist is writing about a creature with a supernatural destiny and involved in a whole world of values. It is inconceivable that a novel which presents

⁴⁵ E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, Penguin Books, Aylesbury, Bucks, 1963, p. 31.

the immoral as beautiful and the moral as ugly could be artistically successful, even though it may become a huge commercial success.

c) Judge the treatment of detail. This third principle stresses that if a novel is to be an artistic success it must avoid overdoing detail. This is quite clear when we consider photographic accounts of the details of life. A novel is not meant to be a tape-recorded slice of life; when it becomes one, it fails as art. P.F. Speckbaugh says of such works that they fail against the artistic canon of representation.

The naturalist considers his work on a par with such objective reports as court records or confessor's manuals. Thus he claims that he has a right to present things just as they are, slices of life, without any responsibility for the right or wrong use of the facts. The lie is given to his argument the moment he lays claim to the title of "artist". For an artist is not a court reporter, he does not have as his function the repertorial task of communicating factual truth. To be an artist, to be an imitator of life in the artistic sense, the raw materials of life must be eaten, digested and selectively assimilated. The very nature of art is that it is not natural, but artificial. The crude ore discovered in the universe of experience must be processed in the creative imagination of the artist and smelted

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down for his art. The trouble with the naturalistic theory is that it makes of novelists little more than cataloguers. The novelist, Herbert Gold, has characterized them well:

They observe. They make the discovery of the trivial--it is most important; in fact, even the important is merely trivial; the trivial tells us all we need know. They soothe us with sociology. They lay us to rest with details of a tailoring and brand names. Their predominate cast of mind is a sentimental passivity toward the dead weight of facts, which are seen quantitatively, and the contents of a closet are given the same loyal inventory as the two-headed contents of a bed.⁴⁶

This same judgment is to be made upon the intemperate use of such realistic facets of life as the vulgar and sordid: in speech or in action. No doubt the use of the common language is of tremendous value in a novel for giving the sense of immediacy and presence. Yet, certain words, certain expressions of common-day language can be overdone. Used to excess, they can destroy the whole effect they are intended to create. They no longer possess their legitimate power to awaken, to shock. Thus they become meaningless, hence of little artistic value: indeed, an artistic blunder which can completely turn the serious reader from an author's works. Time's reviewer of one of Henry Miller's latest works, Sexus, puts his finger directly upon the sore spot in all such authors:

⁴⁶ Herbert Gold, "The Mystery of Personality in the Novel," in The Living Novel: a Symposium, New York, Collier Books, 1962, pp. 101-102.

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Giving him all his due and more, it is clear now that Miller sacrificed himself to the dirty-word revolution. He learned to be an effective pornographer, and for a while this obscured the fact that he had never learned to be a competent novelist or philosopher. Readers do owe Miller a debt; in part because of his writings, it is now possible for an author to ignore sex. What readers do not owe him is a reading. That would be asking too much. While he may no longer be unprintable, he is largely unreadable.⁴⁷

The same is to be said of repeated detailed descriptions of sordid events. While he owes it to his art to make his characters live, to present convincing portrayals of their behavior, at the same time his descriptions must not be such as to become a definite source of temptation for a well-balanced reader. No doubt this is a ticklish point. Temperaments differ; what to one man is nourishment may be for another a poison.

It may be necessary to describe a drunken orgy once in order to give an insight into the person described. But once done is enough. A repeated recital of characters beating each other bloody like animals in a field, or passing from bed to bed unthinkingly like animals in rut, can no doubt titillate one's sense-passions for a while, and maybe have even a permanent appeal for moral degenerates, but to the normal man they can only become boring, monotonous

⁴⁷ "The High Price of Zap", Time, June 25, 1965, p. 76.

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--in a word, inartistic. In the same review of Sexus, Time again makes this point.

He (the hero) meets Mara, the beautiful dance-hall girl. Zap. He weaves home to his wife. Zap. Back to Mara. Zap, zap, zap. An old girl friend and her roommate. Certainly. Then a girl in a restaurant. And so it zaps, until the reader wishes that Writer Miller or Hero Miller had spent an occasional evening playing bridge.⁴⁸

Even in cases where description to detail is necessary, discretion must be the order of the day. There are certain events which cannot be described--or which cannot be described in a certain way--without arousing an unhealthy disgust or prurient interest. In erotic matter, for example, it can and does happen that description is so vividly detailed that readers are led away from the characters and plot to the activity itself. Attention is drawn away from two characters who desire one another to the very desire itself and its consequences. Thus depersonalized, the desire can easily arouse its likeness in the reader. He may be excited to the point of desiring some form of sexual activity himself, or, and this is just as probable, the written account can become a substitute sexual activity for the reader. It has then succeeded in arousing the reader vicariously and inflamed his desire for more voyeurism of this sort. This

48 Ibid.

is the usual effect of such writing as characterizes a book like The Carpet-baggers.

Such an effect, because it does in fact detour the reader from the novel itself is unaesthetic, bad art. Jean Genet never had a second thought about including the erotic in his works--he went so far as to make an out and out pornographic movie. Strangely enough, he seems to recognize that for this reason, to the extent to which it is present, his works cannot be considered as great art. Thus, for example, he declared in an interview for Playboy

I now think that if my books arouse readers sexually they are badly written, because the poetic emotion should be so strong that no reader is moved sexually. In so far as my books are pornographic, I don't reject them, I simply say that I lacked grace.⁴⁹

Genet here renders explicit something that George Santayana put so well:

...if ever the charm of the beautiful presentation sinks so low, or the vividness of the represented evil rises so high, that the balance is in favour of pain, at that very moment the whole object becomes horrible, passes out of the domain of art... as an aesthetic value it is destroyed... The more terrible the experience described, the more powerful must the art be which is to transform it... any violent passion, any overwhelming pain, if it is not to make us think of a demonstration in pathology, and bring back the smell of ether, must be rendered

⁴⁹ Quoted by George P. Elliott, "Against Pornography", Harper's Magazine, March, 1965, Vol. 230, # 1378, p. 54.

in the most exalted style. Meter rhyme, melody, the widest flights of allusions, the highest reaches of fancy, are there in place. For these enable the mind swept by the deepest cosmic harmonies, to endure and absorb the shrill notes which would be intolerable in a poorer setting.⁵⁰

And that precisely is what we have said that Faulkner has succeeded in doing in his description of the rape scene.

E.I. Watkin writes of how the expression of the significant form of an experience in a work of art is able to stir up a reader's memory, or bring about an anticipation of "imaginative living" of that experience. This effect of art is the production of a "secondary vital union". What is important to stress is that this secondary vital union is not an aesthetic or artistic effect; and its experience must not be attributed to an appreciation of the work of art as such. This vicarious experience

...is a mere concomitant without aesthetic quality. Moreover, when it supervenes it is liable to obstruct or wholly inhibit the aesthetic intuition of form which provoked it. To take one example: as the primary vital union of sex excludes, so long as it occupies the field of consciousness, the aesthetic intuition of human beauty, ...so a secondary vital union of sex imaginatively experienced excludes in so far as it takes possession of the field of consciousness the aesthetic intuition of artistic beauty of the significant form expressed in the work of art.⁵¹

⁵⁰ George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1955, p. 137 and 39-140.

⁵¹ E.I. Watkin, A Philosophy of Form, pp. 341-342. Cf. also de Wulf, Art et Beauté, p. 235.

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This is the charge that we level against a work of art which in the interest of presenting "slices of life" has not taken into account the moral dimension of the slice which it cuts, or the method it uses in cutting it.

d) Judge the whole work, not just sections. The final guideline concerns more a critic than an author, and resembles the second principle. The judgment of a book should be made on the whole work, not merely on one or two passages. The old scholastic principle, "bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quocumque defectu", can be seriously misapplied when it comes to literature. A flaw in a statue by Michaelangelo might mar its perfection; the statue can still remain an excellent work of art. We must balance the offending passages against the whole tone of the book. This is not to say that a predominately moral tone is any justification for an overly-sordid portrayal of vice. The author has done wrong in including such passages, and in future works should be more circumspect in his elaboration. It does mean that our final judgment as to the artistic worth of the book is going to be qualitative, not quantitative: it is the whole attitude toward evil that bears the brunt of our evaluation.

For example, among the works of serious modern literature, there are few which could be considered more shocking than Baudelaire's collection of poems, Les Fleurs

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du Mal. The poet was, in fact, brought to trial and convicted on a charge of obscenity for the work (in 1857). Today, over 100 years later, serious critics absolve the poet, seeing in his work, not a glorification of unmentionable sexual behavior, but, rather, just the opposite, a loathing of the sins into which fallen man can fall still deeper. The truth of the matter is that Baudelaire believed in Satan and sin; he was sincere in his faith that progress in human affairs could come only when evil in the world was diminished. Enid Starkie overemphasizes the point, yet there is some truth in what he says:

Yet he [Baudelaire] was the only writer in the middle of the nineteenth century who was preoccupied with spiritual values. He considered creation as a spiritual activity and believed that inspiration came from contact with ultimate reality.⁵²

It was this fact which caused Baudelaire to say in his own defence: "The book must be judged as a whole, and then follows a terrifying morality."⁵³ The same can be said of many of our modern novelists.

H. CONCLUSION

In any essential description, literature is to be considered as the expression of personality in language,

52 Enid Starkie, From Gautier to Eliot..., p. 35.

53 Quoted by Enid Starkie, Baudelaire, p. 320, and cited by Stolnitz, Aesthetics and Philosophy..., p. 347.

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an expression which takes as its subject matter the whole wide field of human behavior.

As an art, literature does not have for its function the teaching of morality. In this, some of the greatest personages in both art and philosophy have been wrong. A great novel may, indeed, teach a lesson. Perhaps, even, the author intended this very thing. But, and this is the point the neo-scholastics have tried to make so clear, when the novelist's method itself is so chosen as to serve the ends of prudence over those of art, then the novelist has failed as an artist. To the degree that he becomes engrossed in evangelizing and propagandizing, to that degree his artistic method suffers. If the novel finally produced does turn out to be a masterpiece, it will be because in the writing of it the author turned away from moralizing and concentrated on the art of the thing.

On the other hand, the populizers of the cult of Art for Art's sake are equally wrong in their attempt to make of literature a pure expression of beauty. Such a thing is impossible, and in their vain attempt to bring it within the realms of possibility, they end up by making a religion of beauty and thus, paradoxically enough, begin preaching their own peculiar brand of didacticism.

While to be counted as true art, the novel must eschew didacticism, yet morality is of importance to the

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novelist, novel and reader. Writing and enjoying literature are human acts and, as such, they fall under the aegis of morality. Moreover, since the virtue of art is in man, the moral life of the artist will have a profound effect upon the practical working of that virtue in him. Finally, in its content, literature's portrayal of human life must hew to moral norms if it is to be true to itself as art. Only in being a true literary realist will the novelist become a true artist.

Literary realism is a good thing. It gives us a broad view of life which does not overdramatize either the ugliness or the raptures of daily existence. As such it is a rebellion against an idealistic romanticism which was overly concerned with the life and times of the upper crust of society, the courtliness of medieval ages, or the "grandeur that was Rome". Naturalism, however, in its descent to the common and in its portrayal of the humble as well as the noble (a fine thing in itself), succumbed to the material it dealt with. The method of art suffered in the too frequently brutally frank pictures of ugliness, filth and horror which it found. Guérard castigates even those "moralistic" naturalists who feel they must detail even the most unnatural sins in order to enveigh against them:

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It is not necessary to splash lustily in the mud and bespatter all bystanders, in order to bring out the useful truth that the mud is there, that it stinks, and that it stains.⁵⁴

But this is precisely what the method of naturalism leads to.

To imitate life, however, literature does not have to be naturalistic. True literary realism will be an imitation of life, but it will be a true imitation of life: one proceeding from a virtue whose object is "recta ratio factibilium": the right way of making things. Such realism need not be a total rebellion against what is good and true in idealism. Edith Wharton makes this point clear in an interview recorded by Camille McCole:

Realism, then, does not depend upon subject matter alone; it does not demand an indiscriminate use of language; it cannot be secured by mere intensity: it should be just as attuned to the universal as any other literary method; it is not guaranteed by details, but by the "verbal mood" which details can be made to produce. It should deal worthily, not only with the actual but with what is actually worth dealing with; and it should not be confused with high seasoning.⁵⁵

True literary realism will present man as he is--a marvellous combination of animal-spirit. In such a presentation of humanity, sin will, of course, be presented, for men frequently sin and frequently sin shamefully. An author

⁵⁴ Guerard, op. cit., p. 192.

⁵⁵ Camille McCole, "Realism and Paprika", in Commonweal, Nov. 26, 1937, p. 30.

who would attempt to make angels of human beings would be as incapable of producing a truly great novel as is the naturalist: and for the same reason: he would not be telling the truth about his subject matter. The Polyanna-type novel, the never-end-without-a-happy-settlement novel cannot be regarded as really great literature. Coueism, whether in life or in art, is nothing but a hollow optimism, and of as much harm in its own way as the overly frank portrayal of immorality in a naturalistic novel or in real life.

One does not need to be a moralist or a Christian to recognize that there is sin in life. For that reason it must enter into the novel. But neither does one have to be a moralist or a Christian to recognize that in the normal man, there is a struggle involved in sin: a wrestling with weighty issues, the outcome of which is of great moment; a struggle accompanied by all the groans and agonies of a man divided against himself as he feels himself torn in two directions. This very struggle gives evidence to the existence in man of something other than mere animality, of a reality which transcends that of this world. And that, too, a novel must portray. For only then will a reader be compelled to feel for its characters; only then can they matter to him; only then can they be viewed as human persons engaged in human conflicts. And precisely that is what literature promises, and what, when it is Art, it delivers.

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