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Knowledge Truth

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Literature

KNOWLEDGE TRUTH

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LITERATURE

Ph.D. Thesis

Bryan Patrick George Godden

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy at the University of Kent at Canterbury

December 1981

21878

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B. P. G. Godden

PREFATORY ABSTRACT

Philosophers have largely dismissed literature as imaginary and fictitious, and necessarily unconnected with real-life experience; it could not communicate truth or be a source of knowledge because, according to traditional definitions, such could only be acquired from the factual world. This thesis considers this ancient problem in the light of recent epistemology.

Part 1 discusses traditional notions of knowledge and truth and the definition of true, justified belief. Classical essentialism, as Wittgenstein shows, must be rejected. There is more to knowledge than factual information, the understanding of which involves concepts learned from heterogeneous examples embodied in language, and these may be imaginary, but applicable to life.

Part 2 underlines the importance of language in the understanding of emotions, which cannot be private. Literature can enrich emotion concepts and verbalize emotional experiences. Truth and sincerity of emotions and the inchoate verbal relationship are analysed.

Part 3 discusses the form/content dichotomy. In ordinary language this involves paraphrase, but in creative literature, where form and content amalgamate, this is illogical. "Pure" language is ruled out, the figurative is defended and can be true and meaningful.

Part 4 focuses upon literature and truth, including the role of truth in critical theories. Literature does not involve a "different truth" from that of life. The same complex criteria apply in both dimensions. The relationship between truth and beauty is investigated and found to be indivisible; moral content cannot be excluded from literary evaluation; aestheticism is rejected. The problem of universals in literature is considered. Essentialism falsely depicts literature as a vehicle of information, but it is demonstrated that general truths cannot be abstracted from particular literary form in informational terms, though form is of crucial importance in conveying conceptual knowledge.

Literary examples illustrate their contribution to conceptual development and enrichment. Critical reasoning is discussed in an appendix.

KNOWLEDGE

TRUTH AND LITERATURE

To praise a novelist for truth-telling is to imply a cognitive view of literature. Now the contrast between emotive and cognitive views is an old and complex issue of literary theory: all the cards are on the side of the emotive view (it recognises what literature is, and how it differs from other things), but cognitive theories obstinately refuse to die: we continue to praise the insight, wisdom and truth of great writers. If we really grew convinced that works of literature contain only pseudo-statements, that they convey experiences but not knowledge, then we might be in a position to construct an impregnable theory of poetics, but we would cease to read - and the writers would cease to write.

Laurence Lerner: The Truth-tellers.

If, therefore, we find unwelcome the conclusion that poetry is something optional, decorative, well enough when we have no serious business in hand but not to be mentioned in the same breath as money, power and scientific discovery - unwelcome and, on purely intuitive grounds, absurd - we must take up the argument again and see if a patient analysis can give us grounds for thinking that truth is applicable to poetic discourse and for putting that value upon it which belongs to those types of discourse in which we make plain to each other and to ourselves the character of human life and of its predicaments.

James Cameron: The Night Battle.

Observing mankind with the eyes of a sensitive friend or with the severe frown of a judge, sympathizing with it, laughing at it, delighting in its courage, condemning its futilities - literature arises above life and, together with science, lights the way of the human race in its progress towards its goals, towards the development of its better nature.

Maxim Gorky: Literature and Life.

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INTRODUCTION

Philosophy, it might be said somewhat loosely, endeavours to interpret the world, a quest for knowledge by way of meaning and truth. When put like this it can be seen to share certain features with literary criticism (and by this I do not mean simply the academic discipline, but our everyday experience and appreciation of literature), whose task is to interpret the different worlds of literature, and reveal aesthetic meaning and truth. But here we have inevitably two dimensions; the internal world of the works of literature and the real, external world. Now, whatever view the extreme autonomist might hold, he must surely concede that there are certain links between the two. The language itself is a fundamental one; if we were not familiar in some sense with the past usage of the majority of the words employed, we would not be able to conceive of the imaginary literary world. Similarly it only makes sense to talk of a literary world in so far as it is an intelligible analogue of the real world. But what is the extent of the relationship? What aspects of meaning and truth in the one will be meaningful and true in the other?

We are all familiar with contraries like fact and fiction, literature and life, science and poetry, reason and emotion, knowledge and imagination. But these traditional dichotomies are surely too vulgar; they simplify a complex relationship, emphasizing and exaggerating differences and distinctions that obscure the resemblances and connections. Monolithic theories too, like Mimesis and Autonomy, are similarly stultifying; the former puts so much emphasis on the familiar truths and values of the real world that the unique formal qualities of the artistic creation seem irrelevant or accidental, while the latter, in overzealously defending the unique formal qualities of the artistic creation, holds that the familiar truths and values of the real world are completely irrelevant. The one exterminates literary value by reducing its

content to the level of miscellaneous general knowledge, factual information and moral instruction, while the other, in its defence of literary form, puts an embargo on all epistemic considerations external to the work itself. A less rigid approach is demanded in order to view the relationship more clearly. By avoiding these extremities it is, I believe, possible to hold that literature is both instructive and informative, while at the same time it remains a creative art and not another thing. Such a view need not necessarily reduce literature to mere factual information or moral instruction; on the contrary, the following thesis seeks to demonstrate that literature can be an important source of knowledge, and this, rather than diminishing its value as creative, original art, enhances and elevates it.

A fair question at this point would be: What do we mean by "Literature"? It is after all a familiar term, and it is used in many different areas. Traditionally, such a question would be answered in terms of a definition. One would expect any dissertation on Literature and Knowledge to stipulate definitions of the basic terms employed therein. But, as the argument in the following pages tries to show, definitions that lay down hard general rules, distort meaning and legislate against truth. They are tyrants who emasculate and incarcerate our concepts, cutting them off from the common logic of ordinary language usage.

Therefore, without proffering a definition, I would like to explain that by Literature I mean creative literature - novels, poems, plays, stories; the work of the literary artist. These are many and varied - "Gulliver's Travels", "Middlemarch", "Ulysses", "The Wasteland", Shakespeare's sonnets, "The Rape of the Lock", "Anthony and Cleopatra", "St. Joan", "Waiting for Godot", "The Odour of Chrysanthemums", "Heart of Darkness", "A Christmas Carol".

At this point, inveigled by our craving for generality, we might invoke traditional criteria with the observation: "These works are all

fictitious; they deal with imaginary situations." Such statements are often applicable to literary works, but they are sometimes inaccurate, indeed sometimes downright false. Such distinctions would invalidate what one might want to call literary biographies, such as Boswell's Life of Johnson or Edmund Gosse's autobiography, Father and Son. These works are certainly imaginative, one might even say creative, but they are certainly not fictitious, and neither are the worlds they represent imaginary. Similarly, Truman Capote's In Cold Blood could not be described as a work of fiction, but neither is it a piece of competent journalism. His own term, "factual novel", seems most appropriate here, which demonstrates the flexibility and open-endedness of such concepts. The war poems of Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg are not factual dispatches or pieces of war propaganda, but neither is it appropriate to call them works of fiction. Poems like "Exposure" and "Dead Man's Dump" do not deal with purely imaginary situations, but they are undoubtedly imaginative, and examples of creative literature.

There are obviously many more heterogeneous criteria that one could investigate where the concept of literature is concerned, and one can see how such criteria provide guidelines but not rigid boundaries. What is imaginative and creative, for instance, cannot be confined to Literature. Such terms might well be appropriately applied to the works of Marx and Einstein. But neither Das Kapital nor "The Theory of Relativity" are works of literature.

The concept of literature is many-faceted, and not amenable to general rules. It is what Wittgenstein would call a "family resemblance" concept and is best explained by reference to particular examples. There are examples in the following pages, and I hope that these will be illuminating. But I think we can assume that most people know what is

meant by the term "literature" as used in common parlance, when applied to novels, plays, poems and stories. One thing is certain; without such knowledge, any definition, if one were foolish enough to stipulate one, would be of no use at all.

The familiar preoccupation with definitions has long been a feature of arguments concerning the value of literature, especially in regard to truth and knowledge. Philosophers, by restricting the concept of truth to matters of empirical fact, can demonstrate with indisputable logic that works of creative literature, involving fictitious characters in imaginary worlds, are quite false. When this is coupled with the traditional idea that knowledge is simply the possession of verified facts or "true justified belief", then the conclusion is evident. We surely, on these premises, cannot learn anything about the real world from works of literature. It is true that we might acquire some factual information from literary works, but this is merely incidental. We do not need literary works as such to discover and accumulate facts. Thus it would appear, according to these traditional notions, that serious claims about the medium of literature as a source of knowledge can be dismissed. But this argument, although internally sound, is founded on spurious premises. For as we shall see, there is far more to truth and knowledge than factual information.

The restricting of such concepts by philosophers is paralleled by those literary artists who, in order to demonstrate the epistemic qualities of literature, extend the limits of literary concepts beyond the bounds of ordinary language usage and everyday logic. Thus we find Shelley in his "Defence of Poetry",¹ extending the concept of poetry to cover most subjects of human discourse, including politics and law.

1 See Shelley: "A Defence of Poetry" from English Critical Essays, ed. Edmund Jones.

Similarly, Emile Zola, in an age of empirical observation, argued that the creation of literature is a science, and the novelist is as much a scientist as the chemist.¹

The triumph of scientific achievement is undeniable, but that achievement, in both form and content, has had its effects on disciplines outside the scope of scientific investigation; from David Hume to A. J. Ayer, experimental science has been revered as the supreme paragon of truth and knowledge.

The traditional definition of truth is a correspondence between word and world, or ideas and impressions. But if correspondence is the essence of truth, what is the essence of correspondence? For language is flexible, and there is no systematic correspondence criterion that will cover all truths, for the term is used differently in different circumstances, and this includes areas of observable fact. To apply it rigidly would exclude much that is undeniably true, while at the same time a more flexible employment may admit falsehood. Other general criteria for the concept of truth are similarly procrustean, and chaotic in their ramifications, for the concept of truth is many-faceted and internally complex, and cannot be reduced to necessary and sufficient conditions for its employment, no more than knowledge can be explained in terms of "true justified belief" or factual information. For we can still know what is true and why, in particular situations, without reference to a rigid general formula.

Gilbert Ryle drew attention to the importance of "knowledge how" as well as "knowledge that", and the later Wittgenstein described the inordinate complexity involved in "knowing how" to follow the rules that govern the use of language. This is the knowledge that provides us with our concepts, the basic components of understanding. This knowledge is

1 See Emile Zola: The Experimental Novel.

not propositional, and cannot be reduced, like a general recipe, to the language of factual information. Yet it is a fundamental knowledge upon which the acquisition and possession of facts depends. It is the knowledge of understanding and interpretation, an active and critical knowledge. It is the knowledge which all rational beings in some measure must possess.

It is through our concepts that our perceptions are made intelligible to us. It is through our concepts that we interpret and order our experience of the world. Thus if our conceptual apparatus undergoes a change, then our picture of the world changes too. Wittgenstein and more recent philosophers have shown that what we perceive in the world is dependent on what we know, and that our ability to recognise aspects of our experience as one thing rather than another, relates to the prior possession of certain concepts. Therefore, as our concepts change, and become extended and enriched, then our experience of the world changes too, deepening our understanding and widening our knowledge.

Conceptual enhancement and the knowledge it affords is not simply confined to factual accumulation, though this undoubtedly plays an integral part in forming and informing our concepts. Wittgenstein has indicated that philosophical analysis, thought and reflection, can increase our conceptual knowledge, enabling us to reorganize and re-interpret old information and see familiar facts in a new and different light. In this regard he emphasized the explanatory value of concrete examples, and these may be fictitious and imaginary, but nonetheless epistemically informative. John Wisdom, too, has shown that our conceptual knowledge may be extended without any new facts being learned. This can occur by way of analogies, paradoxes and aspects of art and literature, any of which may give us a picture of the world which clarifies our own picture, revealing and illuminating aspects of our experience, providing us with knowledge and avenues to further knowledge.

But if literature can extend our knowledge by clarifying our experiences of the world, to what extent can it deepen our understanding of human nature? Indeed, can it be a source of self-knowledge? This introduces questions concerning our subjective experiences, emotions, feelings and psychological states. Now few people can doubt that emotion plays a significant role in literature, but whether we can learn anything about our feelings or the feelings of others by frequenting literary works is not a simple matter. It is, therefore, necessary to approach the problems by way of an analysis of our everyday understanding of emotion-concepts.

The traditional, or Cartesian account, holds that emotions are private, and known only to the individual, but if this were true, then all self-knowledge would stem from within, and we could not learn anything about ourselves from other people, neither could we observe other people's feelings. This would preclude literature, and anything other than introspection, as quite useless as a source of self-knowledge.

Wittgenstein demonstrated that the idea that sensations and emotions were inner experiences known only to the individual is an illogical one, for it presupposes a simple name/object relationship between the emotion-term and the inner feeling, and a private system of understanding. His arguments show that meaning is governed by social usage, and cannot be explained in terms of names, because applying a name presupposes understanding a language, and this involves rules of correctness and incorrectness, which are governed, necessarily, by objective criteria. It follows from this that emotion-concepts cannot be privately understood, and that there is a conceptual relationship between the inner feeling and the outer expression. If this were not the case we would not understand other people's emotions, and as a consequence, we would not acquire the conceptual apparatus to understand our own inner states. Thus a behavioural gesture like a smile is not merely caused by an inner feeling of happiness;

smiling is part of the feeling of happiness. Though people may smile when they are not happy, they are still exploiting the logical link between inner feeling and outer expression. Emotional pretence and deception presuppose a mastery of concepts which only a language-user can possess. This emphasizes the importance of behavioural criteria, though these cannot be divorced from the circumstances in which the behaviour is manifest. For emotions are logically linked to their objects in the environment, e.g. we cannot normally feel sad without having something to feel sad about. Thus a full understanding and a correct interpretation of the emotions of our fellow human beings must include a reference to the object of that emotion. It is by way of detailed examples delineated in literature of circumstances and situations, where emotions are dramatized and enacted, that we can arrive at a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between inner feelings, outer expressions and the objects of the emotions described. This extends our knowledge of emotion-concepts and, as a consequence, our knowledge of human behaviour.

But if we understand our emotions in terms of the language which embodies the concepts, does it make sense to talk of inchoate emotions? Or does language give us the ability to feel emotions? We surely witness inchoate emotions in animals and pre-linguistic children in terms of their behaviour. That they feel certain primitive emotions is a necessary consequence of the logical connection between inner feeling and outer expression. But certain sophisticated emotions are only available to language-users, e.g. hope, remorse etc. Without language, emotions are primitive and blind. One cannot attribute emotional understanding and self-awareness to non-language-users.

Human emotion, therefore, necessarily involves a verbal dimension and is inextricably related to thought. We are thus able to reflect upon our emotions and give verbal expression to them. We can evince our

emotions in simple, verbal terms, or describe the experience imaginatively. The characterizing of one's emotional experiences in terms of language involves both self-awareness and considerable verbal competence. This may well demand the use of metaphor and poetic imagery, and here the literary artist with a keen, sympathetic sensibility and creative use of language, can reveal aspects of our emotional life and heighten our understanding of ourselves and others.

Sometimes we recognise how we feel by way of other people's verbal expressions. Such redescriptions can reveal aspects of the emotional life hitherto unobserved. We thus find words and phrases in literature which bring our feelings sharply into focus. The meaning and truth that we apprehend in this way convey knowledge not only of ourselves and our feelings, but also, by way of the logical connection between emotion and its object, our conceptual understanding of our experience in the world is extended.

Does all this indicate that we can be wrong about our feelings? Can we falsify them by way of misrepresentation? This would appear to be the case in so far as language has to be learned, and when describing experiences, even emotional ones, distortion or even misinterpretation are possible. Thus children make mistakes when learning the language of feeling, and these are corrected by outsiders with reference to behaviour. The importance of behavioural criteria cannot be over-emphasized because of their primitive natural status, and the fundamental role they play in the learning of emotion-concepts. The crucial problem is: can we be sincere in our expression of emotion, yet wrong in our interpretation? This surely does occur, and sometimes the discrepancy is manifest in our behaviour. Doubt about one's feelings is surely not necessarily senseless, because people are often confused about their own feelings. Indeed, if the descriptions of our emotions were necessarily true and incorrigible, then we could never be wrong about our feelings and, therefore, uncertainty

and difficulty of verbal expression would not arise, and behaviour would be irrelevant. The strong thesis of incorrigibility leans too heavily towards the Cartesian privacy position. Ordinary language locutions instruct us on this, for people say such things as: "I thought I was in love with him but it was merely infatuation." In this regard outsiders, by way of our behaviour, might be more in touch with our true feelings, while at the same time not entirely clear about their own. As Jesus observed, a man can often be sensible of the mote in someone else's eye without being aware of the beam in his own. However, the agent cannot be disregarded, and we cannot tell someone categorically what he feels, though we can offer alternative descriptions. We must thus lean towards incorrigibility to the extent that the final arbiter as to the nature of the feeling is the agent himself. But this presupposes his complete sincerity, which of course cannot be presupposed; indeed it can only be determined by way of behavioural criteria, which involve an external assessment. This is a subtle position, and an attempt has been made in the following pages to steer between two extremes.

For it does appear that in so far as we can be wrong about our feelings, we can apprehend revelatory truths about them by discovering language that more accurately and lucidly expresses them. Thus in literature we may find described situations which indicate to us that we have misinterpreted our feelings, sometimes to the point of complete falsification, and consequent self-deception.

It is evident that some people can express their feelings more lucidly than others. Some of us are emotionally inarticulate. We are governed, in our expressions, by the language that is readily available to us, and we are not all poets. Clichés and familiar idioms can give a false picture of sincere emotion, by over-dramatizing or sentimentalizing it. The imaginative expression and description of emotion in literature can emancipate us from verbal conventions which can trivialize deep and sincere feelings.

All this serves to indicate how the connection between inner feeling and outer expression is made profoundly more complex by the verbal dimension. It will be seen that the connection between the inchoate feeling and the verbal expression cannot be accounted for in terms of a crude, contingent/analytical dichotomy. For if the same feeling can be clarified by way of different words and yet in some sense still remain the same feeling, then the relationship cannot be tightly analytical, though it would be absurd to conclude that it was therefore contingent. This is one important area which exposes the inadequacy of this traditional distinction, and indicates that the terms are not mutually exclusive.

It is by way of language and the conceptual components embodied therein that we are able to understand meaning and apprehend truth, the integral constituents of human knowledge. Language is also the material of which works of literature are composed. It is thus necessary in any inquiry into literature as a source of knowledge to consider the problem of form and content, both in regard to the language of literature and ordinary language usage. The problem connects necessarily to questions concerning meaning and truth and, therefore, to epistemic considerations. The enquiry itself is after all concerned with literary forms of expression and the nature of their epistemic content.

In ordinary, everyday language, we are able to divide form from content because the meanings of terms are not rigid or systematically tied to particular situations in the world. What terms mean depends upon the way we use them. Thus because language has such exquisite scope and flexibility, there can be many different ways of communicating the same information. At the same time, similar terms used in different contexts may have completely different meanings. Thus we have the concepts of synonymy and paraphrase, and in many situations, words and phrases may be exchanged for others without significant loss of meaning. In our daily

lives, we are constantly rephrasing and restating linguistic formulations by way of our own peculiar vocabulary and phraseology, in order to interpret or communicate aspects of meaning and truth.

That form may be separated from content is not only true as a matter of fact but also logically necessary as a function of language. Nevertheless there are writers who deny this, and argue that form can never be separated from content, and that a change of words indicates, necessarily, a change of meaning. But such conclusions are reached by analysing words and phrases in isolation and ignoring the context in which, and the purpose for which, such terms are employed. The argument is made plausible by exploiting general differences of meaning between terms, which in particular situations can be quite irrelevant. It involves bringing the technique of the literary critic to bear upon the language of everyday information, and to this extent involves a category mistake. This not only misunderstands the nature of meaning and language, but denegrates the work of the literary artist by putting it on the same level as ordinary everyday information.

It is because we are able to make the separation in ordinary language that we have the problem of form and content where the language of literature is concerned. Here we cannot deny that in some respect the division is made, for whenever we make comments on the style of Jane Austen or speak of the events narrated in Tom Jones we are alluding, respectively, to form in the one and content in the other. This does not mean, however, that we can dichotomize form from content in literature, as we can in the language of ordinary information. We cannot paraphrase a Shakespearian sonnet without loss of meaning; indeed, to paraphrase is to destroy, where literature is concerned. This is necessarily the case and in the nature of literature. For the medium of literature is language itself, and all we have are the words on the page, chosen and arranged by the literary artist. On the other hand linguistic terms, when used in the

real world, relate to a social situation; their meanings derive from such; they grow out of and fit into a state-of-affairs (though, it is important to add, not in any rigid or systematic sense). Thus there are independent criteria relating to context and purpose, for determining what linguistic terms mean and in what form they may be paraphrased. Such independent situations do not obtain in regard to literature; the language originates from the real world, but it is being used in a rather different way. The literary artist can exploit multifarious layers of meaning, connotations and ambiguities; use metaphors, analogies and other figurative devices, in order to develop symbols and motifs and complex patterns of significance.

Thus we are in no position to paraphrase; we have only, as James Cameron says, "these words in this order." Nevertheless there are writers who believe that poetry has to be paraphrased in order to be fully understood, and to reveal the cognitive, or rational meaning. One has to eliminate the "poetic devices" and "emotive overtones" and translate into "pure" or "literal" language. This is the converse of the previous argument, for rather than treating ordinary language like the language of literature, it treats literature like the language of information. It thus denegrates the work of the literary artist by reducing it to nothing more than a vehicle of information. This stems from the traditional idea, made explicit in "The Tractatus", that there is a "pure, natural language" that corresponds immediately with the world and represents things "as they are". Thus the language of poetry has to be translated into the language of science in order to reveal the "pure essences" of meaning and truth. But of course, as the later Wittgenstein demonstrates, such a language does not exist, and to search for "pure essences" of meaning and truth is fundamentally to misunderstand the nature and function of language itself.

In considering literature and truth, the role of the metaphor is of central concern, for the idea of pure essences of meaning has served to

promote the status of literal terminology as the medium of clarity and precision, while simultaneously denegrating figurative devices as false or meaningless. Such is the inheritance of a name/object account of meaning.

This presupposes that one can strictly differentiate between the literal and the metaphorical by way of some general formula, and this is not the case, for although in many particular cases we can clearly distinguish between the metaphorical and the literal, there are uses of language which exemplify the artificiality of an absolute dichotomy. Similarly, the belief that the metaphor is meaningless because it is illogical or nonsensical to call a man a pig when he is clearly not a pig in the literal sense, is an unequivocal denial of the facts of common language usage and a perverse misunderstanding of the nature of metaphor. It demands that metaphors must be paraphrased before they can be clearly understood. Although some complex figurative devices may need elucidating, paraphrase into the literal medium is not a necessary condition for understanding a metaphor. Indeed, figurative devices themselves can be used to clarify various uses of language, including the literal. Thus, in so far as metaphorical statements may be meaningful, then they can also be either true or false, and as there is no general recipe for truth, then whether a metaphor is true or false will depend upon the circumstances in which it is employed. Indeed, the same conditions apply to the metaphorical statement as to the literal statement for determining its truth. This involves grasping the statement as a metaphorical one, for this is an important area of meaning in all uses of language, and is not confined to literature. Thus paraphrasing into literal terminology is not a necessary condition for determining the truth of metaphors. Indeed, figurative devices can often reveal meaning and truth in our experience that is beyond the scope of literal language. It is such usage by the literary artist that provides us with knowledge of ourselves and the world about us.

The problem of truth in literature has been around since the days of classical Greece. The monolithic theories of truth and knowledge have been paralleled by a similar approach to the nature of Art and Literature. The general theories as to what constitutes literature have given the question of truth prominent consideration. At one extreme, truth figures as an integral constituent of literature, while at the other there has been an endeavour to exclude it as irrelevant in the analysis and evaluation of literature.

Mimesis, in holding that literature was an imitation of life, put great emphasis on truth in the form of some kind of correspondence relationship between the literary work and the real world, but this emphasis seemed to represent literature as a vehicle of factual information or moral propaganda, and underrate its creative and imaginative dimensions. This later gave rise to the autonomy theory, which endeavoured to preclude any comparison of literature with the real world, and discount truth-to-life completely. But even the extreme autonomist has to recognise the existence of internal truths within the imaginary literary world, e.g. the fictitious character Adam Bede is a carpenter; this of course connects with real-world truths, e.g. carpenters work with wood. The autonomist, however, argues that all questions of truth are matters of internal consistency, and settled by way of a coherence criterion. This however is not satisfactory, because our understanding of internal consistency, with reference to characters and events, cannot be divorced from our experience in the real world. It is evident that autonomy cannot exclude truth in our consideration of literature; it simply employs a different criterion. But in maintaining that the truth of the real world is completely irrelevant, it divides the concept of truth into two halves, one for literature and one for life, which is not only contrary to the facts of our experience, it is also logically indefensible. Similarly, putting the emphasis on beauty as opposed to

truth simply turns Mimesis on its head, and is equally legislative in its ramifications, conducing to formalism and Art for Art's sake.

The expressive theory also puts great emphasis on truth, though again, the criterion is different, for when literature is defined as an expression of emotion, the central concern is the sincerity of the literary artist. This of course introduces the problem of poetic sincerity vis-a-vis the imaginative expression of emotion. It will be seen that in so far as one cannot divorce emotions from their objects, other truth criteria are necessarily involved.

Although different theories of literature employ different criteria for assessing truth and its importance, the problem of truth and the relationship of literature to life persists. We shall examine the notion of "a different sort of truth", i.e. poetic or artistic truth, as opposed to empirical or scientific truth, for according to this, it follows that we are punning when we allude to truth in literature as opposed to truth in life. Surely, if what we apprehend in works of literature is true, then it must be subject to the same family of criteria that we use when employing the concept of truth in life. If this is not so, then the term "truth" is inappropriate. But in this regard, poets and critics have been seduced by the arguments of philosophers and scientists about the nature of truth and certain knowledge. The notion of a different kind of truth, rather than tackling the problem, is an implicit acceptance of the traditional paradigms. This widens the dichotomy between literature and life, and reinforces the arguments of positivist philosophers, who claim that literature affords no knowledge of the real world. The latter are sometimes aestheticians themselves, who appreciate that literature is valuable, but that its value is "purely aesthetic", and that no real-life comparison can be made. These aesthetes attempt to drive a wedge between the moral content of a work of literature and its aesthetic form, but to do so is fundamentally to misunderstand the

nature of literature. For the interpenetration of form and content is such that the two are mutually dependent, for much of the beauty of a work of literature may inhere in its moral content, though this evaluation cannot be divorced from its embodiment of truth, which itself is directly related to the work's aesthetic form. It makes no sense to judge works of literature "purely aesthetically", for this is to deny the human content and ignore its moral and emotional significance. This makes literature ethereal and mystical, and devoid of life-values, which not only devalues it aesthetically, but also legislates against open-minded criticism and misunderstands the nature of aesthetic evaluation.

The analysis of literature is a complex and many-faceted process, which cannot be reduced to a formula or a set of general criteria, from which value can be deduced. Thus to exclude truth, moral or otherwise, as aesthetically irrelevant, is a prescriptive formula, for it stipulates a general principle.

It is this craving for generality which has engendered chaos and confusion in theories of literature and literary criticism. This is the inheritance of traditional theories of truth and knowledge. The epistemological problem of universals and the search for definitions has left its mark upon the literature/knowledge debate, for some philosophers and critics have argued that literature may be a source of knowledge in terms of universals or general truths about the world and life. But this cannot be supported by a traditional essentialist approach, because it entails that knowledge is necessarily general, and that all particulars ultimately rest on general principles. This applies to the definitions of concepts and matters of empirical fact. If this were true then all learning would be an inductive, systematic process. This not only presents a reductive account of knowledge; it also reduces literature to the status of a vehicle for carrying general truths (proverbs and the like), and definitions. If these are defined in terms of essentialist

criteria, namely by what is common to each and every instance, then logically we would value in literature the common, the general and the uniform, as opposed to those particular aspects which make each work of literature original and unique; indeed, those features which make literature the creative and imaginative art that it is. The literary form, therefore, would be seen as accidental, an embellishment of information.

The following thesis is an endeavour to demonstrate that we do discover truth in literature, but not in terms of generalisations that can be extracted from the work, for this would render redundant the creative form. What we learn in terms of universals from literature cannot be divorced from the particular form by way of which the universal is exemplified. In this way we may learn more about jealousy, remorse, grief etc. Similarly, general truths about the world or human nature may be endowed with profound significance by way of particular dramatization and realization. Indeed, some commonly held general beliefs about human beings and their moral and emotional behaviour may be demonstrated to be false in certain particular situations, which underlines the inordinate complexity of universals, especially in relation to human behaviour. These particular situations are created and presented by the literary artist in a variety of different ways, thus exemplifying the universal by way of concrete particular cases, each of which is original and unique. Thus different works may embody similar universals and general truths, but each in its own original form will reveal different aspects of meaning and different facets of truth. This provides us with knowledge by extending and enriching our conceptual apparatus, which not only brings meaning to our experience; it also provides an avenue for the apprehension of further truth in the real world.

PART ONE

KNOWLEDGE

We saw how what had always seemed to be knowledge may suddenly seem not to be knowledge, and then to be knowledge, but not quite what we had thought it, and then again to be not knowledge, and then to be knowledge different from what it has once seemed to be and yet neither more nor less. So what has seemed for years like sanity may in a moment look like madness, what has seemed to be love may suddenly seem to have been not really love, and then again to have been love.

John Wisdom: Philosophy and Psychoanalysis.

When Socrates asks the question 'What is knowledge?' he does not even regard it as a preliminary answer to enumerate cases of knowledge.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Blue and Brown Books.

Knowledge . . . is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view, it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives, each single theory, each fairytale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness.

Paul Feyerabend: Against Method.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

The question "What is Knowledge?" is as old as philosophy itself. The traditional definition of knowledge is "true, justified belief", and this spans the centuries from Plato¹ to A. J. Ayer.² According to this, knowledge is propositional and expressed in language. The proposition, in order to count as knowledge, must be true and demonstrated as such, with reference to sound reasons or, in A. J. Ayer's terminology, "empirically verified". Thus the proposition "Horses are vegetarians" constitutes knowledge in this regard in so far as it is true, and this can be justified in terms of empirical evidence. The condition of truth here is not simply a philosopher's prescription; it is in accordance with common parlance. It would make no sense, for example, to say that a man had the knowledge that "Horses are carnivores", because this proposition is not true. Thus, it would not be knowledge, but a false belief. Thus, if one has knowledge one cannot be mistaken. Knowledge, then, in this sense, connects with the objective world.

Now this account of knowledge, as some philosophers have noted,³ is a fitting description of factual information, which is without question an important area of human knowledge, but the traditional account is an attempt to define knowledge in general. Thus it would seem, according to this, that facts stand at the foundation of all knowledge. We must consider whether it is possible to explain all the many varieties of human knowledge in terms of factual information.

1 Plato: Theaetetus, 201; Meno, 98.

2 A. J. Ayer: The Problem of Knowledge, p.34.

3 e.g. David Pears: What is Knowledge?

Charles Dickens's novel Hard Times begins:

Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them . . .

This is the philosophy of Thomas Gradgrind the schoolmaster. His pupils are filled like "little pitchers", with facts, and are constantly drilled to recite facts and definitions made up of facts. For Mr. Gradgrind, facts and definitions constitute knowledge. When a new girl, Cissy Jupe, tells him that she comes from a circus, where her father works among horses, her description is far too vague for the precise and factual Mr. Gradgrind. He promptly defines the girl's father as a veterinary surgeon, a farrier, and a horsebreaker. He decides to test Cissy on her knowledge of horses.

' . . . Give me your definition of a horse' (Cissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

'Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!' said Mr. Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers. 'Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest animals! Some boy's definition of a horse . . .'

'Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye teeth and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too - hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.' Thus (and much more) Bitzer.

'Now girl number twenty,' said Mr. Gradgrind. 'You know what a horse is.'¹

The ideas of philosophers are not confined to academia, and the traditional account of knowledge has had a considerable influence on educational theory. This was particularly manifest in the 19th Century. The real Mr. Gradgrind, at whom Dickens's polemic is directed, was the

1 Charles Dickens: Hard Times, Chapters 1 and 2.

Utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, who equated learning and knowledge with the acquisition and possession of factual information.¹

This view is unoriginal and unimaginative, but this is not wholly surprising, for Bentham had no use for his own imagination nor any one else's. For him imagination, along with emotion, were not part of the real world, for that was composed of facts. Thus to know the world was to know facts and facts alone.² The novel Hard Times, by way of imagination and emotion, illustrates the barrenness of Bentham's philosophy.³ The above quotation exemplifies the inadequacy of factual information as the definition of knowledge, for according to Mr. Gradgrind's criteria, Bitzer is the one who knows all about horses, because he has learned, parrot-fashion, the encyclopaedic facts of the formal definition. His ability to recite these facts at a moment's notice is ample evidence of his knowledge. But what escapes Mr. Gradgrind is that, apart from this mechanically acquired collection of words that the boy hardly understands, Bitzer, an unimaginative town-dweller, knows very little about horses. Cissy, on the other hand, has been brought up alongside the animals. She lives and works with horses, and obviously knows a great deal about them, but unlike

1 D. J. Manning, in The Mind of Jeremy Bentham, records how Bentham denigrated imaginative subjects like art and poetry, and emphasized the importance of scientific discovery, and "useful" subjects like law and politics:

"Generally, arts subjects were to be neglected. There was to be no instruction in classical languages or religion. A little time might be spent on music to 'occupy the vacuum of thought which might be filled up by drunkenness or other mischief,' but it was not the business of the State to interest people in idle pursuits. 'Poetry - no more reason for teaching it than chips or cards.'" (p.106.)

2 See also Ludwig Wittgenstein: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.

3 F. R. Leavis writes in The Great Tradition on Hard Times:

"It is a triumph of ironic art. No logical analysis could dispose of the philosophy of fact and calculus with such neat finality." (p.262)

Bitzer, she is sensitive and imaginative, and quite incapable of memorising the tedious and unfamiliar language of the definition. It is evident that Mr. Gradgrind's question has no meaning for her, and her inability to recite the required catalogue of facts demonstrates for Mr. Gradgrind that Cissy does not know what a horse is. She has no knowledge of horses.

Here we can see the shortcomings of a definition of knowledge that is confined to factual information. It is, to say the least, restrictive and reductive, for by restricting knowledge simply to the possession of facts, it fails to explain, or even recognise, other aspects of human knowledge, and in reducing the learning process to the passive induction of established fact, it represents knowledge itself as something static.

It may be objected here that Socrates did not intend "true justified belief" to be interpreted in this manner. But the above passage shows how such a narrow, monolithic formula conduces to absurdity in practice, reducing learning to the absorption of static information, a stultifying, uncritical, uncreative process. No critical argument is needed; justification, or the giving of reasons, is simply the recitation of more facts, facts learned by rote, demanding little inventiveness or initiative. Knowledge, when defined as factual information, leaves out of account the dynamic constituents of learning, the questioning intellect and the creative imagination and all imaginative innovation. Learning becomes a passive process of memorising, measured in terms of one's ability to record or recite factual information. This traditional definition does not explain how facts are recognised and understood; it simply takes them for granted.

This notion of knowledge has been attacked by a number of polemicists.¹ But it is evidently embedded deeply in our culture, for it is still very widespread today. This is reflected in the mass media of communication. There is a variety of quiz programmes on radio and television, which perpetuate and reinforce the idea that knowledge is simply the possession of factual information, and that intelligence is measured in terms of one's ability to memorise and recite heterogeneous and disconnected facts.²

It is therefore not surprising that literature has been discounted as a source of knowledge by successive critics and philosophers, from Plato to A. J. Ayer. This may be explained in two ways. A work of literature may be excluded as a source of knowledge by definition, for if it is a work of fiction then it does not deal with the factual world, and therefore contains no facts. On the other hand, a work of literature may include many facts about the real world, but here epistemic claims are disregarded, as it can be argued that the facts that one may learn from a literary work may be learned elsewhere, and the medium of literature is not necessary for the communication of facts. Thus, it may be said, we learn nothing from Middlemarch because the town is a fictitious, imaginary world. On the other hand, the facts that we may learn about 19th Century London from Bleak House, we may also learn from reading chronicles or history books and thus literature is redundant in this regard.

1 e.g. Matthew Arnold: Culture and Anarchy, J. H. Newman: The Idea of a University, and more recently, F. R. Leavis: Education and the University.

2 e.g. "Top of the Form", "Brain of Britain", "Mastermind", "University Challenge".

DEFINITIONS AND CLASSICAL ESSENTIALISM

The traditional definition of knowledge is evidently unsatisfactory, and this may prompt us to formulate another definition or extend the criteria of "true justified belief" so as to cover those aspects of human knowledge that the definition excludes. This is the move that many philosophers make when trying to establish the precise nature of specific concepts. This is the move that most ordinary people make when seeking a definition i.e. one that will cover all cases. The failure to find such a definition usually not only leads to the conclusion that the subject in question is therefore indefinable but also that, being indefinable, it necessarily entails not knowing what the word applicable means.

Indeed, this search for necessary and sufficient conditions, in order to formulate the once and for all definition of knowledge, is indicative of a certain philosophical pre-supposition appertaining to the nature of knowledge itself, namely that knowing what something is, necessarily involves knowing how to define it in terms of a strict general formula. This means that whether one is referring to concrete objects like horses and trees, or abstract concepts like knowledge and truth, providing a complete and satisfactory definition that will cover all cases.

This was the doctrine of classical essentialism, the belief that every concept, concrete or abstract, had certain essential features. It was these features that defined the subject in question and made it what it was. Thus, according to this, knowing what a horse is is knowing the essential features of a horse, which, so it was believed, all horses had in common. Similarly, with knowledge, knowing what knowledge is is to know what all cases of knowledge have in common, the essential features of knowledge, for it is these that make up the definition and form the necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct use of the

term. According to this classical belief, anyone who cannot define the concept he is using ought not to be using it at all, for he is using words whose meanings he is unable to state and, therefore, words he does not understand. The inability to state a definition would be regarded as evidence of one's ignorance.

Saint Augustine infers in his Confessions that he does not know what "time" is because he cannot state the meaning of the term.¹ Although he uses the word repeatedly, he is convinced that he does not know what the word means because of his inability to formulate a definition, for he has no idea of the essence or the essential features of time that can connect the past with the present and the present with the future. Socrates² too, after much exhaustive analysis, reaches the sad conclusion that he does not know what knowledge is, after all, for he was unable to discover the essential features of knowledge that he believed all cases of knowledge must possess. He concludes, therefore, that he does not know what knowledge really is. We saw evidence of this long-held belief in the Hard Times extract. Mr. Gradgrind concludes that Cissy Jupe does not know what a horse is because of her inability to state the general definition of a horse.

This search for general principles and definitions has prevailed in philosophy since the days of classical Greece. It is not confined to philosophy; it seems to be a habit affecting most areas of human thought. Whenever questions like "What is goodness?", "What is beauty?", "What is truth?", "What is knowledge?" are asked, then philosophers begin the frantic search for the necessary and sufficient conditions that will make up the general formula. Traditionally, philosophers have believed that

1 St. Augustine: Confessions, p.263 and p.273.

2 This is especially to be found in the Theaetetus, and also to some extent in the Cratylus.

generalisations are the stuff of knowledge. It was, after all, on general principles that particular beliefs were ultimately justified.¹ According to Plato's essentialist philosophy, one could only know the universal, the ideal form. Particulars were contemptible imitations of ideal forms. To know the universal was to know what was common to all particulars bearing the same name; for Plato to know the universal was to possess true knowledge. The ideal form, he believed, could exist (and did, in some divine domain) apart from any vulgar representation in concrete particulars.²

Aristotle's thesis, though different in many ways from his former teacher's, was still fundamentally an essentialist one. He did not believe in ideal forms; he was far more concerned with the real world, and neither did he accept that the universal could exist apart from particulars. Nevertheless he inherited Plato's contempt for those particulars. He states explicitly that we cannot know particulars, we can only know the universals,³ and he believed, like Plato, that the possession of universals constituted true knowledge. For him the wisest

1 ". . . the reason why a thing is as it is is ultimately reducible to its definition, and the ultimate reason why a thing is as it is is a cause and first principle." Aristotle: Metaphysics, Book 1, in Renford Bambrough: The Philosophy of Aristotle, p.45.

2 See Plato: The Republic, Books 7 and 10. Cornford, in The Republic of Plato, writes that Plato is concerned with knowledge of unchanging objects:

". . . in this respect the Forms resemble the laws of nature sought by modern natural science: a law is an unseen intelligible principle, a unity underlying an unlimited multiplicity of similar phenomena, and supposed to be unalterable. The Forms, however, are not laws of the sequence or co-existence of phenomena, but ideals or patterns, which have a real existence independent of our minds, and of which the many individual things called by their names in the world of appearances are like images or reflections." (p.176.)

3 See G. E. R. Lloyd: Aristotle: The growth and structure of his thought, p.126. He refers to Analytica Priora 81, and Metaphysica 13, ch. 4, 26 ff. See also Marjorie Grene: A Portrait of Aristotle, ch. 3, p.80 ff and ch. 6, p.193 ff.

man among men was he who possessed the most generalisations.¹ Although one had to observe many particulars of a similar name in order to induce what was common and formulate the definition or universal, it was those essential features in the universal which constituted knowledge.² Thus as far as these classical philosophers were concerned, knowledge was necessarily general, because all particulars rest ultimately on a general principle.

But the influence of these philosophers has prevailed, and was considerably reinforced, during the age of empiricism. John Locke writes:

General truths are most looked after by the mind as those that most enlarge our knowledge and, by their comprehensiveness satisfying us at once of many particulars, enlarge our view and shorten our way to knowledge.³

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- 1 Aristotle: Metaphysics, Book 1, in Renford Bambrough: The Philosophy of Aristotle, p.43.
 - 2 See Lloyd: Aristotle, p.126, where he refers to Aristotle: Analytica Posteriora 88a 4 f and 97b 7 ff, and Analytica Priora II chapter 19.
 - 3 John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book IV, chapter v, Section 10.

WITTGENSTEIN AND FAMILY RESEMBLANCES

It was the later Wittgenstein who questioned the existence of essences and the validity of the general formula. He speaks of our "craving for generality",¹ and it was for him this eternal, insatiable craving for systematic or monolithic solutions to particular problems that was responsible for much of the confusion, and even chaos, in traditional philosophy. Wittgenstein's examination of the relationship between the general and the particular, his refutation of the age-old presumption that every concept must possess certain essential features, and the illuminating analogy of family resemblances,² has effected fundamental changes in philosophical thought, the ramifications of which are manifest in numerous disciplines. For this basic change in our approach to the nature of meaning not only enables us to clarify any concept we care to analyse, but it also revolutionises our philosophical conceptions of what constitutes truth, rational justification and knowledge, and brings them into harmony with the logic of ordinary language.

Wittgenstein uses the example of "games" and he shows that what constitutes a "game" involves a complex network of heterogeneous features, and different games possess different combinations of these features, in the same way that members of a family share certain characteristics. We may believe that there are certain essential features common to all games, indeed our education and culture may incline us in that direction but, says Wittgenstein, when we look carefully we see that such features do not exist and that the concept cannot be summed up by way of a general formula.

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Blue Book.

2 This is discussed in the early part of the Philosophical Investigations; see especially paragraphs 65-79. See also Renford Bambrough's illuminating paper "Universals and Family Resemblances" in G. Pitcher, ed.: Wittgenstein, the Philosophical Investigations.

This calls into question the very nature of meaning and how language is learned. Wittgenstein illustrates the inordinate complexity of other concepts, and argues that we learn the meanings of terms that refer both to concrete objects, like leaves and chairs, and abstract terms, like intention and understanding and the vast range of emotional and psychological concepts, not to mention moral and aesthetic concepts, not by way of a general definition that covers all cases, but by learning how to apply the term in particular contexts according to a heterogeneous variety of criteria. These criteria are so multifarious and inordinately structured that they defy any attempt to distil them into a formula or general principle.

Thus, as children, we learn what a game is, not by attending to a definition but by living in a society where different games are played, and where the concept of game is employed in numerous different contexts. As we become acquainted with the rich variety of criteriological particulars, so we attain a grasp of the concept so that we are able to use it, with confident independence, in new areas.

Similarly, with knowledge, if asked the questions "Do you understand what knowledge is?" or "Do you know the meaning of the word knowledge?", most adults would answer these questions in the affirmative. Indeed, we would probably demonstrate our "craving for generality" by attempting a definition. But we surely did not learn the meaning of the term "knowledge" by way of a general definition. Rather, our ability to understand and use this concept may be explained with reference to our experience of many heterogeneous particulars, where knowledge has been exemplified and the concept correctly employed. This concept, like most, is internally complex, and all attempts to sum it up in terms of an all-embracing definition have met with failure.

For if we did learn the meanings of terms by inducing an essence common to all uses of the concept, then meaning would be completely inflexible, and language static. Indeed it would not be language at all, and communication would be impossible. Therefore the criteria that govern the employment of concepts are not just heterogeneous, but open-ended and indefinite. Each new application, although sharing certain features with past usage, is not rigidly governed by it. Thus with the invention of new games, the concept of games is extended. Similarly, as our knowledge of the world becomes more extensive, and new disciplines are introduced, so the concept of knowledge becomes more complex and profound; searching for a general formula leads to chaos and confusion.

The criss-crossing patterns of connections and distinctions between one kind of knowledge and another not only defeat attempts to give a neat and compendious account of the whole nature of knowledge; they also make it impossible to give a brief and tidy definition of any particular kind of knowledge. Knowledge in general is to be characterised by describing instances of that kind; and in both cases it is important that the instances should be many and varied, that they should not be selected to conform to a precise blueprint.¹

General definitions impose artificial restriction on language and legislate against truth by constructing false accounts of our concepts. Moritz Schlick advocates this kind of legislation and exhibits his own craving for generality:

When we look at a leaf, we get an immediate acquaintance with a particular quality of 'green'. Is there any reason or justification to speak of this acquaintance as a kind of 'knowledge'? The use of our words, i.e. our definitions, should be determined entirely from the practical point of view, and we ought not to employ the same word for two things which have nothing in common in their nature and purpose.²

1 Renford Bambrough: Reason, Truth and God, p.19.

2 This comes from p.234 of Meaning and Truth in the Arts, by John Hospers, who quotes Moritz Schlick with approval.

Sometimes the criteriological lines are drawn so narrowly that incontrovertible examples of the concept in question may fall outside the limits of the definition. We saw this with the narrow definition of knowledge given by Mr. Gradgrind; Cissy Jupe's knowledge of horses was unacceptable because it fell outside the schoolmaster's definition of strictly formulated facts. When this happens, the "legislators" will either deny that the example is an acceptable use of the concept, (as did Mr. Gradgrind) or widen the scope of the criteria until all cases of the concept in question are enclosed within the boundaries of the definition. This usually results in a definition that is so general that it covers areas where the concept in question is quite inappropriate; thus a general definition of knowledge may well include in its boundaries aspects of fantasy, ignorance, incompetence, superstition, quackery etc., designating all as knowledge. Thus we may find cases of knowledge outside the definition when the latter is too narrow, or conversely when the definition is too wide, examples which are certainly not knowledge included within the definition.

This shows how searching for a definition, or common essence, presupposes knowing the meaning of the term in question. Thus, when Socrates asked the question "What is knowledge?" and embarks on a search for what is common to all cases of knowledge in order to establish the all-embracing definition, he already knows what to count as knowledge and what to leave out. He therefore knows the meaning of the term before he begins his analysis. This is constantly demonstrated by Socrates' swift demolitions of spurious definitions.

Nevertheless it would be fallacious to conclude that this kind of philosophy is not worth while, or that we do not learn anything from conceptual analysis. Indeed it is only by way of such analysis that we are able to realise the depth and complexity of certain concepts.

By adopting a disciplined approach, and consciously exploring the inordinate network of criteria involved, philosophy may make explicit and lucid what hitherto was tacit or vague. Concepts are the complex components of understanding, and rational analysis of those concepts deepens that understanding by giving a verbal dimension to an intellectual activity. It is because concepts are internally complex that philosophical analysis is necessary, in order to reach a more extensive and profound understanding of them. If they were simple and uniform, and governed by rigid rules, then we would simply refer to those rules as we refer to the rules of cricket.

Wittgenstein emphasized and reiterated the importance of particular usage when analyzing meaning. It is thus to particular examples that we must turn when seeking a deeper understanding of certain concepts.

John Wisdom reinforces the point:

Others before Wittgenstein had warned us of 'abstract' thought. But Wittgenstein showed the danger of it in instance after instance. Kant said that examples are the go-cart of the human understanding. But this is not enough. Examples are the final food for thought. Principles and laws may serve us well. They can help us to bring to bear on what is now in question what is not now in question. They help us to connect one thing with another and another. But at the bar of reason, always the final appeal is to cases.¹

1 John Wisdom: "A feature of Wittgenstein's technique" in Paradox and Discovery, p.102.

TRUTH

Before considering knowledge itself in more detail, let us focus on truth, one of the traditional components of knowledge. We have seen that truth is one of the essential threads in the traditional definition of knowledge. Certainly, as far as factual knowledge is concerned, it would be self-contradictory not to have truth as a necessary condition. But in the same way that factual knowledge was thought to be all there was to knowledge as a whole in terms of "true and justified belief", empirical fact has dominated questions concerning truth. Traditionally truth has been defined as a "correspondence" with facts. Correspondence was thought to be the essence of truth, that is, some form of correspondence between our descriptions of the world and the world itself.¹ The correspondence criterion is usually exemplified by reference to simple, child-like statements, expressed in the present tense and subject to straightforward empirical verification e.g. "The cat is on the mat".² If the statement is true, so the argument goes, and the cat is on the mat then there will be a "correspondence" between the statement and the state of affairs it describes.

This all sounds very well, but one difficulty is that no one has been able to explain just what "correspondence" means here, just what corresponds with what. Even if we accept some kind of loose correspondence relationship between the names in the statement and the objects they name - "cat" and "mat", (and there are profound difficulties here) what are we to do, as Strawson observes, with negative true statements, such as "The cat

1 The notion dates back to the ancients. See Plato: Cratylus, 450b ff (translated by Benjamin Jowett) and Aristotle: Metaphysics, Book IV, chapter 7 (in Renford Bambrough, ed.: The Philosophy of Aristotle, p.71.)

2 See J. L. Austin: "Truth", in George Pitcher, ed.: Truth.

is not on the mat"?¹ What corresponds with what here? It makes no sense to say that the statement corresponds with the fact, because facts are not objects, and do not exist in the physical world like cats and mats. Facts are expressed and embodied in statements, so to say that the factual statement corresponds with the fact that it expresses, is to say no more than that it corresponds with itself.

To argue that truth is correspondence is not only to restrict the concept, but also to give a distorted picture of the nature of language. The early Wittgenstein argued in the Tractatus that if a statement was true, then there would be a systematic (some would say rigid) correspondence between the statement and the situation it describes, between words and world.² But language is not rigidly tied to situations in the world.³ It is flexible, adaptable and ever-changing. Linguistic terms may be used correctly and meaningfully in an indefinite variety of ways; this certainly applies to the term "correspondence" itself, and although philosophers may attempt to attach rigid rules to this term in order to prove that correspondence is the essence of truth, the correspondence criterion is certainly being used differently in the two statements "The cat is on the mat" and "The cat is not on the mat". As a consequence, it makes sense for someone to say: "The statement 'The Devil exists in the world' is true because it corresponds with my experience of the world." Thus we can see here that correspondence is unworkable as a strict

1 P. F. Strawson writes: "With what type of state-of-affairs (chunk of reality) is the sentence 'The cat is not on the mat' correlated by conventions of description? With a mat simpliciter? With a dog on a mat? With a cat up a tree?" See "Truth", in the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume XXIV, 1950. Reprinted in Pitcher, ed.: Truth. (Above quote from p.51.)

2 See Ludwig Wittgenstein: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. See also George Pitcher: Truth, p.11.

3 This is discussed in some detail in the chapter on form and content.

criterion because it depends upon a false account of the nature of language by tying words rigidly to situations in the world, or simply because of the actual nature of language, the term "correspondence" can be employed correctly to cover statements which, if not downright false, are certainly questionable.

Neither can the correspondence criterion account for many other areas where the terms "truth" and "true" are appropriate and correctly employed. Mathematical statements are not verified with reference to any correspondence criterion. $2 + 2 = 4$ is true because it is coherent with the rules of arithmetic, and fits into a system. Historical statements, too, cannot be checked by way of empirical observation, but depend upon an overall coherence of historical evidence. There are, of course, many areas where the concept of truth is employed, where a simple correspondence criterion is redundant - morals, aesthetics, religion etc. But even in the area of empirical fact, where correspondence was thought to be firmly based, the criterion simply will not do.¹ The epitome of empirical fact is the inductive generalisation, and this is necessarily outside of any correspondence criterion. The statement "All horses are vegetarians" may well be true, but as it involves past, present and future horses, it is impossible to observe any correspondence relationship between the statement and the situation it describes.

Perhaps the final humiliation for the correspondence criterion is that it falls foul of itself, for on the model of easily empirically verified statements like "The cat is on the mat", the following proposition: "The true statement is that which corresponds with the situation in the world it describes" must be regarded as false, for what is there in the physical world with which this could correspond in any hard empirical sense? If, on the other hand the statement is to be

1 See N. Rescher: The Coherence Theory of Truth, ch. 1, p.8.

regarded as true, then it is because the term "correspondence" is so flexible as to be unworkable as a criterion. Indeed we would be far better to stick with the term "truth", which is equally flexible, and may be employed correctly in a multifarious number of ways, subject to different criteria, in different circumstances. The term "correspondence" is appropriate in some areas where the concept of truth is used, but it cannot serve as an all-embracing criterion, for in many if not most, areas, it is inappropriate; there is more to truth than statements of empirical fact.

Since Galileo, the triumphs of scientific methods and discoveries have consolidated the long held faith in factual information, and engendered the ubiquitous belief that science holds the key to truth and certain knowledge.¹ Even now, in spite of a rising tide of anti-positivism, empirical fact still seems to be the order of the day.²

But if science were the one arbiter of truth, it is difficult to imagine how we could order our daily lives. Although philosophers themselves are only too aware of the truism that science is totally impotent in any analysis of human values, that no microscope or test tube can settle problems in morality, art or metaphysics, still positivism lurks in the back of the philosophical mind, ever ready to manifest itself when terms like truth or objective knowledge are mentioned.

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- 1 In Britain, the definitive account of this doctrine is A. J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic. The author synthesizes many of the ideas of Hume, Bertrand Russell, and the early Wittgenstein. See p.41.
 - 2 "What, we may ask is the difference between a true proposition and a fact? What, for instance, is the difference between the proposition expressed by the sentence, 'The cat is on the mat', and the fact that the cat is on the mat? What need have we both of true propositions and of facts?"

Theory of Knowledge A. D. Woozley, p.165.

But if what happens to apples and planets were all that could be said of truth (the language of Descriptivism), how could we bring order to human intercourse? How could any one defend a moral judgment with conviction or pronounce the superiority of one work of art over another? If there were no truths in human values, and all were individualistic and subjective then it would make sense to say that Adolf Hitler was a very good man, or that posters that line the London Underground are comparable in merit to the paintings in the National Gallery.

One may argue of course that there is a wider consensus of agreement in the natural sciences, but there is disagreement, and facts as we shall see are not taken for granted.¹ Furthermore, because there is disagreement in politics, morals, aesthetics and other areas of human discourse, it does not follow that truth and falsity are phantasms. If this were the case, there would be no point in conducting arguments and enquiries into such subjects. The concept of truth is applied appropriately in many areas where empirical criteria are quite inappropriate. Truth cannot be defined simply as a product of factual induction and logical deduction,² no more than a game can be defined merely as a competitive activity, for this

1 See Norwood Hanson: Patterns of Discovery, chapters 1 and 2, and T. S. Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. The latter writes: "An investigator who hoped to learn something about what scientists took the atomic theory to be asked a distinguished physicist and an eminent chemist whether a single atom of helium was or was not a molecule. Both answered without hesitation, but their answers were not the same. For the chemist the atom of helium was a molecule because it behaved like one with respect to the kinetic theory of gases. For the physicist, on the other hand, the helium atom was not a molecule because it displayed no molecular spectrum. Presumably both men were talking of the same particle, but they were viewing it through their own research training and practice. Their experience in problem-solving told them what a molecule must be. Undoubtedly their experiences had much in common, but they did not, in this case, tell the two specialists the same thing. As we proceed we shall discover how consequential paradigm differences of this sort can occasionally be." (pp. 50-51.)

2 See, for example, David Hume: A Treatise on Human Nature, III, i, 1.

leaves Ring a Ring a Roses and Patience out of account.¹ Similarly the concept may be applied with reference to a variety of criteria, depending on whether the circumstances are moral, mathematical, historical, aesthetic, scientific, political, philosophical or whatever. And indeed these categories are obviously subject to further fragmentation.

What is significant is that the idioms we use are objective, including those concerning human values. We say: "That man is a hypocrite" or "Mozart's requiem is a work of genius". Now as the meanings of all terms in a language are necessarily public, and governed by objective criteria,² then whenever it is possible to make meaningful statements, it makes sense to talk of truth and falsity. The concept of truth has no essence other than truth itself. After all, what all games have in common is that they are all games. Truth is not governed by general principles, but subject to heterogeneous particulars.

There have been other candidates for the essence of truth; the most important one is "coherence". This is a theory which in various forms has attempted to demonstrate that statements are true with reference not to situations in the world, but to other statements which, so the argument goes, fit into a coherent system of knowledge. Such theories represent an endeavour to prove that all truths to counter such should be subject to the same rigour as mathematical truths, for these are subject to a "coherence" criterion, where calculations are true, according to a system or precise rules.³

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- 1 See Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, paragraph 66 ff.
 - 2 Wittgenstein attacks the possibility of a private language, and insists that language can only be public. See Wittgenstein, *ibid*, paragraph 243 ff. This is discussed in some detail in the chapter on emotions and feelings. See also Norman Malcolm: "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations" and Rush Rhees: "Can there be a private language?" in G. Pitcher, ed.: Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations, and Peter Winch: The Idea of a Social Science, pp.33-39.
 - 3 A well-known exponent of this theory was F. H. Bradley. See Essays on Truth and Reality.

This, as with "correspondence", presents a distorted account of the concept of truth, and gives a false picture of our experience of the world, for we check to see if a statement is true, and know if this is the case according to a complex and inordinate variety of criteria, and there are many times when coherence plays no part at all. When we look to see if "The cat is on the mat" we are not aware of any coherent system of true propositions into which the linguistic utterance is to fit. We are looking for lumps of reality, like cats and mats. There are of course areas apart from mathematics where one can talk sensibly of coherence, e.g. secondary verbal accounts, reports from the past, historical accounts etc.

Truth is no different from any other abstract concept, and different criteria will be used for its employment in different circumstances. There is no essence or all-embracing yardstick. Sometimes "correspondence" may seem an appropriate term, while in other cases, "coherence" may be applicable. On many other occasions both may be inadequate.

The search for essences is an attempt to tie our language down to precise and rigid rules, indeed to make it all that language is not. But the search is both fruitless and futile. It simply moves the problem from one concept to another. For if one accepts that correspondence is the essence of truth, one is then left with the problem: What is the essence of correspondence? And what is the essence of that?¹ Etc. Etc. ad infinitum and ad absurdum.

1 It is interesting to note that even devotees of Wittgenstein subscribe to essentialist ideas when it comes to truth. Both George Pitcher (see his introduction to Truth) and David Pears (see What is Knowledge?) go for correspondence. Renford Bambrough subscribes to the coherence criterion (see Reason, Truth and God, pp. 146-8).

CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE

Not only is the concept of truth not governed by general principles, but subject to heterogeneous particulars, but also the inductive truths of science, the universal generalisations, depend for their formulation on terms that can only be mastered by reference to heterogeneous particulars. For agreement in scientific principles presupposes agreement in the definitions of the relevant concepts. We have seen that disagreement in definition is not settled by way of a general principle but by reference to a catalogue of particular examples. The discovery and understanding of scientific facts depends upon the possession of socially shared concepts in a public language.¹

Facts cannot be taken for granted in science or anywhere else because meaning is not a perspicuous matter, even to the empiricist. ". . . observational reports, experimental results, 'factual' statements, either contain theoretical assumptions or assert them by the manner in which they are used."² Reality as we shall see later is not self-conceptualizing. Conceptual adjustment or reappraisal may reveal new facts, but at the same time the discovery of new facts may well effect an alteration in our concepts. It is because of this symbiotic interpenetration of concept and fact that conceptual analysis is of supreme importance in the sciences. Therefore if the formulation of general facts depends on the correct employment of specific concepts, whose meanings are not governed by general principles, or any rule that can be abstracted from the context and situation where it occurs, and can

1 This point is emphasized and reiterated by Thomas Kuhn, through his notion of paradigms and shared scientific beliefs. See The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.

2 Paul Feyerabend: Against Method, p.31. See also Thomas Kuhn, *ibid*, pp. 50-51, and Norwood Hanson: Patterns of Discovery, chapter 1.

only be exemplified by reference to its particular employment, then the fundamental importance of particular cases in the acquisition and application of knowledge becomes apparent.

Generalisation means, as its derivation implies, putting things into their genera or classes. Right from a very early age our observation and inquiries lead us to form generalisations which guide our judgments and determine our actions. For example, a child may soon learn that Matches are dangerous playthings, or that People who frown are angry, or that Dogs are faithful animals, or that Jays like peas, or that Policemen wear uniform. Each new experience, each freshly acquired piece of knowledge helps him to form new generalisation, or to strengthen or modify his old ones. It will easily be seen that without this power of generalisation, human knowledge would have never advanced, and civilisation would have been impossible.¹

The above illustrates how knowledge, traditionally, has involved the establishing of general principles, but this presupposes knowledge of heterogeneous particulars to account for the mastery of the relevant concepts employed in each general principle. It makes no sense to imagine human beings formulating generalisations and then encapsulating them in concepts, for our ability to formulate generalisations, whether they are factual or definitional, depends itself upon the possession of concepts. One cannot formulate facts about biology without the knowledge of several biological concepts. Indeed, the ability to perceive and interpret biological phenomena as such, as we shall see later, involves this prior conceptual knowledge. Similarly, the ability to stipulate general definitions of concepts that are at least taken seriously, presupposes an understanding of the concept in question. This conceptual knowledge necessarily involves the mastery of language.

1 R. W. Jepson: Clear Thinking, pp. 127-8. This was used as a textbook in 'A' level English Literature, A.E.B., as recently as 1969. This clearly demonstrates the point made earlier about philosophical theories being made manifest in the culture and modes of education.

We noted that the traditional definition of knowledge, dating back to Plato, was true belief secured by sound reason. This, like so many other legislative general principles, simply will not do; it says both too much and too little. For these "true beliefs", whether interpreted as the general rules of meaning of different concepts, or generalisations of empirical fact, were verbal formulations which could be learned by rote and repetition. We saw this in the Hard Times extract, and this represents knowledge as static information and its acquisition and possession as a passive and uncritical and uncreative process - the absorption of rigid rules and static facts.¹ This narrow conception of knowledge does not account for man's ability to innovate, his inventive critical faculty. This is a feature of obvious importance in knowledge, a complex and many faceted concept, for in asking the question "How do we know that X is the case?" we have to remember that we know how to ask such a question.

Wittgenstein's analysis shows that having informational knowledge is dependent on knowing how to use concepts that only a language user can possess. This fundamental conceptual knowledge which furnishes us with the tools of thought, reason and understanding cannot be summed up in a once and for all piece of information. We do not learn how to use language by reading dictionaries or, for that matter, having dictionaries read to us. Dictionary definitions are useful in so far as they endeavour to summarize common usage, but they cannot instruct us as to how each word is to be used in every given situation. Dictionaries can only serve as a rough guide ^{MS contrasted} to words that we already know and understand. At some time we have to use our imagination and reason, and use each term

1 Feyerabend states that this has been a prevalent feature of scientific education. See Introduction and chapter 1 of Against Method.

for ourselves. Wittgenstein demonstrates that using and understanding a language involves rules which cannot be stated in any complete sense any more than "a game" or "knowledge" can be summed up in terms of a definition. It makes sense to talk of rules here, though they cannot be stated, for while we can sensibly discuss correct and incorrect usage of terms, such usage must involve rules, which can be either followed or not followed. Here, knowing the rule is not the possession of a piece of information, but simply the ability to use the term correctly in different, not to say innovatory situations. This knowledge-how lies at the base of reason and understanding, and indeed the creative imagination itself.

A pupil may demonstrate his grasp of simple arithmetical formula by continuing a series of numbers: 1, 3, 5, 7, with 9, 11, 13, 15 etc., and here, knowing how to go on in "the same way" is not a mechanical reiteration of what went before, for something new is being produced which involves thought and imagination.¹ So it is with language, and the ability to use and understand terms in different circumstances and contexts is not a trained response, like Bitzer's mechanical recitation of the definition of a horse; it is rather a knowledge which necessarily involves critical judgment.

Consider the trained reaction of a dog when the word "sit" is uttered. The dog sits. The sound "sit" produces the one response. As far as the dog is concerned it has one essential application. But this is not how we understand the term "sit". It is far more complex and inordinately structured. It has a heterogeneous multiplicity of uses. We may: sit down comfortably, sit up suddenly, sit still, sit on the grass, sit quietly, sit in court, sit in judgment, sit at the

1 See Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, paragraphs 143-155.

head of the table etc. It may be expressed in the form of orders, questions, requests, exclamations, statements etc., and of course, the meaning can vary according to the emotional circumstances in which it is used, and uttered. The possibilities are indefinite. One might argue here that continuing the series: 1, 3, 5, 7 etc. is as rigid as the term "sit", where the dog is concerned. After all, one might say, adding two is adding two. It always means the same thing. But this is surely not the case, for the concept "add two" is being used differently in each case, and something different emerges. "Add two" applied to one means three, applied to three, it means five, etc. However much we may take simple arithmetic for granted, the term "add two" involves concepts of number and calculation which, when compared with the dog's "understanding" of the term "sit", are highly sophisticated.¹

If the rules that governed meaningful communication were not flexible, and our concepts were not internally complex, but as rigid as essentialists would have us believe - that is, amenable to complete formulation, with necessary and sufficient conditions to cover all future usage, then it would be impossible to explain the every day reality of new or different thought, or indeed thought itself.² It would be as if continuing the series 1, 3, 5, 7 in the same way were to be interpreted not, as in our example, but simply parroting what had gone before: 1, 3, 5, 7, 1, 3, 5, 7 etc. But all this is unintelligible, for it concedes too much to the essentialist position to say that our knowledge of the world would never extend any further, or that we could never possess any new information, because we could not explain

1 See L. Wittgenstein, *ibid*, paragraphs 185-190.

2 Paul Feyerabend argues: ". . . without a constant misuse of language there can not be any discovery, any progress." (Against Method, p.27.)

how we acquired the information we already possess, or indeed how we understand it. Thus the essentialist's thesis involves a fundamental contradiction, for it demands an understanding of meaning prior to itself, while, at the same time, it legislates against that very understanding that it presupposes, for it presupposes a language on the one hand or simultaneously setting up rigid rules which would make future thought and communication and all that we expect from language impossible.

Mr. Gradgrind reduced knowledge to dead information, but we can now see that knowledge demands a living technique. Instead of the passive induction of general facts and definitions, knowledge involves the active employment of concepts embodied in language which enables us to recognise, understand and formulate facts. The use of these concepts is not, and cannot be governed by general rules in any hard systematic sense. What was passive becomes active, what was static becomes dynamic. This helps to explain, without resorting to any mystical intuitionism, the tacit knowledge we all possess, that cannot be wrapped up in neat formulae. For example, how do we recognise a smile? The correspondence theory of truth delineated by the early Wittgenstein in the Tractatus demands that words be precisely definable in a way that their meaning can be understood in the abstract and without reference to any particular context. This implies that each word has just one meaning - an essence. It is common knowledge that "the smile on the face of the Mona Lisa is enigmatic", but in order to say that the statement corresponds with the facts, we would have to have a precise formulation of what constituted an enigmatic smile. Let us, for a moment, restrict our discussion to just what constitutes a smile. Are there necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of the word "smile"? Do we recognise a smile by

reference to a set of empirical features? Is there an ideal smile with which all other smiles have to correspond? There are toothless smiles, wide smiles, cruel smiles, sardonic smiles, happy smiles, insincere smiles, genuine smiles. Babies smile with no teeth, skulls smile with no lips. We do not recognise smiles according to the angle of the mouth, the length of the lips or whether or not the teeth are exposed. When Lewis Carroll left the smile of the Cheshire Cat, what did he leave? According to naive illustrations, the lips and the teeth remained. This not only vulgarises Carroll, but it misses the philosophical problem to which he was alluding. A smile doesn't begin and end with the mouth. The eyes are of supreme importance, for it is in them that the expression is concentrated. But this introduces another problem. Where exactly is the expression of the eyes? It cannot be confined just to the eyeballs - it involves the surrounding facial areas. What I am arguing is that a smile in some sense involves the expression of the whole face. Though, to know whether it is sincere may involve many aspects of the individual character, as well as his physiognomy. We are in possession of the concept of a smile, and we have acquired it from a multitude of examples. And we know when and when not to apply it according to particular circumstances. Whether a person is smiling or not is a matter of interpretation, and not an inference from a set of abstract rules.

We must not forget the situation and circumstances in which a smile occurs. These would be extremely significant in determining the nature of a smile, whether for example it is cruel or kind. A man may wear a smile watching his enemy being tortured or observing children at play, and in both cases the physical arrangement of his features may be similar.¹

1 See L. Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, paragraph 539.

Although no general principles or hard empirical criteria are applicable with such knowledge, we are able to use our concepts in this way and make correct judgments. We cannot give definitions or neat verbal formulae, but we can demonstrate our knowledge ostensibly by giving concrete particular examples.

The same is of course true of other concepts. We may know how to criticize, how to analyse, how to argue, debate, reason, how to make moral and aesthetic judgments in an indefinite and multifarious cluster of situations. We may know how to differentiate, according to the contexts, between anger and indignation, we may question, evaluate, understand, describe, imagine, but although we may each know how to do all these things, we cannot distil that knowledge into definitions or neat pieces of information no more than Cissy Jupe could verbalize all her practical and conceptual knowledge of horses.

For centuries philosophy has conducted a search for general principles and definitions and yet, ironically, teaching someone to philosophise cannot be done by way of a general recipe or definition, but by engaging the student in particular philosophical problems.

We have seen that traditionally, truth was a necessary condition for the possession of knowledge and to be sure, as far as factual information is concerned, this is indisputable. But as true information is not all there is to knowledge, and knowing, we might want to say that a more fundamental knowledge is a pre-condition for the possession of true beliefs. We have to conceptualize our experience for it to be meaningful. True beliefs are not "out there in the world", they have to be formulated and embodied in meaningful statements. This demands a conceptual knowledge that only a language user can possess. Consider, for example, knowing how to use and understand the concept of truth itself.

But in saying that our ability to formulate true judgments is dependent upon our ability to understand and use certain concepts, i.e. that knowledge of fact presupposes knowledge of meaning, we must be capable and fully aware of the chicken and egg implications. For agreement in definitions is no more than agreement in common usage and the rules of meaning cannot be hypostatized from the concrete situations in which they are applied. We can learn the rules of cricket without playing cricket but we cannot learn the rules that govern language without playing particular language games in which the rules inhere. Thus, a child's acquisition of concepts is inseparable from a cumulative familiarity with facts and beliefs about the world.

At this point we can observe the importance of truth in conceptual knowledge, and how truth and meaning interpenetrate. For without meaningful concepts, the formulation and communication of truths and truth would be impossible. Conversely, without the rigour of truth, the communication and development of meaningful concepts will also be impossible. Of course, there are undoubtedly meaningful statements that are false, which does suggest that meaning is not necessarily related to truth, but it surely is not possible to imagine the meanings of concepts being grasped if all, or perhaps most of the statements which purported to exemplify them were false.

How, for example, could a child grasp the meaning of terms if he was told that an armchair was a table on one occasion, a cat on another, a man on another, that a man was a monkey, that a monkey was a desk, that someone was angry when he was sad, and that sadness was indigestion, or that a red colour patch was green, or that green was the number six?

Statements that are meaningful and false can only exist in a world where most statements are meaningful and true. If an omnipotent evil genius overnight caused everyone to utter nothing but false statements,

then meaningful communication would break down. Then, to succeeding generations, what was once false would be meaningless, no more intelligible than the words of one parrot heard by another, or, for that matter, by itself.

We shall examine in more detail later the interpretation of concept and fact, but it is enough to say here that a clarification of meaning can reveal new truths, while conversely, the discovery of new truths can enrich and extend meaning, and thus provide an avenue for further truths. Knowledge can be seen as an embodiment of both true meaning and meaningful truths.

At his rational or intellectual level, "knowing how" and "knowing that" interlock. This distinction of Gilbert Ryle's is useful and revealing but it suggests that these are two quite separate kinds of knowledge, rather than two aspects of the same concept.¹

1 See Gilbert Ryle: The Concept of Mind, chapter 2.

PERCEPTION AND INTERPRETATION

We noted earlier that our ability to recognise and formulate facts depends upon the possession of certain concepts, and this fundamental ability that human beings have to use sophisticated concepts rests on the mastery of a language. Facts do not exist out there in the world like objects or events; we do not bump into them or expect them to occur. They are expressed and formulated in linguistic statements which necessarily involves the employment of concepts.

Let us examine the relationship between concept and fact in some detail, for as stated earlier, this relationship is of crucial significance when considering the concept of knowledge, especially vis a vis the acquisition of new knowledge. Concepts and facts are, in a sense, separate entities, the meaning of the terms are quite different; they perform different functions in the language and are in no way synonymous. Nevertheless, concepts and facts interpenetrate symbiotically and cannot be absolutely divided. For example, it is a fact that "tigers are fierce carnivores"; it is also a fact that "horses are docile vegetarians". An empiricist might well say these facts are contingent truths, and that things might well have been otherwise. It is, after all, logically possible that the reverse might have been the case. Now let us suppose that overnight, by some strange quirk of nature, tigers became mild, grazing creatures and horses became fierce carnivores, then it would be evident that our present concepts of tiger and horse would be inappropriate, not to say meaningless. Our understanding of these animals, our attitudes towards them, our whole behavioural approach would soon have to change. This would be reflected in our language-habits, our idioms, phrases, metaphors and poetic images; statements like "there is a tiger in the children's playground" or "little Suzie wants to give the horse

a lump of sugar" would have quite different uses and connotations and conjour up quite different feelings and attitudes. We would thus see tigers and horses through new conceptual apparatus and thus see them quite differently from how we saw them before. Thus in this unlikely example it can be seen how a change in the external facts can bring about a change in our concepts. This shows how the old dichotomy between the analytical and the empirical, though useful and revealing in particular situations, cannot be absolutely maintained. For it may well be an empirical fact or a contingent truth that "tigers are fierce carnivores" but also, "carniverousness" and "fierceness" are important features in the tiger-concept, and form part of the meaning of the term.

The concepts we possess are fundamental in our understanding of the facts of experience, and to this extent they determine how we see the world, and what we see in it. A change in the external facts can effect a change in our concepts, but also a change in our concepts can affect the way we see the facts. Conceptual extension and enrichment can widen our vision and understanding, and make available new areas of knowledge. This may give access to further facts, but also lay the foundations for further conceptual development. Here it is pertinent to consider the notion of "seeing as", which has figured prominently in modern epistemology.¹ Imagine two people, a two-year-old child and her father looking through an album of photographs. They come across a coloured picture of a tiger lying in the sun. The child, who has no knowledge of wild animals at all, points at the picture and says: "Pussy-cat", while her father, who remembers shooting the beast, sees not a pussy-cat but a vicious man-eater. Now both people

1 See Ludwig Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, pp. 193-208; Norwood Hanson: Patterns of Discovery, chapter 1; Thomas Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, especially chapter 10.

are looking at the same picture, and yet each sees something different. There is obviously a sense in which they both "see" the same picture, in so far as they are both receiving the same visual sense-data and, with normal eyesight, having similar retinal images. But each has a quite different understanding of what the picture represents, for different concepts are being employed, evoking different attitudes and feelings, and engendering different experiences. Indeed, different things are being seen. The child, through her restricted range of concepts, sees something warm, cuddly and affectionate, while her father, whose conceptual knowledge is far more extensive, sees something powerful, ferocious and dangerous. For what one sees is inextricably bound up with what one understands.

Let us consolidate this thesis by considering some counter-examples:

It could well be said that as both people are looking at a tiger, both are seeing a tiger, and that any sentient being with normal eyesight will see what there is to see, simply "as it is". Similarly, if a dog sees his master playing chess, and his master is playing chess, then the dog sees his master playing chess. The dog does not have to understand the rules of chess. The facts, as it were, speak for themselves. Thus it may be said that the prior knowledge that the father possesses in our above example is irrelevant. He may know what tigers are, how they behave, what they can do; nevertheless he sees no more than the child: they are both seeing the same entity, having the same visual experience. The child calls the animal a "pussy-cat", but what's in a name? She sees a tiger. They both see the tiger, no more no less. There is, after all, only one way of seeing objects and situations in the world, and that is "as they are".

But what does this mean, seeing things "as they are"? This suggests that we can purify our perceptions, and can see the world in an absolutely

neutral way, or that we can have some immediate contact with reality that does not engage the intellect or the imagination in any active sense at all. It is as if "understanding" were given by a self-conceptualising world, and did not involve the employment of concepts and language, but simply sense-data. Thus according to this "seeing" is simply the reception of visual impressions, and this also constitutes understanding; "understanding" is merely seeing. All this suggests that facts exist in the world like objects, and the mind, like a camera, passively photographs them. Such an argument depicts the information we possess about the world as pictorial, and the pictures as perspicuous and unequivocal. To see the picture is to understand it, leaving no room for interpretation. Indeed interpretation falls out of account. Neither is there room for disagreement, for everyone with normal eyesight will see the world in the same way. Falsity therefore occurs as the result of myopia or poor memory. Language, too, takes a secondary place for rather than being the fundamental apparatus of understanding and thought, it is seen as no more than a system for communicating what we already privately understand, as if chimpanzees and dogs see the world in the same way as human beings; but they simply can't tell us about it.

Surely our above example shows that two people can have a different understanding of the same situation, and this is not the passive reception of perspicuous pictures. There is, as Hanson says, "more to seeing than meets the eyeball."¹ Both the child and her father are interpreting what they see as they see it, through the active employment of certain concepts. The reception of visual sense-data is not sufficient for seeing what the picture represents, for seeing what the picture represents involves the understanding. The facts do not speak for themselves,

1 Hanson, *ibid*, p.7.

because the facts are not in the picture. The fact that "the animal is a fierce carnivore" is not in the picture. The animal is in the picture, the animal is an object. Facts are not objects. The picture may in some sense represent facts, but what these are is always open to interpretation, which involves intellect and imagination, concepts and language.¹

Neither are facts pictures. It is a fact that "tigers are not native animals of Africa", but that fact is not a picture, nor is it necessary to imagine a picture in order to understand the factual statement. What could such a picture look like? It is surely impossible to imagine any picture either being or projecting that one single fact clearly and unequivocally. Some facts, such as "tigers are striped animals", may more easily inspire a mental picture, but the fact is not the picture, and the statement that expresses the fact is perfectly meaningful without the picture. Indeed, a statement of fact could not inspire a picture without a prior understanding of the statement. Thus the mental picture is meaningful only in terms of the factual statement that accompanies it, and not vice-versa. Pictures are not facts and facts are not pictures, and neither are facts in pictures the way that objects and animals are in pictures. They are embodied in linguistic statements, the formulation and expression of which involves the active use of concepts.

But what are concepts? Are they in the world? Do we induce them pictorially in our visual impressions of the world? Surely not, for the concept of the "tiger" is not in the picture. The animal is in the picture, and animals are in the world. But the animal is not the concept. One may photograph and shoot tigers. One cannot photograph and shoot

1 See Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, p.11.

concepts. It is a mistake to confuse the meaning of the term "tiger" with the bearer of that name, the animal itself. If meaning inhered in objects, and understanding the meaning of a concept were simply to picture the object it named, then terms like: pain, ecstasy, alienation, indifference, love, nothing, truth, mind, intelligence etc. would all be meaningless. For these terms do not name objects. Consider also terms like: and, also, therefore, the, and so on. Whether terms like: pain, ecstasy etc. name anything at all, will depend upon how they are being used; the essence of meaning is not naming, any more than the essence of "games" is amusement. Naming is not the foundation of language; it is just one of a countless variety of functions in an established language. Meaning is not in names and objects, and if tigers became extinct overnight, the concept would still be with us, and the term "tiger" continue to be meaningful, whether written or spoken, as is the term "dodo". Similarly, we can understand the concepts of mythical creatures such as centaurs and unicorns. Meaning is not to be found in the physical world, and cannot therefore be understood or explained simply in terms of pictures of that world, whether these are visual impressions or mental images. Meaning lives in the social world of human intercourse, made manifest in the daily, ever-changing, use of language, spoken or written, where concepts and expressions are actively employed.¹

Therefore the pictorial impressions we have of the world, whether visual or mental, cannot be perspicuous, because the concepts and facts

1 The picture theory of language and naming as the basis of meaning is the thesis of the Tractatus, which was refuted by the later Wittgenstein in the Philosophical Investigations (see especially paragraphs 1-46). For a definitive rebuttal of the picture theory of language see E. Daitz: "The Picture Theory of Meaning", in A. Flew, ed.: Essays in Conceptual Analysis. See also Gilbert Ryle: "The Theory of Meaning", in Collected Papers, volume 2.

that make these pictures intelligible are not in the world. They are embedded and expressed in language, through which we describe and interpret the world. It is in the active capacity to use language that we find the fundamental apparatus of human understanding, as opposed to the passive reception of visual impressions. Without the understanding that language affords, our experience and knowledge of the world would be primitive and inchoate.

Thus we see the world through our concepts, and seeing a tiger as a tiger involves prior knowledge, for it presupposes an understanding of the tiger-concept. This is not just a matter of visual recognition and the application of the name "tiger"; it is also the ability to use the term correctly in a variety of grammatical contexts, and this in turn requires the possession of some facts about tigers.

Concepts are shared, embedded in a necessarily public language, and the words we utter are indicative of the concepts we are employing.¹ Therefore, when the child points at the picture and says "Pussy cat", it makes no sense to say that she has a private understanding of the picture, and is simply incorrectly applying a name, for the word "pussycat" is a public manifestation of her understanding, and it describes her visual experience. She is thus not seeing the animal as a tiger and calling it a pussycat; she sees the animal as a pussycat.

Consider this further in the light of one of Wittgenstein's examples.²

1 The idea of a private language is refuted by Wittgenstein in the Philosophical Investigations. This is discussed in more detail in a later chapter on emotions and feelings.

2 See Philosophical Investigations, p.194.

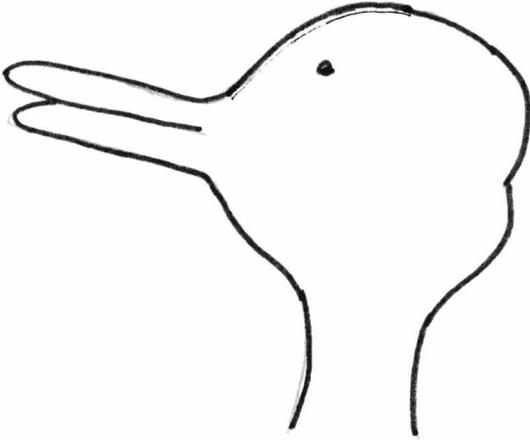


Figure 1.

In figure 1 we have a duck-rabbit picture; that is, looked at one way it can be seen as a duck, while looked at another way it can be seen as a rabbit. What was the beak of the duck becomes the rabbit's ears. Here it is possible for two people looking at the one drawing, the same arrangement of lines, each receiving similar retinal images to have quite different visual experiences, one seeing a duck, and the other a rabbit; obviously what they report is what they see (we can assume that they speak sincerely, and that both know the difference between ducks and rabbits and how these terms are used). It makes no sense to say that the one who says "duck" really sees a rabbit, for here, seeing and interpreting are part and parcel of the same process, and if one understands the drawing to be that of a duck, then one sees a duck, and if the child in our earlier example understands the picture to be that of a pussycat, then she sees it as a pussycat. We can say in the case of the child that she sees the picture wrongly; that her interpretation is false; for according to all the facts in hand, the picture is that of a tiger. Thus she could be enlightened, and her conceptual apparatus extended and enriched. But in the case of the duck/rabbit example, as in many areas of human investigation, whether

the sciences, morals, or aesthetics, the matter is not so clear. Indeed, our above example is one of complete ambiguity. To see the figure as a duck or a rabbit, or even, at a more sophisticated level, as a duck/rabbit picture, involves the employment of concepts. The extent and nature of the concepts that one brings to bear upon situations will obviously depend upon one's background and experience. One can imagine the child who played with rubber ducks in the bath, or who lived near a duckpond, saying "duck" on first seeing the picture, while the child who kept rabbits in the garden saying "rabbit". The picture, no more than the situation, does not carry its interpretation written on its face. To see the picture as a duck demands some knowledge of the duck-concept, i.e. the ability to recognise ducks, and distinguish them initially from rabbits and later, perhaps, from geese. It would be neither necessary nor sufficient to have a picture of an ideal duck in one's mind. What would such an ideal picture look like? How could it correspond with all ducks? There are many different ducks, and they look different in different situations. The term "duck" may be used in reference to ducks on ponds, flying ducks, plastic ducks, alabaster ducks, ducks sitting on their eggs, ducks in picture-books, rubber ducks in the bath, dead ducks, decoy ducks, and ruptured ducks, roasted ducks, etc. The duck concept, as with other concepts, is flexible and open-ended, and may be used according to a variety of criteria. Indeed, applying the term "duck" to the duck/rabbit picture testifies to a sophisticated mastery of the concept, for the drawing is stylized and certainly not realistic, which indicates the engagement of the intellect and the creative imagination in the employment of our concepts.

But being creative and imaginative does not mean that we can do as we like or that anything goes, for the rules that govern the use of our

concepts may be unsystematic and open-ended, but nevertheless they are still rules, and rational thought and meaningful communication depends upon their proper application.

Seeing certain phenomena, then, presupposes an understanding of certain concepts. If there is more to seeing than simply the reception of visual impressions and retinal images, then it makes no sense to say of two people looking at the duck/rabbit picture, "They both see the same thing, the difference lies in their interpretation", because the concept of seeing involves interpretation as a necessary constituent. In order to see the duck in the drawing one has to have mastered, to some extent, the duck-concept. Without an understanding of either duck or rabbit concepts, the lines will either be interpreted as something else or seen simply as random lines, which although in one sense is to say that the lines are uninterpreted or meaningless, to see them as "random lines" is, at a fundamental level, to interpret them. Thus, seeing and interpreting are one and the same. Hanson demonstrates that when we see familiar objects, like boxes and bicycles, there are not two processes going on, seeing and interpreting, we simply see. Against the background of conceptual understanding, interpretation is in the seeing.¹ When we see objects and situations in the world we see them through our concepts, and in doing this, so we interpret them. This is what seeing is, this is what understanding our experience is. Apprehending and recognising facts cannot be explained in terms of visual impressions. We do not first see aspects of the world in some "neutral" sense, or as "pure phenomena", and then clamp an interpretation upon them. I do not have a visual sensation of rectangular redness and then interpret this as a book; I simply see a book. When reading I do not see, in some

¹ See Norwood Hanson: Patterns of Discovery, chapter 1, section B, pp. 8-19.

neutral sense, marks on paper and then proceed to interpret them as words; I see words. (But even this is to lean too much towards crude empiricism; it would be more correct to say that I simply read.) I do not see a clock as a pure object and, having initially interpreted it as a clock, then proceed to interpret what the time is; I just see what the time is. We are not aware of "neutral" or "pure" phenomena. To see is to see-as. The interpretation is in the seeing. The accomplished reader sees words as words, while to a totally illiterate person they would be meaningless marks, and the semi-literate may well see them as a jumble of letters or even words that he is unable to read. In each case the phenomena are being seen as something.

Of course there are times when we are puzzled by what we see, and we try to make sense of what is before us. We may sometimes wonder whether we are observing a rather masculine woman in trousers or a long haired man, vaguely effeminate. Or gazing through a haze we may see a lorry as a bus. In cases like these we look for other criteria in order to form a judgment. Here we are consciously interpreting what we see, but not from neutral sense-data, for whatever we see will be through our concepts. Indeed it is the concepts that we possess that enable us in situations like this to be puzzled. So that whatever we perceive, we can only perceive in terms of the concepts we possess, and if these are inadequate we may well be puzzled or mystified, and in many situations our unawareness may amount to "blindness". Hanson writes:

The infant and the layman can see: they are not blind. But they cannot see what the physicist sees; they are blind to what he sees. We may not hear that the oboe is out of tune, though this will be painfully obvious to the trained musician.¹

This is obviously conceptual or meaning blindness, where to see is to understand, and not simply a reference to visual impressions. "One

1 Hanson, *ibid*, p.17.

might say of someone that he was blind to the expression of a face. Would his eyesight on that account be defective?"¹ In common parlance we often say: "I see what you mean" and this clearly means: "I understand".

When a child looks at the duck/rabbit picture and says "Duck", he is reporting his perceptions, and is plainly not aware that he has brought a specific concept to bear upon the situation and, in so doing, interpreted it. The child simply sees the drawing as that of a duck. To this extent the figure seems to speak for itself. One might even say that this is perspicuous. But this is surely how we see familiar objects like boxes and bicycles. That is, we do not see them neutrally and then engage our concepts in order to interpret what we see; we see them through our concepts, which are employed tacitly. It is perhaps this inextricable amalgam of perception and interpretation (which the unobtrusive back-cloth of conceptual understanding gives rise to) that has conduced to the philosophical view that the pictures we have of the world i.e. our visual and mental impressions, are perspicuous, or in some way self-explanatory, for it is the visual that thrusts itself upon the consciousness, the "ineluctable modality of the visible"² where language and the concepts embedded therein, seem to take a back seat. One is not continually taking out a conceptual "measuring-rod or Calculator" in order to interpret one's experience. Wittgenstein's remark about following rules blindly is appropriate here.³ For when we see a bicycle, or report that we have seen a bicycle, we need not be, and for the most part in our ordinary everyday observations are not,

1 Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, p.210.

2 James Joyce: Ulysses, p.42.

3 See Philosophical Investigations, paragraph 219.

aware of applying a rule or using a specific concept. Yet certainly, a rule was tacitly applied when the bicycle was seen and recognised and again, in a verbal or grammatical sense, when the statement was made. In these observations one is not conscious of seeing in a neutral sense and then interpreting what one has seen; we follow conceptual rules without reference to strict formulae, and without one eye upon the rule-book. And in so far as we apply these rules for the most part without being aware that we are doing so, in both our perceptions and our descriptions, then it makes sense to say we follow rules blindly.

We see the world through our concepts and the rules that govern their employment. They are rather like spectacles that we wear all the time, without being aware that we wear them, except when we question and analyse our concepts; indeed, when we do philosophy.

"A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees."

William Blake¹

1 William Blake: Complete Writings, p.151 (ed. Geoffrey Keynes).

"REFLECTIVE REASONING" AND CONCEPTUAL ADJUSTMENT

Philosophy is generally considered to be an academic discipline, but it should be recognised that philosophical ways of thinking are integral features of daily life. Whenever we engage in serious arguments concerning morality, aesthetics, art, literature, politics, or almost anything else, including areas of empirical investigation, we are not merely concerned with facts, but also with concepts and the process of philosophising. Often we may be brought to see things differently from how we saw them hitherto and, by way of a clearer view of the rules that govern our concepts, we may enhance and enrich them, furnishing ourselves with an a priori knowledge which goes some way towards removing the blindness to which Wittgenstein refers.

The importance of facts in forming and informing our conceptual apparatus is indubitable, but as we have noted, the way we observe the facts depends upon the structure of our concepts, and if our concepts undergo a change, then our view of the world will change, too. What is of central significance here is that there are many ways of viewing the same set of facts. In the same way that two people may view the same phenomena quite differently, it is possible for different people with access to the self-same set of facts to arrive at quite different conclusions. As the same visual phenomena can involve different interpretations, so the same factual information can be organised to formulate different patterns of significance, and thus engender quite different evaluations.

Wittgenstein has indicated that when we do philosophy we do not embark on a search for new facts.¹ It is not an empirical discipline. Conceptual analysis does not extend our store of information in this

1 See Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, paragraphs 90 and 109.

manner; it is rather an activity that re-structures and reorganises the information that we already possess, though it is important to mention here that this kind of a priori enquiry may well make new facts available to us, for by clarifying our concepts it consequently clarifies our perceptions. By way of thought and reflection we can extend our knowledge by attaining a clearer insight into our conceptual apparatus and, as a consequence, come to a more profound understanding of our experience of the world.

Wittgenstein emphasized the importance of particular examples; the cataloguing of concrete cases for comparison, the process of acquainting ourselves with the similarities and dissimilarities that obtain between instances, the myriad features that collectively constitute each conceptual component.¹ It was in this manner, by way of thought and argument, that Socrates, though dissatisfied with his efforts, came to a deeper understanding of the concepts that he investigated, like justice, goodness, knowledge etc. It is, as Wittgenstein demonstrated, because of the complex structure of our concepts and the inordinate multiplicity of criteria that govern their employment, that knowledge of the universal can only proceed in terms of knowledge of the heterogeneous particulars that constitute the universal. But the traditional conception of the connection between the universal and the particular has misled philosophers and engendered, as we have seen, a misconstrual of the fundamental concepts of knowledge and truth which, as a necessary consequence, entailed a restricted account of the process of reason and the nature of rational justification.

We noted earlier that truth and reason were necessary constituents of the traditional account of knowledge, and certainly, while avoiding

1 This is reiterated throughout the Investigations, but see especially paragraphs 71; 75-77; and 130-131.

any talk of essences, it must be accepted that truth and reason are important features of the concept of knowledge, but the artificial boundaries that the traditional account imposes upon knowledge were reinforced by Empiricist philosophy, and clearly exemplified in the work of David Hume in terms of the constraints that he applies to the concepts of truth and reason. "Truth is of two kinds, consisting either in the discovery of the proportions of ideas, considered as such, or the conformity of our ideas of objects to their real existence."¹ For Hume, truth was simply the product of factual induction and logical deduction, while reason was defined in terms of the processes of induction and deduction. For Hume, sound knowledge rested on these twin pillars and could be acquired in no other manner. He states this categorically in the Treatise when he argues that moral values are not derived from reason:

As the operations of human understanding divide themselves into two kinds, the comparing of ideas and the inferring of matter of fact; were virtue discovered by the understanding, it must be an object of one of those operations nor is there any third operation of the understanding which can discover it.²

Now Wittgenstein has shown us that the links between examples of the same concept are not uniform or systematic, and that we do not and could not acquire fundamental and conceptual knowledge by way of simple induction, for as there is no set of features common to all games, there is no essential thread that binds all cases; tolerance, hypocrisy, joy, intelligence, or even tables and chairs, together. This casts some doubt on the validity of the uniformity of the inductive generalisations of experimental science for, as we have noted, the inductive generalisation itself embodies concepts which themselves were not acquired by way of induction. It appears, therefore, that the ability to reason

1 Hume: Treatise, Book II, Part iii, Section 10.

2 Hume, *ibid*, III, i, 1.

inductively is dependent upon the mastery of a reasoning process which itself is not inductive. We noted earlier that the inductive search for what all games have in common presupposes knowing what to count as a game and what to leave out, and this involves a process of giving reasons prior to that of inductive reasoning. This is the ability to recognise complex connections and relationships, similarities and dissimilarities, central and peripheral features. Such reasoning is neither inductive nor deductive, for if there is no systematic connection between the particular and the general, then there can be no necessary entailment from the general to the particular.

One might ask here: But is there deduction involved in our apprehension of particular objects and situations in the world? - that is, when we recognise that a bicycle is a bicycle, are we in some way deducing that what we see is a bicycle? Wittgenstein makes it clear that this is not the case; the move that takes us from being aware of certain visual sense data to the conclusion that what we see is a bicycle, is not deductive, for there is no necessary entailment connecting the visual sense experience with the conceptual interpretation.¹ Thus in our earlier example, although the small child saw a "pussy-cat" in the picture, it did not necessarily follow that it was a pussy-cat; indeed it was not. But because the connection is not necessary, it would be erroneous to conclude that it is not logical or rational. For two people seeing the duck/rabbit drawing can point to objective features in the drawing to support their conclusion or interpretation.

Thus it appears, contrary to Hume's account, that our fundamental conceptual knowledge is acquired neither inductively nor deductively. It is rather a knowledge that involves an active and creative power of reason on which reasoning techniques like induction and deduction are

1 Wittgenstein, Investigations, paragraph 486.

themselves dependent. The irony is that empiricist philosophy falls foul of its own strict demands; certainly by way of experiment and observation we can induce that "Horses are vegetarians", and from this, and related premises we can deduce further conclusions. But it was not by way of such empirical investigation that Hume arrived at the philosophical belief that "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions".¹ Such conclusions are reached by way of thought and reflection, though still involving the process of reason; not one which accorded with Hume's own definition, but the a priori activity to which we have alluded. Indeed we might say, with due respect to Hume and his contribution to philosophy, "Induction and deduction are and ought only to be the slaves of reason".

John Wisdom has further developed the work of Wittgenstein and reiterated the importance of cataloguing concrete cases for comparison in the process of reason and the search for knowledge and truth.² He argues cogently in terms of the concrete examples that he himself advocates, that we can acquire knowledge by way of reflective reasoning, which is neither inductive nor deductive. It is an a priori reasoning, where the connections are valid without being systematic, and the entailments logical without being rigidly necessary. This account portrays reason as active and critical, while induction and deduction, with their emphasis on uniformity and generality, appear mechanical and systematic. Wisdom recognises the value of the syllogism in certain contexts and describes the descent that takes one necessarily from the

1 David Hume: A Treatise on Human Nature, II, iii, 3.

2 Wisdom reiterates this in the collections of essays, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis and Paradox and Discovery. See especially "Gods" and "Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psychoanalysis" in the former; "A feature of Wittgenstein's technique" and "Tolerance" in the latter, and the title essays in the two collections.

general premise to the particular conclusion as vertical reasoning. But he, along with Wittgenstein, argues that the validity of the generalisation can always be questioned, even in areas of empirical investigation.¹ He insists that general premises can only be understood in terms of heterogeneous particulars, and that it is on these that we should concentrate our attention. In this regard, Wisdom discusses what he calls "horizontal reasoning",² which consists in the cataloguing of concrete cases for comparison, to scrutinize the familiar and the unfamiliar, and the complex network of features that connect the cases within the scope of the same concept. Thus in legal matters one decides that what constitutes an act of negligence is not the looking up of a general rule that stipulates the essence of negligence, but by consulting past cases of negligence, and also analyzing the concept in the light of what it makes sense to say, and considering possible cases of negligence. Would we call x negligence? How does x differ from y? How does y connect with z? etc. This, as Wisdom recognises,³ is not

1 In the unpublished "Virginian Lectures" (delivered in Virginia in 1957), Wisdom is uncompromising in his attack:

". . . all deductive argument, absolutely all deductive argument, comes in the end to a case-by-case procedure . . . One may with regard to the question 'When is deductive argument good?' make some very considerable attempt to give an answer in terms of definite rules which amount to a definition of the good deductive argument and the bad deductive argument. But it is notorious that with regard to inductive, scientific reasoning the attempt is by no means such a success; the attempt to give an account in general terms of when scientific reasoning, inductive reasoning, is good or bad has been a failure not only compared with the attempt to give such an account of deductive reasoning but also as compared with what we may achieve when asked about reasoning concerning probabilities." (See lecture XI.)

2 See John Wisdom: "Gods", from Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, p.157.

3 See John Wisdom: "Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psychoanalysis", in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis.

simply a matter of fact, for, as we have seen, facts do not speak for themselves, and as the same phenomena may be viewed differently, so the same facts may be structured into different patterns of significance. Neither are such cases simply a matter of words in any simple semantic sense, because words embody the concepts which structure and order our experience. Language connects with the objective world, and the way we understand words has practical consequences affecting our behaviour and decisions. Thus we stroke horses; we do not stroke tigers.

These important points and the centrality of philosophical thought in everyday life were clearly exemplified in the recent trial of the "Yorkshire Ripper", Peter Sutcliffe. The facts of the case were not in dispute; Sutcliffe had confessed to killing a number of women and the crimes were described by him in considerable detail. The main question that the court discussed and placed before the jury was not a simple factual one, and neither was it just a matter of words. It was a problem of conceptual interpretation. Did the facts add up to manslaughter or did the same facts add up to murder? This distinction is obviously crucial for complex legal concepts are involved, and the decisions that are reached in court concerning matters of law are of supreme importance, for they create precedents that modify and adjust the concepts in question, which can and do affect the course of future judicial proceedings. In this regard, Wittgenstein's emphasis on the logic of ordinary language and what it makes sense to say are particularly apposite, for the Yorkshire Ripper trial focused on questions of meaning, and one central feature of the trial from the outset seemed manifestly to "sublime the logic"¹ of ordinary language. This was the fact that Peter Sutcliffe pleaded guilty to thirteen cases of manslaughter and

1 See Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, paragraph 38.

seven cases of attempted murder, where the attacks had been of a similar nature but where the victims had survived. Now the concept of manslaughter contains an element of the accidental, while murder involves the deliberate intention of taking a human life. It would thus appear that one cannot deliberately kill someone and truthfully call it manslaughter. It seemed, then, from the beginning of the trial, that a contradiction of terms was involved, namely that one could attempt to murder someone, and if this resulted in the death of the victim, it could be classified as manslaughter. The court therefore had to consider, in the light of the facts, the philosophical problem concerning the similarities and dissimilarities between murder and manslaughter, and this involved a detailed examination of the criteria by way of which such concepts are employed. Thus other related concepts were scrutinized and measured against the facts, including intention, premeditation, free will, compulsion, responsibility and, perhaps the most significant question: how does one distinguish diminished responsibility from irresponsibility?

Now the problem here, as with many areas of human knowledge, was not a simple factual one, although of course facts were inevitably involved. It was rather a question of interpretation; what pattern of meaning would emerge from these facts? How were the phenomena to be structured and organised? Such fundamental conceptual disputes cannot be approached in terms of induction and deduction. They are far too complex and multi-factorial, they involve, both as a matter of fact and common logic, the reflective reasoning to which Wisdom alludes:

In such cases we notice that the process of argument is not a chain of demonstrative reasoning. It is a presenting and re-presenting of those features of the case which severally co-operate in favour of the conclusion, in favour of saying what the reasoner wishes said, in favour of calling the situation by the name by which he wishes to call it. The reasons are like the legs of a chair, not the links of a chain. Consequently although the discussion is a priori and the steps are not a matter of experience, the procedure

resembles scientific argument in that the reasoning is not vertically extensive but horizontally extensive - it is a matter of the cumulative effect of several independent premises, not of the repeated transformation of one or two But it is not an arbitrary decision though the rational connections are neither quite like those in vertical deductions nor like those in inductions in which from many signs we guess at what is to come; and though the decision manifests itself in the application of a name it is no more merely the application of a name than is the pinning on of a medal merely the pinning on of a bit of metal.¹

This kind of reasoning process is a common aspect of human enquiry, and occurs at all levels, from disputes in public houses to debates in the Houses of Parliament. It is clearly exemplified in the law-courts, where opposing lawyers emphasize different features of a case in order to establish one pattern of meaning rather than another, that the facts add up to this picture rather than that. This may be compared with the example of the two people observing the duck/rabbit drawing, where one quite clearly sees a duck and thus indicates and emphasizes duck attributes, while the other quite clearly sees a rabbit, and points with equal conviction to the visible evidence.

Now according to recent philosophers, this kind of dispute is not uncommon in science, and it is not simply an experimental matter, but a question of conceptual organisation. The process of inculcating knowledge that enables someone to see a situation differently from how he saw it previously is neither a matter of induction nor deduction, but involves the presenting of examples and the exposition of features, as Wittgenstein and Wisdom have indicated.

It is important here to reiterate that the cases themselves do not have to be factual, but they do have to accord with the logic of our language. However imaginative, and oblique in their significance, the examples may be, they obviously have to fulfil the conditions of what

1 John Wisdom: "Gods", in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, pp. 157-158.

it makes sense to say, and thus in some sense be in harmony with the logic of human experience. We can, therefore, invent cases or construct analogies in order to bring certain concepts into focus, and thus view them with an insight that widens our vision and extends our knowledge of the world. We can see here how the imaginary and fictitious connect with the real and the factual.

Jesus Christ used parables to describe how human beings could behave in certain situations, and this communicated knowledge, not in terms of factual information, but by sharpening our insight into moral and emotional concepts concerning human behaviour, such as generosity, hypocrisy, love, compassion, tolerance, selfishness, jealousy etc. In this way, by providing particular examples, the novelist and the poet and the dramatist can alter our vision and enable us to see situations differently from how we saw them previously, showing us meaning and patterns of significance in familiar, not to say common-place, phenomena, and making us aware of truths that were hitherto unrecognised.

The presenting of cases in terms of imaginative analogies can inform us not only by extending our knowledge of the concepts that the analogies exemplify, but also, by way of contrast, widen our vision of their contraries. Thus we may come to know more about love by an analysis of hatred. Likewise, an attainment of insight into evil may well deepen our understanding of the moral good. Irrationality may teach us something about rationality, or rationality about irrationality. It is in this way that paradoxes can be informative, for they juxtapose contraries in such a manner that they can shock our sensibility into a deeper awareness. We are so aware of the differences that distinguish opposites that we fail to recognise the subtle and often inscrutable similarities. There may be aspects of beauty in ugliness, or vice versa. When a woman described her life after winning the football pools as "a

miserable happiness", she was alluding to the false ideals that people often have as to what constitutes happiness and misery. In retrospect, she could perceive that her former "miserable" life had much in it that was happy. One can apprehend the significance in William Blake's words: "Without Contraries is no progression."¹ The connecting of contraries can reveal aspects in the phenomena by way of stark contrast, and this is a familiar feature of literature. The poet employs various devices, like oxymorons, hyperboles, metaphors, similes and other images, to achieve this kind of contrast.

When Blake described the chimney-sweep as "A little black thing among the snow",² he was in this image throwing into relief the evil of a society that forced children to climb chimneys in inhuman conditions of cruelty and poverty, in order to live (or, more pointedly, die), by contrasting the black, man-made soot, with the natural white purity of the snow. For the climbing boys wore "the clothes of death"³ and their natural innocence had been corrupted by their experience of evil in an urban society, and this is reflected in the black soot on the white snow.

John Wisdom has shown us the significance of paradox in discovery:

. . . though some statements which seem self-contradictory are self-contradictory others are not, . . . indeed some of the most preposterous statements ever made have turned out to convey the most tremendous discoveries.⁴

Paul Feyerabend emphasizes the importance of contrast in the search for knowledge. He argues that in order to see the real world more clearly, we must construct imaginative alternatives, in an effort to

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- 1 William Blake: "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" Plate 3 in Blake's Complete Writings, p.149 (ed. Geoffrey Keynes).
 - 2 William Blake: "The Chimney Sweeper" from "Songs of Experience" *ibid*, p.212.
 - 3 Blake: *ibid*.
 - 4 John Wisdom: "Paradox and Discovery", in Paradox and Discovery, p.124.

shake off the prejudice of pre-determined paradigms that culture and education prescribe. He writes:

We need an external standard of criticism, we need a set of alternative assumptions or, as these assumptions will be quite general, constituting, as it were, an entire alternative world, we need a dream-world in order to discover the features of the real world we think we inhabit.¹

Such dream-worlds are constructed by literary artists, and through these analogies we can, by way of similarities and dissimilarities, become more acquainted with the real world. In this way the literary artist teaches us how to see the world, how to interpret our experience. He provides us with knowledge by adjusting our concepts, enhancing and enriching them. We shall see later, by way of examples, how this is achieved.

1 Paul Feyerabend: Against Method, p.32.

PART TWO

SELF-KNOWLEDGE: FEELINGS AND LANGUAGE

From 18th to 19th February, 1913

. . . What is clear within is bound to become so in words as well. This is why one need never worry about oneself. After all, who knows within himself how things really are with him? This tempestuous of floundering or morass like innerself is what we really are but by the secret process by which words are forced out of us, our self-knowledge is brought to light and though it may still be veiled yet it is there before us wonderful or terrible to behold.

From 17th to 18th March, 1913

. . . I once wrote . . . that no feeling need search for corresponding words but is confronted or even impelled by them. Perhaps this is not quite true after all.

Franz Kafka: Letters to Felice.

He hated Popé more and more. A man can smile and smile and be a villain. Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain. What did the words exactly mean? He only half knew. But their magic was strong and went on rumbling in his head, and somehow it was as though he had never really hated Popé before; never really hated him because he had never been able to say how much he hated him. But now he had these words, these words like drums and singing and magic.

Aldous Huxley: Brave New World.

. . . for it seems to me it's the same with love and happiness as with sorrow - the more we know of it the better we can feel what other people's lives are or might be, and so we shall only be more tender to 'em, and wishful to help 'em. The more knowledge a man has, the better he'll do's work; and feeling's a sort o' knowledge.

George Eliot: Adam Bede.

INTRODUCING THE PROBLEM

Since the days of ancient Greece, poets and philosophers have given serious thought to the role of emotion in both the creation and appreciation of literature. There is a complex and many-faceted relationship between literature and emotion. Literary works are often emotionally expressive, indeed poetry has been formally defined as an expression of emotion, and the language of poetry has been labelled "emotive". There are works of literature which certainly evoke emotion, and many seek to analyse or describe emotional states. The nature and extent of the relationship between literature and emotion, be it conceptual or factual, need not concern us here. We are concerned with the epistemic qualities of literature, and therefore address ourselves to particular questions, vis-à-vis the emotions and self-knowledge. Can literary works tell us anything about ourselves that we do not already know? Can they inform us about our own emotional states? Can literature heighten self-awareness or clarify our feelings? Can we come to a deeper understanding of ourselves, not to mention our fellows, by frequenting works of literature?

We will be in a better position to understand and assess the contribution that literature can or cannot make to self-knowledge when we have a better understanding of just what constitutes an emotion. We must therefore consider how we learn about ourselves in general in our everyday lives. How do we come to understand our own feelings, and also the feelings of others? How do we acquire emotion-concepts?

In George Eliot's novel Daniel Deronda, there is a scene where Gwendolen and her mother are sorting out some trinkets to sell in order to raise money, for the family have fallen on hard times. Gwendolen remarks bitterly:

'I am going to take the veil. I wonder if all the poor wretches who have taken it felt as I do.'

'Don't exaggerate evils, dear.'

'How can any one know that I exaggerate, when I am speaking of my own feeling? I did not say what any one else felt.'¹

Gwendolen's retort here represents a long-held view of the emotions, which until comparatively recently was unquestioned philosophically. The view still remains to some extent at what one might call a common-sense level. It is certainly implicitly present in many areas remote from philosophical analysis. It is the view that the inner life of an individual (his sensations and emotions,) is private, and known only to himself. His feelings are experienced inside; they exist inside, and cannot be experienced or truly made manifest from without. It is thus, according to this, as Gwendolen asserts, impossible really to know the feelings of another. Here one might say "Well surely no-one can possibly know a man's feelings as he knows them himself. They are, after all, his feelings". There is obviously a sense in which this is true. It is possible for an individual to hide his emotions, so that only he knows what he is feeling at a specific time. A man may be angry, but for reasons of diplomacy or tact, decide to conceal his anger, and suppress all outer manifestations of the emotion. In this way, his feelings would be known only to himself. But does this not touch on the very nub of the question? For if a man has to make an effort to conceal his emotion, then, necessarily, his feelings are displayed, in some sense, to the outside world, and can be observed and studied. But here the hardline Cartesian would argue that these outer manifestations are merely signs and symptoms, and that the "actual" emotion goes on inside, for that is where it is felt.

Now if it is true that the individual knows his emotions in a way that no-one else can know them, because he has a peculiar and unique access to

¹ George Eliot: Daniel Deronda, p.414.

his feelings, then it would follow that all self-knowledge would stem from within, that one could not discover anything about oneself by studying other people. And conversely, it would make no sense for someone to point out, as Gwendolen's mother does, that one is exaggerating one's feelings, or that one is perhaps mistaken about them. For if the emotions are known only to the individual, then what he says he is feeling is all there is to go on. If he is wrong about his emotions, then logically only he can know that he is wrong. It would make no sense, for example, to make the following observations:

"We all knew that Jill was in love before she knew herself. You could see that from the way she was behaving," or:

"He said emphatically that he wasn't angry, but we could see that he was furious," or:

"Jack says he's not jealous, and I'm sure he believes it, but you can see from the way that he acts that he is extremely jealous."

It is in the same scene, exemplified by way of Gwendolen, that George Eliot asserts that human beings can be mistaken about their feelings. Gwendolen is not at all clear as to why she wants to keep a necklace which previously she had not cared for and had sold, but was subsequently recovered for her by Deronda.

Why she should suddenly determine not to part with the necklace was not much clearer to her than why she should sometimes have been frightened to find herself in the fields alone: she had a confused state of emotion about Deronda - was it wounded pride and resentment, or a certain awe and exceptional trust? It was something vague and yet mastering, which impelled her to this action about the necklace. There is a great deal of unmapped country within us which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms.¹

Now the author here is not simply concerned with her character. She is making a general statement about human nature, that people do not

1 *ibid*, pp. 415 - 416.

always know their own feelings, and that it is conceivable that we can be mistaken about our emotional states. Now if it is true that we can be mistaken about what we are feeling, then according to Gwendolen's position, no-one could ever know of any mistake except the person who made it, for he is the sole arbiter; only he knows his feelings, no-one else has access to them.

This needs careful consideration, for if this view were true, then there would be no way of learning anything about oneself except by introspection. Neither could we know anything about other people's feelings, except what they told us. This prompts certain questions; just how do one's feelings relate to the feelings of others, and what is the connection between the inner experience of emotion, and the outer expression? One thing is certain; the view as stated by Gwendolen would exclude the reading of literature, or anything else, for that matter, as a source of knowledge about one's own feelings and emotions.

WITTGENSTEIN AND THE TRADITIONAL THEORY

Gwendolen is, unwittingly, a Cartesian. Her words reflect a theory which was delineated in some detail by Descartes,¹ though it has its roots in ancient philosophy; it has been called the "traditional theory".² This portrays the emotions as private, inner experiences, perceived as one perceives objects, each separately recognisable and appropriately labelled: remorse, shame, anger, or whatever. Thus, emotion-words were simply names, and these were defined by their bearers, the private inner objects, the feelings themselves. But Wittgenstein's arguments on privacy and the language of sensations have demonstrated that this traditional theory is ultimately illogical and false.³

We have already seen that language is a social phenomenon, and that meaning cannot be accounted for in terms of objects or pictures of objects. The relationship between word and world is living and dynamic, and inordinately complex, and cannot be explained by way of rigid formulae, like the name/object account, which is dead and static. The unsatisfactory nature of this account is further demonstrated when it is employed as an explanation of sensation and emotion-concepts, for it presupposes a private system of understanding that somehow "stands behind"

1 This is the thesis that Descartes worked out in his Meditations.

2 See especially Errol Bedford, "Emotions", in V. C. Chappell, ed.: The Philosophy of Mind, p.110 ff.

3 This complex and profound argument is one of the main features of the Philosophical Investigations, and extends for over 100 paragraphs beginning at paragraph 243. There are many explanatory essays on Wittgenstein's thesis; see especially Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations", Rush Rhees, "Can There be a Private Language?", John W. Cook, "Wittgenstein on Privacy", Anthony Kenny, "Cartesian Privacy", and Norman Malcolm, "Knowledge of Other Minds", all in G. Pitcher, ed.: Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations. See also Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science, Chapter 1, John Cook, "Human Beings", in Peter Winch, ed.: Studies in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, and David Pears, "Sensations", in Wittgenstein.

the language we publicly speak. It also makes an absolute distinction between mind and body, and entails extreme, not to say total, solipsism. For if emotion-terms were defined simply by reference to private inner objects, then clearly they could not be taught to anyone, either to oneself or to others. The individual could not know whether he was applying the emotion-term correctly, because he would not have access to other people's private feelings, and thus could not observe how they applied the concept. Similarly, no teacher would be able to correct him because his private feelings, too, would be inaccessible.

One might object here: but why do emotion concepts have to be taught? Why can't we learn them ourselves, by introspecting our emotions? Now this idea may have a certain specious attractiveness, but it presupposes a private system of understanding, mentioned earlier, which Wittgenstein cogently rejects. It will be seen that the idea of such a system operating in reference to emotion and sensation-concepts, is not simply contrary to the facts, but quite clearly illogical. For if the meaning of each emotion-term were private, known only to the individual himself, then how could individuals make themselves understood to each other? How could we communicate our emotions? If an individual said that he felt angry, or guilty, then how would other individuals know just what he meant, when only he had access to the private objects to which he referred? Now the fact is that we are able to communicate our emotions and feelings to each other in our everyday lives. Is this not because we have common access to the tools of thought and communication, language and the rules that govern correct and incorrect usage? When we learn new terms and widen our conceptual vocabulary, we learn the terms with reference to their use in different social situations, according to rules that are socially shared and publicly available. It is the objectivity of linguistic rules which provides a common standard of

meaning and understanding. Therefore, as Wittgenstein points out, the fact that we do understand each other where emotions and sensations are concerned, demonstrates that the meaning of these concepts cannot be private, and there must necessarily be external and public criteria for the language of the inner life. Wittgenstein makes it clear that this is not simply the way it is, but also the way it has to be, logically. For the idea that we can have a private understanding of our emotions and sensations, entails the belief that a completely private language is logically possible - that is, a language, evolving and developing in the psyche of one individual, by definition cut off from the objective rules of meaning, which social agreement in usage bestows upon ordinary language. The rules of meaning in a private language would be solipistic and purely subjective, for the sole judge of correctness and incorrectness in the use of linguistic terms, would be the individual self, referring back to self by way of memory, with nothing external against which to check and measure the memory.

We have already seen that meaning cannot be explained in terms of names and objects named. But even if we ignore this, a further difficulty for the traditional theory of the emotions and the private language that it entails is the problem of correctness and incorrectness of application. How can the individual be sure that he is applying the named feeling correctly? His only guide will be his memory, and how he applied it in the past. He has to remember both the name and the feeling to which he applied it. Now can he be sure, without any external check, that his memory is accurate? We have to imagine an individual who speaks no language, having a feeling and giving the feeling a name, and then, the next time he has the feeling, in a day, or month, or in five minutes, applying the same name to the same feeling. But again, how can he be sure that it is the same feeling? Of course, one could immediately say

here, surely we often check one memory against another. There is nothing unusual about this. We may wait confidently for a bus, remembering a past occasion when we caught a bus at a similar time. We may reinforce this by referring to yet another memory of a similar occurrence. But here, the ultimate check is an objective one. For the final proof of whether the memory is correct or incorrect, lies with the bus time-table. It is, after all, only by referring to external evidence, that we can demonstrate whether we have a reliable memory. Without such a reference to objective evidence, we could surely not differentiate between memory and imagination. The supposed private language user would necessarily have no access to external evidence. Here the individual's word is law. He is the only judge. As with Humpty-Dumpty,¹ words could mean anything and everything, depending on how he used them or how he remembered using them.

But allowing this begs too many questions, for it assumes that the individual has already reached the sophistication of knowing what words are, or what it is to name something, and this makes him a language-user before he begins. Wittgenstein clearly demonstrates this point, arguing that in order for the individual to recognise the "same feeling", not to mention applying the "same name", the individual would have to have an understanding of what "the same" means. And the concept of "the same" is a very complex one indeed. The term is governed by an indefinite variety of heterogeneous features, and what we mean when we use the term "the same" will depend upon how the term is being used, and the circumstance and context in which it is used. The "same pen" could mean a pen of the same colour, one of the same shape, one with the same coloured ink in it, a pen of the same make, a fountain-pen as opposed to a ball-point, etc. or it could mean the very self-same pen.

1 Lewis Carroll: Through the Looking Glass, p.324.

Thus a grasp of the concept of similarity, or "the same", presupposes a sophisticated grasp of the concept in reference to which the term is used. To talk of "the same pen" involves a not inconsiderable knowledge of pens. Similarly, to talk of the same feeling presupposes a knowledge of feelings or emotions that cannot be pre-supposed. Furthermore, to talk of the same feeling in this way is to presume that the feeling or emotion in question is a precisely defined phenomenon, easily identified and circumscribed as "one thing", rather than being, as with most concepts, internally complex and governed by a family of features, not reducible to essences or necessary and sufficient conditions. Naming a feeling in this way presupposes a sophisticated conceptual framework.

Let us consider "naming" itself. A man's ability to name his dog "Fido" is necessarily dependent upon considerable conceptual knowledge, knowledge which is largely taken for granted. He understands what dogs are, how they differ from other animals, how his dog differs from other dogs. Many concepts appertaining to shape, colour and canine behaviour all play a part in naming the dog. Naming an emotion or a dog presupposes a sophisticated understanding of language and the concepts embedded therein. Naming cannot be seen as a precondition or as a foundation for language. It is merely one of a number of activities that take place in an already established and acquired language. Rather than "naming" being a necessary precondition for language, it is more correct to say that language is a necessary precondition for naming.

There is an important and fundamental difference in the naming of a dog "Fido" and the naming of an emotion "anger", "shame", or whatever. The former case presupposes considerable linguistic ability and conceptual understanding, which cannot be presupposed in the latter case, for where naming an emotion is concerned, the naming represents the very foundation

on which the understanding of the concepts and the acquisition of the private language of feeling, are supposed to be based.

Consider further the observance of objective rules in the learning of language. When a man names his dog "Fido", in spite of his considerable sophistication in language and concepts, he can still make mistakes. In such an eventuality, he is open to correction. The dog may not answer to the name "Fido", or he may bite the man, or other people may point out that it is in fact not Fido, but another dog, named "Bruno". Thus here, as with all language, there is an objective standard. But where feelings are named privately, or where private language is concerned, no such standard is available. We cannot presuppose a conceptual framework here because that begs the whole question. How would such a private language have got off the ground? The idea of a man having a private language, with his own subjective rules, or to imagine that human beings understand their emotions in this way, is ultimately illogical. It is analogous with the idea of human beings putting their watches right according to their own private, individual, imaginary clocks as opposed to a common, standard time-check. For without standards, such as Greenwich, (which in turn is linked to the objective movements of the planets) clocks and watches could not be correctly adjusted, for there would be nothing with which to synchronize them. Thus the concept of "correct time" could have no application, no meaning, because correct time depends upon agreed standards of correctness, a common system of measurement. Now here, to imagine people adjusting their watches in relation to their own, private, imaginary clocks, is to beg the question, for the invention and existence of time-pieces presupposes an agreed standard of measurement against which clocks are to be tested and adjusted. It also necessarily presupposes the concept of "correct" time in objective existence. A similar kind of question-begging is involved in imagining that an individual can

privately name a feeling or emotion, and thus give birth to his own language. For naming a feeling and then recognising it later as the same feeling, involves a prior understanding of sophisticated concepts which only a language-user could possess, concepts which can only be learned in a society where they have an objective existence, and are meaningful according to public criteria, against which the individual can correct his mistakes.

INNER FEELING AND OUTER EXPRESSION

As was mentioned earlier, when we acquire new linguistic terms and widen our conceptual vocabulary, we learn those terms by way of their employment in different social situations according to rules that are socially shared and publicly available. This is true not only of the language that describes and evaluates the objective, external world of pianos, houses and trees, but also the language of the inner life of sensations and emotions. We have seen that this language cannot be learned privately by individuals; there must, therefore, be some public manifestation of emotion in order to give the language a foothold, or point of reference. This indeed is the case; if, for example, a young child unfamiliar with the use of linguistic terms, and feeling his way with emotion-concepts, says "I am feeling angry today" when it is perfectly evident, according to the circumstances and context in which the remark was made, and the accompanying behaviour of the child, that he is really expressing the fact that he feels sad, then those around him can correct his mistake by pointing out that "angry" is not the correct term, and that he is misusing it. It would be explained to him that he should be using a word like "sad" or "unhappy", or some such similar expression.

An important aspect of the traditional theory is that we cannot logically infer from a person's behaviour just what he is feeling. The Cartesian account denies that there is any logical connection between the inner experience and the outer behaviour. This must necessarily be so if the definition of the concept is confined to the feeling itself, and the connection between the latter and its outward expression would thus be merely contingent. That is, the inner feeling simply causes the outer expression, no more, no less. But Wittgenstein has shown clearly that the concepts through which we understand and interpret the inner life,

stand, necessarily, in need of external criteria. Thus, as the above example seeks to demonstrate, we learn emotion-terms as children, as they are applied to us by adults, who interpret what is publicly manifest in our behaviour. We therefore learn to connect the term that is applied to us from the outside with what we are feeling on the inside, the inner experience. At the same time we also become familiar with such terms by reference to how they are applied to other people in respect of their behaviour, thus witnessing different aspects of emotions in ourselves and in others, all contributing to a fuller understanding of emotion-concepts. It can be seen, therefore, that the connection between the inner feeling and the outer behaviour is a conceptual one. Smiling is not merely caused by the feeling of happiness, smiling is part of the feeling of happiness. Smiling and feelings of happiness are logically related. They are different aspects of the same emotion concept.

Now the traditional account, in holding that the relationship between inner and outer was simply contingent, legislated against any logical connection, thus implying that the outer behaviour was unimportant or even irrelevant. To be sure, it would be perfectly consistent with this account to argue that a man who smiled and laughed a great deal and exhibited in his behaviour overwhelming evidence that he was extremely happy and contented with the world was, nevertheless, experiencing within profound anguish and misery. Now, what complicates the argument and indicates the complexity of the relationship between inner experience and outer behaviour, is that the disharmony exemplified above does occur in everyday life, though perhaps not in such an extreme form. Some people can, and do, disguise and hide their emotions to the extent that their behaviour gives a quite false impression of their feelings. A widow stricken with grief may wear a smile in order to put a brave face on things, in spite of her feelings. Similarly, actors on the stage exhibit

convincing displays of emotion that they are not truly feeling. There are also those real-life deceivers who, for their own peculiar motives, simulate false emotions by way of their behaviour. A man may weep and sigh and wear a pained expression and all the suits and trappings of grief on the death of his wife, yet in his heart he may feel glad, or even joyful that the event has occurred. These examples may appear to weaken the logical relationship between inner feeling and its outer expression, but this is not so, indeed there is a sense in which they reinforce the relationship. For the person who smiles in order to put a brave face on things is exploiting the meaning of the gesture of smiling and its associations with the feeling of happiness. The same is true of the man who pretends to be grief-stricken, for by doing so he is exploiting the conceptual connection between inner feelings of grief and certain behavioural criteria. If the connection were merely contingent, then behavioural criteria would be irrelevant, and no logical inference could be made about inner human emotion from outer human behaviour. It is true that some people may smile when they are unhappy, but if everyone smiled when they were unhappy, then smiling, the gesture, would not have the meaning that it does have for us. It would have the meaning of a facial expression connected with pain or unhappiness, like wincing or grimacing. So too with grief-behaviour; if people always sighed and cried and wore what we now call a pained expression when they felt glad or joyful, then such behaviour would not be associated with grief or sadness, but would have a quite different meaning, related to feelings of gladness and joy. It is because most people, most of the time, manifest their feelings naturally and sincerely, and neither hide them nor simulate other emotions by way of their behaviour, that our concepts of smiling, frowning, laughing and crying, are structured in the way that they are.

It is in human behaviour that emotion is expressed and displayed, and what we witness is an outer manifestation of the emotion itself. It is not simply signs and symptoms; if this were the case, then statements like "he was angry" or "she was jealous" would always be hypothetical. Yet we can often know with complete certainty what emotional state a person is in with reference to nothing other than behaviour and the circumstances into which it fits. Actors on the stage only fool us within the vision of the play. We know they are pretending; that is what the stage is for. As for real-life deceivers, they cannot fool all of the people all of the time. If they did, we could not know that such deceivers existed. It is only by reference to their behaviour that we can bear witness to their deceit. The deception will be manifest in their behaviour. Hiding one's emotions or simulating others in terms of behaviour presupposes a knowledge of sophisticated concepts like pretence, deception, acting, etc; and these are, necessarily, only available to language-users. It would not make sense, for example, to say of a very young baby, "although he is smiling and gurgling, he is just pretending to be happy; inside he feels very miserable". We may say of a dog that his bark is worse than his bite, but by this we do not mean that the dog is pretending to be unfriendly, but that the dog is not so ferocious as his bark suggests. It is certain that, if a dog growled and showed its teeth, and strained at the leash, snarling and snapping with all the familiar signs of canine ferocity, it would be absurd to say that the dog was really very friendly and was simply putting on an act. At this primitive level, we see the feelings of human beings and animals displayed simultaneously as they are felt.

EMOTIONS AND THEIR OBJECTS

Human nature, by definition, involves emotions, and human beings are essentially social animals. Hence the emotions are the integral constituents, or even the currency, of human relationships. In the preceding discussion, some considerable attention has been paid to human behaviour, but some reference has been made to the context and situation in which the behaviour occurs. The social circumstances are of fundamental importance, and play a necessary role both in the acquisition of emotion-concepts and in the everyday recognition and interpretation of human emotion. We have seen that there can be no private grasp of emotion-concepts; emotions are understood socially, and there is a logical link between the inner and outer aspects of emotion. There is also a logical link between the emotion and the circumstances of which it is a consequence.

Emotions have objects; not merely as a matter of fact, but as a matter of logic. If one feels afraid, one feels afraid of someone or something; if one feels ashamed, one feels ashamed of something; if one feels compassion, one feels compassion for someone. One could not, for example, feel remorse without having committed a deed or action about which to feel remorseful. Emotions cannot be experienced as feelings in a vacuum, cut off from their objects. They fit logically into a situation or set of circumstances. One cannot talk of feeling jealous without something to feel jealous about, any more than one can talk meaningfully of a one-sided pair of scissors. This represents a crucial difference between emotions and sensations. A man can say "I feel sick" without knowing why he feels sick, or "I have a pain in my back" without knowing why he has a pain in his back. But he could not say "I feel angry" without knowing why he felt angry, or "I feel ashamed", without knowing why he felt ashamed. Sensations involve causal explanations,

while for our emotions we give reasons, i.e. indicating the object of the emotions.¹

It may be objected here that some people do feel emotions which have no objects, like "pointless depression" or "nameless dread", or a general feeling of fear which alludes to nothing in particular. That such feelings exist is undeniable, but the fact that they are objectless is indicative of their irrationality. Such feelings are hardly normal and people who experience them are usually in need of medical attention.

It is the analytical connection between emotion and its object, that plays a significant and necessary part in the interpretation of behaviour. Non-verbal behaviour, however suggestive it may appear, is by itself insufficient evidence for the apprehension of particular emotions, and cannot be viewed in isolation. Emotion-concepts are inordinately complex, and there is no standard pattern of behaviour to guide their employment. They are governed by indefinite multifarious criteria which embrace, necessarily, not only the emotion-behaviour, but also the object of the emotion. We may infer that a crying child is unhappy, but this judgment by itself is trivial, and largely uninformative, for it does not tell us in particular terms which emotion the child is feeling. An enquiry into the circumstances could reveal the object of his emotion and this would provide further necessary evidence for a correct interpretation of the child's emotional experience. There are many possibilities. It may be that he has impetuously struck his younger brother, and feels regret or guilt, or he may be feeling fear because the school bully awaits him around the corner, or . . . ; one could go on indefinitely. It can be seen, therefore, in our previous example of the child who said "I am feeling angry today", that the people around him, in order to ascertain just what he is feeling, would need to

¹ See Wittgenstein: Investigations, paragraph 476.

find out the object of his so-called anger. They may already be doubtful that he is angry, for his quiet sobbing is not how he normally behaves when he is angry, and hardly warrants the description of angry behaviour. They are also aware that his mother has gone away, and this is probably why he is upset. But what reason does he have for being "angry"? The concept of anger often, though not always, involves the attribution of blame of some kind, directed at people or objects and situations. Thus the child is asked questions like: "Did Mummy forget to leave you some sweets?" Or did she take his favourite toy with her? Or is he simply angry with her for going? If so, he is likely to say things such as "I hate Mummy", or "Mummy is horrible; why has she gone away from me?" But no, he does not say this, he says he loves Mummy; he wants to hug her. He can't wait for her to get back. Thus it appears from all the evidence and the logic of ordinary language, that he is not angry with his mother, but is feeling sad and lonely. It is therefore pointed out to him that he is not feeling anger at all, and suitable corrections are made to his use of language. This represents one of the innumerable lessons a child has in his day-to-day development and grasp of emotion-concepts. The acquisition of emotion-concepts is a social process, and the apprehension of emotions in ourselves and in others, cannot be divorced from the circumstances in which they occur, and the objects to which they are logically related.

A mother interprets her child's behaviour and understands his emotional response when she discovers the object of his emotion. She may hear the baby crying and on investigation find that the bottle has fallen from his cot. She then knows that he is feeling miserable because he is hungry, and the object of his feeling is thus hunger. But if she hears him screaming and discovers a large dog looking into his cot then she knows that he is frightened and that the object of his fear is the

dog. Behaviour alone is insufficient, as we have seen, for interpreting emotion, for a child may behave in a similar way for different reasons. He may cling to his mother when a strange man comes into the room, out of fear or apprehension, but if he clings to his mother when she is feeding his baby brother he may feel jealous or miserable at being left out, or a combination of both. If he clings to his mother after wetting his clean trousers he may have feelings of shame, embarrassment or apprehension or any combination of these.

Behavioural gestures in this respect are similar to linguistic expressions, words, phrases, sentences and even poems. In order fully to understand them one has to relate them to the context and circumstances from which they originate; similar gestures like similar linguistic expressions, take on quite different meanings in different surroundings or circumstances.

We are from birth exposed to these inordinate complexities and subtleties for, from our earliest days, the language of emotion and the concepts that it expresses and embodies are constantly employed, and emotions are recognised and understood by relating the emotional behaviour to the objects of the emotion. For, as we have seen, the inner experience of emotion connects logically with the outer behaviour, and the latter connects logically with the object of the emotion.

We shall see later how the literary artist can deepen our awareness and understanding of our own emotional states by dramatizing, in the literary narrative, the profound and intricate relationship between emotions and their objects.

INCHOATE FEELINGS

Language, being the key to understanding, enables us to understand the emotions. Indeed, language is a necessary feature of human emotion, for the words we speak and think structure our feelings and give us a picture of them. The conceptual components that language affords conduce to a higher sensibility, and make possible complex and sophisticated feelings which, necessarily, cannot be experienced by non-language-users. We do not, in our normal everyday communications, talk of optimistic dogs or penitent cats, or imagine that the fox who stole the Christmas goose feels remorseful. Animals may have such feelings in fairy stories, but in these they can also talk. Feelings, at this level, are inextricably bound up with thought, for they involve the employment of sophisticated concepts, which cannot be divorced from the language which embodies them. Indeed, such is the interpenetration between our verbal expressions and our emotional experiences, that it prompts the question - "What are the feelings of non-language-users like, and, does it make sense to talk of emotions being felt prior to the learning of language?" Let us then consider the primitive foundations on which language has to build.

There are many higher forms of life that have not attained the sophistication of language and rational thought, to which we attribute feelings, and where it makes perfect sense to say that such forms of life have feelings, or even primitive emotions. Do we not bear witness to such emotions in our everyday life? We see fear in the petrified rabbit, contentment in the purring cat, and ferocity in the snarling snapping dog. Similarly with human beings prior to the learning of language; babies scream when they feel frightened, smile when they feel happy. The extreme behaviourist here would say that animals and young children merely exhibit certain aspects of behaviour, and that is all that we can say, no more and no less. We cannot conclude that they are

feeling any particular emotion, indeed we cannot conclude that they are feeling anything at all. This is the kind of philosophical scepticism that denies our common experience; it represents the Cartesian thesis turned inside out. We have already noted the logical connection between "inner" and "outer"; it makes no more sense to talk of behaviour unrelated to feeling than it does to talk of feeling unrelated to behaviour. It is fruitful, in such cases, to seek instruction from the logic of ordinary language, and to consider what it makes sense to say. Let us take some particular examples -

When a dog howls and whimpers after being kicked by the postman, we do not say that the dog is exhibiting pain behaviour; we say that "the dog is in pain", which logically entails the further proposition that "the dog feels pain". It would make no sense at all to say that the dog is in pain but he doesn't feel pain. Again, if on a hot summer's day a dog has his tongue hanging out and avidly laps up two or three bowls of water, we do not say that the dog is exhibiting thirst behaviour, we say that "the dog is thirsty", and again, it is logically true that "the dog feels thirsty". It would surely be self-contradictory to say "the dog is thirsty but he doesn't feel thirsty". Now the external criteria that we use in these cases to infer that the dog feels certain physical sensations are surely equally valid when applied to other kinds of feelings, which could be described as primitive emotions. Thus, when a dog snarls and snaps and bites someone, we do not say that he is exhibiting ferocious behaviour; rather, we say that the animal is ferocious and, as in our two previous examples, it necessarily follows that "the dog feels ferocious".

In our everyday lives we attribute such psychological feelings to babies and young children without question. As was mentioned earlier, it is a feature of human behaviour that when people are feeling happy,

they smile. Smiling is an expression of happy feeling. Indeed, we know from what we feel ourselves, and from what other people tell us they feel, that smiling and feelings of happiness go together. Now surely, what is universally true of all language-users, is also true of human beings prior to the learning of language. That is, when young children smile they are feeling happy. Now what such feelings are like in young children, we can only imagine, but that they exist is indisputable. What we can say is that the child, without the conceptual apparatus that a language affords, cannot analyse or understand his feelings. Without the tools of thought he cannot think about his feelings or in any way introspect upon them, or give verbal expression to them. He may respond to stimuli and his behaviour may change according to other people's behaviour, but he could have no understanding of this. Thus his emotions would not be human emotions as we know them, for these, necessarily, involve language. The feelings we see manifest in animals and pre-linguistic children are inchoate, for they are without any linguistic dimensions, uninformed and unstructured by reason or rational thought. They are un verbalized and primitive. Thus here we can make no sense of "inner recognition" or self-awareness.

It is these primitive, inchoate feelings that nature has bestowed upon human beings that form the foundations upon which language builds. As one's ability to use language develops and one's range of concepts increases, so the inchoate becomes structured and intelligible and an emotional life in essentially human terms begins to emerge. The mastery of a language also gives rise to a higher sensibility and the experiencing of more complex and sophisticated feelings, which are necessarily unavailable to non-language-users.

We can follow this development with an example. Let us consider jealousy. This is a complex human emotion which is manifest in

animals and young children as well as in mature adults. Dogs often become jealous when a child is introduced into a previously childless house. We observe the feeling in terms of the dog's behaviour, which shares many features with the behaviour of jealous human beings. The dog clings closely and possessively to his master, and constantly prevents the newcomer from approaching him. The dog shows signs of aggression and may even attack the newcomer. This kind of canine jealousy has sometimes resulted in tragic consequences. That the dog has inchoate feelings of jealousy is evident from his behaviour. It is as evident as the fact that the dog has consciousness, and we know this only from the animal's behaviour. We can perceive what he perceives, but we cannot share his sense-perceptions. We observe from his behaviour that he sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels. Indeed, it is more accurate to say not that we see evidence of the dog's consciousness, but rather, we see the dog's consciousness from without, for behaving in the way he does is what we mean by being conscious. Similarly, we do not see evidence of the dog's jealousy, but rather, we see the dog being jealous. The jealousy is there in the behaviour; behaving in the way that he does is what we call feeling jealous, and is a facet of the meaning of the concept of jealousy. This feeling in the animal, being unaccompanied by language or thought as we understand it, or any process which could meaningfully be called understanding, is obviously inchoate and, as far as the animal is concerned, completely unintelligible. Imagining a dog that can understand his own feelings of jealousy is like imagining a dog who is able to play complex games like chess and understand them or, in other words, a dog who can use language.

We also see jealousy manifest in young children prior to the learning of language, long before they have any concept of jealousy, before they can interpret their own feelings or recognise jealousy in

others, or have any knowledge that jealousy exists and yet, paradoxically, feel jealous. As the child's ability in the use of language develops, so his knowledge of emotions becomes more extensive. He may initially be introduced to the term "jealousy" as it is used by his mother telling him and perhaps other children that they are jealous of each other on occasions. Young children are often jealous of their baby brothers and sisters. Gradually, as the child experiences more and more multifarious examples of human behaviour, where the terms "jealous" and "jealousy" are employed, so his conceptual grasp will develop. The average ten-year old would know more than the average five-year old; he will probably be able to recognise some aspects of jealous behaviour, and would have some grasp of the meaning of the term, while the mature adult, with his wider experience of human relationships, would have a far deeper understanding of the emotion. He is far more likely to be aware of the subtleties of jealous behaviour, and at least tacitly aware of its relationship with other concepts, like love, trust, sexuality etc. He is far more likely than the average ten-year old to introspect his feelings and realize when he himself is jealous, and perhaps be able to control the emotion by effecting a change in his behaviour, suppressing the feeling in some way. As we discussed earlier, the ability to act or to pretend is something we cannot attribute to animals or young children. How they behave is how they feel. One does not need language to feel certain basic primitive emotions, but language represents the tools of thought and, in order to have some understanding of one's own feelings and emotions, not to mention the emotions of others, one has to have attained some considerable sophistication in the use of language.

VERBAL EXPRESSIONS OF FEELING

We have noted that human emotion in the true, developed sense, necessarily involves a verbal dimension. Our feelings and thoughts interpenetrate, and both are inextricably bound up with language. A man may have the thought "I am afraid", and this would also be an internal expression of feeling. When we say "What are your feelings on X?", we usually mean, "What are your thoughts, or beliefs?" Thoughts can evoke feelings, and feelings can prompt thoughts. The thought "I have been swindled" might well evoke a feeling of anger, while a feeling of deep remorse could well prompt the thought "I will confess". Feelings can be tempered by thoughts, and thoughts coloured by feelings. A man's feelings of jealousy could be tempered by the thought that he might be mistaken about the facts, while another's thoughts on censorship may well be coloured by his feelings of disgust against pornography. Language is the medium of thought, and both are integral constituents of human emotion and its expression.

Thought and language enable us to reflect upon our emotions, and recollect them in tranquillity, and thus give further expression to them. We also use language to express our emotions as they are being felt, sometimes in a sudden outburst, which is how we give expression to feelings of pain. Wittgenstein finds a connection here between verbal and behavioural expressions. He argues that our verbal expressions of pain are directly related to the natural and primitive forms of expression.¹ Thus terms like "I can't stand the pain", and "God, it hurts!", may be seen as replacements for the more basic, natural expressions, like screaming and groaning etc. The same argument may be applied to psychological pain, or emotions. While dogs howl and babies cry,

1 Wittgenstein: Investigations, paragraph 244.



language-users are able to use expressions like "Woe is me!" or, more likely, "I am feeling so depressed".

The ability to use such terms indicates, necessarily, a self-consciousness and an awareness of the emotional life which we cannot attribute to non-language-users. The verbal dimension, with its embodiment of conceptual understanding and rational awareness, makes human emotional experience essentially different from the inchoate feelings of the non-language-user. "Whilst a dog might pine away, a man feels grief".¹

As well as the simple verbal expressions of emotion which connect with the natural forms of expression, there are also the more sophisticated expressions, for we also use language for self-reflection, to describe and analyse our emotions and spiritual states. In doing this we make a conscious endeavour to give a verbal picture of the experience, which is something quite different from a spontaneous ejaculation of feeling. The latter is of the form "I am feeling so depressed", while the former is a description of the depression itself. This extract from Virginia Woolf's diary is an example of such a description:

Why is life so tragic; so like a little strip of pavement over an abyss. I look down; I feel giddy; I wonder how I am ever to walk to the end. But why do I feel this - now that I say it I don't feel it. The fire burns; we are going to hear the Beggar's Opera. Only it lies about me; I can't keep my eyes shut. It's a feeling of impotence; of cutting no ice. Here I sit at Richmond, and like a lantern stood in the middle of a field my light goes up in darkness. Melancholy diminishes as I write.²

This is not the simple evincing of the emotion, but an attempt to characterize the emotional experience in terms of a verbal picture. The expression is thoughtful and imaginative, employing poetic devices such

1 John Casey: "The Autonomy of Art", The Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Philosophy and the Arts, Vol. 6, 1971-2, p.77.

2 Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf, p.29.

as metaphor and simile in order to communicate the subtle complexities of the feeling. It includes, inevitably, references to both the emotional response and to aspects of the external world.

The description of course could go further, and include many other details, but the example is sufficient for us to see how such expressions differ from that of the child who says, correctly, "I'm feeling sad today". For here the child is not trying to project or communicate the precise nature of his experience. He is merely expressing the fact that he feels sad; though this itself is a sophisticated utterance, and represents a considerable advance from the primitive and inchoate experience. It is indicative of conceptual development, and the child's awareness of his own feelings. But an expression of feeling in terms of a verbal description of the emotional experience itself, demands a more sophisticated knowledge of the emotions, which not only entails linguistic ability, but also insight and imagination.

A child may point and say "I see a church", but a person who gives a verbal description of the church needs not only some knowledge of churches and their architecture, but also imagination and artistry with language. This is not to suggest that the experience of emotion is like the perception of concrete objects in the world, like churches. The analogy merely illustrates the complexity of translating any experience into words, especially when one is endeavouring, as far as is possible, to convey the essential nature of that experience. This certainly involves creative imagination, and it presupposes a not inconsiderable understanding of the experience in question. To this extent there are similarities between describing a visual experience and describing an emotional one, and one can see how this differs from simply reporting that one sees x or feels y, though this, of course, in a far less sophisticated way, must also count as verbalising one's experience.

There is, of course, a logical and significant difference between describing what one sees and describing what one feels. Seeing and describing a church involves the employment of language with reference to an objective situation which may be publicly observed, the experience socially shared. But when we describe our emotions, we are trying to communicate our subjective experiences, our individual and personal feelings, by way of words and phrases whose meanings are governed by objective criteria. This demands understanding of and insight into one's emotions, which cannot be divorced from an imaginative acquaintance with the language of feeling.

We can illustrate this kind of linguistic usage, the leap from outer to inner, by way of a simple example. Let us reconsider the concept of pain. We learn to grasp this concept as children, by making the connection between the linguistic term as it is applied to us by others who interpret our behaviour, and the inner sensation, the feeling of pain itself. But we also learn to describe our pains and to differentiate between different kinds of pain. This may be done by picking up old expressions as they are applied to us - as children we are asked "Is it a dull pain? Is it a nagging pain? Is it a sharp pain?" But we can only know what is meant by such terms if we have learned to use them in a variety of objective situations. There is a complex pattern of family resemblances which connects sharp knives, sharp words, sharp frosts, sharp winds, sharp apples, sharp lines and sharp wit, etc., with sharp pains. The same is true, of course, of nagging, throbbing, dull, and all the other terms we use to describe our pains. Many of these expressions are familiar to us, and this kind of usage is no longer new. Nevertheless there is always room for invention, and the more imaginative and observant amongst us can see the resemblances and connections, and utilise the public language to describe the private experience.

Some descriptions, though hackneyed, are peculiarly apt. To talk of a "splitting" headache is to use a well-worn cliché, and yet anyone who has experienced a severe attack of migraine knows the accuracy of this simple description. It alludes to the feeling that the head is splitting apart. The pain is so concentrated, and runs so deep, that it is almost as if one had been struck with an axe. This is, indeed, a platitudinous example, and it shows how this kind of usage is taken for granted, for one hardly needs a powerful imagination or penetrating insight to describe one's headache in this way. But the term "splitting" was not learned, nor could it be, by individuals attending to their inner sensations. Its meaning in this context is parasitic upon its multifarious uses in the external, objective world. The fact is that when used in this metaphorical way, the term "splitting" gives a man a lucid description of his pain. It also enables him to convey a clear picture of the experience to other people.

Now there is obviously more to self-knowledge than learning to describe one's headache accurately, but this example endeavours to show how individuals use the public language of the objective world (there is, of course, no other) to describe and analyse their own subjective experiences. This takes on a far more profound significance when one is considering not simple physical sensations, but the subtle complexities of psychological and emotional feelings. For it is by way of these that we are identified as people, as rational beings who think and feel, as moral purposive agents. Understanding, as we have seen, is inextricably related to language. Thus to understand one's feelings is to understand the language through which those feelings are expressed. Therefore, as I shall argue further, by discovering more accurate and more lucid descriptions of our inner spiritual experiences, we come to a deeper and clearer understanding of ourselves, which of course constitutes self-knowledge.

It is a conceptual ability, "knowing how" in terms of verbal interpretation and description.

This calls for imagination and insight and, as the Virginia Woolf extract exemplifies, may well involve the use of figurative language, like concrete metaphors, to encapsulate the spiritual, and sensuous images, to give tangible expression to the incorporeal. These are familiar devices in literature, especially poetry, which, as I shall go on to argue, makes literature a valuable source of self-knowledge.

The contribution that literature can make to emotional and moral development is recognised by certain psychologists. Bruno Bettelheim emphasizes the importance of fairy stories where children are concerned. He argues that such stories are valuable because, while being entertaining and interesting, they also involve the active imagination and develop the child's intellect, and, by reflecting his anxieties and aspirations, they serve to deepen self-awareness by clarifying emotions and inner states. The stories provide an imaginative recognition of his difficulties and also suggest solutions to the emotional problems that perturb him. They are both morally and emotionally educative, and serve to enrich the child's life in a way that does not patronise or preach. The fairy story can give a child a concrete picture of his feelings and predicaments which takes serious account of them. Bettelheim emphasizes the complexity of emotions, and the difficulty that the child has in understanding subtle distinctions and combinations, both in regard to one's own feelings and the behavioural manifestations of others.

Just because his life is often bewildering to him, the child needs even more to be given the chance to understand himself in this complex world with which he must learn to cope. To be able to do so, the child must be helped to make coherent sense out of the turmoil of his feelings. He needs ideas on how to bring his inner house into order, and on that basis be able to create order in his life. He needs . . . a moral education which subtly, and by implication only, conveys to him the advantages of moral behaviour, not through abstract ethical concepts but through that which seems tangibly right and therefore meaningful to him.

The child finds this kind of meaning through fairy tales. Like many other modern psychological insights, this was anticipated long ago by poets. The German poet Schiller wrote: 'Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life.' (The Piccolomini, III, 4.)

In life, Bettelheim argues, people are complex syntheses of good and evil, which underlines the difficulty of moral and emotional interpretation, whereas in fairy stories the contraries are polarized and given concrete representation in different people. This provides a valuable conceptual education, which heightens the child's awareness of the contrary characteristics that constitute individual human beings.

Bettelheim enumerates many examples to illustrate how the fairy story can clarify the child's understanding of himself and others. "The Fisherman and the Jinny" is a typical case. Bettelheim describes how the child empathizes with the feelings of the imprisoned genie:

According to adult morality, the longer an imprisonment lasts, the more grateful the prisoner should be to the person who liberates him. But this is not how the Jinny describes it. As he sat confined in the bottle during the first hundred years, he "said in my heart, 'Whoso shall release me, him will I enrich for ever and ever.' But the full century went by, and when no one set me free, I entered upon the second five score saying: 'Whoso shall release me, for him I will open the hoards of earth.' Still no one set me free, and thus four hundred years passed away. Then quoth I, 'Whoso shall release me, for him will I fulfil three wishes.' Yet no one set me free. Thereupon I waxed wroth with exceeding wrath and said to myself, 'Whoso shall release me from this time forth, him will I slay . . .'"

This is exactly how a young child feels when he has been 'deserted'. First he thinks to himself how happy he will be when his mother comes back; or when sent to his room, how glad he will be when permitted to leave it again, and how he will reward mother. But as time passes, the child becomes angrier and angrier, and he fantasizes the terrible revenge he will take on those who have deprived him. The fact that, in reality, he may be very happy when reprieved does not change how his thoughts move from rewarding to punishing those who have inflicted discomfort on him. Thus, the way the Jinny's thoughts evolve give the story psychological truth for a child.²

1 Bruno Bettelheim: The Uses of Enchantment, p.5.

2 *ibid*, p.29.

This is not merely a theory on Bettelheim's part; the source of his account is his long experience with children.

This exemplifies how literature can provide a verbal picture of our feelings which, in clarifying our own emotions, gives us a deeper understanding of other people. But such education is not confined to childhood, for conceptual evolution and development is an on-going process.

REDESCRIPTION AND REVELATION

Dr. Johnson, on Gray's "Elegy written in a country churchyard"

writes:

The four stanzas beginning 'Yet even these bones', are to me original, I have never seen the notions in any other place, yet he that reads them, persuades himself that he has always felt them.¹

The lines to which Johnson refers are as follows:

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked
Implores the passing tributes of a sigh.
Their name, their years, spelt by th'unlettered muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.
For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.²

This sense of recognition and revelation to which Dr. Johnson alludes is by no means unusual. It is a familiar feature of the common reader's experience of literature. It also occurs, though perhaps in a less grandiose way, in other areas of our daily lives. We are often aware of other people's words precisely expressing our feelings, and sometimes this prompts almost triumphant exclamations of affirmation and approval. "Yes, that's exactly how I feel", and "Those words perfectly echo my own feelings".

When a doctor describes our physical sensations we are not particularly impressed, or at least, not in the same way. "The pain is

¹ Dr. Samuel Johnson, in "Thomas Gray", The Lives of the English Poets, (vol. two) p.392.

² Gray's "Elegy" is to be found in many anthologies. This was taken from M. G. Edgar and Eric Chilman: A Treasury of Verse, p.99.

like x, isn't it?" he says, and puts his finger on the perfect expression. It is something we take for granted; after all he is a doctor and should know such things. But when we discover descriptions of our emotions and subtle psychological states, then the experience is quite different, for then something of the self is revealed. When we come across words which express so exactly our own feelings of anger, jealousy, remorse, joy, sadness or some complex amalgam of subtle feelings which defies categorising without reduction, then there is an immediate illumination, a sense that something has been brought sharply into focus, and clarified. Often these new expressions may reveal to us aspects of emotion which hitherto were only felt, indicating the inferiority of our own verbal expression. Sometimes the new description may express our feelings so precisely that the terminology can seem like our own, indeed the language may seem so appropriate and so accurate an expression of one's feelings, that it is almost as if the words had been, as it were, lurking in the shadows of one's mind. Yet, as Dr. Johnson observes, one might well be quite certain that the phraseology is completely original, that those words, in that order, had never been previously encountered. Yet these new words seem to speak to us and for us - expressing what was hitherto unexpressed, and embodying meaning and truth which is immediately apprehended and identified. Any past expression we may have had now seems nebulous and unsuitable, though at the time of its adoption it may have seemed a perfectly appropriate and accurate expression of the feeling.

This is surely a familiar feature of conceptual development, the ability to recognise that one's previous understanding was inadequate, and that one was hardly aware of the unintelligible or the inchoate. This capacity to recognise and assess one's past ignorance is a logical demonstration of newly acquired knowledge. This is knowledge by

redescription, "the dawning of an aspect",¹ which promotes conceptual adjustment, for by extending our range and choice of descriptions and expressions, so we extend and enrich our conceptual apparatus and increase our understanding and knowledge of ourselves.

The awareness of inaccuracy or misrepresentation is something that happens in retrospect, in the light of newly acquired knowledge, for along with the immediate and apodeictic certainty that the new expression is an accurate and lucid description of the emotional experience, goes, necessarily, the knowledge that any previous expressions we may have had in terms of language were inadequate and vague.

This is not to say that we carry around in our heads neatly formulated descriptions of our experiences, emotional or otherwise, or that we are even aware of having some special description of a feeling. It is rather more like this: we may remember occasions when we felt jealous, angry, frightened, remorseful, joyful, ecstatic etc., and these experiences, like all experiences, can only be understood in terms of the language by way of which we are able, at will, to describe and evaluate them. The new description might not only be more appropriate and accurate than any that we are able to express ourselves, but it may well reveal feelings and aspects of the experience which formerly were inchoate and unverballed - those elements of the emotional experience which are noticed by consciousness and, perhaps, manifest in behaviour, though unattended by thought. Our memories of emotional or other experiences include a great deal of uninterpreted material in terms of sense data and sensuous images; vague, unverballed fragments as well as inarticulate snatches of language; new descriptions and expressions enlighten us and inform our concepts by reorganising this uninterpreted material into a coherent and meaningful picture.

1 See Wittgenstein: Investigations, p.194.

People are often aware that their own verbal expressions are inadequate and vague, and do not clearly characterize the nature of the emotional experience, even though the feeling itself is by no means vague; indeed it may be powerful and overwhelming. Yet efforts to express or communicate the experience in terms of language may engender what seems to be a vulgar representation when compared to the actual experience within. This is, of course, itself an inner experience, the feeling of frustration at one's own incoherence. Tennyson alludes to this in "In Memoriam", a poem which covers many aspects of the poet's thoughts and feelings, but centred around Tennyson's grief and deep sense of loss at the death of a friend. The atmosphere of emotional catharsis is strong throughout the poem; indeed it is a remarkable expression of profound grief. But for Tennyson his words are no more than the suits and trappings of the emotion that he feels within, and although they may comfort and console, he feels that they cannot faithfully characterize the inner experience:

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these¹ enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

One can learn a great deal about grief and related emotions by reading poems like "In Memoriam", and also, by way of contrast, perhaps achieve a clearer understanding of contrary emotions like joy and happiness, etc. We shall see, in later sections, by way of examples, how

1 From Tennyson's Works: In Memoriam, "In Memoriam", Tennyson.

the language of literature can be a source of self-knowledge in terms of emotional expression and description which, necessarily (in view of the public nature of emotion concepts), provides us with a deeper understanding of the feelings of others. Furthermore, because of the ineluctable connection between the inner world of feeling and the outer world of fact, knowledge of the inner life cannot be divorced from knowledge of life around us, and any meaningful description of emotional experiences must allude to an external reality, the object of the emotion. Thus, to return to Dr. Johnson's example, Thomas Gray's words revealed to him not only aspects of his own melancholy and sadness etc., but also inevitably served to heighten his awareness of certain features of the external world. Thus Johnson's conceptual apparatus, relating to death, burial, country churchyards etc., was enhanced and enriched, which amounts to an extension of knowledge of both his emotional life and the world about him.

It is evident and will be demonstrated further that literature provides a rich variety of examples, myriad concrete cases that illuminate our experiences and extend our knowledge.

TRUTH AND SINCERITY OF EXPRESSION

Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult . . .
Examine your words well, and you will find that even when you have no motive to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings - much harder than to say something fine about them which is not the exact truth.¹

To discover a true description of one's feelings is to discover truth about oneself, truth by redescription. This may well indicate to us that our former description was not only inadequate, but also that it embodied certain inaccuracies approaching falsity. At the time we may well have been unaware of these, being both satisfied with our interpretation and sincere in our expression. But whereas the primitive, natural forms of expression are "given", language has to be learned and there is, therefore, always room for distortion and misrepresentation. We can, in our ignorance, make significant mistakes in our descriptions.

When we are inaccurate in our descriptions of the objective world, if we use linguistic terms incorrectly, or inadvertently report what is not the case, then we are exposed, and open to correction. Thus if a man states that a church is Norman when it is in fact Gothic, his mistake is clearly manifest and can be pointed out to him. It could be explained that although there are similarities between Norman and Gothic architecture, there are also important differences. In such a case a man may sincerely believe that what he perceives is, in truth, a Norman church. But sincere expressions do not make true descriptions. Misusing language may distort or misrepresent the truth or, on occasions, conduce to a quite false account. When this happens in reference to our subjective experiences, our feelings and our emotions; that is, when we describe them inaccurately, the language is still governed, inevitably, by objective criteria, (there can be no subjective meanings) but any

1 George Eliot: Adam Bede, p.170.

mistakes or misrepresentations that occur are made manifest in a different manner, and may not be immediately apparent. We cannot experience another's feelings in the way that we experience our own. The one check we have as to whether a man's linguistic expressions are correct and accurate interpretations of his feelings and inner states, is in terms of his behaviour.

It is a matter of relating the more primitive behavioural expressions of emotion to the verbal ones. Sometimes there may be manifest in a man's behaviour certain features which do not accord with his own descriptions of his feelings. Yet we may know him sufficiently well to be sure that his expressions are sincere, and that he believes them to be an accurate description of his feelings. Nevertheless the discrepancy that is manifest between his verbal expressions and his behaviour indicates that he may be misinterpreting and misrepresenting his feelings.

Now here we may want to say, perhaps tentatively, "Are you sure you're feeling like this?" We cannot assert positively, for we are not having his experience, and we do not have the same kind of public evidence that was available in the description of the church. That kind of certainty and authority does not obtain here. Nevertheless we do have evidence and there are times when we do question other people's descriptions of their feelings, especially if they seem uncertain themselves. Thus we may present others with alternative descriptions, thereby suggesting that they may be mischaracterising their feelings.

In the case of a child who says "I am feeling angry today", when in fact he feels sad, we have a fundamental error and a wide discrepancy between the verbal expression and the child's behaviour, but language is such that there can be very subtle distortions and misrepresentations. This can happen in any description, but when it happens in an expression

of feeling, the only criterion of truth that we have available is in terms of correlation between the verbal and behavioural expressions. In the case of the more subtle inaccuracies there may not be a palpable discrepancy in the criteria. These misrepresentations may be revealed later to the agent himself when he discovers a more fitting description of his feelings. Whether or not there is a discrepancy will obviously depend upon interpretation, but sometimes it is clearly apparent that there is a clash between the verbal and the behavioural criteria. When this occurs, if the individual is speaking sincerely, then it is reasonable to assume that he is mischaracterising his feelings, and that the more primitive expression is a more accurate indication of what he is actually feeling.

It could be objected here that a man's sincere expression of his feelings or emotions is incorrigible, and that it is senseless to question it. What he says he feels is what he feels, no more and no less. But this suggests that people are always quite sure about their feelings, and that they have no difficulty in expressing them; this is certainly not the case. It is not unusual for people to be wrong about their feelings, or in retrospect to discover that they have mischaracterised them. We may not be aware of how much we love or hate someone, though to outsiders the extent and nature of our feelings may well be apparent. We may be angry, jealous, scared, ashamed, despondent, joyful, triumphant etc., and yet sincerely deny that we have any such feelings in spite of overwhelming evidence in our behaviour to the contrary. We hear people say in retrospect, "Yes, I was very angry, though I honestly didn't believe that I was at the time", or "Yes, I can see now that I was jealous, though I convinced myself at the time that it was loyalty." Indeed, when we focus upon our everyday locutions, we discover that people are not always clear about their feelings, and

very often outsiders have a more lucid understanding of them. It is not unusual to hear people comment on the complexity of their feelings, and that they have difficulty in both understanding and expressing them. The following examples are typical of what people actually say, indeed some of them are collected from life:

"I convinced myself that I was in love but I wasn't; I was just lonely."

"I didn't know I loved her until she went off with someone else."

"I wish that I hadn't done it, but I'm not sure whether this is a feeling of moral shame, or simply the fear of being caught."

"I'm not sure what I feel any more; I'm so confused."

"I didn't know I was scared until John noticed it, and then I realized I was terrified."

"I used to say I felt depressed, but it wasn't till my wife died that I realized what depression really was."

There are also those remarks that we hear in our daily lives which indicate that some people are mistaken about their feelings, and outsiders can see the discrepancy between their behaviour and what they say -

"She says she doesn't love him, and I'm sure she believes it when she says it, but everyone can see that she worships him."

"He said he wasn't scared or apprehensive, and I think he's convinced himself that he wasn't, but it was obvious that he was."

"She says she's sorry for what she's done, and I don't question her sincerity, but she's doing nothing to make amends."

"He insisted that he wasn't embarrassed or ashamed, and he meant it, but he was blushing at the time."

These remarks are not at all unusual, and they indicate the difficulty of understanding and expressing feelings, and the importance of behaviour as a criterion of verification. If what people said about

their feelings were necessarily true and incorrigible, then, presumably, uncertainty and difficulties of expression would not arise, and behaviour would be irrelevant. But as we have seen, external behaviour is logically linked to inner feeling; indeed, it is in behaviour that we witness the external manifestation of feeling. If this were not the case we could not learn the language of feeling, and as a consequence we would not be able to understand either our own feelings or anyone else's. To argue that what a man says about his feelings is necessarily true and incorrigible is to lean too heavily towards Cartesian privacy, for the argument implies that the feelings are essentially private, and known only to the individual, and that what he says is all there is to say. But we do have available external evidence of a man's feelings, namely his behaviour, which is the more primitive and natural expression. It is, after all, by way of behaviour that verbal expressions of feeling have meaning and application. It is also by way of behaviour that such expressions are checked for their truth and sincerity.

Of course, here it could be said that it's all a question of sincerity, and that if a man is sincere in his expressions, then there will be no discrepancy between what he says, and his behaviour. Thus a discrepancy would only occur when he was deliberately trying to deceive, and being insincere in his verbal expressions. This calls into question the very notion of sincerity. Just what is sincerity? Are there not times when we are in doubt about our motives? And genuinely bewildered as to whether we are sincere or insincere? Is there a sharp line between sincerity and insincerity? This is the very point at issue. Do we always know our own feelings? Do we not sometimes assure ourselves of our own sincerity which surely indicates a certain emotional ambivalence? If it were not possible for a man to be sincere in his interpretation and expression of emotion, and at the same time quite wrong about his feelings,

then there would be little room for self-deception in this area. It would make no sense to say "I was mistaken about my feelings", or "I didn't understand how I felt at the time". Sincerity cannot be assumed, indeed it can only be ascertained with reference to behaviour. It is here that the argument for incorrigibility involves question-begging and contradiction, for to accept what a man sincerely says about his feelings is to deny the fundamental significance of behavioural criteria, while at the same time implicitly employing those very criteria. For to assume a man's sincerity is to beg the question; the only way we can determine whether he is sincere or not in his expressions of feeling is by observing his behaviour. Without this independent check we are restricted to his verbal expressions. Does this mean that if he says "I am quite sincere about my feelings", that this, too, is incorrigible? Surely not. We would check his verbal expressions and assertions of sincerity by reference to his behaviour. Now if it is acceptable to use behavioural criteria to check a man's sincerity (and there is no other check), then it is surely acceptable to use behavioural criteria to verify his other expressions of emotion. His sincerity cannot be assumed, or taken for granted in terms of his verbal expressions; we have to have independent evidence. If this were not the case then a man could say anything at all appertaining to his feelings, and we could not question it, for it would be incorrigible.

But of course we do question what people say about their feelings. If there is a manifest disharmony between what a man says about his feelings and the way he behaves, then either he is being insincere and deliberately trying to deceive (and as we have seen, this could be done for good or evil motives), or else he is sincere in his expressions of feeling, but, for whatever reason, is unable to characterise them accurately and lucidly in terms of language, and as a consequence does not convey the true force of his feelings.

The argument that what a man says about his feelings is apodeictically true, makes the connection between emotion and its linguistic expression, tightly analytical. And this leaves no room for different expressions of the same emotion, which may be more or less adequate and lucid. Yet is this not contrary to our common experience? For, as we have seen, the acquisition of new expressions can reveal and clarify our feelings to us, by being more accurate and lucid descriptions of them.

This demonstrates that there are aspects of emotional experiences which are unverballed and inchoate. There is nothing surprising about this, since we attribute certain primitive feelings to non-language-users. It is thus evident that there is in existence something other than the language through which emotions are expressed. This unstructured inchoate dimension of emotion is given structure by language, enabling us to understand and express our emotions. But the language of emotions, like all language, has to be learned, and this can be done well or badly. Thus there is room for inaccuracy and misrepresentation.

If language did not have to be learned, if it were as instinctive and as natural as laughing and crying, and if there were a logical link between certain feelings and certain words and phrases, then it would be difficult to conceive of inaccuracy or misrepresentation. It makes no sense, as we have seen, to imagine that a crying baby is really feeling happy, and is making a mistake in the expression, for here there is a necessary link between the inner feeling and the outer behaviour. This logical relationship can only appear to be broken when people have learned to deceive and pretend - to be insincere - that is, when they have learned language, which is after all the main instrument of insincerity. Thus it can be seen that the natural form of expression is the more reliable guide to truth, for it is a more fundamental and direct indication of

inner feeling than the verbal expression, which is an acquired skill. Language is not instinctive; it has to be learned, and, being a complex and sophisticated medium of expression, there is ample room for error and distortion. We have seen that language is flexible and inordinate, and there can be no systematic connection between it and experience, and this not only applies to the objective world of fact, but also to the subjective world of feeling. The same fact may be expressed in different words and phrases, with more or less clarity and precision and, similarly, the same feeling may be expressed in different words and phrases with more or less clarity and precision.

Now we know that there are inaccuracies and misrepresentations in descriptions of the objective world. These occur all the time, and are perpetrated by people who believe quite sincerely that their expressions are entirely true. Distortion and misinterpretation are common when experience is being transposed into language. But this is also true of our subjective experiences, and when we try to put our emotions and feelings into words we are just as prone to inaccuracy and misrepresentation.

Those expressions which are formulated during the time that the emotion is being experienced, are more likely to be inaccurate and distorted, for the force of the emotion may well affect the judgment of that very emotion. Any description can be distorted by the influence of emotions, and descriptions of our feelings are not excepted. Sincere feelings may appear otherwise by an unfortunate choice of words; indeed the language we use can exaggerate and distort, dramatize and sentimentalize what is genuinely felt emotion. Thus the more accurate and true descriptions are often those discovered later, when the emotions are recollected in tranquillity. It is then that the agent can recognise, with a calm clarity of judgment, the truth of the expression.

Expressions of feeling are not unquestionable or incorrigible, but nevertheless they do have a status and function which does make them logically different from descriptions of the objective world, for in spite of the objective criteria available in terms of behaviour and the circumstances in which it occurs, judging another's emotions is not a matter of straightforward empirical observation, neither do we have that kind of certainty. For although feelings are publicly manifest, they are by no means self-evident; recognising and understanding emotion in others involves the interpretation of patterns of behaviour which may be extremely subtle and complex. This demands empathy and imagination, and a considerable knowledge of human nature. Thus we may assert confidently, even authoritatively, "The church is not Norman, it is Gothic; you are wrong." But we do not say, "You're not feeling x, old chap, you are quite wrong there, you're really feeling y, you have misinterpreted your emotions."

This would be obviously absurd, and goes to the other extreme for, rather than regarding the agent's expressions of feeling as being incorrigible, such an approach completely dismisses them as irrelevant. We must resist the temptation to become complete behaviourists, for a man's feelings are, after all, his feelings, and although it is possible for him to be mistaken and misinterpret them, nevertheless, the fact that he is having the emotional experience, makes him a unique authority on it.

To state categorically that the agent is wrong about his feelings, is to assume a certainty of proof that can rarely be assumed, and it is ignoring a key witness in the drama, namely the agent himself, which is almost like leaving the Prince of Denmark out of Hamlet. Emotions have inner and outer components, and while outsiders witness emotions being felt, it is the agent who feels them.

Thus, although we may feel quite certain that a man is wrong about his emotions, it would be an unethical interference to contradict what he says about them, unless, of course, he was seeking advice, and openly confessed that he was confused about his feelings. Even then one could not logically state categorically that he was wrong. The correct approach, both ethically and logically, is like that of the doctor who, with all his authority and knowledge has to take seriously what the patient says about his pains. No matter how certain he may be that his patient's pain is like y, he cannot lightly dismiss what the patient says about his own pain; thus he involves his patient by asking him questions: "Is your pain really like x?" or "Is it more like y?" or even "Are you sure your pain is as you say it is? Is it not rather like . . . ?" The case is similar with the emotions. We are only likely to tell a man categorically that his expression is incorrect, and that we do not accept that he is feeling the way he says he is feeling, if we believe that he is being downright insincere, and trying to deceive. But this is also true of the doctor, if he thinks the patient is malingering. He might well suggest that his patient's pain is not only not as he says it is, but even that it is not there at all. Presumably, in such a case, there will be such a blatant discrepancy between behaviour and verbal expression, plus, perhaps, a considerable past knowledge of the individual in question, as to make the insincerity perfectly apparent. This could justify, ethically and logically, any categorical contradiction of a man's expression of feeling.

In cases where we believe that people have misinterpreted their feelings and are quite sincere in their expressions, we cannot dismiss the viewpoint of the agent, and must therefore register any disagreement, if such is appropriate, in terms of questions, and by offering alternative descriptions.

It would be senseless not to lean towards incorrigibility to the extent that the final arbiter is the agent himself, and ultimately the real test of truth, for any description is that it be accepted by the agent. However, it is important to mention that a man may accept a particular description of his feelings in order to deceive someone, or he may reject a correct description in order to deceive. But if we know a man sufficiently well to be sure that he is sincere, and he rejects the suggestion offered, then it must be concluded that it is the wrong description or, conversely, if the same man accepts the description, then it must be concluded that the description is correct.

This detailed analysis has been necessary in order to demonstrate that it is possible to mischaracterize or misrepresent sincere emotional experiences by way of verbal expression and description. To this extent the language of literature can provide valuable knowledge of one's feelings and the feelings of others, and generally illuminate our picture of the emotional life of human beings. This of course raises the question of sincerity of expression in literature, and this can only be determined by a close analysis of the language of the literary artist. We have already noted, and shall observe further, the complexity of the relationship between inner feeling and outer expression. The concept of sincerity, too, is many-faceted, and we shall see that sincerity of expression in the imaginative and creative language of literature is not governed by what the literary artist actually feels while verbally expressing the emotion in question, but rather how he understands that emotion and his interpretation of human emotional experiences. His understanding of human nature and emotion will be manifest in the language he employs in his work. We shall examine this in more detail in a later section.¹

1 See Part Four, Truth and Critical Theory, subsection Expressionism.

CONVENTIONS AND CLICHÉS

When we discover linguistic formulations which more faithfully describe our feelings than our own, it becomes apparent that some people have more ability and insight in understanding and expressing feelings than others, and also that it is possible unwittingly to misrepresent one's feelings both to others and to oneself. There are those whose verbal expressions testify to a lucid and articulate understanding of their emotions, to the extent that we can often identify with their descriptions while, at the same time, there are those people who find it very difficult to put their feelings into words at all. There are many possible explanations as to why this is so. Sometimes emotions may be so powerful that people are overcome and at a loss for words, or perhaps express themselves wildly or incoherently. One necessarily needs both verbal competence and some depth of understanding of the experience, and there are different kinds and degrees of inarticulacy. Some people may have too limited a vocabulary to express their feelings lucidly, while others may be extremely articulate in other ways, but lacking imaginative expression, or are perhaps naturally reticent about their emotions.

We are all governed, in our expression of emotion, by the language that is readily available to us. Some of us may be poets, but most of us are not, and cannot, at will, adopt the language of Shakespeare or Wordsworth. We are exposed to multifarious habits of linguistic expression and conventions of phraseology. We are also bound to be influenced by familiar idioms and common clichés. These may stultify any imaginative interpretation, and give an inaccurate account of what we are feeling. The words we use may present a vague picture, or they may trivialize and make light of what is profound and serious. They may dramatize or sentimentalize our feelings, or make what is sincere seem insincere, or the true appear false.

John Casey, in a revealing and valuable paper, provides an excellent example of misrepresented feelings, from D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*.¹ Walter Morel has lost his wife and we are left in no doubt as to his bewilderment and deep grief, but his simple expressions cannot convey the true nature of his feelings.

He had striven all his life to do what he could for her, and he'd nothing to reproach himself for. She was gone, but he'd done his best for her. He wiped his eyes with his white handkerchief. He'd nothing to reproach himself for, he repeated. All his life he'd done his best for her.

And that was how he tried to dismiss her. He never thought of her personally. Everything deep in him he denied. Paul hated his father for sitting sentimentalizing over her. He knew he would do it in the public houses. For the real tragedy went on in Morel in spite of himself. Sometimes, later, he came down from his afternoon sleep, white and cowering.²

For Paul Morel, these words are not only self-indulgent and sentimental, but they suggest insincerity, as if his father were not really upset at all. But, as Casey points out, Morel's emotion is genuine; he feels his loss deeply. We are told this by Lawrence in a report about Morel's inner feelings, "for the real tragedy went on in Morel in spite of himself." It is also evident from the description of Morel's behaviour: "Sometimes later, he came down from his afternoon sleep white and cowering." It is Morel's language that serves to cheapen and falsify what he is actually feeling. Casey explains this:

Morel is in fact expressing himself in a conventional way about his wife's death, saying what he takes to be the normal thing. It is this conventional way of talking that imposes insincerity upon the expression of his feelings. A language which would express his feelings adequately is not readily available to Morel. To break through these perfunctory, conventional expressions of grief in order to grasp it would require an effort of imagination that cannot be expected or demanded of him.³

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- 1 I am much indebted to John Casey's excellent paper, "The Autonomy of Art", The Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures on the Arts, 1971-2, pp. 75-76.
 - 2 D. H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers, p.488.
 - 3 Casey: "The Autonomy of Art", *ibid*, p.76.

involvement. In the development of one's linguistic and conceptual accomplishments, there is ample room for varying degrees of inaccuracy and misrepresentation.

We saw in the example of the child who said "I am feeling angry today", when in fact he felt sad, that his error was apparent because of a manifest clash between the verbal and behavioural criteria, and the circumstances in which the latter occurred. The examples from the "In Memoriam" column are often indicative of similar clashes of criteria, for there are people whose behaviour testifies to the fact that they are feeling deep and genuine grief, but who express their feelings in the language of the above examples. Their feelings, too, are being verbally misrepresented, for what may be worthy and profound emotions, the very embodiment of sincerity, are being expressed in words which are trivial and shallow, and suggestive of insincerity.

We noted earlier that Tennyson was aware of an inadequacy in his language to express the deep grief that he evidently felt when writing "In Memoriam", but that poem is itself a potent example of how literature can extend our knowledge of the emotional life.

THE INCHOATE/VERBAL RELATIONSHIP

There is a further philosophical problem to be considered; let us introduce it by summing up in stages the experience of inner revelation. A man is aware of having a feeling or emotional experience of some kind. His verbal expression of the feeling is inadequate and vague, though he is unaware of this at the time the feeling is experienced. He becomes aware of the inadequacy of his own verbal account at a later stage, when he discovers words which describe the feeling clearly, giving it definition and structure, and revealing aspects of the experience which his own language failed to encapsulate. Indeed, his language may amount to no more than a vague recognition of the experience, devoid of clarity and thought, uninterpreted and unexpressed. The experience becomes meaningful and coherent when the discovery of a verbal description brings it into focus. The problem here is: what is the connection between the inchoate experience and the verbally structured one, and does it make sense to talk of "the same feeling"?

The traditional approach, with its emphasis on dualism and privacy, would hold that the only accurate "description" was the feeling itself, because the connection between feeling and expression was thought to be contingent. Therefore no expression could be considered adequate. For if the feeling itself is a private experience, which simply causes the verbal expression, then no logical inference can be made about the feeling from the language which expresses it. Here, one set of words is as good, or as bad, as another. Not only would the choice of words be irrelevant, but also, if the connection between feelings and verbal expressions of feeling were merely one of cause and effect, then the very notion of choice falls out.

But if the idea of a contingent relationship is unacceptable, the traditional alternative in philosophical disputes is by no means wholly

satisfactory as an explanation. If the connection between our feelings and our verbal expression of feeling is construed as analytical, it leaves no room for the idea that the same feeling may be expressed by way of different verbal formulations, for here, feeling and expression are necessarily part and parcel of the same entity. This means that if a verbal expression of feeling is vague, it necessarily indicates a vague feeling. Now one would not wish to dispute that vague expressions are sometimes the result of vague feelings. But if the connection between feelings and verbal expressions were analytical, then it would leave no room for the possibility of a vague feeling being clarified later, with the discovery of a new verbal expression of the feeling, and in some sense remaining the same feeling. If the analytical relationship between feeling and expression is tight and rigorous, then to change the words is to change the feeling. According to this there cannot be different ways of expressing the same feeling in verbal terms, because feelings and the words that express them are logically linked. Therefore each different description would necessarily describe a different feeling.

This traditional dichotomy, with its either/or alternatives is inappropriate here, for both extremes exclude the possibility of explaining what is, by all accounts, a common human experience, for either from a contingent point of view all expressions are imposters, and no verbal description is reliable, or, on the analytical side, the verbal description of the agent is necessarily correct and accurate. Thus both positions cut out the possibility of new expressions providing insight and illumination. But as John Casey notes, verbal expressions of feeling may be more or less adequate and lucid.¹

1 Casey, *ibid.*

Now if these discoveries and enrichments are a fact of common life, as Dr. Johnson observes, then this philosophical dichotomy must be rejected as inappropriate here, for its procrustean rigidity fails to accommodate or explain this complex relationship. The satisfactory position may well involve both extremities. We have already observed the complexity of the relationship between inner feeling and outer expression in behavioural terms; to contend dogmatically that it must be strictly either contingent or analytical may well be reductive, or even simplistic.

With reference to pain and its expression in behaviour, Dr. Colin Radford¹ argues that the relationship can be seen as both contingent and necessary, that feelings of pain can cause people to act in one way rather than another; certainly extreme pain does alter our behaviour. A man suffering from migraine behaves differently from the way he behaves when he is not suffering from migraine. Dr. Radford argues persuasively that the connection between pain and pain-behaviour can be construed as one of cause and effect, though at the same time he insists that there is, nevertheless, also a necessary relationship, and that pain-behaviour is, indeed must be, conceptually connected with feelings of pain. He concludes a revealing paper by suggesting that the relationship is equally complex with reference to emotional and psychological feelings. Thus, for example, feelings of anger or jealousy may cause human beings to act one way rather than another. All this does not mark a return to Cartesian dualism, for here the connection between inner feeling and outer expression is not seen as merely contingent; the argument for an analytical relationship still holds as cogently and logically as ever. But it does mean that the relationship is inordinately complex, and

1 Colin Radford: "Pain and Pain Behaviour", Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy, Vol. XLVII, No. 181, July 1972.

cannot be reduced by the either/or language of the contingent/analytical dichotomy. The connection is both contingent and analytical.

Now if Dr. Radford is correct, it does indicate the inadequacy of the traditional approach, and that such positions are not mutually exclusive. We are of course concerned here not with physical, but with verbal expressions, and the connection between the inchoate feeling and its verbal expression is similarly complex and cannot be explained in terms of rigid dichotomies. We may reasonably talk of a contingent connection between feelings and verbal expression in so far as, for example: feelings of happiness may well cause a man to say that he feels happy. But the term "cause" here does not refer to a mechanical process, like that of a man who blinks when a fly goes into his eye. The connection is also undeniably analytical, for an expression like "I am feeling happy today" is as much a part of a man's feeling of happiness as his smile. This has to be qualified, for in the same way that the causal connection is not a mechanical process, the analytical connection cannot be construed as tight and rigid if it makes sense to conceive of "the same feeling" being expressed by way of different verbal formulations.

This is the question we have to consider: does the newly-discovered expression allude to the same feeling? But while considering this, we must not discount the possibility of new descriptions introducing us to new kinds of feeling, thus enabling us to feel what we have not felt before. This is one of the functions of newly acquired emotional language; indeed, if this were not the case, it is difficult to conceive of either our emotions or our knowledge of them developing and maturing. But it is important to note that the new description, in order to be intelligible, must connect with feelings with which we are familiar. It has to relate in some sense to our former experiences. For Dr. Johnson, the words of Thomas Gray gave expression to what he, Dr. Johnson, had felt

in the past; it verbalised feelings he had already experienced. To this extent, the new phraseology clarified and revealed his feelings by giving expression to them. This is not an uncharacteristic human experience, and it does demonstrate that there are different ways of expressing the same feeling, though some are more accurate and lucid than others.

We have already seen that there are different ways of expressing the same fact in terms of language, because world and word are not rigidly or systematically tied together. This is surely also true of inchoate feelings and the language which gives expression to them. Thus the same feeling may be expressed or described in different ways, depending on verbal competence. Some feelings we may have verbalised, though inadequately, and are thus aware of a vague description, while other feelings may be completely inchoate, having never been verbalised at all, and are therefore, although experienced in a sense, clothed in darkness, and not really grasped by the understanding. With such feelings, we are in no position to know what we felt, for we have no understanding of what we felt. Yet, paradoxically, we do know, when a description is discovered, that this is precisely what we felt; that this description expresses the feeling in words which interpret the experience and furnish the understanding, by giving structure and definition to what was hitherto inchoate and unintelligible.

Now here we might say: but how can a man know that this was what he felt, when hitherto he had little or no understanding of the feeling, no description of what he felt? But this, as Casey observes, is similar to Wittgenstein's example of a man who cannot say what he means until he finds the word or phrase that correctly and accurately expresses his meaning.¹ He cannot say what he means, either to himself or to anyone

1 See Wittgenstein: Investigations, pp. 217-219.

else, though he is aware of something, and is in a position to reject terms as inappropriate or inadequate, in so far as they do not correctly express what he means. It is not simply that he lacks the appropriate language to express his thought; indeed, while the meaningful expression that he is searching for eludes him, he has little grasp or understanding of his thought. But when the correct terminology is discovered, he knows immediately that this is what he means. This knowledge is apodeictic, and the question: "how do you know that this is what you meant?" does not arise.

Now this is surely what happens when we discover descriptions which encapsulate our emotional experiences (we have already noted the interpenetration of thought and feeling). Yet in a sense, in spite of the new-found phraseology, the feeling remains the same feeling. The term, in a sense, is appropriate here, because undoubtedly there has been a change. We now understand the feeling, as we did not understand it before. Our knowledge of the feeling has changed. It is the same feeling, clarified and structured.

One may compare this to our experiences in visual perception. Consider the visual experience of first seeing an arrangement of lines as meaningless, or vaguely suggestive, and then seeing the same arrangement of lines quite clearly as the stylized drawing of a face. In a children's book we may see a tree puzzle, first as a meaningless scribble of foliage, and then as a quite definite picture of an animal. In one sense the first and second experiences are the same, yet in another sense they are different. It is the same visual experience in terms of sense-data; the lines are the same, no-one has moved them or added any. But the understanding of the lines has changed; we are now aware of significance and definition, which hitherto we had either missed completely or had been merely vaguely aware of something. Thus the experience is the

same, but our knowledge of the experience has changed. The case is analogous with vague feelings later being clarified by the discovery of language that describes and structures the feeling. It is the same feeling, but our knowledge and understanding of the feeling has changed. But such discovery will heighten our awareness of future feelings conducing to an enrichment of emotional experiences.

PART THREE

F O R M A N D C O N T E N T

CAESAR: I do not much dislike the matter, but
the manner of his speech . . .

Shakespeare: Antony and Cleopatra, Act II, Scene 2.

Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: Zettel.

It is these words in this order that constitute the poem; and the sense of the poem, a sense that can be elucidated but not stated, is so entirely a function of a particular verbal structure that it seems impossible to maintain . . . that a poem consists of a core of meaning that could be stated in a series of propositions and, surrounding the core, a set of embellishments delightful in themselves and having, in relation to the propositional meaning, the function of high-lighting and emphasizing what the poet wishes to single out as being of peculiar interest.

James Cameron: The Night Battle.

THE PROBLEM AND ITS COMPLEXITIES

The problem of form and content in literature and in other areas of art has been much discussed in modern criticism. It is often linked with questions on Autonomy and Mimesis, beauty and truth, or the aesthetic and moral aspects of creative work. But the problem is not confined to art or imaginative literature. It is part of the fundamental problem of human understanding and the role of language; bound up with thought and expression, meaning and truth, and the relationship between word and world.

In the context of language and expression, "form" is a reference to how something is said or written, i.e. the specific choice of words and phrases and the order in which they are constructed.

When we speak of the content of an expression we are not concerned with the choice of this word or that particular phrase. The style of language is irrelevant; it is the underlying sense or the information the words embody that holds our attention. "Content" is a reference to what is being said or written, and the very term implies that there is something internal that can be extracted or revealed. Thus it is sometimes used to indicate "the real essence of meaning" of the expression, or the "inner core of truth".

Form may be summed up as style and manner, while content is sense and matter.

These terms are obviously appropriate not just to works of literature, but may be applied to any linguistic formulations: political speeches, diplomatic communications, news broadcasts, Government reports, newspaper editorials, essays, reviews, law reports, magazine articles, and of course any of the ordinary language expressions in our daily speech.

There are many implicit allusions to form and content in our everyday communications e.g.:

"I agree with everything he said, though I would not have put it in those words".

"She has some interesting ideas but her prose is tedious".

"Both the Times and the Mirror carried the same story, in their different ways, right down to the last detail".

"I can tell you exactly what he said in my own words".

The problem of form and content, with its focus on meaning and truth, is of central importance in any enquiry into literature as a source of knowledge, for this must surely be an analysis of literary forms of expression for their epistemic content. The prime concern is with language, for language is both the material of literature and the fundamental apparatus of human knowledge. We have already seen how meaning and truth are the integral constituents of knowledge and, if a literary work is to embody truth, and/or if we are to acquire knowledge from it, then logically it must be endowed with meaning. But meaning in literature is a complex and many faceted subject, and the issue of form and content is a basic one. It may therefore be viewed more clearly against the background of ordinary language.

Arguments about meaning in literature often involve arguments about meaning in other uses of language, and this approach in principle is surely right and proper, for such a comparison may well throw into relief both the differences and similarities between fact and fiction, and perhaps deepen and clarify our understanding of the nature of literature. I. A. Richards emphasized the differences to the extent that he drew a strict dichotomy between the language of life and the language of literature. He argued that meaning in factual or scientific discourse was referential, and therefore cognitive, while meaning in

poetry was not referential, and could not be, because of its imaginary status, and was therefore emotive.¹ This kind of crude distinction is neither new nor uncommon.

There are also those writers who, though recognising the dichotomy, believe that the gap can be bridged, and the emotive meaning of literature transformed into the referential meaning of everyday life and fact. This is done by dispensing with the literary form, by way of paraphrase. The "poetic ornaments" and "figurative devices" are removed, and replaced with so-called simple or literal language. This is said to reveal the "pure meaning" of the work, or the "cognitive content", or the "inner core of truth". Thus, according to this argument, the language of literature may be treated in just the same way as the language of everyday information, and form easily separated from content.

There is another argument, which is completely contrary to the aforementioned. This holds that form can never be separated from content, either in literature or in any other use of language, irrespective of context or purpose, and that to change the wording of even the most mundane phrase or statement will, as a necessary consequence, bring about a change of meaning.

These arguments represent extreme positions, though, like many extremes in philosophy, they each contain an element of truth. But they are founded on fundamentally false assumptions as to what constitutes meaning, which not only mischaracterizes literature, but misunderstands the very nature of language itself.

Consider the latter position, i.e. that form and content are not only inseparable in works of literature, but in any linguistic expression, whether spoken or written. It is not difficult to imagine

1 This is the thesis expressed in C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning; see especially chapter 7.

the insidious steps that might lead to such a belief. Let us for a moment anticipate some of the later arguments. Suppose, as devotees of the literary arts, we come, after some thought, to the conclusion that the nature of literature is such, that although we may refer, in some sense, to the form or the content of specific works, ultimately the one cannot be separated from the other, and the full meaning of the work inheres in the choice and order of the particular works employed. This contention may well be reinforced by some reading on the subject, e.g. "The Heresy of Paraphrase",¹ and/or The Language of Fiction.² It seems glaringly obvious to us that if Shakespeare's words "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" mean, merely: "Your beauty is beyond comparison", then he would have surely written just that. Thus we assert, with firm conviction, that a change of words is necessarily a change of meaning, and to paraphrase is to destroy. We stand boldly on the belief that in works of literature, the content of meaning and truth is inextricably related to the linguistic form through which both are expressed. As Professor Cameron put it, we can only focus on "these words in this order."³

Thus, quite convinced where literature is concerned, we consider other uses of language. We come across an old election poster which says, "Let's go with Labour". It occurs to us that this is a rather slick slogan, for it means at one level "Let us give our support to the policies of the Socialist party - let's vote for the Socialists". But the word "go" is of great significance, for it is an implicit reference to the "stop-go" economics of the previous Tory Administration, and here,

1 Cleanth Brooks: "The Heresy of Paraphrase", in The Well-Wrought Urn.

2 David Lodge: The Language of Fiction.

3 James Cameron: The Night Battle, p.132.

"go" means "let's proceed along the path of sustained economic growth". However, this is still not all, for the term "Let's go with Labour" is also a call for the country to get down to work. "Let's go with the Socialists" would not embody the same meaning, or have the same force. Finally, the slogan rolls off the tongue with a simple and energetic rhythm, accentuated by the alliteration. It is short, to the point, and easy to remember.

At this stage, with an Empsonian¹ ingenuity we find subtlety, ambiguity and depth of meaning in every phrase and fragment of language used by everyone, from the milkman to the Prime Minister. We are now in danger of coming to the absurd conclusion that form and content, in any context or situation, can never be separated, and that how something is expressed will always, on every occasion, determine what is being said or meant. Thus different linguistic constructions would always have different meanings, and there could not be different ways of conveying similar information.

This seems to be the position of Monroe C. Beardsley.² "I am here" and "here I am" do differ in style, and this difference is a difference in meaning in what they suggest about the situation and the speaker's relation to it. "Here I am" suggests that I have been long-awaited or searched for. Again, "Go home", "Return to your abode" differ in style but this difference is once more a difference in meaning, for the connotations of "abode" are not the same as the connotations of "home".

Gene Blocker too, writes:

"But surely what is said linguistically always depends on the way it is said. If I change 'slammed the door' to 'shut the door' the meaning is different. Similarly, there are important

1 See William Empson: Seven Types of Ambiguity.

2 Monroe C. Beardsley: Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism, p.223.

shades of difference in the meaning of expressions like: 'Come if you possibly can', 'Come if you like', 'Come if you want', 'Come if you must', and so on. So if the meaning of poetry is internal and inseparable from its form, then the same seems to be true more or less outside of poetry."¹

These arguments may seem persuasive, but they are only superficially plausible, and are quite contrary to our experience, and the facts about language. For if no word, or set of words, can ever, under any circumstances, mean the same as another or another set, then both synonymy and paraphrasing are ruled out as impossible, and such terms otiose and superfluous, not to mention the terms "form" and "content", at least in regard to language. But of course this is not so, because we do paraphrase linguistic expressions, and synonyms do exist: dictionaries could not function without them. It may be true that when words and phrases are examined in isolation, no two appear to have precisely the same meaning. But words and phrases derive and develop their meanings from daily usage in many and varied situations. It is therefore necessary, when considering them, to refer to the kind of situation in which they may be correctly used - the context and purpose.

There are many occasions in our everyday communications when "Return to your abode", however pretentious it may be, can mean nothing more than "Go home", and where the various associations and connotations are quite irrelevant. Beardsley also makes the terms "I am here" and "Here I am" seem very rigid and limited in their application. He talks of "the situation" and "the speaker's relation to it", as if there were definitive situations into which each of these terms fitted perfectly. It would be tedious to enumerate examples, but surely there are many situations where "I am here" could be exchanged for "Here I am", and vice versa, and whatever suggestions these phrases may carry when scrutinized in a vacuum, these could well be inappropriate and redundant

1 Gene Blocker: "The Meaning of a Poem", British Journal of Aesthetics, volume 10, 1970, pp. 337-343.

in concrete situations. Blocker, too, gives us phrases in a vacuum, with no reference to either context or purpose; yet without going into any detail about background circumstances, one can put the expression "Shut the door", into the sentence "I was in such a temper that I shut the door in his face" and immediately one has a picture of the door being slammed.

These writers are understandably reacting to a position which mischaracterizes literature, and reduces it to the level of mundane information in its attempts to reveal meaning or truth by way of paraphrase and restatement. But in giving that Scylla such a wide berth, they have become themselves drawn into the Carybdis of an equally extreme position. For if we are to attend to all the connotations, associations and rich layers of meaning in all uses of language, whatever the context or purpose involved, then every word we utter or scribble down is elevated to the level of poetry. If we look at it from another point of view, poetry and literature need not be regarded as anything out of the ordinary.

The language we know, the language we speak and write, is fluent and flexible, yet this argument restricts and stultifies it, for according to this argument there appears to be only one way of saying anything there is to be said. For example it would make no sense to say "I'm sorry, I don't know what you mean; could you rephrase it?" because any rephrasing or changing of words would necessarily constitute a change of meaning. It is thus necessary to consider this problem in more detail with reference to ordinary language.

ORDINARY LANGUAGE LOCUTIONS

In his book The Language of Criticism, John Casey contends that for the most part, form and content are inseparable. He attacks, quite rightly, the Tractatus model of language as false, but he argues that, according to this theory, the separation between form and content may be easily made, while the account of meaning delineated in the Philosophical Investigations makes separation difficult, and for the most part impossible. His interpretation of the Tractatus certainly does allow for an easy separation between form and content, but the enigmatic, not to say contradictory nature of the thesis makes it also possible, as we shall see, to argue quite the contrary, that is, that form and content are ultimately indivisible and one and the same. Casey's own conclusion, that form and content are seldom, if ever, separable, is as general and monolithic as his account of the Tractatus thesis, and typifies the kind of philosophical reasoning that the later Wittgenstein persistently attacked. Wittgenstein reiterated the importance, when analysing the meaning of expressions, of particular cases, how terms are used, the context, purpose, feelings and background circumstances involved. Casey is obviously aware of this, and he admits at one point that in some language games, paraphrase and translation are possible. But in so far as he gives no examples to support this, it can only be seen as a rather vague lip-service. However he does give examples to illustrate how form may be separated from content when one applies the misguided arguments of the Tractatus, and suggests that in the light of the Investigations, the separation is far more difficult, and can rarely take place at all. But this mischaracterizes language, and is quite false.

Casey writes:

For instance, on the picture theory of language 'The cat is on the mat' and 'The mat is under the cat' would be two different expressions, or projections, or locations of the 'same' fact - a fact that could be neutrally represented by a photograph, or by a perfect photographic or iconic language which simply represented things as in themselves they really are. But along with the rejection of this model of language goes a loss of the ease with which we can say that these different phrases refer to the same objects, or that different poems say the same thing or express the same feelings.¹

Now the inference here is that the linguistic expressions in question can only be seen as interchangeable or sharing the same meaning according to the spurious picture theory of language. This as we shall see, is plainly false. But let us for a moment pay some attention to the Tractatus theory of meaning, for its publication brought to the surface the tip of a very large iceberg; as Wittgenstein himself points out, in the Philosophical Investigations, aspects of this theory are evident in Plato² and St. Augustine,³ and as Casey notes, it has been an implicit feature of British empiricism. It has, in various respects, been manifest in literary criticism and the language of aesthetics, and has been responsible for much of the confusion that has saturated the subject of form and content. Wittgenstein's Tractatus represents an explicit example of the source of many age-old confusions.

In Casey's example we see how the terms "The cat is on the mat" and "The mat is under the cat" may be different projections of the same fact. Now according to the picture theory of language, the fact is in the objective situation. Facts are in the world.⁴ These facts, or states-

1 John Casey: The Language of Criticism, p.111.

2 Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, paragraphs 46, 48, 518.

3 Wittgenstein: *ibid*, paragraphs 1-3, 32.

4 Wittgenstein: Tractatus, p.7.

of-affairs, may be represented in linguistic statements which are meaningful in terms of their capacity to inspire or communicate pictures of the fact or state-of-affairs. Different statements may be formulated by different individuals to describe similar states of affairs, and, so the theory has it, communicate similar pictures. Thus, according to this, we have information about the world communicated pictorially through the medium of language, and the content of the world may be dressed up in a wide variety of different linguistic forms. For example, "The present heir to the throne wore blue" and "Prince Charles was dressed in blue" are different expressions which could inspire the same picture. It is therefore apparent that when the Tractatus is interpreted in this way, then form and content may be seen as quite separate. But let us look at the picture theory more closely, and pursue its ramifications concerning form and content.

Wittgenstein writes: "What a picture must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it - correctly or incorrectly - in the way it does, is its pictorial form".¹ For the early Wittgenstein, the proposition pictured the world to us by way of a one-to one-correspondence between elements in the language and elements in the world. Thus the proposition shared with the world an identical pictorial form. The words that made up the proposition derived their meanings from the objects in the world that they represented. Words were the names of objects. Therefore, for a proposition to have meaning, it had to reflect, or project, what was in the world pictorially: "What a picture represents is its sense"² and "A proposition, therefore, does not actually contain its sense, but does contain the possibility of expressing it . . . A proposition contains the form, but not the content, of its sense".³

1 Wittgenstein, *ibid*, 2.17.

2 Wittgenstein, *ibid*, 2.221.

3 Wittgenstein, *ibid*, 3.13.

Thus, according to this, the content of the world may be represented to us in propositions by way of their pictorial form. Language cannot give us the content of the world as such, for that is the world, but in so far as the pictorial form reflects the content of reality, so the proposition expresses it. Therefore the proposition expresses both the form and content of reality. But because of the systematic correspondence between elements in the language and elements in the world, name and object named, the situation pictured can only engender, ultimately, one form of picture, by way of the pure, "elementary proposition":¹ one way of picturing the form, one way of forming the picture. This would be the only correct way of expressing the meaningful content of the world. As a consequence, form and content are inextricably interwoven. To change the form is to change the sense, and to change the sense is to misrepresent the content of the world.²

Now if we return to Casey's example, "The cat is on the mat" and "The mat is under the cat", these would not only be different projections of the same fact, but, according to the theory, they would also have in common the same elementary proposition, and the early Wittgenstein believed that this pure form, the elementary proposition, could, by way of analysis, be revealed. But neither he nor any of the Tractarian devotees could give any examples of elementary propositions, or demonstrate how language could be unpacked in order to reveal them. Pure elementary propositions are, of course, non-existent; they are as fantastic and as mythical as phlogiston.

All this suggests that although we often separate form from content, we ought not to, and that we do it at the expense of clarity and simplicity. It is as if our language has become somewhat embellished

1 See, for example, Wittgenstein; *ibid*, 4.2 - 4.26.

2 In the Tractatus, it is difficult to distinguish Wittgenstein's conception of meaning from that of truth.

and overdressed, and that if we got rid of these extra garments, we would get down to the pure essences of meaning, where form and content are one and the same.¹ Thus Casey's contention, that the Tractatus model of language makes the division between form and content an easy matter, is not altogether correct, for it can be argued that when terms are "completely analysed"² they will share both form and content. This is an important point, and we shall return to it, for this notion, that there is a pure language that somehow lies at the foundation of all our common expressions, and corresponds systematically with reality, has been responsible for much of the chaos in regard to form and content, and on the subjects of meaning and truth especially in regard to literature.

Now let us consider further Casey's argument. He writes of the Tractatus: "Along with the rejection of this model of language goes a loss of the ease with which we can say that these different phrases refer to the same objects, or that different poems say the same thing or express the same feelings."³ Here Casey is putting the language of poetry into the same category as other forms of expression. Let us leave poetry for the moment and consider other uses of language. For however whole-heartedly we reject the Tractatus theory of meaning, it does not get rid of the ease with which we can separate form from content, or can say that different phrases mean the same thing. In the ordinary

1 Wittgenstein writes:

"A proposition possesses essential and accidental features.

"Accidental features are those that result from the particular way in which the propositional sign is produced. Essential features are those without which the proposition could not express its sense.

"So what is essential in a proposition is what all propositions that can express the same sense have in common." (ibid, 3.34 - 3.341.)

2 Wittgenstein, ibid, 3.201.

3 Casey: The Language of Criticism, p.111.

language of everyday use we do make the separation, and different phrases often mean the same thing. Casey argues that even simple, childish sentences are unlikely to be interchangeable with others:

. . . even such simple sentences as 'The mat is under the cat' and 'Bring me the broomstick and the brush which is attached to it' are rarely likely - and then in rather unusual circumstances - to mean the same as (and hence be replaced by) 'The cat is on the mat' and 'Bring me the broom'.¹

Here it must be said that the "broom" example is not so much simple as bizarre, for as Casey is aware, it was used by the later Wittgenstein to illustrate the absurdity of logical atomism. He was indicating that there is no such phenomenon as the pure, elementary proposition and that it made no sense to explain the "meaning" of linguistic terms, e.g. "Bring me the broom" by reference to physical objects (i.e. the broom) and their component parts, the so-called "simples".² The expression was therefore not to be regarded as a more complex formulation of "Bring me the broomstick and the brush that is attached to it", for it is evident that "meaning" could not be located in the material world. He was not arguing that expressions could never, in any circumstance (or, as Casey puts it, "rarely",) have the same meaning, neither was he saying that terms could not be paraphrased, nor that similar information could not be conveyed by way of quite different linguistic formulations.

We might well question Casey's assertion that such expressions can rarely be interchanged, for whether they can or not will depend upon how they are being used, and the particular circumstances and context of such usage. To scrutinize them in a vacuum takes the life out of the words and blinds us to their potential meaning in any given context. That is not to say that isolated statements like "The cat is on the mat" are

1 Casey, *ibid*, pp. 115-116.

2 See Wittgenstein: Philosophical Investigations, especially paragraphs 39, 46 and 60.

meaningless; this is quite obviously not the case. The statement makes linguistic and logical sense and we can relate it to past usage. Even if we had never heard this hackneyed statement before, and came across it for the first time, written on an otherwise blank sheet of paper, assuming that we are able to read, and are familiar with the concepts and terms employed therein, then the statement would have meaning. Indeed, in order to qualify as a statement, meaning is presupposed. The formulation has meaning in so far as it accords with the rules of linguistic expression, or what Wittgenstein calls the logic of the language. But these rules, and logic, owe their existence to everyday use, i.e. the dynamic usage of linguistic terms in an ever-changing variety of concrete situations. Thus, unless we know the particular use of "The cat is on the mat", and the context into which it fits, then we cannot be sure of precisely what it means. Wittgenstein himself comments on this apparent paradox of knowing what something means, while at the same time not knowing just what it's about:

'After he had said this, he left her as he did the day before.' Do I understand this sentence? Do I understand it just as I should if I heard it in the course of a narrative? If it were set down in isolation I should say, I don't know what it's about. But all the same I should know how this sentence might perhaps be used; I could myself invent a context for it.

(A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction.)¹

We are certainly in no position to legislate for future usage, or to make a priori assumptions about terms being rarely interchangeable. Statements like "The mat is under the cat" and "The cat is on the mat" do suggest "a multitude of familiar paths". Many lead off in quite different directions, while others criss-cross and mingle. The possibilities are obviously indefinite. But let us consider some examples:

1 Wittgenstein, *ibid*, paragraph 525.

A child is trying to pull a small rug from beneath her cot. It is coming, but rather slowly. She bends to investigate, and says: "Oh, the cat is on the mat," though here she might well have said: "The mat is under the cat".

Another example: a wife is upset at the loss of a table-mat belonging to a set which was a wedding present. Suddenly her husband announces that he has discovered it. He calls out: "The mat is under the cat," though here again he might well have said: "The cat is on the mat." Of course, in these examples, as in any, the tone of voice, and emphasis on particular words, is important. But the above usage does not strike me as being at all unusual or rare, but typical of what goes on in our everyday communications. These examples illustrate how the form of words may be changed while the informational content remains the same, and conversely, how the form of words may remain the same, though the informational content is quite different.

In the first example, the statement "The cat is on the mat" was an expression of exasperation but also an explanation, expressing the fact that the cat was hindering the moving of the mat. In the second example, "The cat is on the mat" was a triumphant exclamation, expressing not only the fact that the mat had been found, but also implicitly explaining why it had not been discovered sooner. Thus it can be seen as a fact about the nature of language that statements of different forms can be used to convey the same information, while the same form of statement can be used to convey quite different information.

Let us elucidate this with a further example:- There are four people standing in a room, when a voice is heard coming from an adjacent room, saying "Where is Tiddles?" The four people reply simultaneously. A, a man of few words, says "By the fire", B, fond of cliches, "The cat is on the mat", C, "There is a tabby on the hearthrug" and D, a man of many

words, "An animal of the feline species, in an attitude of sedentary repose, is situated on the carpet."

Now in this context, all four statements are reporting the same information, namely the whereabouts of the cat. Even the succinct "By the fire" is as informative as any of the others. One might hesitate to say that it is a paraphrase of the other statements, but this calls into question just what a paraphrase is. In our everyday common usage, paraphrasing a statement can be said to be exchanging the statement in question for another which serves the same purpose or, in a given context, has the same meaning. It makes no sense in general to talk of a "perfect paraphrase" for when viewed in isolation, that is remote from any particular context, no two statements can share precisely the same meaning. A perfect paraphrase is like a perfect substitute, appropriate in particular circumstances. Plastic, in some circumstance, may make an excellent substitute for wood, while in others it would be quite unsuitable. It is not merely unreasonable, but quite illogical, to demand that a substitute possesses all the properties of that which it substitutes. It is to demand that plastic should be wood. Similarly, to insist that the only true paraphrase of any statement (e.g. "The cat is on the mat") is one that shares all its properties, and may be exchanged without loss on each and any occasion for that statement, is to insist that the paraphrase be nothing more and nothing less than the statement itself, (i.e. The cat is on the mat) and not a paraphrase at all. It may be that statements B, C & D are more flexible in terms of other contexts, and may be more easily interchanged, but nevertheless, in this particular context, statement A performs the same function as the others, and is equally informative, against a background of certain given facts, i.e.: There was only one rug, and this was immediately before the fire and, when this particular cat was by the fire, it was invariably on the mat.

Thus here it can be seen that Statement A, when viewed in isolation, appears quite different from the other statements, but when considered in the circumstances in which it is used and understood, in so far as it can be meaningfully exchanged for any one of the other three, then it surely here approaches the nature of a paraphrase.

Now according to the Tractatus, the meaning of the four statements would lie in the situation to which they refer, in the objects named and the relationship between them. The statements would all have in common a single, pure, elementary proposition and this would correspond systematically with the objective situation, and represent its meaning by way of a picture. In order to discover this core of meaning, we simply analyse the three statements, strip off the superfluous embellishments of language, and reveal the pure, naked truth. Of course, as stated previously, the most ardent devotees of the Tractatus were not able to conduct such an analysis, and the theory in this explicit form has been abandoned, for it is clear that pure, elementary propositions do not exist, and to imagine that they do is to misunderstand the nature of language. But it is, as we shall see, this kind of misunderstanding that has plagued arguments over form and content for centuries, especially in regard to literature and truth.

Now what the four statements do have in common is their use and function, and in so far as they are each being used successfully to serve the same purpose, they may be said in this particular context to share the same meaning. It is significant, if we take the simple statement "The cat is on the mat" and place it in a completely different context (any one of our two previous examples), that as its use changes, so too does its meaning. It could mean, for example, that the cat is about to evacuate, because this particular cat has the unfortunate habit of always doing this on the carpet. The statement could well be an

exclamation of joy and surprise at the return of a long lost pet found sitting on the doormat. The examples are endless. At the same time, in these examples, other expressions might well have been equally appropriate. It is therefore apparent that there can be no systematic correspondence between linguistic formulations and situations or circumstances in which they are employed, hence the failure of rigid correspondence theories of truth. For, as we have seen, "meaning" is not simply referential, or descriptive, and is not to be found in objects or static reflections of the world, but in active, everyday usage. The idea that linguistic content is systematically represented by pictorial form, in terms of pure, elementary propositions, which correspond with the pure essences of the world, and somehow lie at the base of our common speech, characterises language as rigid and restrictive; for according to this theory, there is only one clear way of saying anything and everything. For anything other than these pure essences are "accidental features" or superfluous embellishments contributing nothing whatsoever to the "real" and "true" meaning. As a consequence, any linguistic expression will always have the same meaning, whatever the context and circumstances in which it is used, because according to this theory every situation with which the expression corresponded would have the same essential features, making the expression appropriate to it. There could not be different linguistic formulations to convey the same information, because when "completely analysed", these different formulations would supposedly be made up of the same essential features. Neither would it be possible to use identical linguistic formulations in completely different situations, because according to the theory it is the situation and its pictorial form that dictates the meaning of the expression. Thus, if the situation changes, then so, too, does the expression, which is rigidly tied to it. This is evidently a

false account of language, and one cannot imagine thought and communication ever evolving and developing under such rigid and stultifying conditions.

It is therefore apparent that in our ordinary, everyday uses of language, form and content may be easily separated. Indeed, if it were not possible to make the separation in most uses of language, then language would not have the scope and flexibility that it does have. If there were not different ways of conveying the same information and if similar linguistic formulations could not mean something quite different on different occasions or in different contexts, then language would not be as we know it to be, indeed it is impossible to imagine language being otherwise.

THE DISTINCTION IN LITERATURE

We have seen that the form/content dichotomy is a necessary feature of ordinary language. It is demonstrating the scope and flexibility and adaptability of language as a whole. But what are we to say about the language of literature, and does it make sense to make such a distinction in this area? We have to recognise that when literary critics use terms like style, structure and rhetoric, or rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, they are discussing the writer's choice of language and thus referring to the form of the work. We might talk loosely here of the external design as opposed to the internal vision. This terminology need not commit us to a picture theory of language. The distinction is certainly in evidence. There are essays published discussing the style of D. H. Lawrence or the language of Henry James, and books with titles like The Rhetoric of Fiction or The Structure of the Novel. We hear of the rich imagery of Shakespeare and the simple phraseology of Wordsworth.

Similar references are made to content, especially concerning fiction, when critics discuss the story-line, or the plot, or the work's message or metaphysic. Discussion of the behaviour of the characters is an allusion to content, moral or otherwise. Film directors who adapt novels for the screen are primarily concerned with content, for all that is usually retained of the literary form is the residue of the author's language in the dialogue. Thus, Dickens' vivid descriptions in Oliver Twist are transformed into pictures. So, too, is the evocative imagery of D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love. The distinction between form and content is certainly made where literature is concerned and it would be absurd to deny this, for whenever we report to friends and colleagues on poems or stories we have read, we are in some sense distinguishing form from

content. The question is, to what extent is it legitimate, given the nature of literature, to make such a distinction? Some critics argue that, in literature, form and content are inextricably inter-fused. There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth in this, but it is not a simple or straightforward matter.

For knowing that form and content are indivisible in literature does not abolish or render meaningless statements like: "It was a good story, but not very well told" and "This novelist has some good ideas but his prose is tedious", or "The book is well written, but it has nothing to say". Sometimes remarks about literature that distinguish form from content can be perfectly acceptable, even critically illuminating, and it would be a mistake to conclude that on every occasion the distinction is illegitimate, or reductive. The concepts of form and content are part of our vocabulary, with reference to language as a whole, and we cannot simply ignore this, neither can we deny that these concepts do play a part in the field of literature and literary criticism. The problem is: to what extent is the distinction appropriate or valid?

The form/content paradox in literature may be compared to the mind/body problem, indeed it has a great deal in common with it for, however much we may attack Cartesian dualism, and its chaotic ramifications, we can still discuss quite legitimately and logically aspects of the mind, as opposed to aspects of the body. We can distinguish between mental events and physical events, mental illness and physical illness. But although we have both mind and body vocabularies, it does not follow that we can drive a wedge between one and the other. Gilbert Ryle is among a number of philosophers who argue that both are inextricably interdependent and that it is just this amalgam that

constitutes a person.¹ Such philosophers contend that it does not make logical sense to imagine a complete separation of mind and body, that a body without a mind is no more than a corpse, and that the idea of a mind without a body is meaningless, a piece of logical nonsense. Similarly, with regard to literature, we do distinguish between form and content, but although this is the case, it would be absurd to conclude that we can therefore make a complete separation of the kind that obtains in the language of everyday information. Literary critics have to choose their words carefully when making the distinction, for they may suggest that a literary work has an internal content which can be unpacked from the formal wrappings of language in which the work is composed. As we have seen, this is perfectly acceptable in the language of everyday life, where we may paraphrase and re-word our statements and other linguistic formulations in order to clarify meaning or reveal truth.

In many other areas where language is used, the content is not tied to the form, nor the form to the content. Different forms of words may communicate the same content of information and, conversely, the same form of words in a different context or circumstances may communicate a quite different content of information. But in literature the language, the choice and order of words, is of supreme importance, because literature is a creative art, and words and phrases are the components of the literary work. Language is the very stuff of creation where literature is concerned. We must be careful when we talk of an interpenetration of the aesthetic form and the moral or cognitive content of a literary work, because such terminology may serve to widen, rather than bridge, the dichotomy. It can be misleading to use phrases like

1 This is the thesis of The Concept of Mind.

"the beauty of form" and "the truth of content", for we may find, in a work of literature, beauty in the content and truth in the form. The meaningful content of a work is inextricably related to the form of words employed, and to this extent they are ultimately indivisible. Thus to change the form of words is to change the meaning and alter the content. When we use terms like aesthetic form and cognitive content we are in danger of simplifying a complex and profound relationship. We will explore this relationship in the next section, with reference to some examples.

POETRY AND INFORMATION

Suppose, in a history book about the first world war, we read the following account:

. . . Soldiers often had to eat their meals lying on their backs to avoid being struck by enemy bombardment. During such moments, discussions of home affairs would provide momentary psychological escape. They would joke and swear and make bets upon their favourite football teams, often using their rations as currency. These men knew that death was a constant threat, and were used to the familiar sight of their comrades getting killed in battle . . .

This is a piece of straightforward factual information that could be communicated in a variety of ways. It could be paraphrased in a number of different styles, embodied in lectures, essays and newspaper reports, or perhaps dramatised in television documentary. The content of this information, the truth and meaning of the account is not rigidly tied to the particular form of words by way of which the information is delineated. Now consider the following poem by Wilfred Gibson:

Breakfast

We ate our breakfast lying on our backs
Because the shells were screeching overhead.
I bet a rasher to a loaf of bread
That Hull United would beat Halifax
When Jimmy Stainthorpe played full back instead
Of Billy Bradford. Ginger raised his head
And cursed, and took the bet, and dropt back dead.
We ate our breakfast lying on our backs
Because the shells were screeching overhead.¹

Now this poem is not simply a statement. It is an artistic creation composed of deliberately chosen words in a specific and original order. The form of the poem, the choice of words used and the order in which they appear, the structure of the lines, the rhythm and rhyme schemes, are all inextricably related to the poem's metaphysic, its embodiment of meaning and truth.

1 Taken from Brian Gardner, ed.: Up the Line to Death, p.84.

The poem contains general facts which we may already have learned from other sources, but it is not the mere presentation of facts that holds our interest. It is their mode of presentation, for works of literature have a formal significance that transcends the language of information, and the poetic form represents a pattern of meaning which points beyond the facts that the poem embodies. Thus we have to focus not simply on familiar facts, but also on their structural organisation.

The poem draws together certain contraries, and although the scene is one of battle and war, it brings our attention to bear upon the paradoxical elements in our everyday experience. In the poem, life seemingly goes on amidst death, and the comic is juxtaposed with the tragic, and this serves to heighten the dramatic shock of horror, while the horror itself is set alongside the ordinary and the mundane. The latter atmosphere is brought out by the casual conversation conducted in the language of men at the local.

The poem begins in a casual anecdotal manner, and the air of comedy is accentuated by the simple language and the repetitive rhyme-scheme. The lines have a regular staccato rhythm, echoing the sound of artillery. The title Breakfast, reiterated in the opening line, creates an atmosphere of mundane routine. "We ate our breakfast lying on our backs/
Because the shells were screeching overhead" seems to mark the beginning of a good yarn, the plurality of the pronouns indicating communion and comradeship, but these same two lines repeated at the end of the poem are no longer the same. They have undergone a significant transformation. The context and use have changed, and they now have a quite different meaning. Their repetition serves to emphasize the air of mundane routine, but the routine is no longer that of breakfast, it is the routine of death. The day begins lying on one's back for breakfast, and, where Ginger is concerned, ends with lying on one's back for death. The words

are now no longer comic and anecdotal, marking the beginnings of a story, but tragic and final, and marking the end of a life. The same lines serve as opening epigraph and closing epitaph.

The plural pronouns, though having a wider application, have been associated with Ginger and the narrator. Now, at the end of the poem, they are loaded with a terrible nostalgia, for the betting conversation initiated by the narrator can be seen as an attempt at momentary psychological escape. But ironically, it was this act of comradeship that precipitated Ginger's enthusiastic response and brought about his death. The repetition of the lines reinforces the routine nature of the incident and the stoic attitude that life must go on as before. But there is also a nightmarish atmosphere about the lines being repeated, as if somehow it never really happened; an attempt to erase the incident from consciousness and begin again.

The central feature of the poem is the bet, couched in simple casual language. The names of the towns and players give the conversation a parochial touch, and hark back to peace at home. Within the vision of the poem the bet is flippant and particular, but the poetic form gives it a wider context and a deeply serious metaphysic. The bet is about a sporting combat and who will emerge the winner, and this serves to obscure the ubiquitous question in every soldier's mind - which side will emerge the victor in the mortal combat in which they are all engaged. Thus the precarious gamble of the war game is thrown into relief, and Ginger's attempt to win a flippant, comic bet results in a tragic loss. It is also significant that he gambles with bread, which is the "staff of life", and has connotations of Communion and the Last Supper and, of course, it turns out to be Ginger's last breakfast.

In these few lines we see juxtaposed with oxymoronic force the comic with the tragic, the mundane with the horrific, the simple with the

profound. We hear the screeching of shells, the living conversation and then the silence of **Ginger's** death. The peaceful intimacy of fraternal affection is set amidst the detached cruelty of war. The felt emotion is objectified in the concrete situation, there is no indulgence in obvious, emotive language; indeed it is the matter of fact terminology which accentuates the emotional evocation, making the poem singularly poignant and devoid of sentimentality. This shows that we cannot make absolute distinctions between the emotive and the cognitive, or the evaluative and the descriptive, where language is concerned. For although we may avoid terms which are associated with subjective feelings, e.g. horror, pity, fear etc., it does not make our descriptions "pure" or "neutral"; indeed, as we observe in the poem, it can have quite the opposite effect.

We see how the form contributes to and reinforces the content, while at the same time the content dictates the form. Thus to change the language in any way would interfere with the overall meaning of the poem. Even the title Breakfast is of supreme importance, for it has connotations of the early morning and new awakening which provides a sharp contrast with the final sleep of death, and emphasizes the premature nature of the event. The term "Supper" would have fitted the metre, but with its connotations of darkness and sleep, would have been quite inappropriate. It would change the whole atmosphere of the poem, as indeed would any other term.

It is important to note here that the earlier history-book account is in no way a paraphrase of the poem, for the poem cannot be paraphrased; it exists only in the language in which it is written. The account is simply an example of how the same general facts that the poem embodies might have been delineated. As we have seen, there is far more to the poem than this superficial information.

We shall see later how works of literature, with their complex patterns of meaning, can effect aspect changes in our experience of the world, extending and enriching our conceptual apparatus, enabling us to see both old, familiar truths in a new and revealing light, and to apprehend new truths, thus providing epistemic material that is tacit and subtle, and not to be quantified in terms of factual information. It is knowledge nonetheless; fundamental conceptual knowledge.

It must be emphasized that to change the words of any poem, or any work of literature for that matter, is not simply to change the "aesthetic form", for any alteration in the linguistic structure will necessarily result in an alteration of the meaning of the work. To change the form is to change the content.

Consider, for example, John Donne's A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning. Donne uses the analogy of a pair of compasses in order to portray the physical and spiritual affinity between two lovers:

Our two soules therefore, which are one,
Though I must goe, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.
If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin compasses are two,
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the' other doe.
And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth rome,
It leanes, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as that comes home.
Such wilt thou be to mee, who must
Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begunne.¹

This is a remarkable comparison. In the hands of a lesser artist it might well have been clumsy and inappropriate. But Donne's image is exquisite,

1 Verses 6 - 9 inclusive, in A. W. Garrod, ed.: John Donne: Poetry and Prose, p.11.

and exploited with delicacy and subtlety, revealing the profound nature of the lovers' attachment.

A great deal has been written on this poem, and there is no need for a detailed analysis. I simply want to concentrate on the final two lines, where the word "makes" is repeated. John Hayward, an editor of Donne's work, is displeased by this repetition, and he has altered the text:

Thy firmness draws my circle just,¹
And makes me end, where I begunne.

Mr. Hayward explains:

I have boldly adopted the reading which none of the editions or MSS. give (Eds. and MSS. read: 'Thy firmness makes my circle just'), from Sloane MS. 1792 and an XVII cent. commonplace book belonging to Mr. John Sparrow. The repetition of 'makes' is extremely awkward, and although it can hardly be supposed that all copyists were guilty of inserting 'makes' in line 36 from the previous line, there can be no doubt that 'drawes' is the better reading. The reading preferred by Walton in his Life of Donne, where this poem is quoted, is:

'Thy firmness makes my circle just
And me to end where I begun'.²

Mr. Hayward's alteration, in spite of his explanation, is indefensible. In his efforts to achieve aesthetic perfection or verbal neatness, he has considerably altered the sense of the poem.

Poetic imagery can serve myriad purposes, and one function of a metaphor or analogy is to make us aware of something by bringing it sharply into focus. When used in this manner successfully, the comparison should illuminate and reveal, by alerting our attention to features or aspects of phenomena hitherto unconsidered or unrecognised; but sometimes, unintentionally, the very contrary effect is the result.

1 Verse 9, in John Hayward, ed.: Donne: Complete Verse and Selected Prose, p.37.

2 *ibid*, p.763.

Poetic imagery can go sadly wrong, perhaps by misplacing the emphasis or over-extending the metaphor and then, instead of sharpening our focus, a metaphor can fog the mind and muddle the imagination. It is in this unfortunate direction that Mr. Hayward's alteration inclines Donne's imaginative comparison.

Donne introduces the image as a simile, though we are lead stealthily into the language of extended metaphor. The analogy moves with exquisite delicacy and precision from the simple mechanics of geometry to the profound power of love, with all its compulsion and tenacity. Thus when we reach:

Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begunne.

we are in the spiritual world of the two lovers and the influence they exert upon each other. The term "makes" emphasizes how the bond of love not only controls the lover's meanderings, but also compels him to return to his mistress. Hayward's term not only ruins this emphasis but also completely destroys the mood that Donne has evoked, by wrenching our attention away from the lovers and back to the drawing board. The term "drawes", with its geometrical connotations, gives the image a regressive hiccup. It takes the emphasis off the narrator's feelings of magnetic compulsion and conjurs up an absurd picture of his mistress chalking a boundary line for him.

Mr. Hayward's alteration involves an implicit value judgment, namely that repetition in literature is necessarily bad. He openly admits that the choice is a singular one, and has no evidence that they were the words of Donne. But he is convinced that his is a change for the better. But according to this criterion, we might change Macbeth's words "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow"¹ into "Tomorrow, the next day,

1 Shakespeare: Macbeth, act 5, scene 5.

and the day after" or Mollie Bloom's final affirmation "Yes I said yes I will Yes"¹ into "Yes I said of course I will certainly". It is erroneous to imagine that such changes are merely aesthetic, or that words may be regarded merely as verbal ornaments. Such apparently small changes in a literary text can be of critical and monumental significance.

1 James Joyce: Ulysses, p.704.

THE LANGUAGE OF FICTION

One might argue that poetry is essentially different from the language of literary prose, and that the same rules of precision and order do not apply to works of fiction. After all, for the most part poetry represents a concise medium of expression, which necessitates an accuracy of meaning and discipline of structure of a kind which distinguishes it from the language of fictional prose. It would be tedious and unnecessary here to try to establish just how one can differentiate between poetry and prose. The main point of consideration is: to what extent is the meaning of a work of fiction dependent upon the specific choice and order of the words and phrases employed therein, or is the aesthetic form, in terms of linguistic structure, separable from the metaphysical or cognitive content? It would seem that a division can be made, given the fact that many great novels and stories are translated into many languages. But this argument is both specious and spurious, and the following analysis and discussion should demonstrate this point.

Let us consider Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. The title, on the one hand, refers to darkest Africa and, on the other, to the darkness of the human heart when unilluminated by the light of moral conventions. Conrad's polemic is that there is no natural instinct of virtue within us, that the African and the European are each born with a heart of darkness, and that the light of moral goodness shines from without. Throughout the novel Conrad reiterates the idea that morality is environmental and social, and that men are, as individuals, morally hollow. This can become manifest when human beings are remotely isolated from strict moral laws and practices. In the hands of the story-teller, Marlow, the word "hollow" becomes symbolically charged as the novel

progresses.¹ But of course Marlow is Conrad's narrator, and is himself human, and had been to central Africa, and cut off from civilization and conventional Western morality. He has been exposed to a different set of moral norms, and is as vulnerable to change as anyone. (The extent of any change will obviously vary with different individuals.) Marlow's own hollowness is dramatically indicated during a momentary pause in his story, and Conrad himself takes up the narration; in a casual though insidious manner, the word "hollow" with all its metaphorical significance, is applied to Marlow himself:

There was a pause of profound stillness, then a match flared, and Marlow's lean face appeared, worn, hollow, with downward folds and dropped eyelids, with an aspect of concentrated attention; and as he took vigorous draws at his pipe, it seemed to retreat and advance out of the night in the regular flicker of tiny flame. The match went out.²

This is a further indication of the complexity of literary meaning, for had it been a simple factual description of the nature of Marlow's physiognomy, e.g. the account of a journalist, then the word "gaunt" could well have served the same purpose; but in the context of Conrad's imaginative work the alternative term lacks the symbolic force that the word "hollow", during the course of the novel, has accumulated; that is, a depth of meaning directly related to the philosophical metaphysics that the work embodies. Literary artists like Conrad are not using language to communicate simple information, and terms are not used lightly or capriciously; they are chosen carefully, and every phrase has a functional significance; thus when Marlow says to his European

1 T. S. Eliot exploits this allusion in his poem "The Hollow Men", the epigraph of which is taken from Heart of Darkness: "Mistah Kurtz - he dead". (See T. S. Eliot, Collected Poems, 1909 - 1962, p.87.)

2 Heart of Darkness, in Joseph Conrad: Three Short Novels, pp. 56-57.

audience that they are "stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman"¹ he is not merely referring to life in a Western urban society. He might well have said: "When you go about your daily business - visit the baker's or the greengrocer's or the post office or the undertaker"; but the terms "butcher" and "policeman" are chosen deliberately, because they relate significantly to the polemical content of the novel. "Butcher" is a reference to the primeval forces, to the inherent savagery in human beings, while "policeman" alludes to the imposed morality of civilization, the code and rule of law. The words "stepping delicately" are equally important, for they mean that we as human beings are delicately poised between savagery and civilization, between chaos and order.

The literary artist is a wordsmith who exploits meaning and creates complex patterns of significance. Consider James Joyce's Ulysses, where each word and phrase employed seems to point to a meaning beyond itself, meanings which ramify and develop as the novel progresses. The novel begins with the phrase: "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan . . ." ² These words have a significance which cannot be divorced from the metaphysical content of the work. The term "stately", applied to Mulligan, is ironic, for he is symbolically identified with a priest and a king, (he conducts a parody of a Mass in his morning ablutions and also represents Claudius the usurper in Hamlet). To this extent he epitomises, for Stephen Dedalus, the worst aspects of church and monarchy, the two institutions which govern the country, and thus he stands for all that is rotten in the state of Ireland. Other terms, like "regal" or "majestic", would be quite inappropriate, for "stately" connects with "State" and

1 *ibid*, p.58.

2 James Joyce: Ulysses, p.9.

applies, with neat ambiguity, to both the predominant forces of rule. It is also subtly ironic. The suggested alternatives would be heavy and obvious. There is another, equally important, reason which further demonstrates the inextricable nature of form and content. The word "stately" begins with S and ends with Y and it is the opening word of the narrative, while the last word of the novel is "yes", where the order is reversed. Some critics have pointed to this as an indication of the novel's circularity. This is not unlikely; indeed, such is the intricacy of Ulysses that it might well be an oblique reference to the "moral paralysis" that, according to Joyce, prevailed in Ireland at the time. Thus within the work, at the end of a single day (June 16, 1904) during which many events have occurred which influence the lives of a number of people, the effects are particular and parochial, and in general, things remain much the same, and one cannot envisage life in Dublin being very different on the 17th of June. The clock and the novel in this sense have turned full circle, and we are back to where we began.

Now consider the second word, "plump". It is not only a description of Mulligan's physical stature; it also anticipates his overfed self-indulgence and the grossness of his egotistic personality. These aspects of his character are further embodied in his name "Buck", which hints at his overt masculinity and animal sensuality.

This kind of analysis can be tiresome and pretentious, but one cannot deny that Ulysses is saturated with symbols and analogical allusions. It is a veritable labyrinth of metaphorical connections and oblique references and leit-motifs which accumulate and develop significance as the novel progresses.

Although the language of literature is the same language as that used to convey everyday information, it is not, in literary works,

being used for that purpose, and, therefore, meaning in literature is a far more complex phenomenon than that of ordinary everyday language. The language of literature is selected and ordered to form an aesthetic design which enhances and reinforces the cognitive significance. Simply consider the names of characters in fiction. In life, most of us do not choose our names, and they are simply insignificant labels of convenience. But in literature, all the names are chosen, and are thus worthy of attention. Sometimes they are deliberately nondescript, like "Tom Jones", while others, like "Scrooge" seem to embody aspects of the character named. Dickens has become the definitive exponent of this art, but it has been employed by many writers, from Bunyan to Joyce. The two main characters of Ulysses have names which are appropriate to them. Bloom, who at one point adopts the pseudonym of "Henry Flower", has a certain earthiness. He is down-to-earth, a man of common sense, with his feet planted firmly on the ground. He is practical, and of the world, an atheist who believes he will return to the earth. Stephen, too, is significantly named, for he has something of the martyr about him, but also, like his mythical namesake (Daedalus), he is up in the clouds in an ethereal world of metaphysics and literary theories. He seems hardly aware of the life around him and, in spite of turning his back on religion, he still has, so to speak, one eye on the heavens for fear an omnipotent deity might punish him for his sins.

The language of fiction is of the utmost importance, and the linguistic form informs the cognitive content, for whether we are discussing allegory in Bunyan, humour in Fielding, satire in Swift, irony in Jane Austen, the moral insight of George Eliot, the characters in Dickens, the pastoral atmosphere of Hardy or the emotional expression of Lawrence - all are inextricably related to the language that these authors employ.

When we analyse literary works we might indicate certain salient features in order to present an interpretation, or justify an evaluation. We may argue that certain lines or passages are more commensurate with a certain metaphysic than others, or that they may more piquantly express a central theme. But such parts fit into a coherent whole, where the words have been carefully selected and ordered. To this extent every word and phrase is functional, and nothing can be considered accidental, and we are in no position to stipulate otherwise. It is because of the uniqueness of literary language that translation from one language to another of works of literature can never, of necessity, be wholly satisfactory. Language evolves differently with different forms of life, and each given culture will endow the words and phrases and idioms of its language with meanings that cannot adequately be translated as far as literature is concerned. The subtle nuances, the fine shades of ambiguity and the myriad connotations that literary artists exploit, inhere in the specific language they employ. They are the unique constituents of that language and are necessarily lost in translation, however brilliant and accomplished the latter might be.

Nevertheless works of literature are translated and, without the work of the translator we would be denied access to many literary masterpieces. After all, it is better to read Anna Karenina or The Trial in translation than not at all. But it is important to realize that we are not getting the real Tolstoy or the real Kafka, but diluted and mediated versions of their work. Tolstoy's analogy here is somewhat illuminating. He compared the experience of a translated work of literature with seeing a carpet or tapestry from the underside, for one can clearly observe the pattern or pictorial design, but the richness and subtlety of contrast and colour are missing. The language of each literary work is thus unique and immutable. We shall see in the next section that it is in the nature of literature that literary works, as a matter of logic, cannot be paraphrased.

LITERATURE AND PARAPHRASE

We have noted that works of literature cannot be paraphrased, because of the very nature of literature. A literary work is composed in the medium of language, and it is tied to the choice and order of words and phrases as a matter of definition. One cannot divide water from its wetness and still maintain that it is water. Ice and steam cannot correctly be described as wet, and neither are they water. Similarly, to paraphrase a Shakespearian sonnet is to destroy it and produce something else; a change of words necessarily involves a change of meaning.

James Cameron, in a valuable essay, "Poetry and Dialectic",¹ makes out a tight logical case why the language of literature is necessarily different from that used in other forms of discourse and cannot be the subject of paraphrase. Cameron argues that some of the entailments appropriate to other forms of discourse are cut where literature is concerned. There are certain questions in regard to imaginative literature which cannot be sensibly asked; questions which fall outside the boundaries of artistic creation. For instance, it makes no sense to enquire what subjects were studied by Hamlet at the University of Wittenberg, or how many children Lady Macbeth had, or what kind of worm it was that infected Blake's sick rose. This in itself is not new, but Cameron argues further. He argues that the cutting of those entailments makes the language of literature immutable and unique, which necessarily precludes the paraphrasing which applies to other forms of discourse.

We have already noted that a distinction can be made in ordinary language locutions between what is being said and how it is being said. Indeed, we saw that this is a logical consequence of the scope and

1 This is to be found in a collection of essays entitled The Night Battle.

flexibility of language, and the nature of meaning. We saw how language usage fits into situations and circumstances, and it is with reference to particular employment that we can understand the full meaning of the terms we use. To be sure, as Cameron argues, in areas of discourse other than that of imaginative literature (or in Cameron's terminology "the making of poetic fictions") the language we use relates to a state of affairs.

Whether we are giving factual descriptions or making moral judgments or interpreting mathematical formulae, the terms we use grow out of and fit into a set of circumstances. Cameron gives examples of such uses and goes on:

Briefly, what all these instances have in common and what makes such uses susceptible of paraphrase, is that in each case the adequacy of what is said is governed by some state of affairs, prior to and independent of what is said. The character of the world, predication, a situation out of which the obligation to pay one's debts arises, those are prior to what may be said about them.

Now, the adequacy of what is said in the form of poetic fiction is not, in any straightforward sense, governed by any state of affairs prior to and independent of what is said. Fictitious descriptions are neither true nor false in the way real descriptions are true or false and this follows from their being fictions. Just as to dream that I make a promise is not to make a promise, for I do not do anything in a dream, I only dream that I do this or that, so to give a fictitious description is not to give a description, just as the promise that I dream I make has the form of a promise. It follows from this that I could not give an alternative poetic description, for there would be no criterion (as there would be in the case of a real description) for deciding whether or not the alternative description had succeeded. The poetic description has the form of a description; but it exists only as this description, these words in this order. What is said and how it is said are thus not distinguishable in the way they are in other forms of discourse.¹

All this is not to say that language is crudely referential, or that linguistic terms relate systematically to a state of affairs, indeed we have seen that this is not and cannot be the case. Different

1 *ibid*, p.137

information can be on occasions communicated by way of the same terms, and conversely the same information may be communicated by way of quite different words and phrases.

We can see, then, how the state of affairs or the context in which language is employed has a bearing upon the sense and meaning of what is being said. Thus, as Cameron describes, in other areas of discourse we are in a position to paraphrase and restate in the sense of exchanging one set of terms for another. But this is not the case where the language of "poetic fictions" is concerned, because there is no context or state of affairs outside that of the work in question to which we may refer.

It is important to mention that Cameron is not making out a narrow, autonomist case where literature is concerned. On the contrary, the main polemic of the essay is directed against this, and explains how literature may reflect aspects of human life that can be valuable and informative. Cameron reaffirms the view of Cleanth Brooks,¹ that the paraphrasing of literature is heretical. Meaning may be elucidated and clarified, by critics (or by any one for that matter) but not paraphrased. Certainly, when critics or others analyse or even explain the meanings embodied in works of literature, they use their own terminology, and even metaphors and analogies, in order to point out and reveal the depths and subtleties of meaning that may be involved. But they are not paraphrasing (any endeavour to paraphrase is to misunderstand the nature of literature), they are illuminating the work in question, and it is always to the text that we must return. For it is ultimately only by reference to our experience of the text that we can judge the critic's analysis to be true or false. Paraphrase involves exchanging one set of words for another, and this, logically, cannot be done where literature is concerned.

1 See "The Heresy of Paraphrase" in The Well-Wrought Urn.

The paradox is that even good criticism involves a suggestion of paraphrase, and it is here that form and content may be legitimately divided. What underlines the paradox is that the division that legitimately takes place between form and content in criticism serves to emphasize how inextricably inseparable they are, for it is not paraphrase in the aforementioned sense which is taking place all the time in areas of ordinary discourse. David Lodge sums it up thus:

It is the inevitable irony of our position as critics that we are obliged, whatever kind of imaginative work we examine, to paraphrase the unparaphrasable. Whenever we try to express our understanding and appreciation of a literary text, we are obliged to state its meanings in different words; and it is in the distance between the original words and our own words, when the latter are brought to their maximum of sensitive and articulate responsiveness, that we feel the uniqueness of the writer's achievement.¹

Nevertheless there are those writers who believe that works of literature can be paraphrased, and that this can be used as a means of revealing the "true meaning of the work", or the "inner core of truth". It is on this issue that Cleanth Brooks² takes Yvor Winters to task, for Winters believes that "paraphrasing" can divide the "rational content" of a poem from its emotive connotations, or the feeling expressed therein.

A. L. Rowse obviously holds a similar belief to that of Mr. Winters, and sees himself, an Elizabethan historian, as peculiarly fitted for the task of extracting the precise meaning of Shakespeare's sonnets.³ In his book he gives what he calls "a paraphrase of the sonnet in modern prose"⁴ on a page facing each original poem. He believes that his paraphrasing

1 Language of Fiction, p.35.

2 See "The Heresy of Paraphrase". Winters account is to be found in "Preliminary Problems" in In Defense of Reason, pp. 361-373.

3 A. L. Rowse, Shakespeare's Sonnets, Introduction.

4 *ibid*, p.ix.

"solves all major problems of the Sonnets".¹ Rowse admits that this is a presumptuous claim, but asserts that as an historian he is "practical and common-sensible".² His method is to follow the poems line by line, "watching for every piece of internal information"³ and to "bring out what lurks behind the text".⁴ He obviously believes that his set of paraphrases represents the last word where Shakespeare's sonnets are concerned. Past writers may have encountered obscurities in the text, but Rowse writes boldly "In this edition, however, I think I have got out the meaning of them all".⁵

All this presupposes that there is something underneath, as it were, the language that we use, that needs to be revealed, something to be extracted. It presupposes a "rational" or "neutral" language at the base of our common speech. It is as if one can strip away the ornaments and trimmings and reveal meaning and truth by way of a purity of expression, a "pure" language.

Ever and again comes the thought that what we see of a sign is only the outside of something within, in which the real operations of sense and meaning go on.⁶

1 *ibid*, pp. vii - viii

2 *ibid*, p.ix.

3 *ibid*, p.viii.

4 *ibid*, p.x.

5 *ibid*, p.ix.

6 Wittgenstein: Zettel, paragraph 140

LITERATURE AND THE IDEA OF A PURE LANGUAGE

In John Hospers' Meaning and Truth in the Arts we find the following:

When we state the meaning of a word or phrase, we are stating what the word refers to, what it has come by convention to stand for. This is doubtless the main sense in which the word 'meaning' is used.¹

Later we find Hospers arguing that it is the referential meaning that makes words and phrases "logical" and "informative",² because they symbolise objects and situations in the world. He goes on:

The same is true of the sentences in which they occur; the sentence which symbolises a situation depends for its (communicative) success on the degree to which it symbolises that situation. Scientific writing doubtless constitutes the chief illustration of words and sentences used entirely in this fashion.³

Writers in the exact sciences deliberately set out to restrict their words to this purely symbolic use, to 'take all the colour out of them'.⁴

Hospers is fond of terms like "pure communication" and "pure prose". He has what one might call a Tractarian view of language, but this is hardly surprising, for the early Wittgenstein's theory of meaning had a considerable influence on philosophy and related disciplines. Hospers, like the early Wittgenstein, emphasizes not the use to which words are being put, the context and circumstances of their employment, but the objects, or "referents" to which he believes words and phrases, when they are used correctly, or as he puts it, "logically", must correspond.

This is the Fido-Fido theory of meaning, and according to Hospers, this is what "scientific writing" or "pure prose" is all about; that is, getting down to the essences of meaning, or as Wittgenstein put it in

1 John Hospers: Meaning and Truth in the Arts, p.74.

2 Hospers, *ibid*, p.123.

3 Hospers, *ibid*, p.123.

4 Hospers, *ibid*, p.127.

the Tractatus, pure "elementary propositions".¹ Hospers, like many others of his generation, obviously believes that such a pure language exists, although, as with Wittgenstein of the Tractatus, he gives no examples of "pure prose" or "scientific writing". Indeed, at one point, in endeavouring to distinguish between poetry and "pure prose" he writes: "But the language of exact science, theoretically at least consists of nothing but this referential or symbolic usage, while the language of poetry consists of something more."² The italics here are mine, for it is a theory which finds no proof in either fact or logic, and one that the later Wittgenstein cast into the flames.

It is, however, important to note that the idea that there is a pure language, that somehow lies at the base of our common speech, which connects directly with reality and gives us a "true picture of the world" did not originate wholly by any means in Wittgenstein's Tractatus. The notion dates back to Plato, who subscribed to a realist theory of meaning and a correspondence theory of truth. Hence we have Socrates continually searching for pure essences in order to discover the true nature of reality. It is, as we have seen, the belief that a pure language exists, that refers directly and immediately to the objects and situations in the world, and describes them neutrally, or literally "as they are".

The idea of this pure language, that could faithfully mirror the world, was prevalent during the age of empiricism. M. H. Abrams records how Thomas Spratt, in the late 17th Century, recommended that "natural philosophers match their combinations of words precisely to the combinations of things in nature".³ This name/object notion of meaning was widespread during this period.

1 See Wittgenstein: Tractatus, pp. 59-63.

2 Hospers: Meaning and Truth in the Arts, p.127.

3 M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p.285.

John Locke sets out his own version in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding¹ and Jonathan Swift refers to it in Gulliver's Travels with more than a touch of irony that in the metropolis of Lagado, talking could be a threat to health, and:

An expedient was therefore offered, that since words are only names for things, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such things as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on. And this invention would certainly have taken place, to the great ease as well as health of the subject, if the women, in conjunction with the vulgar and illiterate, had not threatened to raise a rebellion, unless they might be allowed the liberty to speak with their tongues after the manner of their ancestors; such constant irreconcilable enemies to science are the common people. However, many of the most learned and wise adhere to the new system of expressing themselves by things; which has only this inconvenience attending it, that if a man's business be very great, and of various kinds, he must be obliged in proportion to carry a great bundle of things upon his back, unless he can afford one or two strong servants to attend them. I have often beheld two of these sages almost sinking under the weight of the packs, like pedlars among us; who, when they met in the streets would lay down their loads, open their saddles, and hold conversation for an hour together; then put down their implements, help each other to resume their burdens, and take their leave.

But for short conversations, a man may carry implements in his pockets, and under his arms, enough to supply him; and in his house he cannot be at a loss. Therefore the room where company meet who practise this art, is full of all things, ready at hand, requisite to furnish matter for this kind of artificial converse.

Another great advantage proposed by this invention was, that it would serve as a universal language, to be understood in all civilized nations, whose goods and utensils are generally of the same kind, or nearly resembling, so that their uses might easily be comprehended. And the ambassador would be qualified to treat with foreign princes, or ministers of state, to whose tongues they were utter strangers.

There is, I think, a parallel here between Swift's satirical reference to the "vulgar and illiterate" people's means of expression and what the later Wittgenstein called the ordinary language of men,

1 See Book 3, "Of Words".

2 Gulliver's Travels, p.191

and the distance that both writers observed between the latter and the monolithic theories of metaphysicians.¹

Remarks like that of Thomas Spratt at the dawn of experimental science are hardly surprising, for the favourite candidate of this pure language, as the quotation from Hospers demonstrates, has been the language of science and the idea is still much in evidence in the 20th century. According to the Tractatus, the world is composed of facts, and it is the function of the natural sciences to collect and catalogue these facts and describe them clearly "as they are", in a language which corresponds precisely with them. Thus, meaning, in scientific discourse, was thought to be purely referential and objective,² stripped of all "accidental features"³ or unnecessary embellishments which may have given rise to falsity and distortion. For along with this belief, that scientific language is "pure" or "transparent", goes the notion that poetry, or any discourse that employs figurative devices or accidental features is either emotive or downright false. Thus we find empiricists like David Hume writing, in his essay "Of the Standard of Taste": "Many of the beauties of poetry, even of eloquence, are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles and metaphor, on abuse and perversion of terms from the natural meanings."⁴

1 Compare Swift's remarks on a universal language of things with the following from Hospers:

"For the logical (referential) meaning of words can be translated from one language into another . . . Thus 'cat' means the same thing, that is, has exactly the same referent, as 'katze', 'felix', 'chat', etc. If the foreign language does not happen to have a word with quite the same referent or set of referents as the one in the original language, then one can be coined; this is done constantly in scientific discourse."

Meaning and Truth in the Arts, p.130.

2 C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning.

3 See Wittgenstein: Tractatus, p.33: 3.34, 3.341.

4 David Hume, "Of the Standards of Taste", in T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, ed.: Essays Moral, Political and Literary, volume I, pp. 269-270.

This belief that meaning was to be found in nature, and that a "pure", "natural" language exists, which directly communicates truth, has not only affected scientists and philosophers, but has also had some considerable influence on theories of art and literature. Its connection with mimesis is obvious, for if art mirrors the world, then the language of the literary artist must be carefully selected and arranged in order to represent a true picture of the world. But aspects of the theory have affected those literary artists who may appropriately be called expressionists.

Thus, Wordsworth, in his preface to the lyrical ballads, talks of the "real language of men".¹ This, he believes, is the language of the rustic, because in his terms, such people are closest to nature, and are thus in touch with this pure, natural language, "because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived."² Here we have it; meaning is referential, and language is derived from objects in the world, a system of names. Such a language, Wordsworth argues, is "a more permanent and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets."³

He condemns those poets who "indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression"⁴ and endeavours to purify his own language of such devices for, to employ anything other than "simple and unelaborated expressions"⁵ is not only to distort or pollute the poetry, but also to indulge in falsehood.

1 William Wordsworth's Preface to the "Lyrical Ballads", in The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Michael Rossetti, p.535.

2 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.536.

3 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.536.

4 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.536.

5 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.536.

Wordsworth evidently believes that his pure language is the vehicle of truth, reflecting a true picture of the world, for he writes

It is not, then to be supposed that anyone, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments.¹

All this is not to denigrate Wordsworth as a poet; indeed in this regard his genius is not in question. But it does indicate how widespread and influential was the idea of a pure, natural language, which had some simple and immediate connection with reality, and the parallel belief that the use of metaphor, or any kind of figurative expression was a superfluous and spurious ornamentation which could only conduce to either distortion or downright falsity.

We have seen that the nature of language is such that meaning, even in simple, everyday conversation, is complex and many-faceted, and cannot be reduced to "referents" or "essences". This of course is manifest in the concept of purity itself, for what constitutes purity where language is concerned varies with different writers. The empiricists believed that pure language was the language of "descriptivism", a language which represented the world in pictures of facts, devoid of not only figurative devices, metaphors and the like, but also "cleansed" of all that was thought to be emotive or evaluative.

Wordsworth, however, defined poetry as an expression of emotion,² and certainly believed in the power of his language to evoke emotion in others. It is also apparent that he saw poetry as an embodiment of moral and philosophical evaluation. It was the complicated conceits and "accidental ornaments" that Wordsworth saw as a superfluous incumbrance

1 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.540.

2 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.536.

where the expression of truth was concerned, and sought to eradicate them. George Moore believed in a purity of representation in language that was much closer to that of the empiricists, and he saw Wordsworth as a moral didacticist. In his Anthology of Pure Poetry,¹ Moore defines a pure poem as "something the poet creates outside of his own personality". It should contain "no hint of subjectivity". Moore believed, like the empiricists, that it was possible to purify language and describe nature simply "as it is" through the medium of poetry. Moore's theory of poetry may be summed up in terms of Tractarian mimesis.²

Different beliefs about the purity of linguistic formulation have been held by many writers, especially in the field of literature. Novelists, like Henry James and James Joyce, endeavoured to purify their work of explicit moral or philosophical didacticism and any suggestion of authorial intervention, or even presence, while T. S. Eliot advocated the use of the "objective correlative"³ as a more detached means of expressing emotion in poetry. On this, Wayne Booth has an interesting comment:

This 'objective correlative' has become so much a part of our critical language that we often forget to ask whether there is any such thing as a natural poetic object which will serve, in itself, as a formula for particular emotions. The truth is that dozens of different concepts of what is 'natural' have been covered by this convenient notion of the object which correlates with the natural, inevitable response. Before we allow ourselves to purge our literature of any one form of artificiality, we should be quite clear what we mean when we say that 'the natural object is always the adequate symbol'.⁴

1 This theory is discussed in the Introduction; see especially pp. 17-19.

2 I am not suggesting that G. Moore was a disciple of the Tractatus, but it does demonstrate how ubiquitous, though implicit, Tractarian notions about language were.

3 T. S. Eliot: "Hamlet and his problems", in Sacred Wood, p.100.

4 Wayne Booth: "Theories of Pure Art", in The Rhetoric of Fiction, p.97.

Now there is certainly nothing wrong with the idea of writers endeavouring to "purify" their work of certain features, be they metaphorical conceits or explicit moral assertions. Indeed, with reference to the above mentioned writers, the result has been, indisputably, great works of art, but it does emphasize the influence of empiricism and the belief in absolute purity of expression. The important point is that purity is relative. There is no absolutely pure means of expression, as Hospers would have us believe (even in scientific discourse) with his talk of "pure prose" and "pure communication". Certainly the view of scientific discourse as expressed by him is quite different from that of Paul Feyerabend, who writes: ". . . observational reports, experimental results, 'factual' statements, either contain theoretical assumptions or assert them by the manner in which they are used."¹

Wayne Booth makes the point, where fiction is concerned, that no writer can be completely objective in his style, and that one man's purity is another man's pollution. The literary artist cannot exclude himself and his beliefs completely from his work, and he may use a variety of rhetorical devices to achieve the best effect. He may, in his attempts at purification, eliminate what he considers to be obvious aspects of rhetoric, but as Booth points out, the writer's attempt to purify his work in this way is ultimately the exchange of one kind of rhetorical device for another.² The question is not: does the writer of fiction use rhetoric, but rather, does he use rhetoric well or badly?

1 Feyerabend: Against Method, p.31. See also Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 126-127, where similar scepticism is expressed with regard to a neutral or pure language.

2 See Wayne Booth: "The 'Impurity' of Great Literature" in The Rhetoric of Fiction, p.100.

This is not confined to literary artists. It applies to any writer of serious intent who is trying to communicate something that he considers to be important. Philosophers, scientists, politicians and poets use language in a number of different ways in order to achieve their purpose. Each has a point of view and a set of beliefs, and these will be manifest in different ways in the language they use.

The early Wittgenstein's "accidental features" and Wordsworth's "accidental ornaments", Hume's "hyperboles and metaphors" are part and parcel of the ordinary language of everyday life, and are not confined to literature. They occur in the writings of many disciplines, including scientific discourse, and like all other features of language, they can be used well or badly. When they are used well, in any discourse, figurative devices can be illuminating and informative, and are no more nor less artificial or impure than other aspects of language.

The idea that metaphorical or evaluative terminology is necessarily false stems from a belief that the epitome of a true statement is a literal, descriptive one, of empirical fact, and that what makes it true is the correspondence between the statement and the state of affairs it describes.

This relates to a name/object theory of meaning, and thus eliminates any figurative or evaluative language as either false or meaningless or both, the former being "a perversion of terms from the natural meanings" (according to Hume), and the latter (again according to Hume) as an expression of feeling or passion on the part of the author, rather than a description of fact.¹

1 Hume: Treatise, Book 3, Part 1. The modern definitive account of this position is to be found in A. J. Ayer: Language, Truth and Logic.

Some writers have created the impression that language can be divided into two distinct halves, the descriptive and the evaluative, or the rational and the emotive,¹ but there can be no general rule on this, for what makes a statement either descriptive or evaluative is not just the words themselves but also the context and situation in which they are used. Furthermore, such categories give a distorted picture of language, which can obviously be classified in any number of different ways. It is certainly true that some words, when viewed in isolation, are more emotive than others, in their connotations e.g. "nigger", while other words we may want to call descriptive, again, remote from any context e.g. "black".²

Nowell-Smith also talks of "janus-words",³ which embody elements of the descriptive and the evaluative, e.g. "unpunctual", but such words, like all language, come to life when put into particular situations, which may well contradict these absolute distinctions. Take the statement "there is a black man on the bus". This, uttered by a white separatist in Johannesburg, on a bus reserved for white people, could be termed "evaluative", perhaps involving deep feelings of disgust and horror on the part of the speaker, while the same statement used by a young child in East Grinstead might be nothing other than a descriptive observation. Similarly, for the most part, the term "nigger" is

1 This kind of division is to be found in R. M. Hare: The Language of Morals, and P. H. Nowell-Smith: Ethics.

2 One would think that if any words are to be called descriptive or neutral, they would be the names of colours; indeed colour-words fit quite snugly, it would appear, into a name/object theory of meaning, but even these words are loaded with a multitude of values and prejudices, e.g. the "red menace", the "yellow peril", "blue blood", and the connotations of orange and green in Ireland. The list is endless.

3 Nowell-Smith: Ethics, p.100 ff.

generally regarded as derogatory, a term of abuse used by racists. Yet it is still possible to find some rather uninformed elderly people who use the term quite innocently as a slang term for "negro".

One can see then, how the belief in a pure language conduces to notions like the rational content of a poem as opposed to the emotive, which critics like Winters believe can be extracted by way of paraphrase. It is the belief that one can take a work of literature, like a poem, and strip away the metaphor and "ornaments", strip away the emotive and evaluative and be left with pure meaning and truth. But this pre-supposition, that there is a pure language that connects in some immediate sense with the world of truth and reality, is a phantasm. For the process of stripping, once begun, must end in the total rejection of language as a whole.¹ Language has evolved through human usage, and meaning flows from the hearts and minds of human beings. It lives and grows by social inter-action. The stripping may begin with what is considered to be figurative and evaluative, but where does it end? For not only do pure elementary propositions not exist, but also those aspects of language that might be termed "descriptive" in certain circumstances are as anthropocentric in their origins as the most overblown conceits or emotive ejaculations.

Yes, every such use of language is remarkable, peculiar, if one is adjusted only to consider the descriptions of physical objects.²

1 See Wittgenstein: Investigations, paragraphs 90-96.

2 Wittgenstein: Zettel, paragraph 40.

MEANING AND TRUTH IN METAPHOR

We noted earlier that a name/object account of meaning gave rise to the notion of a pure language which, it was thought, could represent to us with perspicuous clarity the facts of the world. Such a language could not include figurative devices, for these involve a misapplication of names, which could only distort meaning and obscure truth. For philosophers like David Hume,¹ the metaphor was a linguistic perversion which in its departure from "natural meanings" must conduce to falsity. A modern dictionary definition of the metaphor has echoes of a name/object model of language - "The figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object to which it is not properly applicable."² William Alston subscribes to the idea that the metaphor involves a distortion of meaning, and that literal terminology is a more lucid and informative means of expression: ". . . when one is speaking metaphorically, it is generally more difficult to be sure of exactly what he is saying than when he is speaking literally."³

One may observe in arguments about metaphor a strong and a weak thesis. The former is that metaphorical expressions are simply meaningless and, in so far as they are nonsensical, they cannot express truth. The weak thesis is more specious, and consequently more widespread, and this is that although metaphors distort terms out of their "true meanings", nevertheless they can be meaningful in a peculiar, or eccentric fashion. Thus they may be entertaining, or ornaments of decoration, but they cannot express true propositions because of the persistent belief that literal language is the standard-bearer of truth.

1 See the quotation mentioned earlier from "Of the Standards of Taste".

2 Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 3rd edition, 1973, p.1315.

3 William P. Alston: Philosophy of Language, p.103.

It is sometimes admitted that a metaphor has a certain suggestion of what is true, but in so far as it involves a misapplication of terms, then it cannot be true as such. Indeed, in order for the "real truth" to be revealed the offending metaphorical terminology must be eliminated by way of paraphrase and transformed into the literal medium. This may be done in terms of a simile, or by reference to connotations and associations that the metaphorical expression embodies. Thus "Smith is a pig at the table" becomes "Smith is like a pig at the table" or "Smith is slovenly and ill-mannered".

It follows from this argument that the metaphor, no matter how imaginative and pertinent can never illuminate a situation and reveal truth to us. On the contrary, it perverts meaning and thus obscures truth and necessarily needs to be translated in order to be fully understood. But one may wonder here that if this argument is true, then why is the metaphor so widely used? For all this presupposes that the employment of metaphorical terminology is improper, or artificial, the "accidental ornaments" of the poet rather than a common feature of everyday ordinary language.

Let us first consider whether metaphorical terminology can be meaningful as such and also, whether understanding a metaphor is fundamentally different from understanding literal terminology. Then we can consider the question of truth in metaphor - that is, whether metaphors can express true propositions and whether the understanding of meaning or the apprehension of truth in metaphor necessarily involves the process of paraphrasing into literal terminology.

Alston uses the term "generally", and we have already noted how misleading generalisations concerning language can be. If we generalise we overlook the myriad particular situations in which metaphors or other linguistic devices may be used. The same statement can be either

metaphorical or literal, depending upon the context in which and the purpose for which the term is employed. "My heart aches" uttered by a man clasping his chest and grimacing with pain in a doctor's surgery may well be a reference to the symptoms of angina, and therefore a literal statement. But we do not attribute such a malady to the protagonist in the opening words of Keats' poem Ode to a Nightingale:

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains my sense.¹

One might think that this example proves Alston's point, for the literal statement is clear and unambiguous, while in Keats' line, although not obscure, the meaning is not obvious, but in fact "My heart aches" in ordinary language is a very familiar metaphor. It occurs in love-songs, and is a cliché in the language of emotion. Indeed the metaphor is frequently used in common parlance in such a way that the meaning is unmistakably clear. To be sure, it is such a familiar term in the context of emotional expression that one might well question the very idea that it is a figurative device at all.

This raises the subject of dead metaphors, and whether at some point they become accepted as literal terminology. Consider: "The Mayor arrived in a Rolls Royce". This on the face of it seems like a straightforward literal statement. It is in fact a dead metaphor. The etymological derivation of the term "arrive" relates to a boat reaching a river's bank. The verb and its associative terms is now used in many areas, and is not regarded as metaphorical.

The boundaries cannot be rigidly drawn, for not only do past metaphors become accepted as literal usage, but also we often cannot distinguish the difference between extended literal usage and the introduction of metaphorical terminology. There are no hard general

1 John Keats: "Ode to a Nightingale" in H. W. Garrod, Keats: Poetical Works, p.207.

rules for determining how different statements are to be classified. The conceptual categories are flexible and open-ended. Some statements, in particular circumstances, we recognise as obviously metaphorical, while others are obviously literal, but there are many statements which are difficult to categorise in this dichotomous either/or fashion, though we may have no difficulty in grasping their meanings. The boundary lines are blurred, and between the black and the white there is a considerable penumbra of grey.¹

Let us take some examples. "The bed was soft" would appear to be a straightforward literal statement, but "The headmaster was soft" we might want to call metaphorical, though this is arguable. How about "The music was soft". Is this metaphorical or an example of literal extension? Similarly with "The music was sweet" or "The girl was sweet-natured". Do we really think of sugar in such cases? Consider "He exploded with anger". We might want to say here, pedantically, that the statement is definitely metaphorical, but does this not ignore the literal sense in which people actually explode, not with gunpowder, but with pent-up emotion? Yet if we say "He literally exploded" it strongly implies that he was blown to pieces, while conversely, if we say "He metaphorically exploded with anger" it blurs the image and weakens the description. Such statements do not fit happily into either category.

Some terms appear to be metaphorical, though they could be described, arguably, as homonyms in the realm of the literal. For one central feature of metaphor is the ascribing of comparative connections. Thus "Smith is a pig at the table" likens Smith's behaviour to that of a pig. One can see the pig in Smith. Now compare this with "She is an old cow". This is a familiar derogatory expression, and most people would say it

1 It is worth noting here that the meaning of this metaphor is quite obvious from the context in which it is used. There is no need to paraphrase it.

is certainly a metaphor, but do we think of the woman as bovine or cow-natured? Surely not. We do not think of cows at all. There are many terms like this which are used as homonyms in the literal medium, with no content of metaphorical comparison. Of course they might still count as metaphors, but they are not difficult to understand, and fit happily into literal terminology, which shows how heterogeneously structured is the concept of metaphor, and how misleading generalisations can be about aspects of language. There appears to be no hard line between the metaphorical and the literal, but rather a continuum.

We have noted that whether a statement is metaphorical or literal, will depend upon the context and circumstances in which it is used. It is also by reference to the particular situation that the full meaning of the terminology is understood. Consider some uses of the statement: "Smith is a pig". Some farmers have quaint names for their livestock, and "Smith is a pig" could be a reference to a prize boar and mean "Smith is a pig to be proud of". The accompanying gestures, the tone of voice, the feelings, beliefs, and background circumstances; all would play a part in the communication and comprehension of this simple statement.

In the fantastic context of Homer's Odyssey, where Circe, the sorceress, can turn men into swine, "Smith is a pig" would again be literal but an expression of tragedy and disaster. In plays where people dress up as animals, e.g. Noah's Flood, Toad of Toad Hall, "Smith is a pig" uttered by the producer, may simply mean that Smith the actor was playing the part of a pig. But would it be metaphorical or literal? In a sense neither, in a sense both. Smith the actor is not a pig in real life, but within the context of the play he is a pig.

Now consider the term used quite unequivocally as a metaphor. At a dinner-party, where the guests have observed Smith's behaviour, and

are fully familiar with the terminology of the speaker; in this particular situation this metaphorical statement is no more difficult to understand than its literal counterpart: "Smith is slovenly and ill-mannered".

One might object here, and say that it is a common metaphor and a rather simple one, and to this extent it is not a very good example. But this merely illustrates the fact that there are simple metaphors. Of course there are complex ones too, and these will be no doubt more difficult to understand. But the same is also true of literal language. It is a mistake to imagine that all literal language is clear and lucid, and immediately understood. Literal terminology may be vague, obscure, ambiguous, convoluted, verbose, turgid or almost unintelligible. It can also be simple and lucid. But then so, too, can metaphorical terminology.

The idea that metaphor perverts meaning, and therefore impedes comprehension, carries the implicit inference that literal language is immediately understood, while metaphorical terminology is not immediately understood, and has to be translated into the literal medium in order to reveal the "true" or "real" meaning.

Now we have already noted that it is possible to paraphrase linguistic expressions used in everyday conversation, and this does not exclude metaphorical terms. Thus when someone says, at a dinner-party, to the few remaining guests, "Smith is a pig", someone, a newcomer perhaps, unfamiliar with Smith's behaviour, may ask "What do you mean?" and then be told "He is slovenly and ill-mannered at the table."

The question here is not whether such paraphrasing is possible or acceptable, but whether it is necessary in order for a metaphor to be

understood that it first be cashed into literal language.¹ This suggests that most of us, most of the time, are using two quite separate languages, the one consisting of "real" meanings and the other of obscure or disguised meanings, and that metaphorical expressions have to be internally paraphrased into literal terminology before they can be understood.

But is this what happens when someone at a dinner-party says "Smith is a pig"? Is he thinking at the same time "Smith is slovenly and ill-mannered"? Is a similar process going on in the minds of the other guests? Is this what understanding a metaphor involves?

The later Wittgenstein cogently rejects such an account of meaning and understanding.² He argues that when we focus upon language as it is actually used, it is evident that people familiar with the employment of certain expressions appropriate in particular circumstances, understand them without recourse to internal paraphrasing. For to argue that X really means Y is to subscribe to the idea of essentialism and "pure" meanings and as if terms could be checked for their accuracy and precision in the same way that a yard measure may be checked against a standard yardstick.

The context and circumstances in which language is used are all-important, and different language games will engender their own peculiar rules, and the participants, familiar with these, will understand the terms without recourse to paraphrase. We do not carry explicit meanings

1 Some metaphors used in everyday discourse are so imaginative and revealing that they share certain characteristics with the poetic form to the extent that although there is a situation they may refer to, a context and set of particular circumstances, nevertheless a paraphrase may well be inadequate and unsatisfactory. This shows that though there are certain logical differences, we cannot make an absolute distinction between the language of life and the language of poetry.

2 See Wittgenstein: Investigations, paragraphs 19 and 20.

around in our heads that correspond with the words that we use. A man who shouts "Pig!" in an abattoir may be indicating to his fellow-worker that another pig is to be brought in, for this is what "pig" means to them. This is how they use the term, and in so far as the terminology works it is perfectly meaningful, and does not necessitate internal translation. One may explain to a visitor, or new employee, that the term "pig" stands for "Bring in another pig," the latter being an explication of the single sign "pig". But in the particular circumstance of the abattoir the term "pig" may well be the more meaningful and communicative, producing immediate results, while the extended term may well be too long-winded or not easily discerned above the noise. Indeed, to the workers who employ the terminology, the extended term "bring me another pig" really means "pig", for that is how they use it. For it is use that determines meaning, and not a systematic relationship between words and situations. It makes no sense here to say that the term "pig" is being internally translated into its "real" or "essential" meaning in order to be understood. Wittgenstein comments on this:

But what does using one sentence in contrast with others consist in? Do the others, perhaps, hover before one's mind? All of them? And while one is saying the one sentence, or before, or afterwards? - No. Even if such an explanation rather tempts us, we need only think for a moment of what actually happens in order to see that we are going astray here.¹

Of course the same term used in quite different circumstances will have a quite different meaning. The term "pig" addressed to a guest at a party, consuming his seventh trifle, could well mean "you are being greedy" or "you are eating someone else's share". The usage here is metaphorical but the term is no more likely to be misunderstood than in the above situation of the abattoir, where the term was used in its literal sense.

1 Wittgenstein: Investigations, paragraph 20.

Literal language is often misunderstood and does not have a monopoly of true meaning or perspicuous clarity. The idea that literal language is more clear and precise stems from a name/object account of language, and the notion that the meanings of terms can be located and precisely identified. It is true that literal language can be a useful tool for clarifying the metaphorical use of language. This occurs often in literary criticism where critics frequently employ literal terminology to explicate and elucidate complex figurative imagery. But it is important to mention that critics often clarify our understanding of literary texts by the use of metaphorical terminology. Arnold Isenberg is aware of this.

For the last twenty or thirty years the 'correct' thing to say about the metaphysical poets has been this: They think with their senses and feel with their brains. One hardly knows how to verify such a dictum: as a psychological observation it is exceedingly obscure. But it does not follow that it is not acute criticism; for it increases our awareness of the difference between Tennyson and Donne.¹

But in everyday ordinary language usage we employ metaphorical terminology to clarify the literal. Thus at a dinner-party, when someone says "Smith's behaviour is slovenly and ill-mannered" an inobservant newcomer might enquire "What do you mean?" and be told "I mean he is a pig at the table." We may use the metaphorical to elucidate the literal, the literal to elucidate the metaphorical, the metaphorical to elucidate the metaphorical and the literal to elucidate the literal. To presuppose that the literal is more precise in expressing meaning than the metaphorical is to presume that we have hard rules or "essences" to which we may refer in order to check that we are using words with absolute precision. But of course, such rigid criteria do not exist. The rules are inordinately complex and open-ended, and inhere in the very language

1 Arnold Isenberg: "Critical Communication" in Joseph Margolis ed.: Philosophy Looks at the Arts, p.151.

itself, and how terms are employed. Indeed, to argue that the statement "Smith is slovenly and ill-mannered" is a more exact way of describing a situation than "Smith is a pig", presupposes that the word "pig" is constrained in its usage by hard, definite rules. But the very fact that we can call Smith "a pig" in certain circumstances and be immediately understood without question by most people demonstrates that terms like "pig" are not constrained within rigid literal boundaries. For the logic of language is such that this term, like all terms, is open-ended and can be used in an indefinite number of ways.

Metaphors, like literal terminology can be used with clarity and precision and be immediately understood without recourse to paraphrase. To be sure, if one knows into what literal language the metaphor is to be cashed in order to be understood, then it follows necessarily that one already understands it, and that paraphrasing is unnecessary. For if one does not understand the phraseology, then one is in no position to paraphrase, and one simply says "What do you mean?" and then the metaphor may be explicated. But the same, of course, is true of literal terminology if one is not sure of the meaning of the expression being used.

Now what are we to say about the truth of metaphor, for if metaphorical statements can be as meaningful as literal statements, and we have seen that this is the case, then arguments that rule out the possibility of metaphorical statements expressing true propositions must surely collapse, for statements of any kind, in order to counter such, must be meaningful, and combinations of words that are not meaningful cannot logically be termed statements. Statements are either true or false and therefore metaphorical statements must surely be capable of being either true or false. Thus it follows that metaphorical statements being meaningful, can express true propositions.

But let us consider just how this truth is apprehended, for the notion is widespread that metaphors are accidental features that have to be eliminated by way of paraphrase before the real truth can be revealed.

There are traces of David Hume in Monroe C. Beardsley's position. He argues that metaphors are meaningful but that the meaning has been distorted. He is a keen advocate of precise definitions and "standard meanings" and as metaphors represent a deviation from these then they cannot express true propositions as such.

A metaphor is a significant attribution that is either indirectly self-contradictory or obviously false in its context, and in which the modifier connotes characteristics that can be attributed, truly or falsely, to the subject.¹

Thus as far as Beardsley is concerned, the metaphor itself is false, but its connotations may be true or false. Thus "Smith is a pig" is meaningful but false, though when the connotations of "pig" are unpacked into literal terminology and we have "Smith is slovenly and ill-mannered" then the statement can be either true or false.

We see here, then, according to Beardsley, that the metaphor does not reveal truth; indeed it obscures it by perverting standard meanings. This depicts the metaphor as a rather clumsy, cloudy device involving paraphrasing, which could be avoided by excluding metaphors from one's phraseology and adhering strictly to literal language.

This belief connects directly with the idea that poems have to be paraphrased in order to reveal their rational content. For empiricists like Hume, to be rational was to be strictly factual and logical (induction and deduction) and this, coupled with the a priori assumption that literal terminology somehow connects logically with the world of

1 Monroe C. Beardsley: Aesthetics, p.142.

fact, (i.e. the name/object account of meaning) then to be rational was necessarily to be literal. There are traces of this in Monroe Beardsley, and his account of metaphor puts him in the same camp as Yvor Winters when it comes to extracting the meaning of a poem and revealing its truth.

Let us investigate Beardsley's argument further by returning to our example: "Smith is a pig". A straightforward contradiction of this statement taken in isolation would be "Smith is not a pig". But the full meaning of the statement and its contradictory, would only be revealed by reference to the context and circumstances in which the statements were made.

When the statement was made on the farm about the prize boar, the contradictory, "Smith is not a pig" could mean something like "Smith is not what I call a prize pig". The animal may be considered to be too fat or too lean or something of this nature. In the fantastic context of Homer's Odyssey, "Smith is not a pig" could mean that Smith was still a man and that it was the unfortunate Jones who had been transformed into a pig. In our stage play example, the statement "Smith is not a pig" could indicate that Smith the actor was playing the part of a sheep or at least some other character.

But what are we to say about the statement "Smith is a pig" used metaphorically at a dinner-party? According to Beardsley's argument the statement must be considered false not only as a matter of fact, about Smith, but also as a matter of logic, about language, simply because Smith is not a pig, he is a man. "To call a man a 'fox' is indirectly self-contradictory because men are by definition bipeds and foxes quadrupeds, and it is logically impossible to be both."¹

1 Beardsley, *ibid*, p.141.

But this conclusion rests on a misunderstanding, indeed, a deliberate misunderstanding, for it involves interpreting a metaphorical statement as a literal one, which legislates against metaphorical terminology, by simply denying its very existence. It involves the a priori belief that only literal statements can be true and as the statement is literally false, then it is false by definition.

Beardsley argues that such a statement is false in context, but what does this mean? For the context in question is a metaphorical one, and in this regard the statement may well be true. It is only obviously false if one interprets it as a literal statement, but this is to disregard or misunderstand the context in which the statement was made. This gross misinterpretation may be thrown into greater relief if we consider the converse position. Imagine the owner of the prize boar on hearing the remark "Smith is a pig" retorting "Smith is not a pig; he is never slovenly and his manners are excellent". This is, of course, absurd, but so, too, is the former misunderstanding, for it is a prescription for literal usage and literal truth, which deliberately denies the existence of the concept of metaphor as a fully meaningful and independent means of communication, indeed it is the kind of mistake that very young children make before they have grasped how metaphorical statements are to be understood and their truth recognised; for example a hot and thirsty man, on taking a can of beer from the refrigerator may remark, "Ah, this is milk and honey," and his young son may say, "No it isn't; it's beer."

It is correct to say that the statement "Smith is a pig", spoken at a dinner-party with reference to one of the guests, is false when understood literally, but in order to do this one has to note the fact that Smith has two legs and not four; neither does he have trotters and tail and all the other attributes of a pig in the literal sense. This is,

as we have seen, absurd, but what is false here is not the statement "Smith is a pig", for that was a metaphorical observation and may well be true or false. The falsity lies in the deliberate categorising of such statements as literal ones. Whether the statement is true or false in context will depend not on whether Smith has trotters and tail etc., but on quite different criteria appertaining to Smith's manners and behaviour. Thus the contradiction of the statement is not, as Beardsley would have us believe, dependent on a rigid and inappropriate logic, involving the counting of legs etc., but on the kind of person Smith actually is, and whether describing him as a pig constitutes a true description. Thus a contradiction could run something like this: "He is not really a pig, he's been feeling somewhat depressed lately and has unfortunately had too much to drink," or "He is not really a pig, and his behaviour was quite out of character; he was acting like that in order to embarrass his wife because she was flirting with Jones." Of course the latter example might do more to confirm the belief that Smith is a pig in this sense, (though with mitigating circumstances), but at least the statement is understood correctly, and its truth or falsity becomes a matter of argument as to the appropriateness of the metaphor. Only a fool would argue that Smith is not a pig because he is a man, with two legs and hands, and drives a mini and works in a bank, and pigs have four legs, do not drive cars or work in banks. It is this kind of argument which philosophers like Beardsley, (if they are to remain true to their philosophical beliefs) would have to employ whenever they dispute the truth of metaphorical statements; they can either interpret them literally and declare that they are therefore false, or by reference to the metaphor's connotations and associations, translate the metaphor

into literal language¹ in order to reveal the hidden meaning and truth that lies beneath such perverse terminology.

We have seen that metaphors may be understood without any paraphrasing into literal terminology and their truth or falsity apprehended likewise. Metaphorical meaning and truth are facts of everyday ordinary language. We have already seen that poetic imagery, and such, often includes metaphors, may be elucidated, meanings clarified and truths revealed, but not paraphrased. The metaphor, in ordinary language and in poetry, is itself an expression of meaning and truth.

We have already noted the complexity of the truth concept, and literal truths are no more pure than any other kind of truth, they are simply truths expressed in literal language. Literal terminology has often been held up as the paradigm of "pure prose", and it is this implicit belief in a pure language that expresses unequivocal meanings and perspicuous truths, that causes philosophers to argue that metaphorical terminology is meaningless and/or false, but of course, what is meaningless and false is the very idea of a pure language. The concept of truth is too complex and many-faceted to be restricted to the confines of literal terminology.

1 It is difficult to see how Beardsley's arguments about metaphor and paraphrase can exist alongside his beliefs on form and content, namely that in all uses of language form and content are ultimately inextricably inseparable. See Beardsley, *ibid*, chapter 5.

PART FOUR

L I T E R A T U R E A N D T R U T H

Literature is the heart of the world; all the joys and sorrows, dreams and hopes, despairs and wraths of it, all the emotions of man as he faces the beauties of nature, all his terrors as he faces nature's secrets, lend it wings. This heart of the world palpitates indomitably and immortally with the desire of self-knowledge; as though in it all matter, all the forces of nature, having created in man the highest expression of their own intricacy and rationality, were trying to discover the essence and object of their own being.

One might also call literature the all-seeing eye of the world, an eye whose glance pierces the deepest secrets of the human spirit.

Maxim Gorky: Literature and Life.

TRUTH AND CRITICAL THEORIES¹

The problem of truth in literature is an ancient one; it crops up throughout the history of literature and criticism and it will not go away. It plays a part in one form or another in the various theories of literature. The essentialist approach, we noted earlier, in traditional philosophy, concerning questions of truth and knowledge, has been paralleled by similarly general and monolithic theories of art and literature. They each contain elements of truth, but in generalising they distort the nature of literature. But the problem of truth in literature has always been a central one; the controversial questions include: Is truth a necessary constituent of literature? How can such truth be defined and categorised? Can truth be excluded from the analysis and criticism of literature as irrelevant?

Mimemis

The mimetic theory holds that art, or as far as we are concerned, literature, is an "imitation of life", that it "holds the mirror up to nature". Thus the literary artist uses literature to "reflect" aspects of reality and life in the real world.

The theory dates back to ancient Greece,² but found some considerable prominence by the eighteenth century, with Dr. Johnson among its supporters.³ There is an auspicious relationship between Mimemis and traditional epistemology; for such a theory of literature goes hand in

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- 1 The version of the theories delineated are not attributable to any one critic or philosopher, and each represents a synthesis of generally similar views.
 - 2 See Plato's Republic, Book 10, where the analogy of the mirror is used by Socrates. Also see Aristotle's Poetic Chapters in Classical Literary Criticism, where he discusses literature as imitation. For a full discussion of the mimetic theory and its origins see Abrams: The Mirror and the Lamp, chapters 1 and 2.
 - 3 This is mentioned in his "Preface to Shakespeare", from W. K. Wimsatt, ed.: Dr. Johnson on Shakespeare, p.59.

glove with the correspondence theory of truth. The latter, as we noted earlier, began with Plato and Aristotle, and was considerably reinforced during the Age of Empiricism.¹ One can see, then, how the mimetic theory makes truth an important feature of literature, the criterion being some kind of correspondence between the world created by the literary artist and the real world. We have already discussed the difficulties involved in using "correspondence" as a criterion of truth, for the term may be interpreted in a number of different ways.

The complexity of the problem is illustrated by the fact that both Plato and Aristotle were advocates of correspondence where truth was concerned, though the former held that literature was false by definition,² because it involved fictitious characters in imaginary situations, while Aristotle delineated a thesis to the effect that truth could be conveyed through the medium of literature.³ There are, however, as we shall see later, serious flaws in Aristotle's account. As for Plato, he betrays himself by protesting too much, for he argued that the poets were liars and deceivers, and saw literature as a vehicle of propaganda.⁴ This of course, weakens, or perhaps we should say, destroys, his case. For if literature can embody and convey false beliefs to mislead the people, then, by the same token, it can also communicate what is true. The problem is: wherein lies the truth, and how does it relate to the real world? Later empiricist philosophers were in no doubt about the problem. They dismissed literature as false, because it did not correspond with

1 See Locke: Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book IV, chapter V, paragraph 9. Also Hume: Treatise on Human Nature, Book II, part iii, section 10.

2 See Plato's Republic, Book 10.

3 See Aristotle's Poetic, chapter 9.

4 Plato's Republic, Book 2.

empirically verifiable fact.¹ For them, the discoveries of science represented the very epitome of truth and certain knowledge. Literature could be entertaining, fanciful, emotive, evocative, imaginative, pleasurable; but not true.

Now we have seen that "correspondence" is not all there is to truth, although it is an important feature in the concept. Similarly, Mimesis does not satisfactorily account for the nature of literature, but it cannot be entirely dismissed, for, in spite of positivist claims that literature is necessarily false, there is surely a sense in which it is an imitation of life, and that it often can and does "reflect" aspects of the real world. Mimesis is not all there is to literature, but then there is more to games than amusement.

John Keats' "To Autumn" gives us a rich, evocative picture of that season. We may want to say that much of the poem corresponds with our experience, and in doing this we are attributing truth to the poem. In Anna Karenina Tolstoy apparently delineates an authentic imitation of aristocratic life in nineteenth century Russia. It is a first hand reflection of his own experience in that society. Shakespeare's plays present a series of pictures of villainy, treachery, hypocrisy, jealousy, love, loyalty, ambition, generosity, forgiveness, kindness, malice, and innumerable aspects of human behaviour.

1 Abrams, in The Mirror and the Lamp, refers to a number of empiricists who held the view that literature was false or had nothing of cognitive value to offer. They include Locke, Hume, Bacon, Hobbes, Newton and others. Perhaps these words of Jeremy Bentham, quoted by Abrams, sum up the general view of this period regarding literature and truth:

"Indeed, between poetry and truth there is a natural opposition: false morals, fictitious nature. The poet always stands in need of something false. When he pretends to lay down his foundations in truth, the ornaments of his structure are fictions; his business consists in stimulating our passions and exciting our prejudices. Truth, exactitude of every kind, is fatal to poetry." (p.301)

Now when we say that Anna Karenina's behaviour is "true to life" or "realistic", or that it was understandable that Othello was jealous, and that his behaviour corresponds with our knowledge of human nature, then we are alluding to a relationship between these literary worlds and the real world, and thus employing the concept of truth, either as a descriptive term or as a feature of literary evaluation.

This raises a question which will always be central in any monolithic theory of art. Does the theory describe what literature is as a matter of fact, or does it prescribe what literature ought to consist in, as a matter of principle? Certainly, if truth is designated as a necessary constituent of literature, and thus an evaluative principle, it can, by being rigidly or narrowly interpreted, put constraints upon the creative scope of the literary artist. One may call into question what is meant by an "imitation of life" for, in spite of Dr. Johnson's remark that "Shakespeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life"¹ we still find witches, magic, fairies, monsters, ghosts, in Shakespeare's plays. Furthermore, Mimesis can put so much emphasis upon the familiar truths and values of the real world, that not only does it legislate for the content, but also the unique formal qualities of the artistic creation appear accidental, or even irrelevant. This represents literature as a means to a further end, a vehicle of communication. Sir Philip Sidney's notion of Mimesis seems to point in this direction; he writes that poets,

indeed do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved, which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them.²

1 Dr. Johnson: "Preface to Shakespeare", p.59.

2 Sir Philip Sidney: An Apology for Poetry, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, p.103.

Sidney clearly sees literature as imitation for the purpose of moral instruction. While not disputing that literature may be a source of moral knowledge, one has to be careful in terms of emphasis, for such a formula, if narrowly applied, makes literature consciously and explicitly didactic, in the most pejorative sense. This eliminates the idea of literature as a work of art by ignoring its formal qualities and reducing its content to the level of miscellaneous general knowledge in terms of moral instruction or factual information. To be fair to Sidney, he does emphasize the importance of formal beauty in literature, but nevertheless Mimesis as a general theory tends to emphasize content and push form into the background. It was with reference to such considerations that poets and critics rebelled against Mimesis, for however much they might have revered truth or knowledge, they were not prepared to sacrifice beauty and imagination.

Autonomy

The theory of Autonomy represents an endeavour to sever the literary work from the truths and values of the real world, and free the literary artist from the constraints imposed by Mimesis. The comparison of the mirror held up to nature was rejected as spurious, for it represented literature as a static reflection of the world and seemed more in line with the empiricists' notion of natural science. Neither was literature an imitation of life; indeed it was not an imitation of anything. A literary work was an original creation, an aesthetic object. It was not a means to a further end in terms of communicating factual information or moral instruction; it was an end in itself, the creation of beauty. Thus each literary world was an autonomous heterocosm, a sui generis creation with its own truths and values.¹ Indeed, to see the literary

1 The evolution and development of autonomy is discussed by Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp; see Chapter 1 (v) and Chapter 10 (iii).

world as a mere reflection of the real world was to belittle the artist and vulgarise his work, ignoring its formal, aesthetic qualities and thus devaluing it as a creative work of art.

The theory holds that a literary work is an aesthetic creation, and that it evokes a purely aesthetic experience, and should be judged according to pure aesthetic values. The focus is thus on beauty and form, and any truth content that may relate the work to the real world, moral, factual or otherwise, is precluded from any evaluation or analysis as completely irrelevant. Indeed, more recent autonomists subscribe to the view that a work of literature is isolated from the real world to the extent that any interpretation or evaluation must not involve factual truths relating to the artist, i.e. his beliefs, intentions or biographical data.¹ Mark Abrams comments on the more recent development of the concept of autonomy:

This is the concept, at the heart of much of the 'new criticism', that poetic statement and poetic truth are utterly diverse from scientific statement and scientific truth, in that a poem is an object-in-itself, a self-contained universe of discourse, of which we cannot demand that it be true to nature, but only, that it be true to itself.²

It is interesting to note that autonomy does not, indeed it cannot, exclude truth completely, for it is recognised that the concept of truth is applicable within the world created by the literary artist; but then could it have been otherwise? Is it possible to imagine a literary world that completely excludes truth from its boundaries? The autonomists are sensible to truths within the work, i.e. "facts" concerning

1 See Beardsley and Wimsatt: "The Intentional Fallacy", in The Verbal Icon. Also R. Wellek and A. Warren: The Theory of Literature, where a similar thesis is defended. For the definitive attack on this position, see F. Cioffi: "Intention and Interpretation", in C. Barratt, ed.: Collected Papers on Aesthetics.

2 Abrams: The Mirror and the Lamp, p.272.

the characters and situations - e.g. Adam Bede¹ is a carpenter, and Casterbridge² is a country town. They also recognise the truth of internal consistency, where interpretation and evaluation are concerned; thus the work should not contain contradictions vis a vis character, plot or theme. This of course is a coherence criterion, and is applied with reference to the logic generated by the work itself. Therefore, at this point we can say that autonomy does not exclude truth completely; it simply endeavours to isolate the work from the truth of the real world and exchange a correspondence criterion for one of coherence.

Autonomy is an understandable reaction against Mimesis, but like the latter, it does not delineate the whole truth about the nature of literature. Nevertheless it would be foolish not to recognise that the thesis does make some valid points about literature as a creative art, which cannot be ignored. There is undoubtedly a sense in which literary works are autonomous entities, for they involve imagined literary worlds, each created by the artist, which are in a sense subject to their own truths and values. It would not amount to intelligent criticism to condemn Gulliver's Travels or The Trial as "unrealistic" or "not true to life" because of the strange nature of events which occur in these novels. If this were the case, then many great works of literature, including those of Homer and Shakespeare, would have to be rejected as fanciful fantasies. It is also the case, as we have seen, that literature is by definition a creative art, and to that extent, its interpretation and evaluation has an aesthetic dimension. We noted earlier the significance of form and its inextricable relation to content; the style, structure and unique use of language are essential in any analysis of literary

1 Adam Bede - George Eliot.

2 The Mayor of Casterbridge - Thomas Hardy.

meaning. There are, to be sure, obvious similarities between the language of literature and the language of life, but there are also crucial differences, and these are emphasized by the Autonomy theory.

We can see, then, how it makes sense to describe literary works as aesthetic objects, for they are created works of art. They are also autonomous worlds, for the world of Lemuel Gulliver is not the real world, indeed the world of Anna Karenina is not the real world; they are imagined literary worlds created by their respective authors.

But if Mimesis leans too heavily towards the truths and values of the real world, it can be objected that Autonomy goes too far in the opposite direction. Its zealous defence of the unique formal qualities of literary works, and its emphasis upon the creative and imaginative is justifiable, but the nature of literature is such that it involves both the beauty of form and the truth of content, and the endeavour to isolate pure aesthetic qualities must be seen as misguided. The theory of Autonomy is as legislative in its demands as Mimesis, for it puts an embargo on all epistemic considerations external to the work itself, and precludes any comparison between the literary world and the real world. Such a model of literature would deny the artist the possibility of communicating truth through his work, and renders any evaluative reference to truth by critics, illegitimate.

But one cannot talk of a totally autonomous heterocosm, for there are incontrovertible factors that connect the literary world with the real world. The language is, of course, a fundamental one, for however imaginative and innovatory a literary artist may be in his use of language, if we were not familiar in some sense with the past usage of the majority of words employed in a literary work, then we would not be able to conceive of the imagined literary world. Similarly, it only makes sense to talk of a literary world in so far as it is an intelligible analogue of the real world. This being the case, it is difficult

to imagine how the familiar truths and values of the real world can be excluded from our analysis and judgment of literary works. Thus when critics argue that Jude the Obscure is unrealistic because Father Time is larger than life and the killing of the children implausible, they are invoking truth as a criterion, though of course the Autonomists would argue that in such cases the coherence criterion was applicable, and the work internally inconsistent. We shall consider this in more depth later.

The theory is a valuable stimulus, for it does raise a number of important questions concerning the nature of literature and literary criticism. Does it make sense to talk in terms of a "pure" aesthetic experience? And what are "pure" aesthetic values? And can the truths and values within the literary work be completely separated from the truths and values without? Does it make sense to talk of two kinds of truth, one for literature and one for life? Later we shall pay close attention to these questions by way of a polemical examination of the work of some recent aestheticians. We shall see respectively that it makes no sense to dichotomize the concept of truth,¹ and that extreme Autonomy, or "art for art's sake" leads to formalism and aestheticism.² Let us for the moment reiterate the fact that autonomy, in spite of its endeavours, cannot ignore the concept of truth completely, but in line with contemporaneous epistemology it rejects the correspondence criterion in favour of coherence.

Expressionism

The critical theory that holds that literature is an expression of emotion has its roots in Wordsworth's Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, where he defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings!"³

1 See the section "The Unity of Truth".

2 See the section "Truth and Beauty".

3 Wordsworth, Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, The Poetical Works, p.537 and p.542.

It became a prominent thesis during the Romantic period, and was further developed by later theorists. M. H. Abrams sums it up in the following terms:

A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind. ('Thus the Poetry . . .'
Wordsworth wrote 'proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world'.)¹

Expressionism is not confined to lyric poetry, and may be applied to other areas of creative literature, where emotion is expressed either in the narrative or through the characters in the work. The thesis appears radically to shift the emphasis, for now the focus was not on the external world, but on the heart and mind of the literary artist. The theory, like Autonomy, superseded Mimesis, and literature was no longer regarded as a static imitation of the external world of fact, but as a dynamic and creative expression of the inner world of feeling. Such an account, for the hard empiricist, would preclude truth altogether. But for devotees of creative literature, truth was as central as ever, though now the criterion of correspondence with the external world seemed of little importance. The main concern was with the truth of emotional expression on the part of the literary artist. The central criterion, therefore, was that of sincerity.

As with the aforementioned theories, Expressionism does contain elements of truth about the nature of literature. It is undeniable that emotion is expressed in this medium, whether we are discussing the despondency of Hamlet or the expression of joy in Hopkins' "Spring" or the anger of Walter Morell.² But creative literature is a complex and

1 Abrams: "Expressive Theories" in The Mirror and the Lamp, p.22.

2 Hopkins: "Spring" in W. H. Gardner, ed.: A Selection of his Poems and Prose, p.28; Sons and Lovers Lawrence.

many faceted art, and cannot be reduced to the mere expression of emotion. We have already noted that one cannot make a hard distinction between thought and feeling, and the theory's emphasis on the latter portrays literature as an emotive outburst, a wild indulgence of the passions. This, seen against the background of Hume's influential fact/value dichotomy,¹ reinforces the belief that literature is imaginative and emotive as opposed to cognitive and rational, which, in accordance with empiricist epistemology, necessarily disqualifies literature as a source of knowledge. But as Abrams notes, truth, for lovers of literature, was still important, and sincerity was the criterion.² Let us examine the concept of sincerity in this regard. We have already observed that sincerity plays a significant role in the expression of inner feelings. However it must be emphasized that sincerity is one of a family of criteria, and the other members cannot be ruled out. Truth cannot be rigidly defined or circumscribed any more than any other concept.

Our earlier analysis of emotion concepts demonstrated that emotions cannot exist in isolation, but are logically related to their objects. In the aforementioned passage, Abrams notes that according to Wordsworth, poetry proceeds from the soul of man to the external world, and one would not want to quarrel with this, except to add that the objective world is the ineluctable source of poetic inspiration. Thus the feelings of ecstasy and tranquillity that are expressed in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"³ are necessarily related to the poet's experience of the world about him. We have already observed that no language can express "pure" facts because language is anthropocentric. It is an essentially human phenomenon, and as human beings feel emotions and hold certain values,

1 See Hume's Treatise on Human Nature, Book III, part i, section i.

2 Abrams: The Mirror and the Lamp, "Expressive Theories", p.23.

3 Wordsworth, *ibid*, p.126.

these cannot be completely excluded from the language that they employ. Thus, in describing the concrete physical world, aspects of the essential humanness of the narrator are bound to be manifest in one form or another. But the converse is also the case, for as human beings we respond emotionally to aspects of the external world, and we cannot describe or express our emotions in any "pure" form, because our emotions have targets, objects and situations in the world to which they are analytically related. We can thus see how the language we use involves our feelings about facts, and facts relating to our feelings.

We are therefore involved in two dimensions, the literary artist's expression of inner feeling by way of linguistic formulations, and also those aspects of reality which constitute the target of feeling which inspired the emotional response, and subsequent linguistic description and expression. Thus a poem like "Tintern Abbey" embodies both the feelings of the poet and the lack of his experience. It would appear, then, that along with sincerity as a criterion of truth, the allusion to an external reality that is comparable with the real world involves some kind of correspondence relationship. For example, we might say that John Keats' "To Autumn"¹ is a sincere expression of the poet's feelings on that season - the joy and the sadness, etc. But surely the sincerity that we discern in the poet's expression and description cannot be divorced from our own experience of autumn, though it is important to mention that we may only become aware of its significance in retrospect. The poem may enlighten us by illuminating our experience, but here, implicitly, we are employing the criterion of correspondence, that is by observing a relationship between the poet's words and our experience of the world in similar or analogous situations. This exemplifies how poetry can inform us conceptually by simultaneously clarifying the inner

1 Keats: Poetical Works, "To Autumn" p.218-9.

world of feeling and the outer world of fact, for while deepening our insight into joy and sadness and other feelings, we also extend our vision of autumn by an enhancement of the myriad concepts through which we perceive that season. We shall in due course investigate some examples of literature in this regard. But for the moment let us return to the concept of sincerity in literature.

It is important to mention that there is no general rule as to what constitutes a sincere poem in terms of its emotional expression. We can only judge this by reference to the language employed therein. We do not have to concern ourselves with the mood or mental state of the literary artist during the time the work was composed. As literary critics we are concerned with the words on the page, and it is to these that we must direct our attention, because it is in the language of the literary artist that the emotion is expressed.¹ The question "Did Keats feel joy when he wrote 'To Autumn'?" should not arise. What is more pertinent is "Does the poem express joy?" and this can only be determined by analysing the poem. Thus we indicate particular examples within the work: "Surely these words express joy" and "Here there is a feeling of sadness". We have already observed the complexity of the relationship between inner feeling and outer expression. We do in ordinary everyday language describe verbal expressions as sad, joyful, triumphant and ecstatic, etc., and it makes perfect sense to say a poem can be expressive of emotion.² Furthermore there is nothing self-contradictory in the idea of a happy man writing a poem that expresses feelings of sadness, for it could well be an imaginative recollection of past feelings or an

1 In saying this I am not disqualifying biographical data as necessarily irrelevant; indeed it is often extremely valuable in understanding and interpreting works of literature.

2 For a thorough analysis of expression in art, see O. K. Bowsma: "The Expression Theory of Art" in William Elton, ed.: Aesthetics and Language.

empathetic interpretation of the feelings of other human beings, and here sincerity is inextricably related to the form of the expression.¹ We noted earlier that important features of sincerity in regard to the expression of emotion were accuracy and lucidity of the language employed, the power to capture the state of inner feeling in words. Thus the question of sincerity where creative expression in literature is concerned must be a matter of linguistic analysis.

We have already seen that emotion concepts are necessarily embedded in the public language, and are socially shared. It is thus through language that we interpret not only the emotions of others, but our own emotions, and by way of language that we express and intellectually communicate them. It is therefore by way of a close analysis of the literary artist's diction that we are able to assess the depth of his sincerity.

It would appear therefore that truth criteria are of central importance in the expressive theory. Sincerity is one, but as we have noted, this cannot be divorced from correspondence, i.e. with experiences in the real world and with the feelings and emotions that such experiences inspire. Indeed one might say that there is a coherence between the work and one's own experience, or that one is simply aware of truth. What is significant is that in the theories of literature that we have considered, truth is of supreme importance. It crops up in different guises throughout the history of literature and criticism. The criteria for its apprehension and judgment may vary but truth tenaciously remains. Truth, as we have seen, is many faceted, and cannot be reduced to any one single essence; but then neither can literature. There is a mimetic content in literature but it is also in a sense autonomous, and it is undoubtedly expressive of emotion.

1 For a clear and comprehensive discussion of sincerity in art and its relationship to life, see John Casey: "The Autonomy of Art" in The Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Philosophy and the Arts, 1970.

THE UNITY OF TRUTH

From Aristotle to the present day there have been the advocates of literature as an embodiment of truth, and these have been largely poets and critics; they write invariably in defence of literature, because it has always been under siege, being attacked by philosophy or science or both. Their task has been the more difficult because of the ambient nature of the prevailing paradigms of truth and knowledge. The cogency of traditional accounts was such that commentators sought refuge in the idea of a "different kind of truth". This was especially the case during the romantic period, when literature was being assailed by empiricism. "A frequent dialectic procedure was to allow truth to bespeak a different, and usually an even more weighty and important kind of truth, for poetry."¹

One can, however, sympathise with this approach because the idea that truth by definition was a correspondence with empirical fact was widespread at the time, and its ubiquity made it the more persuasive; it seemed unanswerable. It was certainly not the function of literature to delineate factual information, and Hume's fact/value dichotomy had ruled out moral statements and all evaluative language as subjective utterances of passion, with no truth content,² and figurative terminology was widely condemned as false by definition.³ Yet with many poets and critics there remained a fervent and tenacious belief that truth of the real world could be apprehended in literature. The problem was, what kind of truth was it? How was it to be defined and categorised? It still throws commentators into considerable confusion, and is reminiscent of St. Augustine's torturous struggles with Time, for it is as if truth in literature exists, and one may

1 M. Abrams: "Poetic Truth and Sincerity", in The Mirror and the Lamp, p.313.

2 See Hume: Treatise, Book III, Part 1.

3 Hume: "On the Standards of Taste".

experience its presence, but whenever one endeavours to locate it it seems to disappear. This prompts the questions: If it is not straightforward factual information, then what is it? Is the truth in literature empirically verifiable? Can it be extracted in the form of propositions? Certainly, as we shall see later, if in trying to communicate the truth that one discerns in a great work of literature, be it Hamlet, Middlemarch or "The Wasteland", one resorts to the formulation of general truths about the world, or human nature, then the results are always reductive and trivial, and worthy of the contempt that philosophy or science may heap upon them. After all, one does not have to read Hamlet to discover that he who hesitates is lost, though there are important qualifications, which will be discussed in another chapter.

Yet philosophy that "proves" that literature does not embody truth may seem like so much prestidigitation when measured against common human experience. For when we focus upon ordinary language locutions and consider what people actually say concerning literature, we find that terms like "true" and "truth" are frequently employed. A novel may be said to be "true to life" or "it depicts a true picture of . . ." "That poem presents a true impression of human emotion". This or that play is "so full of truth". Characters in plays and novels are often said to "represent the truth of human nature". "The dialogue has an uncanny ring of truth about it". "The author's moral observations have a great deal of truth in them". These are characteristic of the kind of remarks that people make about literature, indeed some of them are verbatim quotations taken from life.

Now when people say that they have learned a great deal about human relationships from reading Henry James or D. H. Lawrence, or when someone asserts that the poetry of Donne or Wordsworth or Hopkins has revealed truths that bring about a deeper understanding of life or human beings or whatever, they are experiences - common ones at that - that cannot be ignored, for they suggest that the lofty notions of philosophers are

misguided, and that they should re-examine the "incarcerated" concepts of truth and knowledge. Such experiences are analogous with Dr. Johnson's kicking of a stone to refute Bishop Berkeley's thesis of idealism. It would be a mistake to interpret Johnson's action as an experiment, for no such empirical test could refute Berkeley's argument. Johnson was simply drawing attention to a conceptual distinction - that is, the meaning in common parlance of material objects. He was alluding to what we understand as the physical world, and that Berkeley's categorising was mistaken. Similarly, the above comments about truth in literature indicate both the inadequacy of philosophical accounts and the complexity of the concept of truth. It is no more nor less complex used in the context of literary description or evaluation than when it is used in ordinary life. Indeed, as we shall see, we cannot make such a crude distinction, for the truth of life invades literature, and the truth of literature influences life. The same concept is employed in both worlds, and their symbiotic interpenetration enriches its meaning and contributes to its complexity.

We noted earlier the complex nature of truth, and that efforts to define it in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions have met with failure. Philosophers, by constraining and restricting its legitimate use, have rendered a false account of the nature of truth, and this has had profound and chronic effects upon the literature/knowledge debate.

We learn the concept by way of particular examples, and these may come from literature or from life. Thus its employment demands a heterogeneous variety of criteria, depending upon the context and situation in question. In different areas, therefore, we will give different reasons and different kinds of explanation in order to indicate truth or demonstrate what is true. James Cameron puts this very clearly:

I hold that when we use such a term as 'truth' in the language of poetic appraisal we do so in various ways and employing different criteria in different cases. This would not be an altogether unexpected result, for the same thing holds in other fields. My grounds for asserting that I feel tired, that the blackbirds have begun to nest, that apartheid is morally wrong, that the sum of the angles of a Euclidean triangle is equal to two right angles, are very different. Similarly, if I wish to maintain the truth of such poetic representations as King Lear, Grimm's fairy story The Juniper Tree, the second of Pope's Moral Essays ('Of the Characters of Women') and Mr. Allen Tate's Ode to the Confederate Dead, it is very unlikely that the same criteria will be usable in each case. But it will not follow from our saying that there is truth in King Lear and truth in 'Of the Characters of Women', and having quite different grounds for saying so in the two cases, that we are confused, any more than we are confused in saying that the blackbirds are nesting and that apartheid is morally wrong and that both statements are true, even though our grounds for saying they are true are not of the same kind in the two cases.¹

John Hospers is unhappy about the multiplicity of criteria that we invoke when the concept of truth is employed where art and literature are concerned. He feels that the term has been constantly abused by commentators:

Discussions about truth in art are often vitiated before they get well under way because the participants either have different things in mind by 'truth', vary their meanings of the word without specifying this fact, or have nothing very definite in mind at all.²

The phrase "nothing very definite in mind" is interesting, for implicit here is the idea that we carry neat definitions around in our heads, or that we have some mental representation of meaning that accompanies each word we use. This of course is in line with Hospers' name/object account of meaning discussed earlier. Hospers dismisses the criteria that commentators have invoked to indicate the presence of truth in literature, and justify their use of the term. These include sincerity of expression on the part of the writer, acceptability - i.e.

1 Cameron: "Poetry and Dialectic", in The Night Battle, p.141.

2 Hospers: "Propositional Truth", in Meaning and Truth in the Arts, p.141.

whether a story is acceptable as a possible sequence of events, coherence - and this, Hospers says, seems to embody both sincerity and acceptability and blurs into internal consistency of character and plot, which, he argues, is indicative of vagueness and woolly-mindedness. He quotes the following passage from L. A. Reid and then takes the author to task:

'Truth' may be used to denote 'deep significance' or greatness. We say, How true! meaning simply, How great! The truest work of art in this sense is that which is most profound, in the experience of which as a whole we are aware of a deep sense of 'reality' (as the saying is). And often it will happen that in this harmonious satisfaction of our profoundest impulses we feel a tremendous conviction of knowledge . . .¹

Hospers comments on this: ". . . 'greatness', whatever it may be interpreted to mean exactly, need not necessarily be accompanied by this sense of 'reality' or 'tremendous conviction of knowledge', so that they can scarcely be incorporated in the same sense of 'truth'."²

Hospers dismisses these terms in the way that an essentialist would dismiss the criteria that we employ for describing and recognising games, and justifying the use of the term "game", like "amusement", "competition" etc. because they are not necessary or sufficient conditions. In this Socratic manner, Hospers rejects the variety of truth criteria because they are neither necessary nor sufficient for the use of the terms "true" and "truth". He suggests that often people do not know what they are talking about when they describe a work of literature as true, or state that it embodies truth:

As to why the word 'truth' has been used in all of these senses, I do not pretend to know, and it is not my purpose here to try to give an account of the matter. Doubtless the word 'true' becomes, for many persons, a general honorific

1 L. A. Reid: A Study in Aesthetics, p.251. (Quoted in Hospers, *ibid*, p.144.)

2 *ibid*, p.144.

term which they apply for lack of any other, in order to give art greater dignity or stature. If they cannot find other words with which to praise a work of art, they will at any rate call it 'true'.¹

One criterion that Hospers does not discuss, and its absence is conspicuous, is that of correspondence, yet this term has frequently been employed, perhaps more than any other, in the context of literature and truth. Certainly, correspondence would not be quite so easy to dismiss, for the flexibility of the term "correspondence" is such that it is no less plausible when used as a criterion for truth in literature than when it is used in the context of empirical propositions. To say here that we are using the term "correspondence" in two different ways is of no great significance, for as we saw earlier, different empirical propositions will involve different uses of the term "correspondence" when used as a criterion of truth, e.g. "The cat is on the mat" and "The cat is not on the mat". It may well be for Hospers that an examination of the term "correspondence" when used as a criterion for the apprehension of truth in literature, might have suggested similarities and connections between "propositional truth" and "artistic truth" that he is anxious to avoid. For in spite of his criticisms of other commentators he stipulates no necessary and sufficient conditions for the use of the term "truth" himself, and admits that it is ambiguous.

But to be fair to John Hospers, he does recognise that there is a significant relationship between literature and life. It is evident however that he regards propositional truth that can be empirically verified, as real truth, and this he rules out of literature as being inappropriate. He thus has to resort to a familiar theme in critical defences of literature, and that is the notion of "another sort of truth".² His remarks on truth in An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis are pertinent here:

1 *ibid*, p.144.

2 *ibid*, p.162.

The mysterious-sounding question 'What is truth?' asked by Pontius Pilate becomes the question 'What are true propositions?' The answer is simply this: 'A true proposition is one standing for a state-of-affairs which is actual'.¹

Whenever commentators use terms like "poetic truth" as opposed to "scientific truth" they not only emphasize the differences between literature and life, and thus widen the dichotomy, but they also, as a result, divide the concept of truth into two separate halves. This is precisely what Hospers does, for he argues that "artistic truth" is "another sort of truth", and logically different from "propositional truth". The latter refers to "truth about" the empirical world, while the former is "truth to" life or reality.²

Now as we have noted, there is a very wide variety of areas in which the concept of truth may be legitimately used, e.g. historical, mathematical, moral, aesthetic, biological, archeological, etc., etc., and, of course, these categories can be sub-divided, and so on. It is also the case that we use different criteria in different circumstances. We noted that different theories of literature stipulate different criteria where truth is concerned. But we must be very careful when we talk of "another sort of truth" and then divide the concept into two halves, one for literature and art, and one for life. It is as if the term truth, when used in the context of literature, were no more than a homonym. But it is important to realize that when we say that football is a game and that canasta is a game, we are not punning by using the term in these quite different areas, for the appellation "game" subsumes an indefinite variety of games within the boundaries of the same concept. We may not be able to distil all uses of the term into a definition, indeed we cannot; nevertheless the meaning of the term "game" embraces the inordinate network of cases to which the term applies.

1 Hospers: An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, p.66.

2 Hospers: Meaning and Truth in the Arts, p.162.

Now we do say there are different kinds of games and, similarly, there are different kinds of truths, but this is a reference to the wide, indefinite variety of instances that such concepts embrace. However, the notion of two different kinds of truth, one for literature and one for life, carries with it the inference that the connection between them is merely nominal and accidental; a pun-relationship. This is underlined by Hospers with the use of phrases like propositional "truth about" and artistic "truth to", but the distinction is spurious, for the positions may be reversed. It makes sense to say that an empirical proposition is "true to" the situation it describes, or that a literary work communicates "truth about" the real world. Indeed, would it make sense to say that a literary work was true to life if it did not embody truth about the real world? Surely not; we recognise that a literary work is true to life because we apprehend truth about the real world. Of course the truth may not be valuable, it may be trite and platitudinous. Nevertheless one cannot logically conceive of a literary representation that is true to life that does not include truths of some kind about the real world.

The most stylised and fanciful literary representations involve truths of the real world in one form or another. Terms like "verisimilitude" and "realism" are relative and are more appropriately applied to some works than to others. But although we do not describe Gulliver's Travels or The Trial as true to life, they both include much that is true about human nature and life in general. Indeed the every-day human-ness of Lemuel Gulliver and Joseph K are thrown into relief by the fantastic and surreal nature of the respective worlds they inhabit. The Waves is a strange, stream-of-consciousness novel, diametrically opposed to anything in literature that may be described as naturalistic. Nevertheless it includes much that is true about human nature, and simple facts about everyday life. Even "The Wasteland", an enigmatic poem for many people, involves general facts about the world and human behaviour. Hospers writes:

. . . it is not the function of literature to assert truths about science or philosophy or any other subject-matter at all, and . . . as long as one judges a work of literature by whether or not it reveals facts in any domain of enquiry, he is making a grave error.¹

Here he overstates the case, for it may not be the function² of literature to delineate facts per se, yet the inclusion of some facts and general truths about the world in any meaningful representation seems inevitable. Thus in so far as these are part of the literary representation, they are necessary constituents of one's interpretation, and by the same token cannot be excluded from the judgment.

We noted earlier the interpenetration of meaning and truth, i.e. that meaningful truths depend upon true meanings for their formulation, and the true meanings of concepts can only be inculcated by way of meaningful truths. It seems to be the case that wherever there are meaningful linguistic compositions, the question of truth in one form or another is bound to arise; even a completely false account involves the truth of meaning. If the communication of truth were confined to statements, as some philosophers would have us believe, then the problem of truth in literature would not have arisen.

Hospers' propositional "truth about" and artistic "truth to" is reminiscent of I. A. Richards' dichotomy,³ the former representing scientific meaning and the latter emotive meaning. This distinction, rather than opening up literature as a source of knowledge, tends to close it up as a separate autonomous world, for if literature does communicate truth, whether it is valuable or trivial, it must relate to, and can only be apprehended by way of, our everyday understanding of the ordinary language concept of truth. Thus in some way it must connect with

1 *ibid*, p.162.

2 Literature has many functions, and these may well include the assertion of truths about philosophy and science, and talk of phrases like "the function" are essentialistic and reductive.

3 See C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards: The Meaning of Meaning.

the real world; indeed, if it is to be worthy and valuable it must be "truth about" the real world in which we live, in which case it is going to be the same kind of truth that we are used to in our everyday lives - that is, many-faceted and subject to a wide variety of criteria. It makes no sense to talk of "another sort of truth", and blanket terms like "artistic truth", to cover all that is true in art and literature, must be dismissed as simplistic and unhelpful. The argument that literature embodies "another sort of truth" reinforces and consolidates the positivist case against literature as a source of knowledge.

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

We noted earlier that the theory of autonomy endeavoured to drive a wedge between the internal truths and values of the literary world and the external truths and values of the real world, asserting that in our interpretation and evaluation of literary works, the latter were completely irrelevant. This, as we shall see, dichotomises aesthetic form from the moral or cognitive content of works of literature to the extent that uninhibited and dispassionate analysis and judgment are stifled. Indeed the attempt to separate truth from beauty not only constrains literary evaluation; it also devalues the nature of literature, and has chaotic ramifications which testify to its falsity.

The traditional account of truth dies hard, and the effects of empiricism have been stultifying, although philosophers themselves are only too aware of the truism that science is impotent in regard to the analysis of human values, that no microscope or test-tube can settle problems in art, morality, politics, metaphysics etc., still "positivism"¹ lurks in the back of the philosophical mind, ever ready to manifest itself whenever terms like "truth" or "objective knowledge" are mentioned. Even aestheticians, sensible to the beauties of art and literature, are afflicted by the legacy of empiricism. Arnold Isenberg appears to be one such case of philosophical schizophrenia, for the cogent, anti-positivist account he delineates in the paper "Critical Communication"² upholding the objectivity and truth of value-judgments in the arts is contradicted by his strong positivist position in a subsequent paper,

1 Positivism: this is a term usually given to hard and vigorous empiricists, epitomized by A. J. Ayer in Language, Truth and Logic. Leszek Kolakowski, in Positivist Philosophy, describes David Hume as the "real father of positivism". (p.43)

2 Arnold Isenberg, "Critical Communication", in Margolis, ed.: Philosophy Looks at the Arts, first published in The Philosophical Review, July 1949.

"The Problem of Belief",¹ where his criterion of truth is observable fact.

The essay "Critical Communication" is clearly an attack on positivism. Isenberg argues powerfully that value-judgments can be objective, and although artistic qualities cannot be defined or even described outside the work itself, they can be located and communally discerned within the work. The very fact that these qualities can be perceived and the judgments shared by many people, and others initially blind to these qualities can, through critical communication, have these particular values revealed to an enlightened sensibility to the extent that they change their minds about the work. All this testifies to the objectivity and truth of the judgments. What is, however, apparent and perhaps indicative of Isenberg's underlying positivism, is that he avoids using the word "truth" in this essay, although at the same time he wants to assert that the value-judgments are objective:

I do think that some critical judgments have been and are everyday being 'proved' as well in the nature of the case they ever can be proved. I think we have already numerous passages which are not to be corrected or improved upon. And if this opinion is right, then it could not be the case that the validation of critical judgments waits upon the discovery of aesthetic laws.²

For the last twenty or thirty years the 'correct' thing to say about the metaphysical poets has been this: They think with their senses and feel with their brains. One hardly knows how to verify such a dictum: as a psychological observation it is exceedingly obscure. But it does not follow that it is not acute criticism; for it increases our awareness of the difference between Tennyson and Donne.³

It may be noted here that the judgment Isenberg quotes regarding the metaphysical poets, he would evidently like to verify in a distinctively

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- 1 Isenberg: "The Problem of Belief", in Cyril Barrett, ed.: Collected Papers in Aesthetics, taken from the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 1954.
 - 2 Isenberg: "Critical Communication", in Margolis, ed.: Philosophy Looks at the Arts, p.146.
 - 3 *ibid*, p.151.

positivist way, and we shall turn to this later. What is interesting is that he uses terms like "proved", "correct", "validation", "right". Only once in this context does he use the word "true": "The post-critical experience is the true commentary on the pre-critical one."¹ This is as far as Isenberg is prepared to go in attributing truth to aesthetic judgments. Yet his own lucid demonstration of their objectivity clearly indicates the truth of such judgments. Indeed we only describe statements as being objective if they are supported by objective evidence. If this is the case, and Isenberg undoubtedly believes that it is, then the term "truth" is also highly pertinent.

Now if a philosopher is anti-positivist and open-minded enough to accept that value-judgments about literature can be true, then it would seem reasonable to assume that his understanding of what constitutes truth would be more complex and profound than the empiricist paradigm of verifiable fact, and as a consequence, that he would be sensible to truth within literary works themselves in relation to human values and other aspects of life. But alas, this is not the case. In "The Problem of Belief" Isenberg constructs a thesis which rests on the positivist notion of truth, observable fact. These facts are construed in statements that can be empirically verified or falsified, e.g.: "The rainbow comes and goes", and "From fairest creatures we desire increase".² He argues that because works of literature include many statements associated with the real world which are true, it does not follow that such literary works are aesthetically good, for many true poems are trivial, or sentimental. Conversely, if a literary work is false in some respect - if it contains a number of false statements - it does not entail the judgment that the

1 *ibid*, p.152.

2 Isenberg: "The Problem of Belief", in Barrett, ed.: Collected Papers in Aesthetics, p.125.

work is aesthetically bad. For example, in Keats' poem on "Chapman's Homer" it should not be "stout Cortez" but "stout Balboa"¹ who discovered the Pacific. Yet this falsehood, Isenberg argues, does not disturb the aesthetic quality of the poem. Thus because it can be shown that truth does not necessarily contribute to aesthetic excellence, and that falsity does not necessarily degenerate aesthetic excellence, Isenberg concludes that not only is truth not a criterion for the evaluation of literature, he goes to the extremity of arguing that truth is always completely irrelevant as an evaluative feature.

This thesis would appear to be false as a matter of fact because it does not square with our experience of literary appreciation, but also as a matter of logic, for it involves a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of literature, and this dogma has chaotic ramifications, which will become apparent.

In "The Problem of Belief" Isenberg writes:

What is so glorious about truth? Why should a quality which all except the demented commonly attain in the greater number of their ideas be considered so precious as to increase the stature of a Milton or a Beethoven if it can be ascribed to him?²

This is indeed pithy and forthright, but is the implied statement behind this rhetorical question true? How important is truth in literature and our appreciation of it? We have already noted that the terms "true" and "truth" in a critical context, or anywhere else for that matter, are used in a variety of ways, and one cannot ignore ordinary human experience or dismiss lightly a criterion which plays such a significant role in common parlance in regard to a critical appreciation of literature. Truth, as we shall see, has certainly been the concern of great creators of literature, and has featured either explicitly, or more often implicitly, in literary criticism.

1 *ibid*, p.130.

2 *ibid*, p.132.

In "The Problem of Belief", Isenberg writes: "Belief and aesthetic experience are mutually irrelevant"¹ and "There are distinctive cognitive values in ideas over and above their truth; and these are what warrant their publication".² And later,

First, we believe that when an aesthetic experience is freed from its entanglement with belief, everything comes out as it should; that is, that works of art are seen upon reflection to take their various places in the scale of values that they have already forced mankind by their own power to concede to them. When beliefs are admitted as a proper element of evaluation we are not only prone to distortion of value, but we are committed to greater distortion still, from which we are saved only by blessed inconsistency.³

In this paper Isenberg commits himself in all but name to the thesis of autonomy, for he evidently believes that the literary world is a sui generis heterocosm and quite independent of the truths and values of the real world, to be experienced on its own terms, completely remote from the emotive or moral effects on the reader. According to Isenberg, we have a unique aesthetic experience, which is somehow severed from all our other values. Terms like "aesthetic experience", "aesthetic consciousness", "aesthetic reaction", "aesthetic effect", "aesthetic quality", are predominant in the essay, and serve to underline Isenberg's extreme aestheticism. For somehow (Isenberg does not say how) we are seemingly able to perceive an intrinsic beauty in works of literature irrespective of the moral repugnance that they might engender, or however they might deviate from fundamental truths and values that we venerate. Indeed, whether we suspend, repress or forget, or whatever we do with our beliefs, they are simply irrelevant to the aesthetic experience.

This is reminiscent of the emperor who found the spectacle of human blood on snow so beautiful that he had thousands of human beings

1 *ibid*, p.125.

2 *ibid*, p.132.

3 *ibid*, pp. 142-143.

slaughtered so that he could enjoy the rich aesthetic experience. To what qualities would Isenberg refer in such a situation? Contrast? Harmony? Balance? He would probably assert that the analogy was a false one in so far as it involves a real situation, with living human beings, whereas literature involves fictitious people in imaginary situations. To this extent the analysis and judgment of works of literature occupy an aesthetic dimension which precludes the moral responsibilities that predominate in real-life situations.

Now there is certainly a difference between events in literature and events in life, but we must not allow this to blind us to the similarities and connections. We may not go into mourning for Anna Karenina, but we are moved by her death. We cannot punish Bill Sykes for the murder of Nancy; nevertheless his crime is morally repugnant and reprehensible. Surely our interest in characters and situations in literature, as in reality, is governed by the same moral values that order our daily lives, and is in some sense a practical interest. The judgments we make in literature may not be those of a participant, but they are those of a partisan. It is clear that when we read literature we are involved with the action and decisions of the characters, and we commit ourselves morally. We may applaud, we may condemn, and contrary to what Isenberg states, our beliefs are particularly relevant to the aesthetic experience, for they are an inextricable part of it.

Wayne Booth writes:

Any characteristic, mental, physical, or moral, which in real life will make me love or hate other men will work the same effect in fiction. But there is a large difference. Since we are not in a position to profit from or be harmed by a fictional character, our judgment is disinterested, even in a sense irresponsible. We can easily find our interests magnetized by characters who would be unbearable as acquaintances. But the fact remains that what I am calling practical interests, and particularly moral qualities as inferred from characteristic choices or as stated directly by the author, have always been an important basis for literary form.¹

1 Booth: The Rhetoric of Fiction, p.130.

When we evaluate works of art we sometimes use the phrase "aesthetic experience", perhaps somewhat glibly. But what does this phrase mean? How do we use it in regard to literature, which for the most part has a human content? When we read Middlemarch or Pride and Prejudice, can we divide our aesthetic experience of these novels from our experience of the characters, who are involved in a variety of moral actions and judgments, or the inferences, both implicit and explicit, of their respective authors? For in such literary works we observe the enactment and realization of moral valuations. It is true that we do use terms like "aesthetic form" as opposed to "moral content", but as we saw earlier, literature is an amalgam of these two dimensions and it makes no sense to imagine that they can be absolutely divided. For instance in a moral sense Bill Sykes is a bad character within the vision of the novel.¹ But from an aesthetic point of view he is a very good character - that is, as a literary creation. But (and here the interpenetration is manifest) in judging him to be good from the aesthetic point of view, we are invoking as a criterion the fact that he is convincingly bad in the moral sense. That is, that as a character within the vision of the drama he is full-blooded and credible as a human being perpetrating evil actions, whereas when we consider Father Time in Jude the Obscure² we observe him as an aesthetically bad creation because we find, within the moral vision, his character to be unconvincing. We are therefore not moved by his action of killing the children and himself. The whole incident is incredible. Indeed it strains our credulity to the extent that we are predominantly aware of aesthetic artifact and authorial artificiality, as opposed to Art and the moral life within.

1 Charles Dickens: Oliver Twist

2 Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure

Isenberg would have us believe that the values in literature are purely aesthetic, but what does this mean? One wonders if this demands an "aesthetic sense", or an "aesthetic emotion". There are obviously cases where we can discuss an aesthetic appreciation that is not tied to moral or other interests which might or might not affect our judgment. The scent and sight of a field of tulips could be enjoyed for its own sake (though of course it could be related to an interest in gardening or the science of horticulture). Abstract paintings and music might also be enjoyed aesthetically without necessarily being linked to other considerations. But in many cases the aesthetic experience, and as a consequence the aesthetic judgment, cannot be disentangled from other values or interests. One might find a Victorian steam engine in perfect working order aesthetically satisfying, but this might well be related to an interest in industrial archaeology or man's technological achievements. A portrait of Adolf Hitler, however technically accomplished, might well be morally disturbing if the Nazi dictator were depicted as a benign old uncle. But in each of these cases it does not follow that one's response is not aesthetic. Graham Sutherland's portrait of Winston Churchill was so disliked by the Churchill family that it was apparently destroyed. The judgment, shared by Churchill himself, was that the painting portrayed the old war leader in a manner that was, to say the least, extremely unflattering. It was believed that the picture gave a false impression and was considered morally repugnant. Now whether the judgment was correct or incorrect is irrelevant here. What we are considering is whether it was an aesthetic judgment. We are surely in no position to rule that it was not, for the moral belief contained in the response is not sufficient to disqualify the judgment from being aesthetic. Indeed, those critics who judged the portrait to be aesthetically excellent and a true depiction of Churchill's character, were also inextricably embroiled in moral

considerations. Similarly, if the innocuous field of tulips considered earlier were a field of opium poppies, and cultivated for the purpose of manufacturing heroin, one might find the sight repulsive because of its evil connotations. It is difficult to imagine how we can distil pure beauty from our other interests, or isolate it from our moral beliefs.

One might object here, and say that the aesthetic experience can be quite easily disentangled from moral or any other considerations. Thus, if Concorde is beautiful in respect of its lines and shape and elegance, why should not a nuclear missile, standing poised and shining on the launching pad, also be considered beautiful and aesthetically satisfying? One simply has to clear the mind of this moral debris, and other irrelevant considerations, and view the spectacle objectively, "as it really is". But of course we saw earlier that we cannot purify our perceptions and observe phenomena in a "neutral" or "absolutely objective" manner. To imagine that we can is to misunderstand the nature of perception. We interpret our experience through concepts which are inextricably bound up with our beliefs and predilections. Of course it might well be possible for someone to see a nuclear missile as beautiful, though many people might not share this view because of the associations with holocaust and mass destruction, but what sort of conceptual contortion would be required in order to see the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima as beautiful, with its many colours and changing shapes or, indeed, the scattered massacre in the snow of our former example?

The conception of a pure aesthetic experience presupposes that there is some unique and universal aesthetic essence that can be hypostasized from all beautiful objects and apprehended in isolation and severed from all other values and beliefs. This is not only contrary to human experience; it is also illogical.

There are many examples in literature where the aesthetic experience and judgment cannot be divorced from other values and considerations.

J. O. Urmson puts this powerfully in a paper entitled "What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?" There are, he argues, no simple, logical differences among scientific, moral and aesthetic judgments. He takes A. E. Housman to task for supposing that there is a "purely aesthetic" appreciation of literature. Housman (writes Urmson)

. . . says that if your admiration of Wordsworth is based on certain grounds (the philosophical truth and moral loftiness of the content of the poetry) it is not aesthetic admiration, whereas if it is based on what Housman calls the 'thrilling utterance', by which the surrounding paragraphs abundantly show him to mean the sound, rhythm and imagery of the words used, then it is aesthetic admiration.¹

Now it seems clear that Isenberg's conception of "aesthetic" admiration is identical to A. E. Housman's, because for Isenberg the aesthetic form precludes moral considerations and facts about reality, or whatever may be said to constitute the truth of the real world, as irrelevant. But also, his endeavour to restrict the judgment of works of literature to this "aesthetic form" is an act of artistic legislation, and this formalist approach to literary criticism represents a diametrical contradiction of the account of aesthetic reasoning that he delineates in the essay "Critical Communication"; to attempt to separate form from content in literature in this manner is to misunderstand the nature of this creative art. It is not comparable with separating a horse from its cart, this is a conceptual error. A more accurate analogy would be trying to have the forest without the trees, or declaring that any judgment of forests must not include any reference to the trees of which it is composed. Thus in regard to Wordsworth's work, the philosophical truths and moral loftiness are integral constituents of the poetry, and would therefore be pertinent features in any aesthetic analysis, although of course if this were to be comprehensively conducted it would involve much more.

1 J. O. Urmson: "What Makes a Situation Aesthetic", in Margolis, ed.: Philosophy Looks at the Arts, p.21.

F. R. Leavis, whose contribution to modern English criticism is probably unsurpassed, is scathing in his attack on the kind of criticism that attempts to separate the aesthetic form from the moral or cognitive content, and his comments are worth recording here. In his essay "The Dunciad", he quotes a sentence by Professor Sutherland, and then proceeds to take him to task:

"The criticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been far too much concerned with the moral issues raised by Pope's satire, and too little interested in its purely aesthetic values."

'Aesthetic' is a term the literary critic would do well to deny himself. Opposed to 'moral', as it is in this sentence, it certainly doesn't generate light. Moral values enter inevitably into the appreciation of the Dunciad, if it is judged to be a considerable work; the problem is to bring them in with due relevance, and the bringing of them in is the appreciation of Pope's art. How are malice, resentment, spite, contempt, and the other negative attitudes and feelings that we can't doubt to have played a large part in the genesis of his poetry, turned in that poetry into something that affects us as being so very different?¹

Leavis makes a similar attack on Henry James concerning his comments on George Eliot. James had written that one of the main weaknesses of George Eliot's work was the "absence of free aesthetic life", and that her "figures and situations" are "not seen in the irresponsible plastic way". Leavis reiterates that the word "aesthetic" is a term that "the literary critic would do well to abjure". He goes on:

But, we ask, in what great, in what interesting, novel are the figures and situations seen in an 'irresponsible plastic way' (a useful determination of one of the intentions of 'aesthetic')? Is there any great novelist whose preoccupation with 'form' is not a matter of his responsibility towards a rich human interest, or complexity of interests, profoundly realized? - a responsibility involving, of its very nature, imaginative sympathy, moral discriminations, and judgment of relative human value?²

1 F. R. Leavis: The Common Pursuit, p.89.

2 F. R. Leavis: "George Eliot", in The Great Tradition, p.40.

On Jane Austen, Leavis writes in a similar vein:

As a matter of fact, when we examine the formal perfection of Emma, we find that it can be appreciated only in terms of the moral preoccupations that characterise the novelist's interest in life. Those who suppose it to be an 'aesthetic matter', a beauty of 'composition' that is combined, miraculously, with 'truth to life', can give no adequate reason for the view that Emma is a great novel, and no intelligent account of its perfection of form.¹

About a hundred years earlier, another great English critic, Matthew Arnold, wrote:

The superior character of truth and seriousness in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.²

These critics have a quite different view of the form/content relationship from that of Arnold Isenberg, and clearly repudiate the idea that one can make the kind of distinction between the aesthetic and the moral that Isenberg's thesis demands.

This is one theme of John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn", a poem which exemplifies how metaphysical problems may be investigated through the medium of poetry and testifies to the epistemic value of literature.

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

1 Leavis, *ibid*, p.17.

2 Matthew Arnold: "The Study of Poetry", in Noel Annan, ed.: Matthew Arnold: Selected Essays, p.58.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' - that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.¹

When Keats wrote the line: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty", he was referring to the symbiotic interpenetration of art and life. The poem is about a work of art, a Grecian urn, and the narrator's relationship to it. Thus we have a detailed description of the urn and a lucid account of the thoughts and emotional responses of the narrator. While

1 John Keats: "Ode on a Grecian Urn", in H. W. Garrod, ed.: Keats: Poetical Works, pp. 209-10.

the urn exemplifies art, the narrator represents life. But this relationship, as we have noted, inevitably involves the problem of form and content within art itself, and this is a central theme of the poem. For the narrator, in admiring the form of the urn in terms of its material, shape and colours, and the vivid pictorial design, is simultaneously involved in an imaginative investigation of the content of life, which is graphically depicted around the surface of the urn. It is alive with people eternally portrayed in various attitudes of ritual and festival, love and romance. Thus for the narrator the urn is an "historian" and it is apparent that the beauty of the urn cannot be divorced from the truth-to-life exemplified in its pictures, and conversely, the truth about human life that the urn depicts is inextricably related to the beauty of its form. It is significant that the words: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" are "spoken" by the urn itself, indicating that art speaks to us in one voice, and that in art, truth and beauty become an amalgam, and each identified with the other. At the same time the narrator is aware that although art may reflect life and embody profound values, nevertheless it is not life, but merely a representation (the urn is a "Cold Pastoral") and it cannot be a substitute for life, and though it may "tease us out of thought" we cannot escape into art in any manner that rejects life itself. Art is part of life, and life is a part of art.

It would seem no coincidence that Keats chose a Grecian urn for the subject of his analysis, for this is indicative of how ancient human art is, and emphasizes the eternal nature of beauty and immutability of truth. But perhaps more importantly, we must not forget that it was with the ancient Greek civilization that the problem of relating art to life and beauty to truth originated. Of course the poem itself exemplifies its own philosophy in so far as it is itself a work of art, and it communicates

aspects of life and the nature of the relationship. It is itself an embodiment of beauty and truth.

Isenberg's thesis demands the separation of beauty from truth and form from content, in spite of the fact that much great literature is judged as such because of the content of truth, although of course other considerations are involved. If we ignore the truth content we are left with style, structure, metre, rhythm, rhyme, onomatopoeia, assonance etc., to be somehow analysed and evaluated in a vacuum, but it is only in reference to the content that these formal concepts have any meaning at all.

All this is not to say that form is not of supreme importance; obviously, given the nature of literature, it is as logically necessary as content, for it would be erroneous to put too much emphasis on the importance of truth in itself. As Isenberg quite rightly asserts, many trivial poems are true. Consider the following example by Patience Strong:

Uphill, Downhill

Uphill, downhill, which is it to
be? Good road, bad road. You
decide. You're free - Free to
explore. It's up to you to say -
Time does not wait - so make
your choice today.

Wrong way leads into a
cul-de-sac - piling a load of
guilt upon your back . . . Right
way is hard and difficult to find
- but when it's found it leads to
peace of mind - to life worth
living and to real success -¹ the
only highway into happiness.

The truth content of the above "poem" is platitudinous. Such tautological truisms do not amount to "high poetic truth and seriousness",²

1 Patience Strong: "Uphill, Downhill", in Out into the Sunshine.

2 Matthew Arnold: "The Study of Poetry", p.58.

but this inadequacy in the content is inseparable from a failure of diction, for the language itself is trivial.

Many of the stories in the Sunday newspapers are also true, but these can hardly be considered as works of great literature. Many works, too, are accurate accounts of life, and contain much that is true, and yet have little more to offer than a compelling and authentic tale. For whether a work of literature is good, bad or indifferent, depends upon manifold conditions and cannot be reduced to a neat formula. A thorough evaluation of a literary work demands an analysis of one's satisfaction. This is obviously a complicated and sophisticated process. We might sum up our experience of a novel with the phrase "It's a great book, a classic". But this simple statement does not account for the many features that we indicate within the work where value is located, or the reasons we give and the concepts we employ.

In this regard, Arnold Isenberg has much to say that is profound and revealing, for in his paper "Critical Communication" he argues cogently and rightly that we do not evaluate works of art according to rigid norms or general principles. The reasons that we give for our judgments are not premises in a syllogistic argument; they are sensitizing features which indicate unique aspects of value within particular works, and serve to communicate the experience of aesthetic value to others. It is not the vertical and mechanical reasoning of necessary entailment from general principles, it involves rather the horizontal reasoning process of referring to particular examples. Isenberg writes: "The critic is not committed to the general claim that the quality named Q is valuable because he never makes the particular claim that a work is good in virtue of the presence of Q."¹ The critic, Isenberg argues, who

1 Isenberg: "Critical Communication", in Margolis, ed.: Philosophy Looks at the Arts, p.149.

believes that we deduce value from general criteria has only to consider certain terms to realize that critical analysis is not an empirical process:

If he saw that the meaning of a word like 'assonance' - the quality which it leads our perception to discriminate in one poem or another - is in critical usage never twice the same, he would see no point in 'testing' any generalisation about the relationship between assonance and poetic value.¹

There are, therefore, no rigid criteria for the analysis and judgment of literature, no general principles from which aesthetic value can be deduced. Thus the effect of assonance in one poem may be profound, and conducive to aesthetic excellence, while in another it may be of little significance, or even vulgar and trite. But in "The Problem of Belief", Isenberg contradicts this powerful thesis, for in arguing that truth can never be of any aesthetic significance or value, he commits himself to a general principle of evaluation in literature. Truth, as we have seen, is certainly not a sufficient condition for judging literature any more than is assonance, because the term "truth" also has multiple uses, but in some situations the truths may be profound and significant - all truths are true, but some truths are more valuable than others, and in literature, truth to life and the real world is often an ineluctable feature of aesthetic excellence. The concepts that we employ when judging works of literature are not governed by static rules, and to show a mastery of these concepts one has to employ the term correctly, in fresh, innovatory situations, and in art, being a creative process, each situation is necessarily unique. As we have noted, precedent and past experience obviously play an important part in one's grasp of each concept, but they cannot rigidly legislate for future application.² But Isenberg does not

1 Isenberg, *ibid*, p.150.

2 See Frank Sibley: "Aesthetic Concepts", in Margolis, ed. *ibid*.

merely assert that truth is not a general criterion of value, he goes to the extremity of arguing that truth is always irrelevant in our judgment of literature. This is similar to saying that assonance is always irrelevant in our judgment of poetry, or that irony is never relevant when judging fiction, simply because in some cases such features are irrelevant, and do not signify aesthetic excellence per se. Thus in a negative sense, Isenberg is legislating, for he is, as a matter of general principle, excluding truth from literary evaluation, and thus prescribing the kind of criteria that the paper "Critical Communication" so effectively demolishes. Indeed the later paper, "The Problem of Belief" is an attempt to annihilate truth in order to preserve the "purity" of the aesthetic experience.

The question we have to ask is: Does Isenberg's argument accord with our own experience of reading literature? The answer is of course that it does not. Neither is it reflected in the work of respected critics. F. R. Leavis talks of the "irresistible truth" of George Eliot's work and her "profound insight into the moral nature of man".¹ Now would it make sense to discuss her understanding of human beings, her moral insight and grasp of emotional life etc., if in fact she had got it all wrong? On Joseph Conrad, Leavis discusses "the intensity of his moral preoccupations" and, he goes on,

To appreciate Conrad's form is to take stock of a process of relative evaluation conducted by him in the face of life. What do men live by? What can men₂ live by? These are the questions which animate his theme.

Here again, truth plays a necessary role. Lawrence Lerner writes of George Eliot and Jane Austen: ". . . the main strength of these novelists is that they tell the truth."³ W. Harvey writes: "The truth of the novel resides

1 F. R. Leavis: "George Eliot", in The Great Tradition, pp. 51 and 59.

2 Leavis: The Great Tradition, p.42.

3 Lawrence Lerner: The Truth Tellers, p.83.

not merely in its internal consistency but in its relation to life."¹ Julian Mitchell says: ". . . what is it to be called? Psychological truth? Human truth? Imaginative truth? Whatever we decide to call it, I think it is clear that we do consider fiction to be very much concerned with something called truth."²

Isenberg makes the point in "Critical Communication" that although for decades, meta-critics have discussed general criteria in relation to literary criticism, consummate critics do not employ them, and when one examines their work there is little evidence of them.³ But if philosophers have been presumptuous in this regard about the nature of literary criticism, Isenberg is being equally presumptuous over the question of truth, for he argues that it is irrelevant in criticism, and yet when we examine the work of literary critics we find that truth is frequently referred to as a feature of excellence.

When a work of literature has human beings at its heart, the endeavour to evaluate it as a "pure" aesthetic object can only conduce to chaos. Wayne Booth says of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,

We may pretend that we read Joyce objectively and disinterestedly, without the sentimental involvements required of us in Victorian fiction. But most of us would never get beyond page one if the novel were only a portrait of an aesthetic sensibility receiving its Joycean epiphanies.⁴

This is undoubtedly correct and is even more clearly demonstrated in the case of Ulysses. One cannot read the novel correctly and remain morally disinterested while aesthetically involved. This is a contradiction. Any thorough evaluation of the novel must take account of

1 W. Harvey: Character and the Novel, p.16.

2 Julian Mitchell: "Truth and Fiction", Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Philosophy and the Arts, volume 6, 1971-72, pp. 10-11.

3 This argument is clearly put by F. R. Leavis in "Literature and Philosophy" from The Common Pursuit.

4 Booth: The Rhetoric of Fiction, p.132.

truth and the experience of the real world. Ulysses has been recognised as a monumental contribution to literature, being exceptionally elaborate in both form and content. What would it mean to judge this book purely aesthetically? Some critics have tried to do this, and in doing so they misinterpret the book and inadvertently disparage its author. It must be emphasized that the judgment of a work of art depends upon unlimited and unspecifiable considerations and cannot be reduced to a formula. But it is surely true that Joyce's great masterpiece would be greatly diminished as a work of art if we ignored its human content, that is, its moral and actual truth. As an aesthetic artifact it is notoriously impressive. It parodies and alludes to countless literary works. It employs an intricate system of symbols and leit-motifs. The protagonists in the novel are identified with many characters both real and imaginary, ancient and modern, including Ulysses, Telemachus, Shakespeare, Hamlet, Jesus Christ, Moses, Adam, the Holy Ghost, Parnell, George Fox, Socrates, and scores of others. The style and structure of the book are loaded with ramifying significance. Indeed, there is so much in the book that might be called aesthetic, that many critics have forgotten or failed to realize that it is also about Dublin, 1904, about a man who was a misfit in his society; a Jewish cuckold, atheist and alien, who has erotic fantasies and masturbates in public, and whose father committed suicide. He seems to represent all that a Roman Catholic society would consider immoral, yet he is a kind, compassionate, generous, basically honest man whom Joyce described as "a good man".¹ In spite of being a lonely outcast he is full of humour and devoid of bitterness, a man with whom we can empathise and sympathise. We subscribe to the truth that evil does not reside in such men and that there is something wrong with society's ethic.

1 See Richard Ellman: James Joyce.

But for the exponent of Art for Art's sake, Joyce is doubly ironic. Bloom is a practical man who derives his values from life, and he is contrasted with Stephen, a young man of theory who derives his values from art, an aesthete. Stephen is self-centred, egotistic, self-opinionated, self-pitying, boastful and snobbish, looking into himself and art rather than looking out to others, and life. Bloom judges people according to his experience and Stephen according to literature. To judge Ulysses the critic has to be an amalgam of both Bloom and Stephen, for in spite of all that can be singled out as aesthetic in the novel, it is about an Edwardian urban society where, in one day, human beings were born and were buried; where they copulated, masturbated, urinated, defecated, menstruated, ate and drank and became inebriated, all of which, among many other things, is recorded in the book. Any sound evaluation of this novel would have to embrace its many-faceted truth content concerning human nature and life in the real world.

Joyce was very conscious of the moral dimension in literature. This is evident in his letters. He described Dubliners as "the chapter of the moral history of my country."¹ Of Maupassant he said: "(He) writes very well, of course, but . . . his moral sense is rather obtuse." Contemporary Irish writers, too, he described as "morally obtuse, formless caricature."² Joyce, like all great exponents of literature, was as much concerned with truth as philosophers, psychologists or sociologists.

Professor Isenberg is obsessed with observable facts. He is not concerned with what he disdainfully calls "fancy truths" which "men of letters"³ have purported to find in literature. Thus the implicit or explicit truths about man as a rational agent or moral being, which are

1 Ellman, *ibid*, p.230.

2 Ellman, *ibid*, pp. 216-217.

3 Isenberg: "The Problem of Belief", in Barrett, ed.: Collected Papers in Aesthetics, p.132.

for most people the life-blood of literature, are not important, he says, because they cannot be verified, and thus cannot be categorized as truth at all:

Beliefs, like poems, are subject to criticism. The criticism of a belief follows a standardized method, commonly termed 'verification' and terminates in a verdict of 'probable' or 'improbable', 'true' or 'false' . . . even though we should be unable to say how far the liking for a poem depended on agreement with the poem, we could quite intelligently ask whether the criticism of a poem coincided with the verification of its statements and so, in the end, whether beauty depends on truth.¹

Now how would Professor Isenberg go about the verification of one's beliefs in relation to morality or metaphysics or even aesthetics? What does it mean to verify moral beliefs? Surely the only account we can give of moral beliefs is in terms of concrete examples, to point out what is right or wrong in particular situations. This is, after all, what the best moral philosophers do, and the best exponents of literature. Professor Isenberg is putting the cart before the horse, because the literary artist is, by way of dramatized exemplification, not only verifying many of our beliefs, but modifying and clarifying others in the light of the characters and circumstances presented. But the real truth about the human condition escapes Isenberg and he concerns himself with factual questions over particular lines torn out of their literary context, e.g. whether it was Balboa or Cortez who discovered the Pacific, or verifying statements made by characters in "Hyperion".

So Isenberg demands that statements or observations in literature, to be true, must be verifiable in a hard, positivist way. But as we saw earlier, he does not make this demand for aesthetic judgments made about the literary work itself:

1 Isenberg: *ibid*, p.128.

For the last twenty or thirty years the 'correct' thing to say about the metaphysical poets has been this: They think with their senses and feel with their brains. One hardly knows how to verify such a dictum; as a psychological observation it is exceedingly obscure. But it does not follow that it is not acute criticism; for it increases our awareness of the difference between Tennyson and Donne.¹

Isenberg is obviously unhappy about his inability to verify T. S. Eliot's acute observation,² in the same way that he can check, empirically, whether the rainbow comes and goes. But he accepts that in so far as it corresponds with his experience of reading the metaphysical poets, it is true. But then why should he not accept, in a similar way, the observations made by poets and novelists about life in their own literary creations, that is, if they reflect and correspond with the truth of his experience in the world? If Isenberg's example of a critical judgment can be objectively perceived in the work by people communally, then why should this not apply to judgments made in literature that have application in the real world? The Dylan Thomas lines, for example

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.³

cannot be verified in any experimental or scientific manner, but in so far as it gives verbal sense to a feeling for life and nature, enough to illuminate one's sensibility and correspond with one's experience of the world, it thus reflects the truth. To say that this is merely an expression of feeling, with no cognitive import, is erroneous. One's experience of the world cannot be simply catalogued in terms of facts. Values too are an inextricable part of experience. Literature can give us both the

1 Isenberg: "Critical Communication", in Margolis, ed.: Philosophy Looks at the Arts, p.151.

2 See T. S. Eliot: "The Metaphysical Poets", in Selected Essays, p.287.

3 Dylan Thomas: "The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower", in Daniel Jones, ed.: Dylan Thomas: The Poems, p.77.

facts about our feelings and our feelings about the facts. As critical judgments can be objectively perceived in the work, literary judgments can be perceived in the world, and both may be said to be true.

What are we to make of these two theses? In "Critical Communication", value-judgments about art are objective and true, while, as in "The Problem of Belief", truth in literature as a feature of value is irrelevant in our evaluation of it. This is a rather curious position, for in so far as the aesthetic judgment is true, truth is important in the criticism of literature. But as truth within the literature is barred from actually informing the aesthetic judgment, it is not considered important in the poet's criticism of life. Perhaps this is what Isenberg means by "blessed inconsistency".

Our beliefs about life and the human condition necessarily play a part in our critical judgments. We cannot cut literature off from reality and the truth of our everyday lives. How can we be aesthetically involved while morally disinterested? How can truth and our real experience of the world be irrelevant? How can one possibly suspend all one's beliefs, short of putting a bullet in one's brain? Would it make sense to say of Middlemarch: "It is indeed a great book, about the social and moral interaction of human beings, but in every single respect it is utterly false, without an atom of truth to recommend it. It stands on its own values, as an aesthetic object"? How can anyone deny that this is a contradiction? Yet Isenberg's "logic" must push him into this chaotic position.

Professor Isenberg believes that to entertain truth-considerations is to allow an illegitimate cognitive interest to impinge upon the aesthetic consciousness:

If a man should take exception to something that a poet says and at the same time expresses a dislike for the poetry, or if he should give his disagreement as a ground

for his dislike, I do not know how we can separate his 'cognitive' from his 'aesthetic' reaction. In critical theory we are not competent experimentalists. And I do not know that we are in a position to moralize.¹

This is indeed a strange utterance and demands careful scrutiny.

It implies that if scientific or moral principles should contribute to a man's aesthetic judgment of a literary work, then the judgment is misguided, and if we, as literary critics, disagree with such a judgment, then there is nothing we can do about it, because we are not competent to carry out experiments, nor are we in a position to moralize. Let us first deal with the scientific side; one can surely make no sense of the idea of carrying out empirical tests in regard to poetry and criticism. What form would such tests take?² There is nothing wrong with one's cognitive interests informing the aesthetic experience. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how it could be otherwise, and this may or may not result in a misinterpretation of the work. If the judgment is a misguided one, experimentation has nothing whatever to do with it. If factual or scientific inaccuracies can be accommodated in the work in question and are compatible with the artist's overall metaphysic, then the work has to be brought under a different description. For example, a film-goer when interviewed by a B.B.C. reporter, said he thought "O What a Lovely War" was a bad film because there were scenes in it which did not accord with the facts of his experience. He asserted indignantly that Generals did not and could not conduct the strategy and progress of a First World War battle from the top of Brighton Pier. Now what would being or not being a competent experimentalist have to do with such a case? One would not have to go to Brighton or make a study of

1 Isenberg: "Critical Communication", in Barrett, ed.: Collected Papers on Aesthetics, p.127.

2 This is discussed in detail in the section "Causes and Reasons in Aesthetic Judgments".

military tactics in order to indicate the man's error of judgment. One would simply bring the work under a different description and with reference to symbols and satire etc., endeavour to change the man's sensibility.

Isenberg says that we are in no position to moralize in criticism, but this is patently untrue. When analysing and evaluating literature we moralize all the time. Claudius is devious, Casaubon is an egoist, Blifil is a hypocrite, Emma is snobbish.¹ These examples may be vulgar, but they are indisputable. The pages of literary criticism are crammed with moral judgments of fictional characters, along with detailed dissections of their thoughts, decisions and actions. The point here is that we cannot separate the cognitive from the aesthetic reaction, no more than we can lift ourselves up by our own bootlaces. We cannot aspire to this pure aesthetic state; our feet will always be on the hard ground of reality.

We noted earlier that autonomists like Isenberg are prepared to accept the truth of internal consistency, namely the criterion of coherence. But what does this mean? How can something be true according to itself? One aspect of truth on which both correspondence and coherence theorists agree is that truth involves a relationship between one thing and another.² It would not make sense to say that a statement

1 These refer respectively to the following books: Hamlet; George Eliot, Middlemarch; Henry Fielding, Tom Jones; Jane Austen, Emma.

2 Austin, a supporter of correspondence, writes: "It takes two to make a truth. Hence (obviously) there can be no criterion of truth in the sense of some feature detectable in the statement itself which will reveal whether it is true or false. Hence, too, a statement cannot without absurdity refer to itself." ("Truth", in Pitcher, ed.: Truth, p.23.) F. H. Bradley, for coherence, writes: "Truth to be true must be true of something, and this something itself is not truth, this obvious view I endorse." (Truth and Reality, p.325.)

was true according to itself, but neither does it make sense to say that a work of literature is true according to its own internal coherence. The coherence theory would place a statement in a series of statements that connect in a system that must ultimately include the totality of human knowledge. It would surely make no sense to say that a statement was true according to itself; neither would it make sense to say that it was true according to one or two other statements, for to isolate them in this way would be to admit that they are inconsistent with the rest of human knowledge, and this, according to the coherence theory, would testify to their falsity. Thus one cannot have autonomous true statements and at the same time invoke the criteria of coherence. But similarly one cannot have autonomous truth in literature; the truth that we discern in literary works cannot logically be severed from the truth of the real world for, as we saw earlier, we are employing the self-same concept of truth. Therefore the truth of internal consistency in a work of literature can only be determined by reference to consistency that we experience in the real world. If the coherence criterion is to be applied consistently with the theory, then a literary work, in order to be judged true in any meaningful sense, must in some respect have a coherence relationship with the totality of human knowledge.

Margaret MacDonald writes that it would be inconsistent with what had gone before if Emma suddenly murdered Miss Bates with an axe.¹ We would no doubt find it unconvincing and out of character. We might even say that it was untrue. But such judgments cannot be divorced from our experience of everyday life in the real world. When we get to know particular characters in real life, we expect them to behave in one way rather than another in certain situations. Thus we are not surprised when certain people become very angry over trivial matters, and we describe them as quick-tempered, while other people may remain calm

1 Margaret MacDonald: "The Language of Fiction", in Barrett, ed.: Collected Papers in Aesthetics.

when the house is on fire. We attribute different characteristics to different people as we get to know them. This is not to say that we can precisely predict the actions of individual people, but simply that certain kinds of behaviour are commensurate with our over all assessment of certain characters, while others are not. When we are wrong we are likely to say something like: "This is a side of his character that I have never seen before". But such instances provide us with further knowledge on which to make future judgments. In real life we sometimes say that people have acted out of character and sometimes people go completely mad in such a way that we cannot predict or understand their behaviour at all. But usually when this happens there are behavioural symptoms to indicate such an eventuality. Certainly in retrospect, when an irrational event has occurred, there is a search for such tell-tale signs.

When this happens in literature the literary artist can plant the evidence, subtle or otherwise, in the narrative. This is clearly exemplified in Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles. If Tess had murdered Alec Stoke-D'Urberville the first day she met him, it would have been impossible to accept as credible. We could not attribute such a violent, rash action to the shy young virginal Tess. But when she does eventually kill Alec we accept it as convincing because the antecedent events and Tess's own development of character and preceding behaviour account for it. But here we accept the credibility of this because it corresponds with our own knowledge of human behaviour in everyday life. Thus any coherence criterion that is applied to literature derives its meaning from the order we impose on reality, and when we find incoherence in literature it is because in some sense it does not correspond with life in the real world, or if one wants to keep within the confines of coherence, such events are not consistent with our

knowledge of the real world. It must be emphasized however that this argument does not rule out the strange, the macabre, the unreal, the surreal or the fantastic in literature, but as was pointed out earlier, if a work has any meaning at all, however far removed it may be from life in the real world, there will still be connections and similarities. In such works internal consistency is applicable, but so too are life and truth in the real world.

TRUTH, GENERAL AND PARTICULAR

Great thoughts are always general and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness . . . Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.¹

Dr. Samuel Johnson

To Generalise is to be an idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General knowledges are those knowledges that idiots possess²

. . . Sacrifice the parts, what becomes of the whole?³

William Blake

In our discussion of knowledge, we noted that since the days of ancient Greece the epistemological problem of Universals has preoccupied philosophers, and that the nature of the connection between the general and the particular is inextricably related to questions concerning meaning and truth. As a consequence, this has crucial implications vis-à-vis the fundamental concepts of knowledge and reason. But the subject has been as prevalent in critical theory and its ~~forms~~^{Focus} upon imaginary, literary worlds as it has in metaphysics and its concern with the real world. Poets and critics, as well as philosophers, since the days of Plato, have made frequent reference to the general and particular, especially in the context of epistemic considerations. W. K. Wimsatt writes:

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- 1 Dr. Samuel Johnson in "Abraham Cowley", The Lives of the English Poets, (Vol One) p.12.
 - 2 William Blake: "Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynolds's Discourses", in Geoffrey Keynes, ed.: Blake: Complete Writings, p.451.
 - 3 *ibid*, p.462.

. . . Whether or not one believes in Universals one may see the persistence in literary criticism of a theory that poetry presents the concrete and the universal, or the individual and universal, or an object which in a mysterious and special way is both highly general and highly particular.¹

It seems to be the case that whenever literature is esteemed as a source of knowledge, there appears to be a "natural" tendency towards the general at the expense of the particular. It features with endemic persistence throughout the history of criticism. The view is that literature affords implicit generalisations, proverbs or general truths concerning life and human nature, and that the literary form, with its concrete particularity, is simply a means of embodying and communicating this content of cognitive generalities. The original exponent of this thesis was Aristotle, and it emerged from a background of classical essentialism and the search for universal definitions. It was reiterated in the eighteenth century by, among others, Dr. Johnson, considerably reinforced by contemporary empiricism and its demands for universal generalisations of empirical fact. This view, in one guise or another, is still held by some critics and philosophers of the present day.² It cannot be divorced from the traditional presumption that all knowledge, to count as such, is necessarily general, that is, firmly established on a principle.³ It is therefore not surprising that many critics who emphasize the importance of concrete particularity in literature often stress the aesthetic beauty and form as opposed to cognitive truth and content, and carefully avoid any explicit reference to epistemic considerations.

1 W. K. Wimsatt: "The Concrete Universal", in The Verbal Icon, p.71.

2 See for example: D. Mellor, "On Literary Truth", Ratio X (December 1968) p.156.

L. B. Cebik "Fictional Narrative and Truth - Some Epistemic Considerations" The Southern Journal of Philosophy XII (Spring 1974) p.9.

R. M. Hare: Freedom and Reason

J. Hospers "Implied Truth in Literature" in Philosophy Looks at the Arts ed. J. Margolis.

3 This traditional account of learning from general principles is emphatically restated by R. M. Hare in The Language of Morals, pp. 60-61.

But we often find in such criticism implicit references to knowledge of the real world by way of terms such as "moral insight" and "real-life characters".¹

William Blake stands out in his day as something of an exception, and it is evident that he did not share the traditional essentialist account of universals. For, like Wittgenstein, he saw particulars as constitutive of knowledge, and iconoclastically condemned general knowledge as the knowledge of idiots. Some commentators have held that the general and the particular are not mutually exclusive, and that literature is at its best when it achieves an amalgam of both, though this is seldom backed up with any philosophical explanation of the relationship. This view is epitomized by Coleridge, who held that works of literary genius consisted in "that union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular,"² or the more recent words of Ezra Pound, when he said: "art does not avoid universals, it strikes at them all the harder in that it strikes through particulars."³ Now although such aphorisms have an indisputable truth, they cannot be supported by traditional theories, in the light of which they appear meaningless, though we shall see in the argument that follows that such remarks cannot be supported by any general theory, for this is indeed the very point at issue. Here Blake is very much nearer the truth when he insists on the importance and relevance of particular parts. This applies to both literature as a creative art and to the concept of knowledge.

Wittgenstein speaks of our "craving for generality",⁴ and it is this persistent and insatiable craving that is responsible for much of the

1 We have also noted that there are critics like F. R. Leavis and Matthew Arnold, etc., who do quite explicitly make mention of the moral and life content of works of literature.

2 Coleridge: "The Friend", in Shedd, ed.: The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, II, 416.

3 Ezra Pound: Literary Essays, p.420

4 Wittgenstein: The Blue and Brown Books, p.17.

confusion and chaos in the theories of art and literature. Indeed, the very word "theory" is indicative of the enduring, monolithic approach to the various meta-problems that have arisen in aesthetics. We saw how Wittgenstein's examination of the relationship between the general and the particular revealed an inordinate network of heterogeneous features, and demonstrated how internally complex our concepts are, and that common essences do not exist. His refutation of essentialism and the analogy of family resemblances have effected fundamental changes in our approach to questions of meaning. This has revolutionised our philosophical conceptions of what constitutes truth and knowledge and rational justification, by bringing them into harmony with the logic of ordinary language. This helps to explain how literature can be both a creative art and also a source of genuine knowledge.

The traditional craving for generality, whether in terms of essentialist definitions of concepts or empirical generalisations of fact, has stultified the critical analysis of art, and the effect upon the literature/knowledge controversy has been disastrous. For, by limiting the concept of truth, philosophers like Plato and Hume¹ were able to demonstrate that literature is false, in so far as it does not accord with their own strict correspondence criteria, and being false, epistemic claims are obviously absurd, when knowledge is seen simply as factual information. We have already seen that the attempt to prove that literature is true with reference to internal consistency alone, is ultimately indefensible, and that the literary world as a matter of logic as well as of common human experience, connects in some way with life and truth in the real world. When the traditional, narrow definition

1 See Plato: The Republic, Book 10, and Hume: Treatise of Human Nature, Book 1, Pt. 3, Section 10, where he says "Poets themselves, though liars by profession, always endeavour to give an air of truth to their fictions."

of knowledge is applied to literature, literature is the loser, for the creative, imaginative dimension of literature (that which makes it the art that it is) seems somehow irrelevant, and the literary form is reduced to embellished or decorated information which can be extracted from the work, the rational or cognitive content. This of course devalues literature; indeed it makes it redundant in the context of epistemic considerations. But the same craving for generality has inveigled critics and poets alike, and some have sought to define, by way of strict criteria and principles, literature and its different genres, thus reducing critical appreciation to logical deduction from general premises, which would put constraints upon the creative imagination of the artist.¹ This emphasis on the uniform and general at the expense of the heterogeneous and particular presents a reductive account of literature which devalues its very nature, that is, as a creative art.

The ancient literature/knowledge debate was born and bred on essentialism, and this diet, in one form or another, has fed it ever since. Plato dismissed literature as being false and useless because, as we noted, according to his own essentialist philosophy, one could only know the universal, the ideal form, and particulars were contemptible imitations of ideal forms. To know the universal was to know what was common to all particulars bearing the same name, and as literature merely imitated those particulars, which were themselves imitations, then literature was "thrice removed from the King and truth".²

Aristotle, in refuting this thesis, became the champion of poets and critics for centuries, indeed until the present day. Unfortunately his

1 It is this kind of criticism that Arnold Isenberg so effectively demolishes in "Critical Communication" and that F. R. Leavis indignantly attacks Rene Wellek for, in "Literary Criticism and Philosophy", but the view that aesthetic judgments are deduced from general principles is still prevalent. See D. M. Taylor in Explanation and Meaning, Chapter 8; also R. M. Hare in Freedom and Reason, pp. 139-145.

2 See Plato: The Republic, Book 10.

thesis, too, is founded on essentialism and, as we shall see, is ultimately untenable. We noted that Aristotle did not believe in ideal forms, and concerned himself more with the real world. He did not accept that the universal could exist apart from particulars, but he shared his former teacher's contempt for those particulars and simply turned Plato's contention on its head. For Aristotle, history provided a catalogue of chance particular facts, whereas literature embodied universal truths, and was therefore more philosophical and worthy of serious attention.¹ He states explicitly that we cannot know the particular, we can only know the universal,² and, like Plato, believed that the possession of universals constituted true knowledge. For Aristotle, the knowledge of universals was gained, by way of induction, from many particulars, which, in bearing the same name, shared common essential features. As we saw earlier, it was these common features which constituted the universal or definition and epitomised true knowledge.³ As far as both Plato and Aristotle were concerned, knowledge was necessarily general, and firmly based on principles. Indeed, Aristotle's estimation of wisdom, as we noted, was in terms of generalisations.⁴ Therefore as far as Aristotle was concerned, literature embodied the very knowledge that Plato had sought in his philosophical analysis.

But here one might ask: What is wrong with Aristotle's account? For if literature is to be informative in any real sense, it must surely point to something beyond itself, and the truth embodied therein must have

1 Aristotle: On The Art of Poetry (The Poetics) Penguin pp. 43-4 in Classical Literary Criticism.

2 See G. E. R. Lloyd: Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought p.126. The author refers to Analytica Proia 81 and Metaphysics, 13 Ch. 4 26ff.

3 See Lloyd, *ibid*, p.126 where refers to Aristotle Analytica Posteriora 88a 4f and 97b 7ff, and Analytica Priora II Ch. 19.

4 Aristotle: Metaphysics, Book 1, in Bambrough, The Philosophy of Aristotle, p.43.

some general significance. This is correct, but it depends upon what is meant by "universals", and in what way they are related to the particular representation. The universals that Aristotle refers to in The Poetic have been widely interpreted as generalisations concerning human behaviour, proverbial or moral in a wide sense.¹ These are prompted by evoking our moral feelings of approval and disapproval through the actions of the characters and the necessities of the plot. Aristotle insists that although literature focuses upon the particular, and actually gives individual names to its characters, the concrete representation is merely a means of communication, a vehicle for carrying general truths which, he argues, is the true function and end of literature. G. E. R. Lloyd, paraphrasing Aristotle, writes:

. . . what the poet represents is not the mere particular, but the universal. He uses particular events as the means to represent what is 'always² or for the most part' true concerning human action.

This is reductive, for both the particular form of the literary representation and the many concrete particulars that it embodies, are depicted as no more than the means to a further end, the communication of moral generalisations. This would make literature essentially didactic in the most pejorative sense. Of course, one might say here that Aristotle's remarks refer to the genre of tragedy. This may be so, but the point still holds, for such a view presents Oedipus Rex or Hamlet as no more than vehicles for moral propaganda. Later critics have argued, quite rightly, that to portray literature as simply a means to a further end is to debase it as literature, that is, as a creative art, as if its

1 In his inaugural lecture, Professor Norman Gulley reiterates this view, although he contends that Aristotle's universals are not to be considered truths. However, this feature is not reflected in the many translations, and does not square with the received interpretation. See Gulley: Aristotle On The Purposes of Literature.

2 Lloyd: Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought, p.277.

whole function was to convey propaganda and moral persuasion. When thus presented, the formal qualities of poetic beauty seem irrelevant embellishments, or merely accidental features.

All this is not to say that literature cannot be enlightening about human behaviour, or that it cannot be a source of moral knowledge, for it most certainly can. But the didactic element in literature is one of many features, and it cannot be isolated as the essential aim of literature. We have already seen that it is not possible to divorce, without loss or distortion, the moral content from the aesthetic form in a work of literature. To say that the aim of literature is a didactic one is to say both too much and too little. The aim of poetry or fiction cannot be summed up in terms of a universal definition, any more than can the aim of science, though one can give examples of particular literary aims and achievements, and these would be many and varied, but the same applies to science. Of course one could say that the aim of science is to reveal truth and advance knowledge and, similarly, that the aim of art is to reveal truth and display beauty. Such generalisations may be true, but they are also trivial and platitudinous. It is rather like saying (as some philosophers have),¹ that all games involve an element of human interest, or are pleasure activities. To point out what is common in this manner does little to help us understand either literature or science, or deepen our insight into what constitutes a game, but by enumerating a heterogeneous variety of particular literary achievements, it is possible to discover the criss-crossing network of features and characteristics that literature embodies, and it is to these we must attend for a full understanding of the concept. This further underlines the importance of

1 Haig Khatchadourian: "Common Names and 'Family Resemblances'", in Pitcher, ed.: Wittgenstein, The Philosophical Investigations.

the concrete particularity of each work of literature, its individual literary form. This cannot be described as a means to a further end without simplifying the literary achievement and debasing its unique creative aspects, but conversely, to describe literature as an end in itself, as many critics have been wont to do, is similarly reductive. For this suggests that literature, with all its rich variety, is a single entity that can be precisely located and defined in the abstract, and this would make it a closed concept. Rene Wellek is a notorious exponent of this Scientist's approach. In "Some Principles of Criticism", the title of which underlines his positivist position, he writes:

If we want to arrive at a coherent theory of literature we must do what all other sciences do, isolate our object, establish our subject matter, distinguish the study of literature from other neighbouring disciplines.¹

Such remarks are indicative of extreme autonomy, though when we examine the position, we discover a fundamental contradiction in the autonomists' argument. For it portrays literature as an autonomous entity quite unrelated to any further aspects of human life, and pointing to nothing beyond itself. But simultaneously it denies the very creative open-endedness of literature that the autonomist is so keen to preserve, that is the freedom of the artist to create new forms of literature according to his own particular aims without being constrained by rigid principles. For while the concept is open-ended the artist can on the one hand adhere to the meaning of what constitutes creative literature by reference to the heterogeneous criteria of past usage, and at the same time enrich the concept by extending those criteria in terms of new literary works. The language of ends and means in reference to literature is quite inadequate, for in generalising it simplifies and distorts. Different literary artists write for a variety of different reasons.

1 Rene Wellek: "Some Principles of Criticism" in The Critical Moment pp. 40-41.

Similarly, the motives of different readers in frequenting different writers and different literary works, are complex and varied.

Now let us consider the problem with specific attention to the end to which Aristotle refers, i.e. the embodiment of general truths. If we accept the latter in terms of essentialist universals, then it can only be at the expense of literature as a creative art. We can begin by a consideration of those universals which describe and evaluate human behaviour, the moral and emotional concepts. One might say, with some justification, that by frequenting works of literature we learn more about such concepts as tolerance, compassion, remorse, anguish, grief, jealousy, love, ecstasy, ambition, pride, joy, etc., etc. But what does this knowledge consist in? If these universals had essences of meaning common to each and every instance, and if the value of literature was its capacity to represent these universals, then literary appreciation may be seen as an inductive process. Thus with the observant eye of the empiricist, one would simply search for what is common in every play, poem or novel, wherever similar universals are represented, in order to possess the definition or Aristotelian essence. This assumption that general essences exist puts all the emphasis, as far as literary value is concerned, on the general, the uniform, the similar and familiar. All the differences which conduce to rich creative particularity become accidental and redundant, while originality, creativity and all that makes each work of literature unique, are abandoned. The particular concrete form is thus represented as a kind of ornamental dressing which may be stripped away to reveal the inner content, the core of "meaning" and "truth". Therefore, whether the work is an Aesop fable or a Shakespearian tragedy, it will not matter, the differences become irrelevant and superfluous; and what they have in common, the supposed essences or universals, will represent their literary value and epistemic

content. This aesthetic, if one might call it such, is in line with classical epistemology, where particular examples are only significant for what they have in common; simply a means by which we grasp the general or universal. Thus we do not need literature as literature; if such essences exist we could derive them from a moral treatise, lectures, documentaries, or even from a dictionary, where the supposed inductive work has been done for us.

The ramifications are similarly chaotic if we regard the Aristotelian universals as general truths or statements concerning human behaviour. Critics sometimes, when discussing the "meaning" of a work, refer to a message or moral. But these messages, when distilled from the particular circumstances in which they inhere, are often so general as to be platitudinous. Recently a radio drama critic, after reviewing a play favourably, was asked whether it had a message. He replied that indeed it had: "War is a very nasty business". It is significant that the critics who argue that literature embodies generalisations which can be neatly distilled into statements, when asked for examples of these, are so often embarrassed by their own replies. Professor Gulley, defending Aristotle's thesis, writes:

Aristotle is saying that the literary artist's fictions are designed to prompt generalisations. They are designed to prompt us to see that what Agamemnon, for example, is doing in this particular situation is the sort of thing which that sort of man is likely to do in that sort of situation. By this means they are designed to prompt generalisations about recurring patterns of events in human life - 'pride goes before a fall' and 'he who hesitates is lost' are two very trite examples.¹

Of course not all implicit truths in literature are familiar proverbs or clichés. But nevertheless, they live in the particular work in which they are embodied, and it is this concrete representation that gives them their revelatory truth and profound meaning. We may refer to such in a

1 Gulley: Aristotle on the Purposes of Literature, p.8.

critical context, but in doing so we focus upon the work itself, for to sever the general truth from its particular form is to trivialise it.

In literature it is not the generalisation itself that is important, but the particular circumstances in which it is represented. If this were not the case, then, as stated earlier, it would not matter whether the generalisation was prompted by an Aesop fable or a Shakespearian tragedy, though the latter is perhaps more subtle in so far as the generalisations remain implicit. From Hamlet, for example, we learn that he who hesitates is lost, or from King Lear that pride comes before a fall. Dr. Johnson was an acute and perceptive literary critic but his was an age of empirical science with its cravings for universal generalisations. As a consequence, Johnson, as a meta critic, was a vehement exponent of the Aristotelian theory. For him all great thoughts were general, and the less said about particularity the better. But this debases art, and if it were true we would not commend the artist for originality, novelty and creativity, but similarity, uniformity and the capacity to communicate truisms. Literature is seen as no more than a means of communicating and inculcating a principle or message. In so far as the message or principle is appropriate in precisely the same way, then it follows that the same message or principle could have been illustrated or exemplified in any one of an indefinite number of different works, and if it encapsulates the intrinsic value of the work, then the particular details employed in different works of literature become aesthetically irrelevant. Therefore, whether we find the principle in Shakespeare, Dickens, Tolstoy, Homer, Barbara Cartland or Patience Strong, Ian Fleming or Aesop, is of no consequence, for the form and presentation drop out of account and the content, in terms of general nuggets of truth, assumes supreme importance and overrides all particulars; the general universal truth is all that matters.

Thus, according to this account, however we regard these universals and generalisations, they may be extracted from the work in question, either as definitions of meaning (especially of moral and emotional concepts) that may be verbally formulated as necessary and sufficient conditions, or as general facts or moral principles, which may also be verbally formulated and extracted from different works. Therefore the particular works fall out of account and the meanings and truths that are embodied therein may be delineated as snippets of information. Thus we do not need the work, ultimately, for the informational knowledge may be expressed in a number of different ways. So, we may ask, what is the point of writing the literary work with its particular form in the first place? One might as well reiterate the meanings and truths that the work purports to embody. If the truth of literature is generalised in terms of facts and moral principles, and it is these that represent literary value, then literature that embodies truths we already possess would be of little interest to us. For instance, if we know, as we most certainly do, that war is a very nasty business, then reading Tolstoy or Wilfred Owen will not help us, at least where this truth is concerned. If we know that, for the most part, "honesty is the best policy" is true, then the literature that exemplifies such a principle will be of little epistemic value. It is when we consider that these truths are often so general as to constitute truisms, and have been around since time immemorial, that it becomes apparent that it is neither the mere inclusion of these that constitutes the epistemic content of literature, nor that it is on these generalisations that we must focus in order to assess literary value. Similar considerations apply in the case of meanings and definitions of concepts if these are approached systematically, or with reference to a general formula. If there were a common essence for all particular instances of the same term, be it anger, courage, tolerance, compassion,

love or whatever, then surely once we knew the meaning in terms of this, that is, once we could formulate the once and for all definition, then the literature which embodied such essences of moral and emotional concepts could not enlighten us. It is true that we might have learnt them from literature in the first place, but having once learnt them, then all future literature that embodied such essences would be uninformative, not to say boringly repetitive. Of course, we might want to say that such works are valuable because they tell us what we already know to be true, though in telling us what we already know to be true in this essentialist sense, they cannot be considered as a source of knowledge. It is perhaps because of the enduring power of essentialist presumptions that critics have argued that literature, if it gives us truth at all, can only remind us of what we already know to be true, and therefore does not extend our knowledge of the world.

It would be a mistake to conclude that works of literature do not embody implicit general claims that have application in the real world. Indeed, this is one of the many ways through which literature may be a source of knowledge. In this regard, Aristotle was correct in his conclusion but, as we have seen, it cannot be supported on essentialist premises, for the full significance of the generalisation depends upon the particular circumstances out of which it emerges. Thus the literary artist, by way of particular representations, can endow generalisations with meaning and truth that have analogical connections with our everyday experience. But it is important to understand the complexity that constitutes generality, for the traditional essentialist and empiricist paradigms conduce to chaos and confusion. Consider the following commentary by Dorothy Walsh in regard to implicit general claims elicited from works of literature:

A possible claim about the human condition, elicited and explicitly stated might run as follows: 'We delude ourselves if we suppose that we can find our freedom and our self-realization by the path of withdrawal from the intimacy of human relationships. This isolation, far from providing fulfillment, results in impoverishment. Only through generous participation in the life of others can we be ourselves.' There, now, is something big and possessing an air of impressiveness: the essence of wisdom concerning the human condition. Or so it seems until we fall under the spell of the next work of literature. But the claim elicited from the next work is somewhat different. 'We delude ourselves if we suppose that we can ever really enter with any intimacy into the life of others. The more seemingly intimate the relationship the more inescapable the realization that every man is, in fact, an island unto himself. On the honesty, courage, and dignity with which we accept this hard and terrible truth depends all personal integrity, all civilization, all courtesy.' It seems as if every claim might have its counter-claim and, in so far as we suspect this, we become uneasily aware that we approach the land of proverbs. This is the land where the sign says: 'Look before you leap, but remember, he who hesitates is lost.'¹

This surely represents a traditional approach to generality, namely the search for common essences and perfect uniformity, the idea of an absolute principle or irrefutable law. Now we have taken note of the inadequacy of rigid general formulae, for such are always questionable, even in areas of hard, empirical science. Wittgenstein has demonstrated that our concepts are so complex in their structure that they may well embrace not merely heterogeneous, but even contradictory features. Thus some games may be friendly and amusing, conducive to human warmth and social intercourse - parlour-games and children's party games come into this category - while on the other hand, some games involve conflict and are extremely serious, promoting hostility and bitterness - professional football and tennis are notorious examples. This surely emphasizes the crucial importance of the particular circumstances in which the general term is employed, and the role that the context plays in how the term is to be understood. Thus when we fully grasp the meaning

¹ Dorothy Walsh: Literature and Knowledge, p.51.

according to the particular circumstances, then we can determine the accuracy of the description in question. The same is true in regard to generalisations about the world, especially those moral and emotional truths central to human nature and social life. These, as Aristotle observed, play a fundamental role in literature, and it is to these that Dorothy Walsh directs her attention in the above extract.

The fact is that we are in the land of proverbs. It is the world in which we all live. For what may be irrefutably true in one situation - that is, with reference to a particular set of circumstances - may well be completely false in another, where the circumstances are quite different. This is especially true of common proverbs. It would be tedious to give detailed examples, but it is surely obvious that in some situations it is true that "too many cooks spoil the broth" while in other, quite different situations, "many hands make light work". The truth of the proverb is relative to the circumstances into which it fits. The cases where proverbs are appropriate and true relate to each other, not by way of essential common characteristics, but like the members of a family. The literary artist, by way of his multifarious concrete cases, can exemplify profound general truths in circumstances where they are appropriate and meaningful. In this way, literature can inform us of the complexity and heterogeneity of the criteria that govern our judgments in all aspects of everyday experience.

Dorothy Walsh fails to appreciate this, and thus rejects the idea that literature can be a source of implicit general truths. This is because her notion of generality is that of the empiricist, indeed she argues that in so far as literature does not provide scientific evidence to support and verify its implicit general claims, then the claims are invalid. Her approach is that of the traditional essentialist,¹ but

1 This is evident in her attempts to define creative literature in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. See chapter 3, "What is Literature?" Literature and Knowledge, p.31.

ironically, her conclusion is the very converse of the Aristotelian thesis, for in her eagerness to throw out the empiricist bath water, she also ejects the epistemic baby, at least as far as the embodiment of general truths in literature is concerned. Her demand for perfect uniformity is surely unreasonable, especially in the areas to which she alludes. Understanding life and existence is a difficult business, and there is considerable truth in each of the points of view that she delineates. Human beings are many and varied, and we are, on different occasions, social and gregarious, while on others we are individuals and self-sufficient. It is reductive to imagine that the two interpretations are mutually exclusive. The hard empiricist would no doubt refer to this as a contradiction. How can such diametrically opposed positions both be true? But of course it is not a contradiction, it is a paradox, and both interpretations embody truth. Literature explores and analyses the contraries and paradoxes that fill our lives. We are both free in our decisions and yet determined in our actions, we are both rational and emotional, happy and miserable, cruel and compassionate; the world is good and evil, beautiful and ugly etc. The literary artist can clarify our understanding of these by delineating particular circumstances which emphasize and illuminate aspects of the paradox, but his implicit general claims cannot be extracted in terms of information, and can only be fully comprehended with reference to the particular circumstances through which they are dramatized and realized.

We have observed the case against essentialism, and why it is ultimately untenable. Now we must consider how literature may be a source of knowledge by attending to the particular, thereby extending our conceptual apparatus, and by presenting familiar facts and general truths in quite different and original guises, thus affording reapplication and reinterpretation.

KNOWLEDGE BY EXAMPLE

We have observed that knowledge is many-faceted, and that it cannot be defined simply in terms of factual information, for in order to recognise and formulate facts, one has to possess a prior understanding of certain concepts, which make those facts intelligible. Conceptual knowledge is the foundation of understanding, for it holds the key to meaning and enables us to discern truth. This conceptual ability, as we have noted, is not learned by any systematic induction or by way of abstract general definitions, but by way of a heterogeneous variety of concrete particular examples. These we experience in everyday life, but we also discover them in literature, for literature serves to complement and enhance the knowledge of life.

Literature can be a source of knowledge in many different ways. The medium of language makes it peculiarly valuable, for it can verbalize our experience, either in terms of aspects of the external world, or by giving clearer expression to our feelings, and describing our psychological states. This is not knowledge in terms of factual acquisition, but conceptual adjustment. Literature can also inform our moral understanding by enriching and extending those concepts by way of which we describe and evaluate human relationships and moral situations. The myriad examples presented in literature can give us new ways of seeing the world. We may view with a clearer vision characters we know or have known, by observing aspects of human character in literature. We may come to see meaning in their behaviour which was hitherto unrecognised, simply by the descriptions of characters we discover in literature. We may thus reach a deeper understanding of human nature by way of scrutinizing the complex variety of characteristics that constitute being human. These are made manifest in all their subtlety and heterogeneity by way of the imaginary figures created in literary works. We can thus learn to understand our fellow

human-beings by relating their behaviour to the behaviour of characters in literature. The verbal medium of literature gives it a critical dimension, for it presents interpretations of experience, imaginative analyses of human behaviour, and evaluative descriptions of phenomena, that relate ineluctably to life in the real world.

The importance of contrast cannot be overstated, for the surreal may help us to understand the real, and the fantastic can give us a better grasp of the ordinary and mundane. There is, as we noted, some truth in the analogy of the mirror held up to nature, and sometimes the imitation of life has to be exaggerated or distorted in order to be revealing.¹

The knowledge we derive from literature is heterogeneous and many-faceted. It can be psychological, philosophical, moral, sociological, phenomenological etc. The categories are extensive because literature is itself complex and many-faceted, and deals with all aspects of life in the real world. Each work of literature, however stylized, is in some sense a compendious picture of phenomena which, in order to be meaningful, necessarily connects with real-world experience.

We have emphasized the uniqueness of each original work of literature and, necessarily, the knowledge that one derives from a literary work cannot be distilled into some other form, for we are alluding to a conceptual awareness, an extension of understanding that comes from the experience of a particular work of literature which, by definition, cannot be extracted in terms of information. For we are alluding to knowledge-how that is not reducible to a remedy or prescription, or set of facts. Thus the question: "What did you learn from Anna Karenina?" is embarrassing because it is so often an implicit reference to the traditional notion of

1 This may be compared to the treatment of anorexia nervosa (obsessive slimming), which involves the patient viewing himself in a distorting mirror in order to adjust his vision and get him to see himself differently.

knowledge, and is a request for information. Thus the sceptic who asks this question can smile contemptuously when he is given either the reply which states information (which he can reject by saying: "I don't have to read Anna Karenina to know that,") or smile even more contemptuously when the reply is of the form: "I don't know, it is very difficult to put into words, but I know I've learned a great deal about life." For here the sceptic, armed with his traditional paradigm, can either dismiss the epistemic claim completely with the retort: "If you don't know or at least can't say what you've learned, then you haven't learned anything, and it makes no sense to talk about knowledge," or he can continue his demands for facts and definitions and then, on receiving them, promptly dismiss them as uninformative and platitudinous. This proves, as far as he is concerned, that literature is a waste of time when it comes to "real knowledge", for one can acquire the information more efficiently elsewhere.

But as we have seen, if a work of literature provides us with a conceptual enrichment that enables us to order and understand our experience, then such knowledge is clearly not informational, and cannot be communicated as such. Therefore the knowledge that one derives from reading Anna Karenina or Othello cannot be fully exemplified here because it is inextricably related to the experience of reading those works. The extracts of literature which are used in the following pages do not represent an attempt to distil knowledge from the works in question, it is rather an endeavour to demonstrate how literary works can communicate knowledge. But the significance of the examples can only be appreciated and fully understood by those who have read the respective works, though of course they may become meaningful by way of subsequent reading.

However, it is also important to mention that the extracts are not presented as startling passages of truth or profound nuggets of wisdom,

for epistemic experience in literature is personal, and what is knowledge for some readers is not necessarily knowledge for all. This of course applies to most aspects of human knowledge. We are aware of having learned something when we discover something new, something previously unobserved, unrecognised; indeed, unknown. Thus what is new knowledge and learning for some may not be for others. In the early stages of arithmetic, a child learns that $2 + 2 = 4$, and this is knowledge because it is new and different, something previously unknown. But to the professor of mathematics it is not worthy of attention, for it is something he has seemingly always known. There is nothing new or enlightening about it. It must therefore be recognised that the following examples may not necessarily be illuminating or enlightening, for whether they are will depend on individual experience. Poems that express grief may mean a great deal to someone who is grief-stricken or recalls the experience of grief, either in himself or those close to him. Similarly, love poetry may communicate a great deal to someone who is, or has been, in love. There is, as has been emphasized in this work, a symbiotic relationship between literature and life, for life can bring meaning to literature and literature can bring meaning to life. Life can inform and enrich the truth of literature, and literature can inform and enrich the truth of life.

The aim of the examples is to show how literature can be informative in terms of its contribution to conceptual development. In everyday life this can happen in a gradual and insidious manner, and we are often not aware of the process of learning taking place. This can and does happen with literature, too, but often in literature we know we have come face-to-face with meaning and truth that opens our minds to a new understanding of aspects of our experience. We may discover passages which have some personal significance for us, which makes intelligible what was hitherto unintelligible, and brings order to what seemed to be chaos.

Sometimes we may become aware of knowledge gained from literary works in retrospect, when we observe a situation or spectacle in the real world which is profoundly meaningful in the light of some past experience of literature. This throws the experience into relief, and reveals truth which might well have gone unnoticed. The literary critic, by informing and extending our critical concepts, enables us to interpret and evaluate literature. We acquire knowledge by seeing the work in a new way, but the extension of our critical apparatus equips us for further literary analysis of other works; such is the complexity of the concepts that we employ in criticism. In a similar manner, the literary artist informs and extends our conceptual apparatus, enabling us to interpret and evaluate our experience of life.

The following examples are accompanied by some commentary, but this is wherever possible kept to a minimum, and there is no attempt to provide a profound literary analysis.

Consider this example from Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure. It is the scene in which the newly-married Jude and Arabella slaughter the pig.

He went out to the sty, shovelled away the snow for the space of a couple of yards or more, and placed the stool in front, with the knives and ropes at hand. A robin peered down at the preparations from the nearest tree, and, not liking the sinister look of the scene, flew away, though hungry. By this time Arabella had joined her husband, and Jude, rope in hand, got into the sty, and noosed the affrighted animal, who, beginning with a squeak of surprise, rose to repeated cries of rage. Arabella opened the sty-door, and together they hoisted the victim on to the stool, legs upward, and while Jude held him Arabella bound him down, looping the cord over his legs to keep him from struggling.

The animal's note changed its quality. It was not now rage, but the cry of despair; long-drawn, slow and hopeless.

'Upon my soul I would sooner have gone without the pig than have had this to do!' said Jude. 'A creature I have fed with my own hands.'

'Don't be such a tender-hearted fool! There's the sticking-knife - the one with the point. Now whatever you do, don't stick un too deep.'

'I'll stick him effectually, so as to make short work of it. That's the chief thing.'

'You must not!' she cried. 'The meat must be well bled, and to do that he must die slow. We shall lose a shilling a score if the meat is red and bloody! Just touch the vein, that's all. I was brought up to it, and I know. Every good butcher keeps un bleeding long. He ought to be eight or ten minutes dying, at least.'

'He shall not be half a minute if I can help it, however the meat may look,' said Jude determinedly. Scraping the bristles from the pig's upturned throat, as he had seen the butchers do, he slit the fat; then plunged in the knife with all his might.

'Od damn it all!' she cried, 'that ever I should say it! You've over-stuck un! And I telling you all the time ——'

'Do be quiet, Arabella, and have a little pity on the creature!'

'Hold up the pail to catch the blood, and don't talk!'

However unworkmanlike the deed, it had been mercifully done. The blood flowed out in a torrent instead of in the trickling stream she had desired. The dying animal's cry assumed its third and final tone, the shriek of agony; his glazing eyes riveting themselves on Arabella with the eloquently keen reproach of a creature recognising at last the treachery of those who had seemed his only friends.

'Make un stop that!' said Arabella. 'Such a noise will bring somebody or other up here, and I don't want people to know we are doing it ourselves.' Picking up the knife from the ground whereon Jude had flung it, she slipped it into the gash, and slit the windpipe. The pig was instantly silent, his dying breath coming through the hole.

'That's better,' she said.

'It is a hateful business!' said he.

'Pigs must be killed.'

The animal heaved in a final convulsion, and, despite the rope, kicked out with all his last strength. A tablespoonful of black clot came forth, the trickling of red blood having ceased for some seconds.

'That's it; now he'll go,' said she. 'Artful creatures - they always keep back a drop like that as long as they can!'

The last plunge had come so unexpectedly as to make Jude stagger, and in recovering himself he kicked over the vessel in which the blood had been caught.

'There!' she cried, thoroughly in a passion. 'Now I can't make any blackpot. There's a waste, all through you!'

Jude put the pail upright, but only about a third of the whole steaming liquid was left in it, the main part being splashed over the snow, and forming a dismal, sordid, ugly spectacle - to those who saw it as other than an ordinary obtaining of meat. The lips and nostrils of the animal turned livid, then white, and the muscles of his limbs relaxed.

'Thank God!' Jude said. 'He's dead.'

'What's God got to do with such a messy job as a pig-killing, I should like to know!' she said scornfully. 'Poor folks must live.'¹

1 Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure, pp. 70-72.

There are no doubt facts about the real world contained in this extract, relating to country life and the slaughter of pigs, but it is not these in themselves which are significant, for they may well have been learned elsewhere. But Hardy has organised them in such a form that his graphic description is conceptually informative. There is a contrast between Jude's gentle innocence and Arabella's callous brutality. We may learn something of human nature and man's attitude to animal life. We witness emotions of pity and disgust, cruelty and selfishness. We see how human beings in a relationship can affect each other's behaviour. Jude performs a deed he finds repugnant, and feels guilty for doing so, though we would judge him as the innocent one. Jude's behaviour reflects disgust in his action, while Arabella feels no guilt about the incident at all, but is disgusted and irritated by Jude's clumsy performance.

The contrast of attitudes and emotions is symbolized by the blood on the snow. This may be seen as the red life of the pig, contrasted with the anaemic whiteness of its corpse. It also represents the cold callousness of Arabella as opposed to the warm compassion of Jude. Conversely the snow reflects the uninitiated innocence of the spiritual Jude, juxtaposed with the gushing animality of Arabella.

The full significance of the scene cannot be divorced from the total experience of the novel, which explores many aspects of human relationships. But Hardy's vivid account gives us an interpretation of human experience, involving many concepts through which such experiences are made intelligible, and as we employ them, so we extend them. In this way literature widens and deepens our understanding of the world.

Compare the above passage with the following extract from George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant". The narrator, a colonial official in the Burmese police force, has been called in to deal with a mad elephant, which stirred up considerable interest amongst the local people:

. . . They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. . .¹

. . . It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged I could shoot, if he took no notice of me it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of 'natives'; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one should shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick - one never does when a shot goes home - but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time - it might have been five seconds, I dare say - he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed

1 George Orwell: Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters 1, "Shooting an Elephant", p.269.

with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open - I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. . . .¹

This represents a powerful criticism of life, where many concepts are made manifest by way of concrete exemplification, including fear, guilt, pity, pride, mercy, humility, remorse, shame, and many shades and subtle mixtures of emotion which defy categorizing. We are made aware of the emotions as they are experienced, and also the targets at which they are directed. We are thus given a vivid description of the external world and, simultaneously, an expression of complex and conflicting emotions. Such an account contributes to knowledge by encapsulating experience in language, which extends and adjusts the concepts employed therein, and reveals truth by way of the heterogeneous particular. There is much to be learned from this passage, though a full analysis is not appropriate here. But it is clear that many concepts relating to colonialism are under focus, including freedom and its relationship with authority, and also the philosophical problem of freedom and determinism.

1 *ibid*, pp. 270-272.

In D. H. Lawrence's "The Snake" we find again a complex collage of conflicting emotions, but the situation, although sharing certain similarities, is very different:

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob
tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at
the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the
gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down,
over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small
clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long
body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and
mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels
of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold
are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink
at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so
black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and
entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing
into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing
himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed
in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-
front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human
education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.¹

1 D. H. Lawrence, Selected Poems, "Snake", pp. 136-139.

When we discover such graphic and evocative examples of literature, the notion that such cannot be a source of real knowledge must surely appear absurd, for here again we are given an interpretation of experience which involves evaluation and analysis. The narrator is fascinated by the spectacle and mystified by his own emotional conflict. The clear, vivid description of the external peace of the morning and the apparent gentleness of the venomous reptile is juxtaposed by the inner turmoil of the narrator's feelings and attitudes, though at the same time both are inextricably bound up together. There are beauty and danger, fear and fascination, impetuosity, shame and remorse. There are similar concepts here, as in the two former passages, but they are being used differently. The situation is different, the language is different, they are all quite different in form and content; we are made aware of different conceptual facets and features, though at the same time there are connections and similarities. These literary examples inform us by altering our vision. We may learn how to interpret our experience and see aspects of the world in a new way.

In Hubert Selby's Last Exit to Brooklyn we are brought face-to-face with life in a violent urban society. We may read the facts and figures relating to crime and moral outrages or social injustice in newspapers, sociological text-books etc., but Selby's literary account shocks the sensibility into a new awareness:

Three drunken rebel soldiers were going back to the Base after buying drinks for a couple of whores in a neighbourhood bar and were thrown out when they started a fight after the whores left them for a couple of seamen. They stopped when they heard Rosie shout and watched as she staggered back from the slap, Freddy grabbing her by the neck. Go giter little boy. Hey, dont chuall know youre not to fuck girls on the street. . . They laughed and yelled and Freddy let go of Rosie and turned and looked at them for a second then yelled at them to go fuck their mothers, ya cottonpickin bastards. I heard shes good hump. The soldiers stopped laughing and started crossing the street toward Freddy. We'll cut yur niggerlovin heart out. Freddy yelled and the others ran out of the Greeks. When the doggies saw them they stopped then turned and ran toward the gate to the Base. Freddy ran to his car and the

others jumped in and on the fenders or held on to the open doors, and Freddy chased the doggies down the street. Two of them continued running toward the gate, but the third panicked and tried to climb over the fence and Freddy tried to squash him against it with the car but the doggie pulled his legs up just before the car bumped the fence. The guys jumped off the fender and leaped on the doggies back and yanked him down and he fell on the edge of the hood and then to the ground. They formed a circle and kicked. He tried to roll over on his stomach and cover his face with his arms, but as he got to his side he was kicked in the groin and stomped on the ear and he screamed, cried, started pleading then just cried as a foot cracked his mouth, Ya fuckin cottonpickin punk, and a hard kick in the ribs turned him slightly and he tried to raise himself on one knee and someone took a short step forward and kicked him in the solarplexus and he fell on his side, his knees up, arms folded across his abdomen, gasping for air and the blood in his mouth gurgled as he tried to scream, rolled down his chin then spumed forth as he vomited violently and someone stomped his face into the pool of vomit and the blood whirled slightly in arcs and a few bubbles gurled in the puke as he panted and gasped and their shoes thudded into the shiteatinbastards kidneys and ribs and he groaned and his head rolled in the puke breaking the arching patters of blood and he gasped as a kick broke his nose then coughed and retched as his gasping sucked some of the vomit back in his mouth and he cried and tried to yell but it was muffled by the pool and the guys yells and Freddy kicked him in the temple and the yellowbastards eyes rolled back and his head lolled for a moment and he passed out and his head splashed and thumped to the ground . . .¹

It is not difficult to understand that such a passage will conceptually enlighten and inform maiden aunts living in Bournemouth; indeed it provides material for their imagination that brings cold facts and figures to life. But literature has more to offer than this, for novels like Last Exit to Brooklyn (as with those of Charles Dickens in Victorian England) can be a source of knowledge for those very people who live in that environment. For through his style and manner, the literary artist can present what is familiar and commonplace in a way which illuminates and instructs. His language can effect a change in our interpretation of familiar situations. This is analogous with the duck/rabbit experience. One may be

1 Hubert Selby: Last Exit to Brooklyn, "Another Day Another Dollar", pp. 32-33.

quite familiar with the picture and see, palpably, a duck, especially when placed in the context of other duck-representations. But by changing the emphasis, and indicating other features, suddenly we become aware of the rabbit, and in seeing the situation differently, we have learned something. Our concepts have undergone an adjustment.

Thus the literary artist may present the familiar or commonplace, but by emphasizing certain features and making us aware of other facets, he is able to adjust our conceptual apparatus to reveal meaning and truth that was hitherto unrecognized. The literary critic does this with works of literature. However familiar we may be with the work, the consummate critic can, by attending to particular features and indicating certain relationships and connections, effect a change in our sensibility, so that we come to see the work differently. What the literary critic does with literature, the literary artist does with life.

The problem here is that short extracts cannot sufficiently convey the extent to which our concepts can be altered and enhanced. There is truth to be observed in particular passages, but truth is many-faceted, and many truths are explored throughout the course of a work of literature, through which they evolve and develop. They cannot be simply extracted and revealed without destroying the profundity of their significance with which particular circumstances endow them. For often a literary work may be a dramatized argument, and the conclusions emerge from the enacted premises represented in the drama. Returning to Last Exit to Brooklyn, the story "Tralala" provides insight into the philosophical paradox of freedom and determinism. The full force of his metaphysic cannot be extracted from the work in which it inheres, but at least a pointer can be provided by way of extracts and commentary. Tralala is a young prostitute who lives in Brooklyn:

. . . She kept filling his glass. He kept talking. About the war. How he was shot up. About home. What he was going to do. About the months in the hospital and all the operations. She kept pouring but he wouldnt pass out. The bastard. He said he just wanted to be near her for a while. Talk to her and have a few drinks. She waited. Cursed him and his goddamn mother. And who gives a shit about your leg gettin all shotup. She had been there over an hour. If hed fucker maybe she could get the money out of his pocket. But he just talked. The hell with it. She hit him over the head with the bottle. She emptied his pockets and left. She took the money out of his wallet and threw the wallet away. She counted it on the subway. 50 bucks. Not bad. Never had this much at once before. Shouldve gotten more though. Listenin to all that bullshit. Yeah. That sonofabitch. I shoulda hitim again. A lousy 50 bucks and hes talkin like a wheel or somethin. She kept 10 and stashed the rest and hurried back to the Greeks. . .¹

. . . They were still sitting at the counter when the doggie came in. He was holding a bloodied handkerchief to his head and blood had caked on his wrist and cheek. He grabbed Tralala by the arm and pulled her from the stool. Give me my wallet you goddamn whore. She spit in his face and told him ta go fuckhimself. Al and Tony pushed him against the wall and asked him who he thought he was. Look, I dont know you and you dont know me. I got no call to fight with you boys. All I want is my wallet. I need my ID Card or I cant get back in the Base. You can keep the goddamn money. I dont care. Tralala screamed in his face that he was a no good mothafuckin sonofabitch and then started kicking him, afraid he might say how much she had taken. Ya lousy fuckin hero. Go peddle a couple of medals if yaneed money so fuckin bad. She spit in his face again, no longer afraid he might say something, but mad. Goddamn mad. A lousy 50 bucks and he was cryin. And anyway, he shouldve had more. Ya lousy fuckin creep. She kicked him in the balls. He grabbed her again. He was crying and bent over struggling to breathe from the pain of the kick. If I dont have the pass I cant get in the Base. I have to get back. Theyre going to fly me home tomorrow. I havent been home for almost 3 years. Ive been all shot up. Please, PLEASE. Just the wallet. Thats all I want. Just the ID Card. PLEASE PLEASE!!! The tears streaked the caked blood and he hung on Tonys and Als grip and Tralala swung at his face, spitting, cursing and kicking. Alex yelled to stop and get out. I dont want trouble in here. Tony grabbed the doggie around the neck and Al shoved the bloodied handkerchief in his mouth and they dragged him outside and into a darkened doorway. He was still crying and begging for his ID Card and trying to tell them he wanted to go home when Tony pulled his head up by his hair and Al punched him a few times in the stomach and then in the face, then held him up while Tony hit him a few times; but they soon stopped, not afraid that the cops might

1 ibid, "Tralala", pp. 109-110.

come, but they knew he didnt have any money and they were tired from hitting the seaman they had lushed earlier, so they dropped him and he fell to the ground on his back. Before they left Tralala stomped on his face until both eyes were bleeding and his nose was split and broken then kicked him a few times in the balls. Ya rotten scumbag, then they left and walked slowly to 4th avenue and took a subway to Manhattan. . .¹

This is one of many scenes in the story which exemplify different aspects of Tralala's character and personality. She appears to be completely devoid of all moral principles. She is selfish and callous, and lives only for personal pleasure and the acquisition of money. We are eager to judge her as morally corrupt, for there is no heart of gold in Tralala. Indeed, there is no evidence of her having any compassion, generosity or love, or anything approaching human warmth at all. She seems completely evil, and one judges her as a free agent, motivated by egoism and self-indulgence. As the story progresses she degenerates physically and she becomes a somewhat pathetic creature. However, she does not mellow in any moral sense; indeed, her behaviour is as reprehensible as ever.

In the following extract we see from a different point of view. Tralala is with a number of men after drinking heavily in a bar:

. . . Tralala drank beer while being laid and someone asked if anyone was keeping score and someone yelled who can count that far and Tralalas back was streaked with dirt and sweat and her ankles stung from the sweat and dirt in the scrapes from the steps and sweat and beer dripped from the faces onto hers but she kept yelling she had the biggest goddamn pair of tits in the world and someone answered ya bet ya sweet ass yado and more came 40 maybe 50 and they screwed her and went back on line and had a beer and yelled and laughed and someone yelled that the car stunk of cunt so Tralala and the seat were taken out of the car and laid in the lot and she lay there naked on the seat and their shadows hid her pimples and scabs and she drank flipping her tits with the other hand and somebody shoved the beer can against her mouth and they all laughed and Tralala cursed and spit out a piece of tooth and someone shoved it again and they laughed and yelled and the next one mounted her and her lips were split this time and the blood trickled to her chin and someone mopped her brow with a beer soaked handkerchief and

1 *ibid*, pp. 110-111.

another can of beer was handed to her and she drank and yelled about her tits and another tooth was chipped and the split in her lips was widened and everyone laughed and she laughed and she drank more and more and soon she passed out and they slapped her a few times and she mumbled and turned her head but they couldn't revive her so they continued to fuck her as she lay unconscious on the seat in the lot and soon they tired of the dead piece and the daisy chain broke up and they went back to Willies the Greeks and the base and the kids who were watching and waiting to take a turn took out their disappointment on Tralala and tore her clothes to small scraps put out a few cigarettes on her nipples pissed on her jerked off on her jammed a broomstick up her snatch then bored they left her lying amongst the broken bottles rusty cans and rubble of the lot and Jack and Fred and Ruthy and Annie stumbled into a cab still laughing and they leaned toward the window as they passed the lot and got a good look at Tralala lying naked covered with blood urine and semen and a small blot forming on the seat between her legs as blood seeped from her crotch and Ruth and Annie happy and completely relaxed now that they were on their way downtown and their deal wasn't loused up and they would have plenty of money and Fred looking through the rear window and Jack pounding his leg and roaring with laughter. . .¹

Suddenly we are aware of something; the situation is different. A new aspect has dawned. The narrative has insidiously effected an alteration in our vision. In spite of the moral judgments we might have made, we are now keenly aware of the existence of social and economic determinism, for now, lying amongst the garbage of old bottles, tins and abandoned cars, Tralala, the young prostitute, has become identified with the debris of an acquisitive society, indeed she is depicted as the victim of the environment which produced her and the throwaway bottles and cans. Thus Selby dramatizes the paradox of freedom and determinism, and indicates the profound difficulties involved in judging human behaviour.

Literature can be a valuable medium for social criticism, while still remaining a creative art. An eminent exponent in this field was Charles Dickens. In his work we find a masterful amalgam of creative beauty and social truth. Throughout his literary art he relentlessly exposed the evils of Victorian society, manifest in education, the class structure, the penal system and wanton poverty; his contempt for Parliament and the

1 *ibid*, pp. 126-128

Judiciary is exhibited in caustic satire. His literature contributes inevitably to our understanding of that era. His descriptions mould and develop our concepts and provide us with knowledge by altering our vision. But his work does not merely complement the history of the period; his exposition of human nature and ways of seeing the world are as relevant as ever. We meet people who resemble in various ways Conversation Kenge, Mr. Voles, Mr. Gradgrind, Joe Gargery, Peggotty, Mr. Micawber, Little Dorrit, et al. We find in Dickens all aspects of good and evil and, through his imaginative descriptions and the presentation of literary drama, many concepts are explored and exposed. We discern different facets of hypocrisy, intolerance, malice, fear, vanity, greed; generosity, compassion, love, humility, magnanimity etc. It is impossible to read Dickens without relating the experience to life. His language evaluates and interprets our experience, enriching our sensibility. Consider the following picture of slums he paints in Bleak House. It is the area Tom-all-Alone's, where Jo, the crossing-sweeper boy lives:

. . . Jo sweeps his crossing all day long. He sums up his mental condition, when asked a question, by replying that he 'don't know nothink.' He knows that it's hard to keep the mud off the crossing in dirty weather, and harder still to live by doing it. Nobody taught him, even that much; he found it out.

Jo lives - that is to say, Jo has not yet died - in a ruinous place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone's. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years - though born expressly to do it.

Twice, lately, there has been a crash and a cloud of dust, like the springing of a mine, in Tom-all-Alone's; and, each time, a house has fallen. These accidents have made a paragraph in

the newspapers, and have filled a bed or two in the nearest hospital. The gaps remain, and there are not unpopular lodgings among the rubbish. As several more houses are nearly ready to go, the next crash in Tom-all-Alone's may be expected to be a good one. . .

. . . It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning, of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and at the corners of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows! To see people read and to see people write, and to see the postmen deliver letters, and not to have the least idea of all that language - to be, to every scrap of it, stone blind and dumb! It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to the churches on Sundays, with their books in their hands, and to think (for perhaps Jo does think, at odd times) what does it all mean, and if it means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me? To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on; and really to feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business, here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I am here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am! It must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human . . .¹

(and later, when Mr. Snagsby visits the area:)

. . . Mr. Snagsby passes along the middle of a villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water - though the roads are dry elsewhere - and reeking with such smells and sights that he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses. Branching from this street and its heaps of ruins, are other streets and courts so infamous that Mr. Snagsby sickens in body and mind, and feels as if he were going, every moment deeper down, into the infernal gulf.

Here we have a picture of misery, despair, ignorance and degradation; the description evokes horror and disgust. But this throws into relief aspects of our experience, by structuring it in language, for we still have illiteracy and poverty, and there are still twilight areas in big cities, where tramps and down-and-outs still huddle in hovels. The imagery of such writing has the power to widen our vision and deepen our understanding by verbalizing our experience; this restructures our concepts and enables us to see what was hitherto indiscernable.

1 Charles Dickens: Bleak House, pp. 202-203.

2 *ibid*, p.279.

But contrast plays a significant role in the acquisition of knowledge; "Without Contraries is no progression".¹ This is exemplified in any dialectical representation. There is certainly a striking contrast between the above passages and Dickens's descriptions of upper-class residences. Of Chesney Wold, he writes:

. . . It was a picturesque old house, in a fine park richly wooded. Among the trees, and not far from the residence, he pointed out the spire of the little church of which he had spoken. O, the solemn woods over which the light and shadow travelled swiftly, as if Heavenly wings were sweeping on benignant errands through the summer air; the smooth green slopes, the glittering water, the garden where the flowers were so symmetrically arranged in clusters of the richest colours, how beautiful they looked! The house, with gable, and chimney, and tower, and turret, and dark doorway, and broad terrace-walk, twining among the balustrades of which, and lying heaped upon the vases, there was one great flush of roses, seemed scarcely real in its light solidity, and in the serene and peaceful hush that rested all around it. . . On everything, house, garden, terrace, green slopes, water, old oaks, fern, moss, woods again, and far away across the openings in the prospect, to the distance lying wide before us with a purple bloom upon it, there seemed to be such undisturbed repose. . .²

(and of Mr. Boythorn's house, thus:)

. . . He lived in a pretty house, formerly the Parsonage-house, with a lawn in front, a bright flower-garden at the side, and a well-stocked orchard and kitchen-garden in the rear, enclosed with a venerable wall that had of itself a ripened ruddy look. But, indeed, everything about the place wore an aspect of maturity and abundance. The old lime-tree walk was like green cloisters, the very shadows of the cherry-trees and apple-trees were heavy with fruit, the gooseberry-bushes were so laden that their branches arched and rested on the earth, the strawberries and raspberries grew in like profusion, and the peaches basked by the hundred on the wall. Tumbled about among the spread nets and the glass frames sparkling and winking in the sun, there were such heaps of drooping pods, and marrows, and cucumbers, that every foot of ground appeared a vegetable treasury, while the smell of sweet herbs and all kinds of wholesome growth (to say nothing of the neighbouring meadows where the hay was carrying) made the whole air a great nosegay. Such stillness and composure reigned within the orderly precincts of the old red wall, that

1 William Blake: "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", Plate 3, in Blake's Complete Writings, p.149 (ed. Geoffrey Keynes).

2 Charles Dickens: Bleak House, p.226.

even the feathers hung in garlands to scare the birds hardly stirred; and the wall had such a ripening influence that where, here and there high up, a disused nail and scrap of list still clung to it, it was easier to fancy that they had mellowed with the changing seasons, than that they had rusted and decayed according to the common fate. . .¹

Here Dickens deliberately exaggerates by painting a picture which is truly idyllic, for he has fruits growing and flowers blooming, of all seasons, simultaneously. But this is a satirical accentuation in order to represent the Garden of Eden atmosphere that wealth can create, and to heighten the contrast between the miserable poverty of Tom-all-Alone's and the cornucopian milieu of the aristocracy and privileged classes.

We have taken note, on many occasions, of the complexity of our conceptual apparatus; that one cannot find essences which run through all the different uses of the same concept, for they are far too multifactorial. Literature exemplifies the heterogeneity of concept-structure, and we are made aware of this multifarious complexity by way of the concrete particular instances delineated in literature.

Tolstoy's Anna Karenina is a long and involved work, embodying many truths about life and exploring many concepts relating to human behaviour. We find, as in the work of any great writer, hypocrisy, malice, pity, love etc. But every case is different, exposing different facets of the concept concerned, how it connects and contrasts with other concepts, in a way which informs and enlightens our sensibility. Consider, for example, his analysis of jealousy which plays a significant role in the drama.

Both Anna and her husband, Karenin, experience this emotion, but jealousy involves many features, and we are made aware of striking dissimilarities embodied in this concept. The jealousy of Anna regarding Wronski is quite different from that of Karenin in respect of his wife's behaviour. We observe that Anna's feelings of jealousy are born of love,

1 *ibid*, p.227.

an overwhelming, consuming love, and her jealousy is aroused by the nagging, irrational thought that she might lose Vronski's love, a love that she needs and desperately demands. But the jealousy is destructive, for it in no way benefits Vronski; it does nothing to increase his love for Anna, indeed it chains him to her, restricting his movements and affecting his thoughts and behaviour. Nevertheless, there is no intention on Anna's part of causing Vronski any pain or discomfort, for she loves him, though it is a love that displays insecurity. Thus her jealousy involves possessiveness, and this connects with her frenetic desire that he should need her as obsessively as she needs him. Tolstoy indicates the irrationality of Anna's jealousy, though being irrational does not make it the less real:

In her eyes the whole of him, with all his habits, ideas, desires, with all his spiritual and physical temperament, was one thing - love for women, and that love, she felt, ought to be entirely concentrated on her alone. That love was less; consequently, as she reasoned, he must have transferred part of his love to other women or to another woman - and she was jealous. She was jealous not of any particular woman but of the decrease of his love. Not having got an object for her jealousy, she was on the lookout for it. At the slightest hint she transferred her jealousy from one object to another. At one time she was jealous of those low women with whom he might so easily renew his old bachelor ties; then she was jealous of the society women he might meet; then she was jealous of the imaginary girl whom he might want to marry, for whose sake he would break with her. And this last form of jealousy tortured her most of all, especially as he had unwarily told her, in a moment of frankness, that his mother knew him so little that she had had the audacity to try and persuade him to marry the young Princess Sorokin.¹

Sometimes Anna recognises the nature of her jealousy in ephemeral moments of rationality, and resolves to overcome the emotion, but in the space of a single thought her feelings overpower her, and she is not able to put the resolution into practice:

'I am myself to blame. I'm irritable, I'm insanely jealous. I will make it up with him, and we'll go away to the country, there I shall be more at peace.'

1 Leo Tolstoy: Anna Karenina, p.711.

'Unnatural!' She suddenly recalled the word that had stung her most of all, not so much the word itself as the intent to wound her with which it was said. 'I know what he meant; he meant - unnatural, not loving my own daughter, to love another person's child. What does he know of love for children, of my love for Seryozha, whom I've sacrificed for him? But that wish to wound me! No, he loves another woman, it must be so.'

And perceiving that, while trying to regain her peace of mind, she had gone round the same circle that she had been round so often before, and had come back to her former state of exasperation, she was horrified at herself. 'Can it be impossible? Can it be beyond me to control myself?' she said to herself, and began again from the beginning. 'He's truthful, he's honest, he loves me. I love him, and in a few days the divorce will come. What more do I want? I want peace of mind and trust, and I will take the blame on myself. Yes, now when he comes in, I will tell him I was wrong, though I was not wrong, and we will go away tomorrow.'

And to escape thinking any more, and being overcome by irritability, she rang, and ordered the boxes to be brought up for packing their things for the country.¹

Tolstoy's portrayal of thought and emotion and the expression of these in consequent behaviour is vivid and revealing. We are made aware of aspects of human nature that reveal ourselves in others and others in ourselves. We can observe the complex pattern of connections between jealousy and love, jealousy and distrust, jealousy and insecurity, jealousy and possessiveness. We observe, by way of concrete dramatization, the destructive elements in jealousy that can plant the seeds of hatred; indeed, we see the many connections between love and hatred that jealousy engenders in all parties concerned.

Karenin's jealousy of Anna is quite different, for it is not born of love; it is instigated by pride and egocentricity. He is emotionally tormented, though not so much by the thought of losing her love as such, but because he feels humiliated and publicly insulted by her desertion as his wife in the eyes of God and society. He does not analyse or question his own conduct; indeed he feels that he is beyond reproach, and his jealousy is expressed in terms of blind rage. He does not recognise his own jealousy, but emphatically denies having any jealous feelings at all:

1 *ibid*, p.713.

' . . . I consider jealousy, as you know, a humiliating and degrading feeling, and I shall never allow myself to be influenced by it; but there are certain rules of decorum which cannot be disregarded with impunity. . .'¹

This exemplifies, with concrete cogency, how we can misinterpret our emotions, how we can feel jealousy and exhibit jealous behaviour and yet pronounce, with apparent sincerity, that we do not feel jealous at all. Indeed, Karenin asserts that he loves Anna, but this is not manifest in his behaviour towards her. Karenin provides an excellent example of self-deception, for there is a recurring disharmony between his inner feelings and his external behaviour. He pronounces at times that he knows his feelings, and yet admits that he has no time for introspection, though he directs this criticism at Anna:

'To enter into all the details of your feelings I have no right, and besides, I regard that as useless and even harmful,' began Alexey Alexandrovitch. 'Ferreting in one's soul, one often ferrets out something that might have lain there unnoticed. . .'²

He thus tries to rationalize his own thoughts and regard the matter of his wife's affair dispassionately:

'I cannot be made unhappy by the fact that a contemptible woman has committed a crime. I have only to find the best way out of the difficult position in which she has placed me. And I shall find it,' he said to himself, frowning more and more; 'I'm not the first nor the last.' And to say nothing of historical instances dating from the 'Fair Helen' of Menelaus, recently revived in the memory of all, a whole list of contemporary examples of husbands with unfaithful wives in the highest society rose before Alexey Alexandrovitch's imagination. . .'³

But his attempts to keep his jealous feelings under control are unsuccessful; jealousy boils within him, generating hatred. He becomes in his own way as irrational as Anna:

1 *ibid*, p.147.

2 *ibid*, p.148.

3 *ibid*, p.276.

He did not sleep the whole night, and his fury growing in a sort of vast, arithmetical progression, reached its highest limits in the morning. He dressed in haste, and as though carrying his cup full of wrath, and fearing to spill any over, fearing to lose with his wrath the energy necessary for the interview with his wife, he went into her room . . .¹

Here we see jealousy connected with pride, egocentricity, vanity, malice, fury, but of course we are not learning merely about jealousy and jealous behaviour; we are also discovering aspects of all the related concepts.

It is impossible here, in a short commentary, to do justice to the knowledge that one acquires from novels like Anna Karenina, for it is not informational knowledge and cannot be distilled as such. The work provides a wealth of material for conceptual adjustment, which is knowledge-how in regard to understanding human nature and life in general.

When we become aware of the complexity of our concepts, it is difficult to imagine how essentialism ever received serious attention. Similarities and dissimilarities interchange, and what is a central feature in one situation becomes peripheral or even irrelevant in another. Anna's jealousy is different from that of her husband, but Othello's jealousy is different again, and so too is Mrs. Morel's jealousy regarding her sons' relationships,² and the jealousy that Angel Clare experiences concerning Tess's past;³ different again is the jealousy that Hamlet feels for Claudius, and this again is different from the burning jealousy of Heathcliffe for Catherine's husband, Edgar Linton⁴. The list goes on, but such examples do not teach us about jealousy in the abstract; they are conceived and dramatized in the concrete, encapsulated in behaviour and

1 *ibid*, p.356.

2 D. H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers.

3 Thomas Hardy: Tess of the D'Urbervilles.

4 Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights.

attitudes and the authors' analyses of inner feelings, descriptions of the emotional experiences themselves as seen from within. But literature, in extending our philosophical understanding of moral and emotion concepts, necessarily enriches our knowledge of human nature. It is impossible not to compare the instances with our own experiences of human behaviour, both in ourselves and in others. In this way we are given an interpretation of life. The instances may be stylized, fantastic, surreal, satirical, but such literary devices heighten our awareness of aspects in the real world.

Literature not only provides a catalogue of particulars which extend and enrich our concepts, it also contributes to our conceptual knowledge by engendering a more sophisticated mastery of the language through which our concepts are understood. The comprehending of the concrete particulars delineated in literature stimulates the imagination and involves the active participation of the intellect. We saw how our perception and interpretation of the real world necessarily involves imagination and intellect, with language and the concepts embodied therein playing a fundamental role. Literature is, by definition, a linguistic medium and the boundaries of literature include an indefinite variety of different language-games, and deal with all aspects of human experience.

We are often aware of the acquisition of knowledge when the descriptions clarify our own past experiences. We may recognise the language as meaningful and illuminating although we have never encountered "these words in this order". The phraseology may be so imaginative and original as to be eccentric, and yet we find it revealing, and in some sense it accords with the logic of past usage. Our interpretation of the present cannot be divorced from our understanding of the past and, conversely, our interpretation of the past cannot be divorced from our understanding of the present.

On first reading Keats's ode "To Autumn", we may well be aware of truth in terms of our own experience and yet, (like Dr. Johnson),¹ we have never seen this arrangement of words and phrases before. Yet still the language speaks to us and for us, widening our conceptual vocabulary, and revealing aspects of our experience that were previously unrecognised.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, -
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies:
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.²

Such a poem may well bring about an adjustment in our understanding of autumn, and all that it entails. Indeed the language may become inextricably bound up with future experiences, not only in terms of the

1 See the section "Redescription and Revelation" of this thesis.

2 John Keats: Ode "To Autumn" in H. W. Garrod, Keats: Poetical Works, pp. 218-219.

description of the external world, but also by way of the emotions implicitly and explicitly expressed in the work. A detailed analysis is not appropriate here; it is enough to say that the poem expresses the abundant joy of summer over-hang, indicative of early autumn, and the relaxing peace that follows. But stealthily we are made aware of the sadness of the season and the ominous threat of winter and impending darkness. Such poetry can make an indelible impression upon one's consciousness, and become an integral part of one's understanding. It may well represent an irrevocable step in the evolution of one's conceptual structure. In seeing autumn in the poetry we learn to see poetry in autumn.

One may observe, in the next poem, by Gerard Manley Hopkins, certain similarities and connections with Keats's ode, but the many differences are self-evident. This may further enrich our sensibility and sharpen our focus.

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks arise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, éyes, heárt, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic - as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet! -
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart réars wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his
feet.¹

This poem again describes aspects of the external world, but is also an expression of feeling with which we may empathize, and thus learn something of ourselves. There is certainly joy here, an overwhelming, almost

1 Gerard Manley Hopkins: "Hurrahing in Harvest" in Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Selection of his Poems and Prose by W. H. Gardner, p.31.

uncontrollable ecstasy but, paradoxically, the poet has created this effect by way of a rigorous discipline and the meticulous choice of words and phrases that accord with a strict formal structure. This indicates the involvement of both intellect and imagination, not only in describing the object of our emotion, but also in accurately and lucidly expressing those emotions. When we discover expressions of feeling, as exemplified in both the above examples of poetry, we may well identify with the feelings expressed, for often these imaginative creations seem to echo, quite naturally, our own thoughts and feelings. Such poems exhibit the inter-penetration of the inner world of feeling and the outer world of fact. We may thus learn simultaneously about ourselves and the world about us.

The following extract, from D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers, describes an incident in the marital relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Morel. We observe the anger and related emotions of both characters in terms of their behaviour, and also as described from within, by the narrator.

Just then Morel came in. He had been very jolly in the Nelson, but coming home had grown irritable. He had not quite got over the feeling of irritability and pain, after having slept on the ground when he was so hot; and a bad conscience afflicted him as he neared the house. He did not know he was angry. But when the garden-gate resisted his attempts to open it, he kicked it and broke the latch. He entered just as Mrs. Morel was pouring the infusion of herbs out of the saucepan. Swaying slightly, he lurched against the table. The boiling liquor pitched. Mrs. Morel started back.

'Good gracious,' she cried, 'coming home in his drunkenness!'

'Comin' home in his what?' he snarled, his hat over his eye.

Suddenly her blood rose in a jet.

'Say you're not drunk!' she flashed.

She had put down her saucepan, and was stirring the sugar into the beer. He dropped his two hands heavily on the table, and thrust his face forward at her.

'"Say you're not drunk,"' he repeated. 'Why, nobody but a nasty little bitch like you 'ud 'ave such a thought.'

He thrust his face forward at her.

'There's money to bezzle with, if there's money for nothing else.'

'I've not spent a two-shillin' bit this day,' he said.

'You don't get as drunk as a lord on nothing,' she replied. 'And,' she cried, flashing into sudden fury, 'if you've been sponging on your beloved Jerry, why, let him look after his children, for they need it.'

'It's a lie, it's a lie. Shut your face, woman.'

They were now at battle-pitch. Each forgot everything save the hatred of the other and the battle between them. She was fiery and furious as he. They went on till he called her a liar.

'No,' she cried, starting up, scarce able to breathe. 'Don't call me that - you, the most despicable liar that ever walked in shoe-leather.' She forced the last words out of suffocated lungs.

'You're a liar!' he yelled, banging the table with his fist. 'You're a liar, you're a liar.'

She stiffened herself with clenched fists.

'The house is filthy with you,' she cried.

'Then get out on it - it's mine. Get out on it!' he shouted. 'It's me as brings th' money whoam, not thee. It's my house, not thine. Then get out on't - get out on't!'

'And I would,' she cried, suddenly shaken into tears of impotence. 'Ah, wouldn't I, wouldn't I have gone long ago, but for those children. Ay, haven't I repented not going years ago, when I'd only the one' - suddenly drying into rage. 'Do you think it's for you I stop - do you think I'd stop one minute for you?'

'Go, then,' he shouted, beside himself. 'Go!'

'No!' she faced round. 'No,' she cried loudly, 'you shan't have it all your own way; you shan't do all you like. I've got those children to see to. My word,' she laughed, 'I should look well to leave them to you.'

'Go,' he cried thickly, lifting his fist. He was afraid of her. 'Go!'

'I should be only too glad. I should laugh, laugh, my lord, if I could get away from you,' she replied.

He came up to her, his red face, with its bloodshot eyes, thrust forward, and gripped her arms. She cried in fear of him, struggled to be free. Coming slightly to himself, panting, he pushed her roughly to the outer door, and thrust her forth, slotting the bolt behind her with a bang. Then he went back into the kitchen, dropped into his armchair, his head, bursting full of blood, sinking between his knees. Thus he dipped gradually into a stupor, from exhaustion and intoxication.

The moon was high and magnificent in the August night. Mrs. Morel, seared with passion, shivered to find herself out there in a great white light, that fell cold on her, and gave a shock to her inflamed soul. She stood for a few moments helplessly staring at the glistening great rhubarb leaves near the door. Then she got the air into her breast. She walked down the garden path, trembling in every limb, while the child boiled within her. For a while she could not control her consciousness; mechanically she went over the last scene, then over it again, certain phrases, certain moments coming each time like a brand red-hot down on her soul; and each time she enacted again the past hour, each time the brand came down at the same points, till the mark was burnt in,¹ and the pain burnt out, and at last she came to herself. . .

1 D. H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers, pp. 32-34.

It is interesting to note that initially, Morel is not aware of his own anger, but this is soon revealed to him in terms of the targets of his emotion, first the inanimate gate, and subsequently his wife, who is repelled by his drunkenness. This exemplifies how we can have emotions like anger lying latent within us, without having any conscious knowledge of them, until they are made manifest by the objects at which they are directed. The picture we are given of Mrs. Morel's feelings after being locked out of the house, may well provide insight into our own feelings experienced in analogous situations, by giving a verbal dimension to what was formerly inchoate. Lawrence's image of the red-hot brand to express her emotional turmoil gives concrete lucidity to a spiritual experience.

One could go on indefinitely, delineating examples in order to illustrate the heterogeneous nature of the particulars that literature catalogues, for they are, as we have noted, as miscellaneous and multifarious as the very particulars we experience in life. Consider the following examples of grief and melancholy, all differently expressed, and yet sharing certain similarities and further underlining the complex nature of our concepts, and how the language of literature can be a source of knowledge in this regard.

Cold in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee!
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-wearing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains on Angora's shore;
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
That noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth, and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills have melted into spring -
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee
While the World's tide is bearing me along:
Sternier desires and darker hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure but cannot do thee wrong.

No other Sun has lightened up my heaven;
No other Star has ever shone for me:
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given -
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But when the days of golden dreams had perished
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy;

Then did I check the tears of useless passion,
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine!

And even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in Memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?¹

Elegy

Too proud to die, broken and blind he died
The darkest way, and did not turn away,
A cold kind man brave in his narrow pride

On that darkest day. Oh, forever may
He lie lightly, at last, on the last, crossed
Hill, under the grass, in love, and there grow

Young among the long flocks, and never lie lost
Or still all the numberless days of his death, though
Above all he longed for his mother's breast

Which was rest and dust, and in the kind ground
The darkest justice of death, blind and unblessed.
Let him find no rest but be fathered and found,

I prayed in the crouching room, by his blind bed,
In the muted house, one minute before
Noon, and night, and light. The rivers of the dead

Veined his poor hand I held, and I saw
Through his unseeing eyes to the roots of the sea.
/An old tormented man three-quarters blind,

I am not too proud to cry that He and he
Will never never go out of my mind.
All his bones crying, and poor in all but pain,

1 Emily Jane Brontë: "R. Alcona to J. Brenzaida", David Wright ed.:
The Penguin Book of English Romantic Verse, p.342.

Being innocent, he dreaded that he died
Hating his God, but what he was was plain:
An old kind man brave in his burning pride.

The sticks of the house were his; his books he owned.
Even as a baby he had never cried;
Nor did he now, save to his secret wound.

Out of his eyes I saw the last light glide.
Here among the light of the lording sky
An old blind man is with me where I go

Walking in the meadows of his son's eye
On whom a world of ills came down like snow.
He cried as he died, fearing at last the spheres'

Last sound, the world going out without a breath:
Too proud to cry, too frail to check the tears,
And caught between two nights, blindness and death.

O deepest wound of all that he should die
On that darkest day. Oh, he could hide
The tears out of his eyes, too proud to cry.

Until I die he will not leave my side.¹

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing bells for those who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them for prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.²

1 Dylan Thomas: "Elegy" in Daniel Jones, ed.: Dylan Thomas: The Poems, pp. 216-217.

2 Wilfred Owen: "Anthem for Doomed Youth".

A Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies Day

Being the Shortest Day

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,
The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
The worlds whole sap is sunke:
The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunke,
Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seeme to laugh,
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers bee
At the next world, that is, at the next Spring:
For I am every dead thing,
In whom love wrought new Alchimie.
For his art did expresse
A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and leane emptinesse:
He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have;
I, by loves limbecke, am the grave
Of all, that's nothing. Oft a flood
Have wee two wept, and so
Drownd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two Chaosses, when we did show
Care to ought else; and often absences
Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)
Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown;
Were I a man, that I were one,
I needs must know; I should preferre,
If I were any beast,
Some ends, some means; Yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love; All, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, a light, and body must be here.

But I am None; nor will my Sunne renew.
You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser Sunne
At this time to the Goat is runne
To fetch new lust, and give it you,
Enjoy your summer all;
Since shee enjoyes her long nights festivall,
Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call
This houre her Vigill, and her Eve, since this¹
Both the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

1 John Donne: "A Nocturnall Upon St. Lucies Day", in J. Hayward, ed.:
Donne: Complete Verse and Selected Prose, p.32.

No worst, there is none

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing -
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief'.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.¹

Soliloquy from Hamlet

Hamlet: O! that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew;
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.
Fie on't! ah fie! 't is an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? . . .²

Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

1 Gerard Manley Hopkins: "No worst, there is none" in Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Selection of his Poems and Prose by W. H. Gardner, p.61.

2 Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 2.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.¹

. . . So the weeks went on. Always alone, his soul oscillated, first on the side of death, then on the side of life, doggedly. The real agony was that he had nowhere to go, nothing to do, nothing to say, and was nothing himself. Sometimes he ran down the streets as if he were mad: sometimes he was mad; things weren't there, things were there. It made him pant. Sometimes he stood before the bar of the public-house where he had called for a drink. Everything suddenly stood back away from him. He saw the face of the barmaid, the gabbling drinkers, his own glass on the slopped, mahogany board, in the distance. There was something between him and them. He could not get into touch. He did not want them; he did not want his drink. Turning abruptly, he went out. On the threshold he stood and looked at the lighted street. But he was not of it or in it. Something separated him. Everything went on there below those lamps, shut away from him. He could not get at them. He felt he couldn't touch the lamp-posts, not if he reached. Where could he go? There was nowhere to go, neither back into the inn, or forward anywhere. He felt stifled. There was nowhere for him. The stress grew inside him; he felt he should smash. . .²

1 John Keats: "Ode on Melancholy" in H. W. Garrod, Keats: Poetical Works, pp. 219-220.

2 D. H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers, p.501.

These examples demonstrate the complex pattern of relationships that link our concepts one with another. We can observe many aspects of grief and melancholy in terms of sadness, humility, resignation, courage, pride, despair, negation, self-indulgence, self-loathing, guilt, etc. Each example heightens and emphasizes different features. Each selects and rearranges the criteria, displaying different patterns of significance. Yet there is a complex family of characteristics that connect the cases together. Whether they are imaginary and fictitious or not is of no consequence, for in so far as we can find them meaningful, they have, in some respect, to accord with the logic of ordinary language.

The meaning that such examples of creative literature convey in terms of conceptual elucidation and adjustment, cannot be dichotomized from the embodiment of truth, for if we come to see grief differently from how we saw it previously, then our understanding has undergone a change, and our concept of grief has become extended and enriched. This widens our vision, and we are consequently made sensible of truth in the world, the nature of which we were hitherto ill-equipped to apprehend, and to which we were blind.

Such examples serve to verbalize our experience, and present pictures of aspects of the external world, and also to give linguistic expression to our emotional experiences. We have noted that the language of the inner life, like all language, is a social phenomenon, and has to be learned. The imaginative examples of emotional expression to be found in literature can equip us to understand and recognise emotions in others, by enriching and extending the concepts through which we comprehend those emotions, the concepts that make human behaviour intelligible to us.

But as we have seen, it is by way of the same public language that we are able to understand and give meaningful expression to our own

emotions. The imaginative expressions of the literary artist can thus inform us of our own feelings and deepen our grasp of the inner life, for not only do we learn of the feelings of the narrator, which is in itself an extension of human knowledge, but it may well be the case that we find his language illuminating; we may identify with it. We can discover words that throw our feelings into relief and bring them out of the darkness. This can sometimes take the form of an almost triumphant affirmation on discovering something of oneself, in terms of an imaginative arrangement of words, which structures and orders what was previously nebulous and inchoate. Such knowledge not only clarifies the past by verbalizing our emotional experiences, but also in deepening our understanding of emotions, it equips us for the future. Indeed it enriches the sensibility and conduces to a new emotional awareness, leading to the experience of more sophisticated and profound feelings. For in discovering new expressions which bring definition and order to feelings that were misunderstood or even unintelligible, so we equip ourselves for future recognition and understanding of comparable emotional experiences.

The language of literature, in all its creative originality, can bring clarity and revelation to our emotional lives by departing from the language of cliché and common convention, though at the same time keeping within the boundaries of linguistic logic. Poetic imagery and figurative devices can illuminate our understanding by giving concrete expression to the inner life of the spirit.

It would appear, then, that literature is a source of knowledge, because knowledge is not merely factual information, but involves our conceptual apparatus, and this can be enhanced and extended in terms of imaginative examples, delineated by the literary artist. This is true of the external world, and also of ourselves; literature can enrich and

adjust our vision of life. This may be accomplished in many different ways, for knowledge is complex and many-faceted, and so too is literature. We have dealt with a handful of examples, but they represent a small drop in the sea of literature, which makes a significant contribution to the oceans of human knowledge.

A P P E N D I X

1. REASONS AND CAUSES IN AESTHETICS

The Wittgenstein of the Lectures and Conversations is a philosopher vehemently opposed to what has been called scientism. He rejects any suggestion that aesthetic judgments can be reduced to causal explanations or that experimentation is in any way relevant to the subject of aesthetics. I. A. Richards had attempted to account for literary judgments in terms of the physiology of the critic,¹ and some philosophers were of the belief that the problems of aesthetics would be solved by reference to psychology.² But for Wittgenstein, aesthetic judgments are not causal hypotheses, and no study of the cerebral or mental processes of either the creator of a work or its critics are relevant in any aesthetic understanding or appreciation:

The sort of explanation one is looking for when one is puzzled by an aesthetic impression is not a causal explanation, not one corroborated by experience or by statistics as to how people react.³

There is a 'Why ?' to aesthetic discomfort not a 'cause' to it.⁴

He was also against any scientific experiments or discoveries being allowed to effect aspect-change, or the way we see a particular phenomenon

1 In Principles of Literary Criticism, I. A. Richards attempts to give a "psychological" explanation of the analysis and understanding of literature, though it is more appropriate to use the term "physiological". See especially chapters 11 and 16.

2 This view has been attributed to Wittgenstein's friend, F. H. Ramsey, but I have not been able to trace the source of this. However, the idea is not uncommon today. In his book Explanation and Meaning, Daniel M. Taylor writes:

"Our aesthetic beliefs and judgments are as open to scientific explanation as our other beliefs and actions; this is the concern of psychologists." (p.92.)

3 Wittgenstein: Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, p.21.

4 *ibid*, p.14.

(in any reductive sense) that was contrary to our experience.¹ Thus in the Redpath example we see a man as a man, as a living human being and not as camouflaged water or animated chemicals.² Scent does not cease to be beautiful because a scientist has indicated that it is really composed of animal excrement. Thus if we were told that nightingales only sing when they are constipated, such knowledge should not impinge upon our aesthetic appreciation of Keats' poem. In other words we ought not to make scientific sows' ears out of aesthetic silk purses. It would also be a mistake to concentrate our attention on the ulterior effects that a work of art engenders in us. For the sources of joy, excitement, concupiscence, depression, etc. are manifold (and include the taking of drugs). In the Blue and Brown Books Wittgenstein writes:

We feel we wish to guard against the idea that a colour pattern is a means to producing in us a certain impression - the colour pattern being like a drug and we interested merely in the effect this drug produces. We wish to avoid any form of expression which would seem to refer to an effect produced by an object on a subject . . . Saying, 'I see this and am impressed' is apt to make it seem as though the impression was some feeling accompanying the seeing, and that the sentence said something like 'I see this and feel a pressure.'³

Such a description would suggest an analogy with pain and demand a causal explanation, and, as Wittgenstein maintained, aesthetic impressions are not like this at all. Criticism concerns itself with the internal relations of the work, making comparisons, pointing out relationships,

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- 1 Colin Radford argues this point cogently in a paper called "Characterizing-Judgments and their Causal Counterparts". Thus if someone says that the snow looks as if sugar has been sprinkled on it, the truth of such a judgment depends upon consensus agreement of the visual experience. What actually happens when sugar is thrown on snow is of no relevance. (Analysis, No. 31, January 1971, pp. 65-76.)
 - 2 "If we boil Redpath at 200 °C all that is left when the water vapour is gone is some ashes, etc. This is all Redpath really is. Saying this might have a certain charm, but would be misleading to say the least." *ibid*, p.24.
 - 3 Wittgenstein: Blue and Brown Books, pp. 178-9.

redescribing, perhaps with the use of simile and metaphor and reference to other works of art, in order to characterize the aesthetic experience. In doing this, we give reasons for our judgments; we do not seek causes. When Leavis says of Shelley's poetry it "demands that active intelligence shall be . . . switched off"¹ or that the "Waste Land" expresses "formlessness itself as form"² he is not making hypothetical remarks or putting forward supporting evidence to an experiment. He is giving rational counterparts to characterize his reading of the works. If such judgments "click" with our own experience they will gain our assent and perhaps become our own. It is in this consensus of agreement that the criterion of correctness lies.

Wittgenstein asserts through the telegraphic reports in Lectures and Conversations that rather than caused, our feelings and responses are directed at the work of art or particular aspects of it. This accords with his remarks in the Investigations:

We should distinguish between the object of fear and the cause of fear.

Thus a face which inspires fear or delight (the object of fear or delight), is not on that account its cause, but - one might say - its target.³

Thus as free-thinking beings with rational minds, we point to the objects of our approbation or disapprobation; we do not hypothesize causes.

However, because our feelings are directed at the object, and our judgments concern the internal relations of the work in question as opposed to cerebral or mental processes, all this says nothing for the

1 F. R. Leavis: Revaluation, p.210.

2 Leavis: New Bearings in English Poetry, p.95.

3 Wittgenstein: Investigations, paragraph 476.

objectivity or rightness of value judgments. John Casey, in his book The Language of Criticism¹ seems to think that it does, but Frank Cioffi in his review takes him to task, and his remarks help to clarify the difference between cause and target:

A work of art is the target not the cause of our response, and targets, unlike causes, are internally and not just contingently related to their responses. But the target of my response is merely what I name when I am asked why I responded as I did. It differs from a cause in not being corrigible in the way that a hypothesis as to why I responded would be. It is difficult to see why this should be thought to ensure the objectivity of criticism. If, in an experimental spirit, you consume a bar of milk chocolate while feeling sea-sick you will quite correctly characterize it as the target of your nausea but this doesn't show that the flavour of milk chocolate is emetic. So from the trivial point that a response to a work of literature is internally related to its grounds nothing follows as to the objectivity of critical judgments. 'Wrong' judgments are no less internally grounded than 'right' ones.²

There is an obvious sense in which Wittgenstein is right and that aesthetic judgments cannot be causal hypotheses. For if a remark is truly aesthetic then it cannot be empirically tested. There is no genuinely scientific experiment that can locate the beauty in a painting or discover the value in a poem. To say that a painting "is rectangular", is not an aesthetic remark, and is empirically testable. That a poem is "in the iambic pentameter form" is not in itself an aesthetic remark but a verifiable fact, but this is not to say such facts do not have aesthetic significance, for it might be that the rectangularity of a particular painting, or the specific form of a poem, endow the work with a piquancy, elegance, austerity or something which contributes to its value. But such terms are aesthetic concepts that we would employ in our reasons for valuing the works in question. The value that they indicate cannot be scientifically measured or located. There is no independent test, no

1 See chapters 1 and 2.

2 Frank Cioffi: "The Language of Criticism" (Book Review), Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 68, July 1967, pp. 282-284.

tape measure or thermometer. There is only the human sensibility and the intersubjective recognition of objective value. There are similarities and connections between aesthetic judgments and causal hypotheses. Both involve imagination and creative insight. But for the former the final arbiter for determining its truth is the human sensibility, whereas the latter can be verified independently of human predilections, determined by observation and experiment.

We might say with all the pomposity of a later generation that we do not need Wittgenstein to tell us that aesthetic judgments are not causal hypotheses; we know that art is not science. But Wittgenstein is making a much more subtle point, one that causes some intellectual indigestion, though perhaps I should say it is the target of our indigestion. This trivial point draws attention to the way the word "cause" is used in our language. Wittgenstein himself is aware of its complexity and makes mention of it. The following extract describes the concept in a particularly Wittgensteinian manner:

There is not a single concept of causation but a group or family of concepts. They are united not by a set of common features but by points of resemblance, some of them tenuous.¹

One feels bound to argue that aesthetic impressions are not caused in any mechanical sense. There are nevertheless some aesthetic judgments which seem to carry causal implications. These are remarks which name a particular aspect in the art object which is believed to be responsible in some sense for our approbation or disapprobation. The fact that one is hard put in criticism to find examples of this particular kind of judgment, suggests that such remarks do not occupy a central position in aesthetics. Nevertheless, on the occasions when they do occur, such judgments seem to demand an experiment of some kind.

1 H. L. A. Hart and A. M. Honoré, Causation in the Law, p.26.

Because of the telegraphic nature of Wittgenstein's utterances, different construals of his thesis are possible, but Colin Radford's description is as lucid as anyone's and I shall therefore use his terminology. Wittgenstein has named the height of a door, perhaps in the front of a building, as the target of his aesthetic discomfort. The question is, does such a judgment have causal implications and call for an experiment, and if so, would the result of such an experiment prove anything aesthetically relevant? Dr. Radford interprets Wittgenstein thus:

What I shall call the stronger thesis is that the aesthetic remark, and hence its correctness, is quite - totally - independent of the causal hypothetical (cf. II, §§ 14, 16, 38-9). That is to say, Wittgenstein is here committed to the view that, even if the door were lowered and the critic's feelings of dissatisfaction did not, as a result, evaporate, the aesthetic judgment might nonetheless be correct. Moreover, since there is no relationship of any kind, the aesthetic judgment in no way implies the causal claim.

Wittgenstein was, clearly, very attracted by this view of aesthetics and aesthetic judgments, but it leaves one puzzled and sceptical and with the query, 'What then is the criterion of the aesthetic judgment's being correct? Is there one?'

His weaker thesis is that the aesthetic judgment is connected with the causal judgment, so it has causal implications, but if these turn out to be false that is not sufficient to falsify the original claim (cf. II, §§ 15, 21).

This does not arouse the same feeling of scepticism but, again, it leaves us with the question, 'When, under what conditions, is the aesthetic judgment correct - if it makes sense to talk of correctness here?'¹

I would argue that both versions of Wittgenstein's thesis arouse deep feelings of scepticism. For the strong thesis is unacceptable in so far as these kinds of aesthetic judgments, i.e. those which name the target of our feelings, do have causal implications; one cannot see how

1 Radford: "Characterizing-Judgments and their Causal Counterparts", Analysis, No. 31, January 1971.

it is possible to divorce the aesthetic judgment from the causal implication. Let us imagine a man with a keen aesthetic sensibility in conversation with the builder of his house during its construction.¹

House Owner: "The door doesn't look right. It isn't high enough."

Builder: "How much do you want it raised?"

House Owner: "Oh, I haven't considered what it would be like to have it raised. I just think it's too low as it is."

Builder: "Do you want me to raise it or not?"

House Owner: "I don't know. This introduces a completely new question. I'll have to think about it."

Surely this indicates how eccentric the position is, not to say illogical. In this strong form Wittgenstein wants to say that the aesthetic judgment, a spontaneous reaction, is completely separate from the anticipation that the feeling would be removed if the door were raised. For this is too much like a scientific prediction, and the raising of the door an experiment. But what we have to consider is that it is not an experiment in any ordinary sense because there is no independent test. The final arbiter of truth is the aesthetic sensibility.

But even if we are prepared to accept that the weak thesis is correct and that such aesthetic judgments do undoubtedly have causal implications, the result of any experiment cannot challenge the apodeictic truth of the original judgment; that is incorrigible according to this thesis.

Let us again enact the situation.

House Owner: "The door isn't right. It's too low."

Builder (after raising it): "Is it better now?"

House Owner: "No, it's still wrong. It's not the height. It must be something else."

1 This refers to remarks made by Wittgenstein in the Lectures and Conversations. See pp. 13-14.

Now, if Wittgenstein is right, and the original claim cannot be empirically overthrown, then we have two contradictory judgments, both of which are correct: "The door is too low" and "The door is not too low." One might be able to extricate Wittgenstein from this confusion by saying that the original judgment was a true account of the man's response at the time. The raising of the door clarified his impressions and his responses changed. Thus his subsequent judgment is also correct. But this move is not satisfactory and strikes a distinctly false note. Surely, on an occasion like this, the change of aspect can either consolidate our original impression and thus underline the judgment, or indicate, as in the above example, that things were not as clear as they seemed and that the original impression was misplaced, and the judgment shown to be false and subsequently withdrawn.

Now we have the problem: are we subscribing to the Russellian thesis that says we can only know what we want by continually experimenting? "There is a difference between what we think we desire and what in fact will bring satisfaction."¹ Put thus it is obviously incorrect. For it suggests that human beings are in a state of perpetual doubt about their wants and desires, and are forever putting forward hypotheses as to what would bring themselves satisfaction, to be either verified or refuted. Of course this is not the case. If we say we want a drink of beer it's true we want a drink of beer. If later it makes one violently sick then it does not disprove that at the time the want was in fact for a drink of beer, though we might be less eager to drink the same beer next time. But it does not follow from this that we always know precisely what we want or what we believe, especially in the case of aesthetics or morals. To begin with, many people wanted to fight in the First World War, but on

1 Bertrand Russell: Analysis of Mind, p.32.

seeing the slaughter they became pacifists. This does not demonstrate that they did not truly want to fight when they went to war, or that they were in any doubt at the time. If we objectify this feeling in terms of a moral judgment and say that they thought it was right to fight and then, on going to war, decided that it was wrong to fight, then we have two judgments, only one of which can be true. One might say that they thought originally it was right to fight and then later discovered the truth that it was wrong to fight. A man may want to have his Rolls Royce sprayed yellow, then on seeing it so done, finds it completely unsatisfactory. This does not prove his want to be false at the time, though if we objectify it in terms of an aesthetic judgment we have a contradiction. For he judged initially that his car would be more attractive if it were a brighter colour and subsequently withdrew this, admitting that it was a misguided, not to say false, judgment.

It would appear, then, that viewed like this the Russellian thesis is not relevant, because when a man says sincerely that he knows what he wants this is surely incorrigible, even though he may regret having that want. It does not prove that he did not want what he wanted at the time. But surely there are occasions when we can say sincerely that we are not sure of what we want, especially in areas of aesthetic taste, and in such cases we experiment with our sensibility. We may spend hours deliberating over colour schemes in furnishing and décor, or trying on different combinations of garments. Surely in such cases we are experimenting, though it is important to emphasize that we ourselves are the final arbiters, for there is no independent scientific test. Thus if a man sincerely knows what he wants, then this is incorrigible, and Wittgenstein is correct, even though later the man may change his mind.

However it would appear that Wittgenstein's thesis that this kind of experiment on the aesthetic sensibility is inappropriate in criticism,

is false. But it has to be remembered that such aesthetic judgments are infrequent, and, more often than not, untestable, because it is extremely rare to find a particular aspect in an art object that can be experimentally removed or changed. Indeed, as we have seen, such changes make no sense because of the necessary interpenetration of form and content.

2. CRITICISM AND CRITERIA

We have observed that Wittgenstein reiterates the point in his later writings that when we analyse words we must take the context and use into consideration. For such is the foundation of meaning. This is especially true of aesthetic expressions and this is his point of departure in the Lectures and Conversations.¹ It makes no sense to analyse words like "beautiful" and "good" in a vacuum. We must take account of how such terms are used. Consequently, when we do this with reference to literary criticism we discover that such high-flown value words are seldom, if ever, used, and that most critics are doing something quite different from the accounts given of their work by philosophers and meta-critics.

Now if we consider the following quotation from Dr. Leavis' essay, which is as representative of the whole as any other; the function of the essay seems so apparent that it is difficult to know the source of the controversy. It is worth remembering that at the time of publication the poem in question was considered in most intellectual circles a plagiaristic muddle and pretentious nonsense. And, more ironically, "a heap of broken images" and "the 'piece' that passeth all understanding".

And the 'agony in stony places' is not merely the agony in the Garden; it is also the agony of the Waste Land, introduced in the first section (The Burial of the Dead)

'What are the roots that clutch what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.'

In 'What the Thunder Said' the drouth becomes (among other things) a thirst for the waters of faith and healing, and the specifically religious enters unto the orchestration of the poem. But the thunder is 'dry sterile thunder without rain'; there is no resurrection or renewal; and after the opening passage the verse loses all buoyancy, and takes on a dragging, persistent movement as of hopeless exhaustion -

1 Wittgenstein: Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, p.1.

'Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water.'

- the imagined sound of water coming in as a torment. There is a suggestion of fever here, a sultry ominousness -
'There is not even solitude in the mountains'
- and it is this which provides the transition to the passage about the hooded figure quoted above. The ominous tone of this last passage associates it, as we have seen, with the reference to the Hanged Man in the Tarot passage of the 'Burial of the Dead'. So Christ becomes the Hanged Man, the Vegetation God; and at the same time the journey through the Waste Land along 'the sandy road' becomes the journey to Emmaus.¹

What is Dr. Leavis doing here? It is possibly easier at this moment to talk about what he is not doing. He is certainly not marking the poem against a set of predetermined criteria, but for the moment the negative remarks can be withheld. Here Dr. Leavis, in the extract, is directing our attention to certain passages, with his own comments, contrasting and linking certain features in the work. He is describing the effect of the poetry on his own sensibility by analysing his response to the text. This amounts to an analysis of his appreciation and satisfaction. Thus, if his reasons are sound reasons (and we can test their power by a further reading of the poem) then, by clarifying and deepening our apprehension of the work, he "causes", as it were, the poem to manifest its meaning and reveal its value to us. Isenberg's example is particularly illuminating, i.e. the critic metaphorically directs us to sea-shells, and to our surprise and delight we discover pearls too.² The pearl is the critic's idea of value, which cannot be divorced from his own experience. He can only point to the objective features of the poem with his own sea-shell reasons, to indicate the source of the valuable experience. These reasons represent value, not because they are in themselves criteria that may be employed elsewhere, nor are they deduced from more general criteria, but because they rest on the particular facts of a particular experience.

1 F. R. Leavis: "T. S. Eliot", New Bearings in English Poetry, pp. 83 - 84

2 See Arnold Isenberg: "Critical Communication", Philosophy Looks at the Arts, ed. Joseph Margolis.

There is no suggestion made in the above quotation that we ought to like the poem, or for that matter in the rest of the essay. There is no proposition of the kind: "this poem has property X, therefore it is good." In fact in the whole essay there are no terms used that could be taken as general criteria, or that would make sense outside their present context. Yet surely if Dr. Leavis were using criteria from which evaluative conclusions were deduced, then it would not be difficult to elicit these, for they would be a common feature of all his essays on poetry. But there are no such necessary and sufficient criteria, and meta-critics who purport to have found such are deceiving themselves as well as others.

The features in the poem that Dr. Leavis points to in the essay, terms like: "rich disorganization" and "concrete precision", "formlessness itself as form" - all these and many others are qualities in the singular context of the poem "The Waste Land". In any other context they would either mean something quite different or, by their very misapplication, be quite meaningless.

Logical positivism has left a deep impression on human thought. Its demands for empirical verification and deductive proof have affected the humanities. How can one reach a conclusion without hard criteria? Without principles, or logical demonstration? But it is worth remembering here that aesthetics is not a science, and that human beings are not objects. Where, for instance, would we set our major premises, our principles? Even if we treat poets and their poems as part of the inanimate natural order of things, descriptive generalisations only tell us what is, and poets want to create something different, original. Prescriptive generalisations are also out of place because they say what ought to be, and this is legislating for the poet's imagination. Thus to employ either descriptive or prescriptive generalisations is anti-creative, turning aesthetics into a phony science, where the critic is

either some kind of physicist or a High Court judge. The ludicrousness of this, when put thus, seems obvious, and yet leading meta-critics still insist on judging literature against general criteria in an implicit effort to meet the logical positivist's standards of objective verification.¹

Dr. Leavis and critics like him are not interested in defining good poetry, but simply describing and analysing their reading in the light of a valuable experience, and by locating the source of the experience in the text, the critical judgment can be seen as objective. It is a process of evincing and evoking feeling that cannot be divorced from rational judgment. This objectivity is not verified by scientific apparatus like thermometers and tape-measures. It is the objectivity of human perception, the collective recognition of a particular phenomenon. There is no instrument to tell us that the smell of rotten eggs is unpleasant and that the smell of roses is pleasant. Similarly, no amount of wave and frequency measurement can help us to see any more clearly that red is a different colour from green. But no-one can deny that in both these examples we are dealing with objective facts. Perception at this level is elementary, and most human beings from early infancy are conceptually equipped to identify smells and colours. But the difference between this and critical perception is one of degree. The concepts are more complex and a much wider conceptual vocabulary is needed, and here the critic is particularly important. After all, marks on paper are meaningless until one has learned to read, and one will continue to see a face on the moon until one's knowledge of lunar geography and the effect of light and shadow has widened. Likewise, in the reading of literature and criticism, we extend our experience and develop new concepts. Thus, in spite of some notorious

1 See Cleanth Brooks: The Well Wrought Urn, also Helen Knight: "The Use of 'Good' in Aesthetic Judgments", Aesthetics and Language, ed. William Elton.

critical disagreements, it is an empirical fact that the more that people study literature and the subjects related to it, the more their opinions converge. Disagreement for the most part is over points of detail.

The strength of the critic's case for objectivity without positive criteria is that it is there to see, in the work, if one looks properly. We do not need general criteria or syllogistic arguments; we need a mature sensibility and the facts of human experience. No principles or deductive logic are needed to tell one that the sensation of rectangular redness in one's visual field is in fact a book, and this is true of everyone. Our reason for saying that it is a book is that we can see that it is a book. Our experience has furnished us with the concept of a book i.e. the mastery of a language. Thus F. R. Leavis in his essay on "The Waste Land", in getting us to see a poem differently, is extending our range of concepts.

The "Waste Land" essay was a revolutionary one in so far as it made many people become aware of significance and meaning in the poem which had hitherto been unavailable to them. At this point the pedant might interrupt and say "Significance! Meaning! These are criteria!" For these are the terms typically used by meta-critics in reference to criteria along with Coherence, Intelligence, Unity etc. But these are so general that as criteria for literature they are worthless. These are in fact the very criteria we apply to language itself in everyday communication, involving railway timetables, restaurant menus, sociology lectures, and gossip on the train. The only rigorous criteria employed in literature are formal definitions, and these play no part in critical appreciation. They are analytical and a means of identifying and categorizing, not evaluating. Thus a poem is either a sonnet or not a sonnet, and this can be determined without attending to the content; but

to discover the poem's merit, an analysis of content and meaning is necessary. Of course, if one did use general criteria in criticism, then it would be possible to judge the poem by proxy, by merely enquiring whether it had properties x, y and z, and this is, needless to say, ridiculous. So too is the charge that critics fall foul of the "naturalistic fallacy". For fallacies only occur in logical arguments deduced from criteriologically major premises. But as the extract from Dr. Leavis shows, there are no logical premises; the implicit judgment is not so much a conclusion as a recognition.

It might be objected that critics like Dr. Leavis without pre-determined criteria cannot judge the work at all, they merely describe it. But of course this is not the case; language is filled with what Nowell-Smith calls "janus" words, where both descriptive and evaluative meanings are inextricably tied together, and although one can reject many of these and refuse to use them, it is logically impossible to reject all of them. One can only reject one set of values against another set. Therefore, ultimately, description and evaluation are indivisible, and in describing his experience of the poem, the critic is simultaneously evaluating it. It makes no sense to agree with the description and disagree with the judgment, and vice-versa. Such examples of aesthetic arguments are fictitious models in bad philosophy books. How can a critic say that he sees "Paradise Lost" similarly to Dr. Leavis, but hold a completely opposite opinion of its merit? This seems to be self-contradictory. In the "Waste Land" essay, how can one accept terms like "an effort to focus an inclusive human consciousness" and at the same time cling to the judgment that the poem is fragmented and muddled, or that the "characters" lack substance and development? This makes no sense. Surely the only true description of a poem that does not involve evaluation is a copy of the poem itself, and the same applies to the

Mona Lisa, but here of course there is only one original. But the moment we attempt to paraphrase a poem or describe a painting verbally, value judgments implicitly fill our speech, for we are no longer describing the work as such, but our response to it. Anyone who thinks that, in the context of criticism, the description of a painting as black, red and green, and rectangular does not involve implied value judgments had better think again.

All this does not mean that we have either to accept or reject the critic's interpretation, for it is a composite picture made up of a number of ideas, and we can accept some while rejecting others. Dr. Leavis, in the "Waste Land" essay, laid clues and signposts and at the same time left an indefinite area for one's own imaginative insight. One thing is certain. After reading the essay, one can never view the poem in quite the same light again, because our experience has altered and our concepts have changed. Even if one entirely rejects the interpretation, one has become acutely aware of another point of view, indicating the poem's subtlety and ambiguity. The duck never looks quite the same once we have been introduced to the rabbit, and the face on the moon is not so apparent once we have learned about the lunar surface; we cannot disregard our concepts.

Criteriaological criticism presupposes certain assumptions, and these can only be anti-creative and sterile. Yet when the true critic is analysing his reading of a poem he is at a second level being both imaginative and creative and we "get the beauty of it hot". The critic, in order to communicate feelings and values, has himself to be a kind of poet.

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