INDIVIDUALISM: THE COLLAPSE OF PARADOX IN GIDE

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: It is contended that individualism is a more basic theme with which to characterize the world view revealed in André Gide's life and art than paradox, contradiction, or any other concept denoting the struggle of opposing forces within one person. An examination of a variety of Gide's works shows that many of the writer's so-called antinomies lose their complex and vital appearance when regarded through the dimension of individualism. There is indeed a Gidian tension, but it stems from his stance against society, organized or patterned behavior and tradition, for all of these are interpreted as challenges or burdens to the individual and never as the avenue to self-realization.

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The paradoxical character of André Gide's life and art has been greatly emphasized as a sort of explanatory principle by literary critics. For example, Justin O'Brien laments the difficulty of capturing Gide's "real personality" due to his extensive array of contradictions:

> Even then, his "esprit ondoyant et divers" will make it difficult to seize the real personality of André Gide, for never has a writer seemed to hesitate, to contradict himself, and to complicate his thought as he has done -- not even the great Montaigne, who first used these words about himself. But whatever we decide about the many temperamental conflicts that produce these antinomies on which his dynamic equilibrium rests -- the soul and the flesh, life and art, expression and restraint, the individual and society, ethics and aesthetics, classicism and romanticism, Christ and Christianity, God and the devil -- we cannot fail to admire his genuine modesty, all-embracing sympathy, and proud independence.1

Thomas Mann warmly confesses to "brotherly feelings" towards his fellow writer,[2] and enthusiastically paints a rather similar picture:

> Gide is not the man of the "golden middle" -- this is precisely what he despises most. His

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[1]André Gide, The Journals of André Gide, Vol. I: 1889-1913, trans. Justin O'Brien (London: Secker & Warburg, 1947), p. xiv.

[2]Albert J. Guerard, André Gide, intro. Thomas Mann (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963), p. xi.

> task is the cultivation of the extremes; to hold them in precarious harmony is the mission of his life, and a rather tricky one. If out of all this a moral could be pointed -- if Gide himself had wanted us to point one -- it could only be this: that every principle is nothing but the corrective of its opposite.3

And finally, Albert J. Guerard portrays Gide in terms of conflict and contradiction in a discussion of his continual need to be within some form of orientation:

> The essential conflict seems to have been, at a first glance, between a strong ascetic impulse and the imperious demands of homosexual desire; or, perhaps, between a succession of saintly and inflexible women and a succession of charming Arab boys. Some rebels can exist outside the Law, but Gide could not. He was therefore obliged to demonstrate a Law which would justify his anomoly and admit his most contradictory impulses. He was equally incapable of casual hedonism and of untroubled puritanism and constantly oscillated between order and anarchy -- until at last he made the very state of oscillation the foundation for a new ethic.4

It is noteworthy that with the utmost consideration and delicacy Guerard suggests Gide was too insistent on his contradictory nature and on the differences between his parents' families and regions.[5] He appears to have some appreciable insight into Gide's conflict with established order and society and goes so far as to entitle the first chapter of his book André Gide "The Crisis of Individualism".

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[3]Guerard, André Gide, p. x.

[4]Ibid., p. 5.

[5]Ibid.

But there is actually no crisis in Gide's individualism, only in Guerard's notion of it, since Gide does not separate the moral sphere from the political one, and Guerard feels there should be a separation. Thus the critic continues to regard Gide in terms of order versus anarchy and other contradictions. Later on he refers to the novelist as a "demoralizer" who possesses a destructive but controlled intellect and who questions all preconceptions yet has a natural feeling for tradition and order.[6] All three writers cited insist on the paradoxical nature of André Gide and within this framework make out an impressive and convincing case for its truth and value.

Yet contradiction, conflict, oscillation, these terms which connote a struggle between opposing forces, may not comprise the best and most fundamental concept through which to organize Gide's world view -- his life and art. Possibly another characteristic is more basic and would provide a more complete frame of reference through which to examine his works. With it in use, many of the contradictions which now appear so basic in Gide might simply fall away. Rather than to discount the image of Gide whose emphasis is on his paradoxical or oscillatory nature, it would be most useful to include this image, but to subsume it under another perspective: Gide's individualism. It might be postulated that Gide's very way of expressing his view of the world and

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[6]Guerard, André Gide, p. 235.

of himself is paradoxical, but that is not to be the main concern of the present study. In other words his thought structure may be paradoxical, but his view of the world is individualistic. Through this approach the underpinnings of Gide's ethic and art are no longer seen in terms of paradox but in terms of individualism.

Gide valued his image as a man valiantly struggling with contradictory impulses, certainly not for appearance's sake, but because he believed that the thorny, uncomfortable way, the true Christ's way, was the finest and realest way to live. He saw himself as drawing every preconception into question and keeping every notion in perpetual doubt.

But, as every thinker does, Gide makes certain basic assumptions about man and the world which he is not able to keep in flux or in perpetual doubt. Certain notions are there at the genesis of his writing career and though he experiences extraordinary crises and doubts along with the rest of the western world during the period between 1900 and 1950, those original ideas are never appreciably altered. For this reason it is possible to speak meaningfully of Gide's individualistic approach.

The present study will argue that Gide possesses a view of the world in which individual man, not society, is the basic reality. This is also to say that his ethical and moral posture embodies a sizeable inheritance from Enlightenment values, a notion to be fully developed in the

next chapter. For now, the most important point to emphasize is that individual man, not society, is Gide's primary focus and it is never a notion that he doubts or brings into question. More specifically, truth and knowledge reside in the individual and not in the institutions. Thus, notions such as reality, freedom and authenticity all possess a specific character stemming from Gide's belief in the priority of the individual over organized society.

In contrast with the individualist's stance in which the authentic and basic in man stem from within him is the belief in "the primacy of society to the individual -- historically, logically, and ethically", a concept originating in the early nineteenth-century conservative response to the values of the Enlightenment and the ensuing French Revolution, later qualified and refined by social scientists.[7] In this view reality's locus in not in individual man but in the institutions, in society, and in tradition. As institutions such as family, Church, school, possess a secondary character for Gide, the conservative view sees individual man as a mere fiction.

Certain traits in Gide may appear paradoxical to a person whose outlook possibly incorporates a predominant emphasis on the primacy of the group over the individual.

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[7]Robert A. Nisbet, Tradition and Revolt (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 77.

For example, Gide's struggle is described as between "order and anarchy", while his needs are explained: "Some rebels can exist outside the Law, but Gide could not".[8] If the law is perceived to emanate from society, then Gide's "Law", always coming from within the individual and never wrested away from any source external to him, may indeed appear anarchic and unreal. As a central idea of the Enlightenment is paraphrased by Paul Tillich: "The law is not outside of us, but inside as our true being".[9] Gide is never sarcastic or mocking while he works toward the fashioning of a personal ethic. If he were, then he would be according legitimacy to conventional morality which he genuinely sees as falsifying and "immoral". More to the point, Gide's version of anarchy occurs when man succumbs to a single conquering force within himself or when he submits his will to a higher authority outside of himself. Gide's freedom from institutional pressure, so highly prized, might very well appear chaotic to a person who views the possibility of order and meaning as existing only within those very institutions.

Secondly, it is made to appear paradoxical that Gide

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[8]Guerard, André Gide, p. 5.

[9]Paul Tillich, Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 25.

questions all preconceptions "yet" has a natural feeling for tradition and order. As well, he is purported to have a destructive "but" controlled mind.[10] According to someone in whose view questioning and tradition are mutually exclusive these are contradictroy sets of traits, for to question is ordinarily to fly in the face of tradition, and tradition can be seen to embody order. As well, to draw established values or institutions into question may appear "destructive", but if done in a respectful and/or classical style, could appear controlled at the same moment. As his individualistic conception of man is gradually revealed in the present study, it will become evident that some of his contradictions may exist only in the mind of the beholder, not in the mind of Gide. The novelist drew into question sets of values which focus on institutions as the source of reality and truth. Simultaneously he respected a tradition, but one which grew out of the Enlightenment in which rational, individual man was the source of reality and truth, not the institutions. No true conflict ever arose in his mind. He was not torn between a vision of man as the primary source of reality and a vision of society as its source. As well, "destruction" of those views favoring society could be very controlled to a confirmed individualist

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[10] Guerard, André Gide, p. 235.

who sees the solitary individual as the repository of validity and knowledge. To the group-oriented person he could appear to possess a controlled mind due to an orderly-looking orientation, even if the orientation itself was toward calling established knowledge into question.

Perhaps these two examples will clarify in the mind of the reader the potential utility of an examination of the individualism in Gide, not solely from the standpoint of this century but from the vantage point of history. Concepts of individualism, like notions of change, freedom, truth, rationality, and so on, seem to grow and metamorphose through time. Thus what is one person's freedom may seem to be chaos, boundlessness or disruption to another. A comprehensive study of Gide's conception of man and society, using a specific version of individualism constructed upon an historical base may prove quite meaningful and promise a better way to organize Gide's world view.

A restless Gide began a line of questioning about the self, primarily in terms of the individual versus society, which to a limited extent anticipates some of the issues to be taken up later by the existentialists. Yet Gide lacks totally in the despair or anguish which is so distinctive of the 1930's and after.[11] The writer has no overwhelming

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[11] Germaine Brée, Gide (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 2, 9, 18, 23-24.

doubts except indeed with regard to his homosexuality, confronted with the extreme suffering of his wife.[12] More to the point perhaps is that while Gide continually posits trenchant criticism about his era and develops a view of man which undermines its values, he never suffers a consuming disillusionment with his fellow man.[13] Man is not problematic, but civilization is, for man will always come through and rise above the corrupting forces of society. More specifically, Gide does not put his hope or faith in the community, but in the individual. He therefore does not experience the utter disillusionment and feelings of society's "betrayal", as for instance did Kafka. It might be said that Kafka was truly a paradoxical figure, for like Gide he imbued man's personal experience with a valid and final reality and truth, while he just as fervently turned to the communality as a place where man might find communication and happiness. As one study asserts, for Kafka, "The communal idea is the basic desire for happiness of the individual, and the communal actuality, a constant betrayal of that possibility".[14] At a time when others were suffering under a chronic dependence upon the group for reality, goodness, justification, happiness, etc., Gide never considered this dependence as a possible alternative,

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[12]André Gide, Et nunc manet in te suivi de Journal intime (Neuchâtel et Paris: Ides et Calendes, 1947), pp. 82-83.

[13]Brée, Gide, p. 18.

[14]Hildegard Platzer Collins, "A Study of the Relation-

either emotionally or philosophically. At a time when social scientists were developing the notions of "alienation" and "anomie" in which man experiences an inner disjunction, a separation from self and society and consequently feels lost and despairing in the midst of chaos, Gide was asserting that any separation from the values and institutions of his time was a desirable experience in freedom and a recovery of one's authentic being. He has such confidence in the individual's natural inclinations as to urge man to "follow his slope . . .upward".[15]

One final aspect to the lack of despair in Gide is that he shared with his peers a great confidence in their aesthetic standards and had a firm belief in the aesthetic values and procedures of his generation. As the historian of ideas H. Stuart Hughes describes it:

> . . .they believed in the continuity of something called human nature and in the human mind or spirit as transcending and ruling the realm of corporeal matter . . . .[they] trusted in the human spirit and expressed a measured confidence in the voice of reason. Frequently skeptical or disabused, they had seldom been totally despairing. They had nearly always succeeded in detecting some inner logic in human events, and they had only rarely doubted that their fellow-men were masters of their history.16

Further, Hughes claims that with the arrival of the 1930's

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ships Between Technique and Theme in the Shorter Works of Kafka", Ph. D. Dissertation, U.C.L.A., Dissertation Abstracts, XXIII (1962-63), 1016, P. 765-1468.

[15]Guerard, André Gide, p. 32; also Brée, Gide, p. 2.

[16]H. Stuart Hughes, The Obstructed Path (New York:

the view of the social universe was one of incoherence, the world seen as dominated "by brute force and the illogic of a tragedy too vast for the human mind to comprehend". History was viewed fatalistically as "absurd, delivered over not to a secret law of progress, still less to the designs of providence, but to pure contingency and chance". Gide's generation was seen as morally wanting by the next one since its members did not seem to do more than contemplate their egos.[17]

To sum up, Gide's individualism needs to be examined at some depth, for it appears to be an even more basic common denominator with which to view his ethic and art than that of his paradoxical character, possibly only the manner in which Gide expressed his view of the world. Seen in terms of individualism rather than paradox, Gide's ethical and philosophical character, indeed even his aesthetic posture, may acquire an unexpected depth.

Thus he stands out not as an elite figure beaming choice words of upper-class wisdom from an ivory tower, but as a presentiment of the approaching era when energetic efforts are made to wrest reality from the clutches of "science" and "objectivity" in order to put it back into man.

Harper & Row, 1969), p. 104.

[17]Hughes, The Obstructed Path.

His optimism, an unwavering faith in man's rationality and perfectibility, may appear odd to those whose vision has been coloured by the anxiety and hopelessness of the last forty years. But remove this, as one might remove a piece of smoked glass from before the eyes, and what appears seems utterly logical: Gide's confidence in man's control over his destiny allowed him to be totally ruthless when undermining values, tearing down institutions, urging "immorality", questioning age old truths, and so on. It allowed him total abandon, but it was certainly not the cause of his potentially revolutionary posture. The impetus behind Gide's tearing down of everything established is precisely what will be examined when the focus is turned on his individualism, a stance whose main characteristic is a generous legacy from the values and notions of the Enlightenment era.

CHAPTER II

GIDE'S ENLIGHTENMENT INHERITANCE

Since the main assertion is that André Gide's view of the world is individualistic, "individualism" must be delineated with the utmost clarity. Two types of definitions are required: one, an abstract model of individualism sketched in terms other than those used in Gide's works, the other sketched along historical lines. Then perhaps a description of Gide's own version of individualism, in view of his heritage from the Enlightenment, may be broached, hopefully with a minimum of misunderstanding.

The emphasis in the present study is on the individualist who sees man as existing prior to society, that is, before the fact of society's existence. He sees the world as made up of solitary, pre-social individuals. Each individual is the basic unit of reality in the world, and his innate characteristics must be the source of society's structure in order that society may be consistent with human nature. So individual man is logically and basically prior to the existence of social institutions and groups. The individualist regards society, its institutions and groups, as phenomena which are merely secondary to individuals, and as dependent for their existence upon the decision-making and actions of self-motivated, prior-existing, autonomous

individuals.[1]

The individualism which developed among the Enlightenment thinkers is clearly revealed when their attempts to deal with a number of basic, universal questions about man and society are examined.[2]

First, when the philosophes were confronted with the problem of the nature of authentic human existence, they said that it resided in man's autonomous self. Predominant was the belief that:

> What is fundamental and decisive in man proceeds from what is within man -- from instinct, sensation, the inner drives of self-interest or altruism -- rather than from the social structure and from conventional morality.3

In positing Natural Law theory, Rousseau asserted that "natural man" ought to and would free himself from, as C. E. Vaughan paraphrases it, "all the oppressions and corruptions of society".[4] He put forth the notion that

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[1]Roy W. Hornosty, "Social and Intellectual Roots of Sociological Theory" (unpublished paper), p. 4. Also, for a discussion of individualism in a modern philosophical context as contrasted with its opposing position, termed "holism", please refer to the following: Louis Dumont, "The Modern Conception of the Individual", Contributions to Indian Sociology, VIII (October 1965), 13-61.

[2]Ibid.; the framework of six basic questions is taken from pp. 6-15.

[3]Robert A. Nisbet, The Sociological Tradition (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1966), p. 270.

[4]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contrat Social, ed. C. E. Vaughan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1918), p. xiv.

natural man was a pre-social, self-sustaining and self-sufficient creature who would survive the distortions and debasement of society's institutions, for natural man was indestructible and would outlast society and its inevitable decay.[5] The Enlightenment era can be characterized by the belief that individual man is logically, fundamentally, and historically prior to society.

Second, faced with the question as to what constitutes genuine human needs or rights, the Enlightenment thinkers again focused on the individual. Within him resides what is natural and fundamental; he alone is the source of inalienable rights, not the institutions and/or divine decree. It may be recalled how Rousseau paints culture and tradition to be alien to human nature in the Discours sur l'inégalité. So the natural for the philosophes came to mean what is rooted in the individual, as opposed to the social institutions and cultural traditions, which were secondary and less immediate phenomena in their eyes.

Third, the problem arose as to what perspective to take towards social institutions. The philosophes tended to be extremely anti-institutional: they no longer shared the belief in the sacred character of institutions that had been so prevalent before; rather, they were of the opinion that institutions should be seen as contractual arrangements which

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[5]Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité in Discours; Lettre sur les spectacles, extraits (Paris:

arise out of the natural interplay among free, pre-social, fully evolved, autonomous individuals. Therefore institutions possessed no reality in themselves but took on existence from the acts of free individuals in common. Institutions were often seen as instrumental, potentially coercive, restrictive, and even an obstacle to progress. The philosophes believed that the undesirable traits of institutions could be eliminated and a transformation could occur if they were built upon properties consistent with the innate characteristics in individual man.[6]

Fourth, underlying their view of the problem as to how men successfully live together, that is, as to the organizing principle of collective life, was the assumption that there existed a basic harmony in nature. From this they reasoned that if every person were to follow his "true" nature, a general consensus would arise to the advantage of all in which unity would prevail in society.

Fifth, the question arose as to the character of truth and knowledge. The Age of Reason was the era in which an extraordinary confidence existed in the rational character of truth as well as the accessibility of reason to all men, not just a select few. More to the point though

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Librairie Larousse, 1939).

[6]Hornosty, "Social and Intellectual Roots of Sociological Theory", 9-10.

is that the individualists saw man as the "repository" of reason, and this reason was purged of all institutional distortions, for social institutions as well as cultural traditions were considered to be the sources of error and distortion. The solitary individual became "the basis for the validation of thought".[7] In sum the autonomous individual is seen as the source of knowledge and truth; any other source was secondary and unreliable.

Lastly, as to the questions of the direction of history and the possibility of progress, the eighteenth century exhibited great optimism based on a belief in man's innate goodness. Not only was man innately good, but he had inherent within him the quality of perfectibility stemming from his free will.[8] The philosophes equated the good and reasonable with the natural, not the social, and the "natural", as the reader may recall, was rooted in the individual as opposed to the social institutions and cultural traditions. Release from the traditional order would result in material and social progress as well as moral and ethical perfection. Consequently the Enlightenment thinkers' notion of progress is based on the belief that the individual is logically, ethically and historically prior to society. If

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[7]Hornosty, "Social and Intellectual Roots of Sociological Theory".

[8]Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité, p. 42.

man could be free to enact life in his natural way, he would manifest the potential of perfection inherent in his authentic being and everyone would be the beneficiary of better times.

Thus, when we speak of Gide's Enlightenment inheritance as the basis for his personal rendition of individualism, the emphasis must not be on his heritage of historically particular idiosyncrasies from that era but on the similarity that many of his answers to basic, universal questions share with the eighteenth-century responses to those problems about man and society.

That authentic human existence resides in man's autonomous self is a notion which pervades Gide's works. In Philoctète the central character is "virtuous" before and away from the Greeks and bears a good resemblance to the "natural man" of the Enlightenment. It is his own innate goodness and a personally evolved morality that lend him selfhood and substance, not his Greekness or any identity derived from a relationship with other men. In other words, Gide's Philoctète is a clear example of individual man who exists prior to society and social institutions. Moreover, the possibility of human relationships threatens to be burdensome and compromising for Philoctète, as was personal contact for Alissa in La Porte Etroite. C. E. Vaughan tells us that one aspect of Rousseau's ideal of individual freedom was not immunity from the control of the State so much as

"absolute isolation" from the oppressiveness and corruptiveness of society.

> This ideal is avowed in the Discourse, where each step that removed the individual from the isolation which was his lot in the "state of nature" is branded as a step on the road to ruin.9

As with Rousseau, in Gide's mind society is definitely secondary to man in importance and reality, and it is his constant opponent. Michel of L'Immoraliste becomes maniacally dedicated to the uncovery of the roots of his existence. Gide condemns Michel, not for the extreme value that this character placed on the recovery of "l'être authentique", but for the tyrannical role that Michel allows that value to assume. This last is a crucial and necessary distinction to make, for Gide himself believed in the notion of a pre-civilized or pre-social man. Moreover, implicit in L'Immoraliste is the message that had Michel not allowed that tyrannical fascination with the roots of his existence to carry him away, had he maintained instead a semblance of discipline while seeking his authentic self, he might not have been undermined and condemned by the omnipotent Gide.

Gide saw the most important genuine human need to be the individual's ability to exercise his will in total freedom. When man acts naturally, he is motivated by his

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9 Rousseau, Du Contrat Social, pp. xiv-xv.

will and is not compromised by the expectations or oppression of other people. If the past actions or information (that is, tradition), or institutions or conventional morality prey upon the individual's will, then he is prevented from acting in a natural way. Philoctète sought to free himself from a Greek identity and from the presence of others, so he could be isolated in order to act naturally. The protagonist in La Tentative Amoureuse bemoaned the oppression of the past on his self, for he so intensely desired that something more perfect would flower in him. Michel sought his authentic being underneath the numerous layers of corruptive society, in spite of and in opposition to society's morality. More to the point, he sought the real and natural amongst the people of the land, the young Arab boys and the farmhands. As Michel rejected the dictates of conventional morality, Thésée rejected the legitimacy of divine decree or aid.

In all of these instances and indeed many more is implied the denial of a "natural" character to the requirements and manifestations of social institutions, conventional morality, and even tradition. The logical implication from this is that the freely acting individual is the embodiment of the natural and his limits are the boundaries of nature.

As has already been somewhat revealed, Gide shared the Enlightenment's position on the problem of social institutions. He was extremely anti-institutional and

hastened to write about it at every opportunity. He frequently portrayed society, or a particular institution of it, as the enemy and an obstacle to man's growth, change and self-transcendence, and certainly not as the source or avenue to these experiences. He regarded the explicit manifestations of society, especially conventional morality and role playing, as distorting and corrupting forces that falsify man and prevent him from experiencing his authentic self.

For Gide, the Church was a rigidification and ossification of what was originally a vital and legitimate orientation to life which he valued highly. For a brief period he looked with favour towards Communism to do away with the Church in order to allow the emergence of a "true Christianity", that is, a Christianity purged of its institutional bondage. Odious too was the family, towards which Gide exhibited open hostility, for he thought that by its very nature it warped and repressed human beings. In other words, he did not regard the family as a situation in which human relationships fostered the growth and self-discovery of young people. On the contrary, it was a place where this growth was stultified or prevented, due to the orientation of the parents who took their values and beliefs from outside themselves. The reader only has to recall Gide's message in Les Faux-Monnayeurs, the strife that existed between the parents, a generation of hypocrites who

slowly destroy themselves by trying to live according to the exigencies of conventional morality, and the children, precocious and idealistic youths whose main desire is to be authentic and real, to "ring true", and to find a morality within themselves. In Les Faux-Monnayeurs through Edouard Gide reveals his negative assessment of marriage as well. By its very nature marriage is a relationship in which two people set about the gradual destruction and falsification of each other.

Underlying early and late works of Gide is the implication that if man were allowed to follow his "true" nature, a general harmony or unity would emerge among men in society. Of course accompanying this was always the Gidian stipulation that a manifestation of the "true" person must be accomplished within the strictest control and discipline. Characters experience confusion, stultification and unhappiness when they are compelled by outside forces to act in a certain manner, in a manner they did not choose. The main figures in Les Faux-Monnayeurs are portrayed as entrenched in a modern version of this problem. Other people have the annoying habit of making them act "falsely", such as Bernard vis-à-vis his father, Laura vis-à-vis Edouard, etc. In other words, these characters suffered from a modern dilemma: how can I be myself or "ring true" when other people will not allow it? Implicit is the notion

that if people would try their utmost to let their fellow men act in a "true" fashion instead of pushing them into the trap of expectations, institutional behaviour, or tradition, then we could all live a happier, more authentic and more harmonious existence. Again, this whole idea rests on the assumption that the natural or authentic lies within each man rather than in those institutions which arise out of interrelationships among men and on the assumption that if that natural or authentic quality were to be allowed to manifest itself, within strict discipline of course, there would emerge a harmonious type of existence for all.

As to the character of truth or knowledge, Gide is always certain of its residence in each individual. Indeed people lie to themselves, as many of his characters were shown to do. But implied in this very fact is that if they were to exercise their wills in a proper and complete fashion, they would indeed make some headway towards the discovery of the truth. What is clear is that man is able to discover the truth by himself; he can indeed move closer to perfection without the aid of society or God -- it would never depend on them. And if certain unknowns exist for Gide, the pathway to their illumination is through art and through personal, individual perseverence, not through a better communication with God or society. As was stated

about the Enlightenment era's notion of the rational character of truth, it was a very important aspect of the period, but not the most basic, and certainly not the relevant aspect in this study. Indeed, Gide's fascination with the irrational, unconscious, subconscious, and the hidden, unexplainable elements of people would bear out a singular distaste for the logical and rational. [Although it must not be overlooked that the manner in which he handled the mysterious, passionate and unknown areas of the human spirit was markedly cerebral and strictly controlled at all times.] The most important point to see about Gide's approach to truth and knowledge is that he, like his predecessors, sees individual man as the locus of them rather than society or its institutions. No outside, secondary or supra-individual agent is as in touch with knowledge and truth as individual man in whom they in fact reside. Thésée, Gide's final and glorious hero may indeed be characterized as full of inconsistency and primarily motivated by a highly evolved ethic of mobility. But more basic than that, like his creator Gide, he could never accept outside help or received opinion as a sound basis for judgment. He alone, his inner self, is the ultimate guide for all the decision-making in his adventurous life. Indeed Thésée proves to be quite an agile opportunist. But the source of his heroism lies within himself and no one else.

Finally, as to the direction of human history, Gide was convinced that man could and should experience a certain degree and quality of progress. It stemmed from a belief in man's innate potential for goodness and perfectibility -- however humble his condition may be, an idea majestically put forth in the author's last work Thésée. The hero's final words express the conviction that after him and even because of him men will be happier, better, and more free.[10] Implied is that a person's good works have the power to create improved conditions and increased freedom for following generations. Noteworthy is that always accompanying a better state must be increased freedom for Gide, since release from tradition and the tyranny of social institutions opens the way to a better social and material state as well as to moral and ethical perfection. The young Gide spoke of man's duty to "manifest" his true self; that was the highest value -- even if the results might be harmful. With some alterations, the notion that if each man could live a sincere and authentic existence the world could not help but benefit pervaded Gide's works to the end. Human progress, that is, moral and ethical perfection, would be the inevitable outcome of man's experiencing his "real" or authentic (or natural) being.

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[10]André Gide, Thésée (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 123.

In sum, Gide's confrontation with certain universal questions bears an appreciable resemblance to responses which emerged from similar probings in the Enlightenment era. Standing out from this examination of Gide's Enlightenment inheritance can now be seen a distinct type of individualism with more visible contours. The next chapter is devoted to the task of delineating Gide's own particular and personal rendition of individualism, while the following six chapters, through the more dominant themes that the author developed in his works, illustrate in detail his individualistic world view as he worked it out in the realm of art.

CHAPTER III

A PERSONAL INDIVIDUALISM

Most characteristic of Gide's personal individualism is that he involuntarily takes offense to any type of structuring or organizing of human action into patterns, something that society inevitably promotes just by its very nature and existence. He views the structuring process as a total falsification of man and a destruction of man's dignity and integrity. It is a distortion of man which prevents him from a progressive and always mobile existence of self-realization in a constantly changing and improving world.

The phenomenon of change may be seen in a negative light, as something to treat with caution and over which to exert extreme control. Or it may be viewed with hope and delight as a promise of liberation from irrational and dehumanizing traditions, and as a chance for true self-expression and creativity. This latter is Gide's outlook. Mobility is what he seeks most of all, and he imputes his era with the need and the longing for it that are his own. During this period, while social theorists are focusing on the problem as to how man could best fit into the society at hand, Gide is preoccupied with the question as to how a tortured individual could break free from society's binding

chains that prevent him from discovering and recovering his authentic self.[1] Germaine Brée describes his approach:

> His art of living is addressed to individuals and brings a warning rather than direction to an age whose vital preoccupations and deep-seated anxieties concern collectivities rather than individuals.[2]

While others are implicitly viewing society as the avenue to the self, meaning, and the "real", Gide declares just the opposite: society is the very barrier to all of these things.

He sets an immense value on mobility and has a very particular interpretation of it. In Gide's view of the world change means something promising and good. But what is more essential, he cannot conceive of the death of a phenomenon without anticipating the immediate occurence of its rebirth; he sees the relationship of the two incidents as a cycle. This is so basic to his individualistic stance that it cannot be overstressed. Perhaps Guerard's description will provide some clarification:

> The true individualist cultivates a real eclectecism of the inner life and respects the spirit's dialogue with itself. To suppress one

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[1] Wallace Fowlie, Climate of Violence (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 123.

[2] Brée, Gide, p. 2.

> voice at the expense of another is to cease to be fully alive. The great enemy of individualism (a personal complex of often heterogeneous tendencies) is individuality (the exclusive and tyrannical predominance of one tendency). But even the most rewarding state of being must be destroyed, must die, so that a new one can be born; even one good custom can corrupt the man.[3]

This process of the death and rebirth of a human trait maintains the human quality of an individual, because it maintains the freedom of his will which to Gide is a being's source of humanity. To allow the dominance of even a commonly admired trait is to end the freedom of the will and to end the process of growth and transcendence.

Gide entitles one of his works Si le grain ne meurt, words taken from a passage in the Bible which finishes:

> . . .après qu'on l'a jeté dans la terre il demeure seul. Mais s'il meurt il porte beaucoup de fruits.[4]

Gide's view of man and his human condition is most characterized by its emphasis on the cyclic process of the death and rebirth of habits, values and institutions. A certain unbending maintenance of beliefs and values means only one inevitability to him: their rigidification and consequent distortion. Beliefs which evolve into institutions -- the prime example is the Church, supposedly founded on the teachings of Christ -- he views with scorn and contempt.

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[3]Guerard, André Gide, p. 32.

[4]André Gide, Si le grain ne meurt (Paris: Gallimard, 1928, p. (5).

A glance at his brief encounter with Communism will illustrate what has been said. Gide was not blind to the promises of comfort and relief that commitment to a cause often brings; a number of times in his life he came very close to some sort of identification with a group in which it would be required to refer questions to a higher authority. But that is just where Gide was unable to comply. He distrusted comfort, compromise and all received opinions. The writer interpreted comfort to be that state when the will is silent, compromise to be acting in someone else's terms, and received opinions to be those derived from any source other than one's self. Initially Communism promised equality of opportunity, something Gide valued since he felt a sense of unmerited privilege in a surrounding atmosphere of distress. But the equality of opportunity he sought would help the exceptional individual to succeed; it would help the uncommon man to assert his individual worth.[5] Gide saw with hope that Communism would destroy the institutions of family and Church to allow a freer youth and a "truer Christianity" to emerge. Thus Gide's concept of Communism and its potential was all in individualistic terms. He had never really given up his original values, but had responded to his guilt from being comfortably situated in an economically distressed world, and had let his liberalism and

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[5]Guerard, André Gide, p. 27.

faith in progress push him into an ultimately untenable position of commitment. In a message to the First Congress of Soviet Writers in August, 1934, Gide said:

> Its [the Communist party] task today is to establish in literature and art, a Communist individualism . . . .Communism cannot assert itself without taking into account the peculiarities of each individual. A society in which each man resembles all others is not desirable; I shall even say impossible; and this is even more true of a literature. Each artist is necessarily an individualist, however strong his Communist convictions may be and his attachment to the party. Only in this way can he create a useful work and serve society.6

From this statement it is clear that Gide grossly misread the Communist party's system of ideas and was incapable of anything but his individualistic mis-interpretation.

As was said, Gide had a very deep-seated distrust of comfort, an inheritance from his Puritan background, and of received opinions, most assuredly a legacy from the Enlightenment. Further, he refused to benefit from "the élan acquis; from the acquired momentum of what others have discovered and codified, or of what one has himself discovered in the past".[7]

Re-phrased in a more comprehensive fashion, Gide's individualism presupposed that validity, worth, and reality

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[6]André Gide, The Journals of André Gide, Vol. I: 1889-1913, trans. Justin O'Brien (London: Secker & Warburg, 1947), p. xii.

[7]Guerard, André Gide, p. 31.

reside in each single man, and that the true and real must constantly struggle for supremacy over the patterned, repeated, falsified experiences that man is in danger of viewing as constituting his real life. Therefore, the "real" resides in individual, initial action, coming from within the person, and the "false" resides in patterned action in society, from outside institutions and other established traditions, such as religious beliefs, community values, etc.

Paludes declares the importance and aesthetic superiority of the individual and attests to the ugliness and uselessness of the "normal man". Gide throws out a great variety of trenchant remarks as a negative monument to the average, "l'homme normal, celui sur qui commence chacun . . .".[8] According to the figure of Valentine Knox, health, "Ce n'est qu'un équilibre, une médiocrité de tout . . .", and of course mediocrity is one of the most undesirable traits to have. Further on Valentine declares:

> Nous ne valons que par ce qui nous distingue des autres . . .ce qui importe en nous, c'est ce que nous seuls possédons, ce qu'on ne peut trouver en aucun autre, . . .donc ce que vous appelez maladie.9

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[8]Gide, Paludes in Romans, Récits et soties, Oeuvres lyriques, intro. Maurice Nadeau, notice et biblio. Yvonne Davet et Jean-Jacques Thierry (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), p. 116.

[9]Ibid., p. 120.

It is true that Paludes is a criticism of the self-centered, over retrospective writers of Gide's milieu; he creates striking caricatures of them through monologues such as the one just cited. But the individualism in these caricatures is genuine and sophisticatedly developed. The central figure, by his inability to accomplish a simple, brief voyage, enacts the failure to attain the freedom and individualism that Gide values. Tityre is portrayed as sick; from doubt and retrospection he repeats acts, and is the victim of a terrible entrapment. Yesterday's acts require repetition today; so people are trapped, says the narrator:

> On refait parce que l'on a fait; chacun de nos actes d'hier semble nous réclamer aujourd-'hui; il semble que ce soit un enfant à qui nous avons donné vie et que dorénavant nous devions faire vivre 10

Valentine Knox goes on to declare:

> L'homme normal nous importe peu; j'aimerais dire qu'il est supprimable -- car on le retrouve partout. C'est le plus grand commun diviseur de l'humanité, et qu'en mathématiques, étant donné des nombres, on peut enlever à chaque chiffre sans lui faire perdre sa vertu personnelle. L'homme normal . . .c'est ce résidu, cette matière première, qu'après la fonte où les particularités se subtilisent, on retrouve au fond des cornues.11

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[10] Gide, Paludes, p. 121.

[11] Ibid., p. 120.

It is useful to remember other portrayals of the normal man, such as Albert Camus' hero in La Peste, where he is regarded as the admirable survivor and symbol of hope for humanity; where his dogged determination to keep on trying in the face of great odds is viewed in the most encouraging manner. Paludes parodies Gide's colleagues' over-eagerness for "originality" and points an accusing finger at their self-pre-occupations and pretentions to worthwhile and unusual endeavors. But more importantly, in this work Gide reveals his implicit belief that genuine and free action is initial action which arises from within the individual. Ugly and ensnared is the regularized, predictable, repetitive, usual person who resembles his neighbor, the mass man. What social theorists might label "deviant behaviour", he esteems and considers good and healthy, while what they readily label as "normal" is Gide's notion of the sick, beaten, dis-integrated being. His very accusations offer a lucid revelation of his own values: idiosyncrasy (equated with personality in Le Prométhée mal enchaîné[12]), distinguishing traits, initial action, spontaneity, etc. He favoured difficulties in life that required conquering and judged that obstacles made one develop and grow, never allowing a person to remain trapped in the same being:

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[12]Gide, Le Prométhée mal enchaîné (Paris: Gallimard, 1925), p. 18. As well he writes in his Journal, p. 90:

> Destinées faites sur mesure. Nécessité de faire craquer ses vêtements comme le platane ou l'eucalyptus, en s'agrandissant, ses écorces.13

Damocles of Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, who originally led an ordinary life and whose aim was to resemble the commonest of men, concludes, after having had his unique adventure and having become convinced of his truly singular destiny:

> Maintenant je reconnais certes qu'un homme commun ne saurait exister, et j'affirme que c'est une vaine ambition que de tâcher de ressembler à tout le monde, puisque tout le monde est composé de chacun et que chacun ne ressemble à personne.14

At around the same time in his career Gide wrote:

> L'homme est plus intéressant que les hommes; c'est lui et non pas eux que Dieu a fait à son image. Chacun est plus précieux que tous.[15]

While Guerard describes Gide's individualism as "the spirit's dialogue with itself" and as "a personal complex of heterogeneous tendencies", he also points out that Gide "was persuaded that the emancipated individual could endure and survive his freedom",[16] and that the writer had "the optimist's faith that man achieves a higher destiny

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". . .l'homme en tant qu'individu tente d'échapper à la race. Et sitôt qu'il ne représente plus la race, il représente l'homme . . . ."

[13]Gide, Paludes, p. 107.

[14]Gide, Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, p. 30.

[15]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939 (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 93.

[16]Guerard, André Gide, p. 32.

if he works it out unaided".[17] But by 1935 Gide had qualified his appraisal of individual potentialities to some extent. Whereas earlier he had believed that progress depended solely on man's attempts to surpass himself, by 1935 he felt that social conditions would have to be changed so that individual efforts would be encouraged.[18] It may appear that Gide had relented somewhat and had let slip away part of his original belief in the individual's capacity to create and control his destiny. This is not so. Social conditions remain "out there" for Gide, while the individual's growth and capacity to will and create remain located within him, separate from those conditions. The amount of importance that Gide put on social conditions may have increased in later years, but the qualitative separateness of the two entities remained steadfast.

His final work, Thésée, published in 1946, is even more convincing proof of his confidence in individual man's worth, goodness and perfectibility. As Gide reflected upon his life and art as a whole, he has Thésée declare:

> Si je compare à celui d'Oedipe mon destin, je suis content: je l'ai rempli. Derrière moi, je laisse la cité d'Athènes. Plus encore que ma femme et mon fils, je l'ai chérie. J'ai fait ma ville. Après moi, saura l'habiter immortellement ma

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[17] Guerard, André Gide, p. 31.

[18] Ibid., p. 21.

> pensée. C'est consentant que j'approche la mort solitaire. J'ai goûté des biens de la terre. Il m'est doux de penser qu'après moi, grâce à moi, les hommes se reconnaîtront plus heureux, meilleurs et plus libres. Pour le bien de l'humanité future, j'ai fait mon oeuvre. J'ai vécu.19

Confronted with Oedipe, who is convinced that "quelque tare originelle atteint ensemble toute l'humanité", and that "l'homme ne saurait s'en tirer sans je ne sais quel divin secours qui le lave de cette souillure première et l'amnistie",[20] Thésée remains "enfant de cette terre" and believes only that man has a duty to "faire jeu des cartes qu'il a".[21] Through the figure of Thésée, Gide remains firm in the belief in man's inherent potential for improvement, in man's obligation to live out his life on earth (his duty to "manifest", as he called it in 1890) regardless of how many faults he may contain. In fact, obviously Thésée, gentle and diplomatic though he may try to be with Oedipe, cannot accept his friend's conviction about man's original sin. More importantly though, Thésée cannot accept his friend's belief that man needs divine help in order to break free from that original sin. Thésée never really could trustingly accept help or information from anyone mortal,

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[19] Gide, Thésée (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 123.

[20] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

[21] Ibid., p. 122.

let alone someone divine. In other words, received opinion as well as divine aid are unacceptable. In fact they contain no validity, no reality, in the eyes of Thésée and Gide. No intermediary agent may convey truth to man; only from within his own perception can he apprehend the realities of this world. For Gide the individual, mortal man is the source of truth and reliable knowledge. Neither a divine Being, the gods of Greece, the law makers, politicians, the intellectual élite of contemporary France, nor one's next door neighbor are gainfully equipped to give a person the Truth. Nor does society "lend" a person his reality, for it resides within him and is not a precarious or an occasional privilege, according to André Gide.

CHAPTER IV

AN INDIVIDUALISTIC NOTION OF REALITY

As a young man Gide was very candid about the way in which he formed his notions of truth and reality. In his tendency towards a volatility in abstraction, and abounding in good faith and enthusiasm, he did not hesitate to reveal these views on reality:

> Tous ont raison. Les choses DEVIENNENT vraies; il suffit qu'on les pense. -- C'est en nous qu'est la réalité; notre esprit crée ses Vérités.[1]

Gide's conceptions of truth as well as of man's nature and comportment are grounded in an aesthetics in whose values, as H. Stuart Hughes says, he and his peers believed wholeheartedly.[2] And Gide very early declared succinctly that "Les règles de la morale et de l'esthétique sont les mêmes . . .".[3]

Underlying his notion of reality, and thus his approach to aesthetics and morality, is an individualistic

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[1]André Gide, Les Cahiers d'André Walter in Les Cahiers et les poésies d'André Walter (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 48.

[2]H. Stuart Hughes, The Obstructed Path (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 104.

[3]Gide, Le Traité du Narcisse in Le Retour de l'enfant prodigue précédé de cinq autres traités (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 21.

base. He sees reality as emanating from man, not from that which arises out of men's relationships with each other, but from each solitary being. In response to readings of Spinoza he writes:

> Tous, ainsi, nous vivons dans notre rêve des choses; une atmosphère émanée de nous enveloppe notre âme et colore inconsciemment notre vision des choses. Et, comme elle est impénétrable, elle nous entoure de solitude. -- Et, comme elle est diversement colorée, chaque vision des choses est individuelle; -- l'on ne voit jamais que son monde et l'on est seul à le voir; c'est une fantasmagorie, un mirage, et le prisme est en nous, qui fait la lumière diaprée.4

Regardless of which form reality takes, "a dream", "visions", or a "phantasmagoria", it is grounded in the individual and is created by him. Later on in life Gide's view is said to have changed somewhat, not at the expense of his individualistically grounded reality, but rather supposedly at the expense of his previous confidence in an existing order. Germaine Brée contends that:

> Gide, who had started out with the mental picture of the Christian universe, had now come to see that the only reality he could honesty deal with was the relative, fallacious, and mobile order man creates for himself.5

But it is more likely to say that the writer did not see man's created order as in any way fallacious, regardless of

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[4]Gide, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, p. 104.

[5]Brée, Gide, p. 193.

whether or not he ever possessed a mental picture of the Christian universe. It is true that he often chastises characters in his works for their audacious attempts to create a self-styled morality. But his wrath is actually a disappointment in their inability to remain in control while undertaking their tasks, not a disapproval of their audacity. His very concern for their efforts and the fact that he develops those precise themes about the human endeavor to carve out of existence values to suit the needs of the individual and not the group show Gide's belief in the legitimacy of man-made, as opposed to divinely or institutionally created values. Indeed, the falsity and inauthenticity that Gide senses are in man's encounter with external efforts towards ordering the world, be they divine or institutional.

In Le Cahier Noir he goes on to qualify his notion of individual reality:

> De ces visions particulières aucune ne peut être dite vraie absolument; l'intransigence est une folle arrogance. -- Mais, s'il n'en est pas de fausses, il en est de préférables, et non point en elles-mêmes, mais pour les émois qu'elles suggèrent: on reconnaît l'arbre à ses fruits.[6]

It appears that in Gide's mind reality is linked with truth

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[6]Gide, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, pp. 104-105.

through the vehicle or radifier, emotion. In Paludes the narrator declares:

> . . .les événements racontés ne conservent pas entre eux les valeurs qu'ils avaient dans la vie. Pour rester vrai on est obligé d'arranger. L'important c'est que j'indique l'émotion qu'ils me donnent.7

Angèle asks, "Mais si cette émotion est fausse?" And with conviction he responds, "L'émotion, chère amie, n'est jamais fausse. N'avez-vous donc point lu que l'erreur vient à partir du jugement?"[8] So although Gide feels extreme contempt for the self-centered, habit-loving, narrow-minded writers of his time who never do anything worthwhile,[9] he does not disdain this particular value on the individual's emotion. It is the sole source of the real. Judgments in this context seem to have a built-in stigma, being reflective and social.

H. Stuart Hughes' prime aim in Consciousness and Society is to reveal that ". . .the various thinkers . . . were all . . .striving to comprehend the newly recognized disparity between external reality and the internal appreciation of that reality".[10] In so doing he includes

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[7]Gide, Paludes, p. 105.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 96.

[10]H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 16.

Gide in the group of men who struggle over this problem. The emphasis in the present study is upon Gide's locating reality in the individual as opposed to the group, rather than on the disparity between inner and outer reality which he and his peers experience, yet Hughes' remark is extremely relevant to either conceptualization of the problem of reality in the early twentieth century. A definite idea of consciousness does not stand out in this era, but it is most important to notice that whether reality is readily accessible as a conscious "construct" of our will, or whether it resides in the deeper recesses of our beings and needs moments of heightened awareness to bring it out, as for example in the world of Alain Fournier, truth and reality are located in the personal world of the individual self, not in the religious or institutional realms. Even when viewing man as part of an enormous and engulfing universal plan, as a mere puppet, Gide detects a creative control, a power in man nevertheless:

> Le temps et l'espace sont les tréteaux que, pour s'y jouer, les innombrables vérités ont déployés à l'aide de nos cerveaux, et nous y jouons comme des marionnettes volontaires, convaincues, dévouées et voluptueuses. Je ne vois pas qu'il y ait là de quoi s'attrister; je me plais au contraires à cette conviction de mon rôle, et ce rôle, somme toute, si tout le motive, c'est bien un chacun seul qui l'invente.[11]

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[11]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939 (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 92.

Philoctète illustrates how Gide conceptualizes the problem arising out of the Dreyfus affair. The dilemma lies between the quest of truth as a moral obligation and the duty one might have to the group which transcends mere truth. Implied in the very construction of the dilemma is that truth resides in Philoctète, the individual in quest of the highest, most virtuous posture, not in Greek tradition, Greek society, or Greekness. Néoptolème ultimately favors Philoctète's value system. Virtue, that is, the state of being away from society, free from all constraints, free to express one's full and authentic self, wins out over duty, the state of enslavement to external authority and institutions. Again, the very manner in which Gide phrases the problem of man's comportment reveals that for him, legitimate reality and truth reside in individual man.

Gide does not always remain totally undisturbed by his fellowman's failure to achieve a certain state of improvement or perfection. One shortcoming of others is most unsettling to him and reveals in yet another way how individualistic he is. First he admits to placing a tremendous value on youth:

> On a dit que je cours après ma jeunesse. Il est vrai. Et pas seulement après la mienne. Plus encore que la beauté, la jeunesse m'attire, et d'un irrésistible attrait. Je

> crois que la vérité est en elle; je crois qu'elle a toujours raison contre nous.12

Revealing is the concept that youth always has reason against its preceding generation. He goes on to assert that youth should instruct their elders whose role is to guide them and help them to deliver their message, the one that each younger generation has for the next. Then he expresses keen disappointment that his peers failed to remain loyal to their youth:

> Il est bien peu de mes contemporains qui soient restés fidèles à leur jeunesse. Ils ont presque tous transigé. C'est ce qu'ils appellent "se laisser instruire par la vie". La vérité qui était en eux, ils l'ont reniée. Les vérités d'emprunt sont celles à quoi l'on se cramponne le plus fortement, et d'autant plus qu'elles demeurent étrangères à notre être intime. Il faut beaucoup plus de précaution pour délivrer son propre message, beaucoup plus de hardiesse et de prudence, que pour donner son adhésion et ajouter sa voix à un parti déjà constitué. De là cette accusation d'indécision, d'incertitude, que certains me jettent à la tête, précisément parce que j'ai cru que c'est à soi-même surtout qu'il importe de rester fidèle.13

One's youth, one's intimate self, and the truth one holds inside, all of these are components of the same phenomenon. Fidelity to youth and to an individual's real being are the same, and Gide experiences a great sadness as he witnesses

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[12] Gide, Journal, 1889-1913, pp. 710-711.

[13] Ibid.

his colleagues' betrayal of their youth and their true selves. To give in and be too easily shaped by the lessons of life, this is not to mature and to come into one's own and to have grown seasoned and wise. To be moulded by life is to compromise and distort the reality that a person possesses at the outset. Wisdom is the ability of an individual to brave the fires of real experience, and to emerge with his original truth intact.

That Gide very seldom feels disillusionment about anything, plus the fact that he set such store on an accurate delivery of each generation's own message and on the total loyalty of each individual to his own special truth should illustrate how complete his belief in individual reality actually is.

CHAPTER V

AN INDIVIDUALLY BASED AESTHETICS

H. Stuart Hughes refers to Valéry and Gide as humanists and explains his use of the term in the following manner:

> . . .That is, they believe in the continuity of something called human nature and in the human mind or spirit as transcending or ruling the realm of corporeal matter.1

As has previously been shown, when Gide reveals his view of "Le temps et l'espace" as "les tréteaux que, pour s'y jouer, les innombrables vérités ont déployés à l'aide de nos cerveaux . . .", he clearly exhibits his belief in the power of the mind over corporeal matter. Just as important is the fact that he conceives of his role in this vast universal picture as very likely motivated by everything, yet "c'est bien un chacun seul qui l'invente".[2] Even when viewing life on a grand scale where he admits we may all be mere puppets he is convinced of each individual's power to create his own destiny. The first or initial creative impulse or "élan" resides in each one of us. Thus, as in every other realm or theme to be considered in this essay, Gide's

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[1]Hughes, The Obstructed Path, p. 104.

[2]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 92. (my underlining)

individualism prevails as the basis of his aesthetics.

He goes on to say:

> Les choses ont besoin de nous pour être, ou pour se sentir être, et sans nous, restent dans l'attente. Et l'homme en sent un inquiet malaise: la pression en nous de tout ce qui n'a pas encore été et qui veut être, de tout l'inconnu qui demande son petit instant de pensée, semble implorer de nous l'existence 3

Throughout these statements pulsates an underlying confidence that there exists a logic in human events and that men have some control over the making of their history, that each man "invents" his own part to play and his consequent destiny.

Also implied in his remark is the notion that as we succeed in giving those things of the unknown our thought, so increased awareness and consciousness will occur in an upward trend. As a result a certain kind of progress will occur which involves man's growth and transcendence. In addition it is implied that human beings are something to begin with, that is, that they have a specified nature and have the ability to give existence to things. In contrast came the time in the 1930's when to many people the world began to appear ruled by brute force and illogic, and history took on an absurd appearance; it seemed to be governed by contingency and chance.[4] The notion of progress

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[3]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 93.

[4]Hughes, The Obstructed Path, p. 104.

started to lose all meaning or significance. And the idea of nothingness became an obsession: man was a nothing, a nada, to start with and his principal struggle was with a void, terrifying emptiness, definitely not with falsity and compromise, as there was nothing there in the first place to become distorted.

Gide may appear to contradict himself when he writes:

> C'est dans le sentiment d'un accord, non d'une rivalité qu'est le bonheur, et quand bien même toutes les forces de la nature, l'une contre toutes autres, chacune lutterait, il m'est impossible de ne pas concevoir une unité supérieure présidant à cette lutte même, initiale de toute division, où chaque âme peut se réfugier pour son bien-être.5

But his cherished state continues to be one of tension and struggle, for the unresolved is always far more vital and compelling as a way of life. Yet it is crucial to note that behind that struggling process is a presiding unity in Gide's mind where each individual person will find safety and support. That unity includes a belief in a certain logic to human events in his world view, the very outlook that is discarded during the 1930's. In any case, individuals must struggle onward and this does not mean absurdity and chaos to Gide, but rather hope and vitality, since the

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[5]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 89.

backdrop consists of a type of "given" unity and also since he is convinced that even if a person only succeeds a very little bit, that is some gain, some forward motion towards an improved state.

Thus his individualism is bound to flourish, especially since aesthetics and morality are the same thing to him, which he declares in a note to Le Traité du Narcisse in 1890. Man's purpose is to "manifest" the truth; since each man is a representative of an Idea, he is duty bound to subordinate himself to the Idea, to manifest it, and not to prefer himself to it. Man's whole life is nothing but a progression towards the sacrifice of himself to the Idea. The Idea may be more or less moral, it may even be pernicious, but man's destiny and fulfillment is to manifest it regardless.[6] In this aesthetic and moral vision resides a distinct sense of order and certainly one of purpose as well. That Gide declares with no sense of sadness, loss, injustice, or bewilderment that the best life is one of hardship in which the individual must struggle against great odds, even great forces conflicting within himself, is not an amazing or unexpected phenomenon, once his basic philosophy is taken into account. An individualistic posture is certainly not a posture Gide chose out of a sense of desperation or dis-

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[6]Gide, Le Traité du Narcisse, p. 21.

couragement. If he had done this, implied would be a feeling of "sour grapes", betrayal, and concerted rejection of something that had let him down, something that he had put his trust in, namely society.

More proof of Gide's lack of lost or "alienated" feelings is in the following lines:

> C'est là qu'est la souffrance: ne pas pouvoir
> se révéler, et, lorsqu'on y parvient peut-être,
> n'avoir plus rien à dire.7

He places more of a value on the possession of something (presumably beautiful) to say rather than on the ability to communicate or reveal himself. He is definitely not enamoured of the world without words or the non-intellectual realm. And since he does not feel a lack or void in himself, he never attempts to use words to reach out and touch others. Problematic to Gide is how to manifest his being, not what being should be manifested.

Suffering for him is not a feeling of aloneness or loneliness. Suffering may be the lack of words even after successful communication has occurred. It may be "an anxious uneasiness", because unknown things are entreating him for existence and are calling out to be given a moment of his thought. Gide appears to work through thought in order to experience other people, to sense relationships between

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[7]Gide, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, p. 61.

himself and others, or between people other than himself. His emphasis is on the vehicle of communication rather than on the needs behind it or communication itself. At times it seems as though the aesthetic form possesses more reality for Gide than existence itself.

> Et appelons Idée tout rapport perçu; si tu veux, métaphoriquement, la réfraction dans le cerveau de l'homme d'un rapport effectif.8

When it is said that Gide's work is his life, that indeed seems true. Aesthetics are the medium through which Gide validates existence, not the other way round. After the traumatic metamorphosis of thought in the 1930's, faith in the previous aesthetic standards and values dwindled rapidly. The mind was no longer seen to be ruler over corporeal matter, and man no longer had control over a history within which resided a self-evident logic. Nor were the aesthetics within which Gide worked an adequate vehicle through which to experience or validate existence, the latter then believed to be primary to anything else. Gide essentially never changes course when he says:

> Tu apprendras à considérer l'humanité comme la mise en scène des idées sur la terre.9

John Russell writes "A Note on Oedipus and Theseus" to precede a translation of those two dramas in which he

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[8]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 91.

[9]Ibid., p. 92.

points out that, "In Gide's play [Oedipus] human dignity puts the horrors in their place . . . ."[10] It is as though he believed that through great mental effort man could order the world to suit his needs.

> It is basically a stringent intellectual debate; as in the masterpieces of Poussin (a painter whom Gide particularly admired) the realities of physical violence are subordinated to the grand, overmastering instincts of order and design.11

Certainly Gide pays no hommage to human fears; he is a man of revelation and light, of order and design. Betterment of the human condition and coming to terms with the human condition in Gidian terms consist of revealing the dark and hidden, always with the implied faith that if this comes to pass for us we will be in an improved or advanced state. Germaine Brée explains that Gide called all that in any existence eludes understanding the "devil's share" and goes on to explain how Gide dealt with this phenomenon through his art:

> Whereas art thrives on its sometimes unconscious connections with the devil's share in existence, those human beings who ignore it in life court disaster. And so the work of art has meaning beyond itself and exercises a salutory influence. Gide's former search for an art "that would liberate the unknown within us" had by now become a search for an art "to liberate us from the unknown".12

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[10] Gide, Two Legends: Oedipus and Theseus, trans. John Russell (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1958), pp. v-vi.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Brée, Gide, p. 193.

His faith in aesthetics as the end and the means through which to confront the human condition spilled over into the dilemmas of his own life. And it probably did not appear to him that they were a way of suspending problems and avoiding physical realities. For ultimately more "real" for him was the aesthetic reality, not the one of existence *per se*. He even approached his homosexuality in this manner, writing, explaining, and staging intellectual debates, especially *Corydon*, about this stange but inevitable and implacable condition in his life. Just as in *Oedipe* Gide has human dignity put the horrors in their place, so he does it in the drama of his own life. Paradoxical is the *fact*, the existential fact and physical reality of Gide's homosexuality as an integral part of a man of light and fearlessness, order and design, alongside his magnificent efforts to re-make his anomoly into a creation of dignity and worth. Through his art he struggled frenetically to make the "givens" of his life into "givens" of his own personal specifications. And he was totally convinced that he and his art would win out.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROAD TO AUTHENTICITY: FREEDOM

In an introduction to Albert Guerard's book André Gide Thomas Mann describes Gide's view of freedom:

> He knew how difficult it is to bear freedom, but his fear of it was outweighed by fear of mental luxuries, of all conformism, of the slackening of vital tensions and the slothful submission to authority.[1]

Mann is readily able to empathize with Gide, for both writers define freedom in individualistic terms. Spiritual contentment is disparaged as spiritual inertia, because the self's successful adjustment to or oneness with conventional authority, morality or philosophy is a despicable state to be feared and avoided. The fitting in or adjusting to conditions in society that sociology, psychology, and psychiatry would later on be discussing in favourable and even necessary terms, even as a "given" goal for man, is viewed as the lazy giving up of self to authority. Freedom is dangerous, but more perilous is loss of the real self in the network of "norms", role playing and conventional morality. Adjustment which lessens the pain of anxiety about living in the world may be regarded as a plus, a gain or a way of successfully resolving one's dilemma; or it may

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[1] Guerard, André Gide, p. xi.

be seen as the mutilation and/or loss of the self whose truly best and most authentic state is one of constant tension. Resolution of that tension is seen by both Mann and Gide as undesirable and death-creating in the sense of finality. Freedom thus becomes for them the liberation of the person from the machinations and institutions of society which tries to lure him into the web of conformity, contentment, sleep and oblivion.

Guerard states that Gide "was just as afraid of freedom as of comfort" and says of Madeleine that she was "no doubt the strongest possible counterweight to an alarmingly full liberty".[2] Indeed Gide's marriage was a constant source of doubt, anxiety, great discomfort, and tension, the very states upon which he placed high creative and moral values and through which he saw the promise of liberation and growth. Emerging from the severely ascetic Protestant way of being, which his wife maintained throughout her life, in the early 1890's Gide decides to stop resisting his desires, presumably the main ones being homosexual in nature, and to start following them.[3] The way of Christianity restricts and limits, he declares, while

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[2]Guerard, André Gide, p. 10.

[3]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, pp. 44-45.

self-abandon may be a superior wisdom. More importantly Gide admits that to begin with he was obliged to force himself to be joyous:

> . . .l'habitude de l'ascétisme était telle qu'il me fallut d'abord m'efforcer vers la joie et ce n'est pas facilement que je parvenais à sourire . . . .Ne suivais-je pas, ce faisant, des lois parfaitement naturelles?4

Struggling against one's habits, even suspending their intrinsic or substantive value for a moment, is a value for him which often overrides consideration of the worth of the habit or trait itself. More prominent in his mind is the uprooting process that one must encounter spiritually when changing one's way of being, the process during which no single trait or virtue must ever hold sway over the self. In other words, there were some aspects of asceticism he never ceased to admire, especially in his wife whom he sees as the one person who always "rings true" and who can immediately sense if others are counterfeit.[5] As well, he eventually achieves a good glimpse of the advantages and disadvantages of self-abandon.

But it is important to realize that for Gide the value of any of those manners of comportment such as

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[4]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 45.

[5]Gide, Et nunc manet in te suivi de Journal intime, p. 20.

asceticism or self-abandon lies in their instrumental or useful aspect, for they may be the means by which he experiences the process of growth and self-transcendence. Yet, as will be discussed further on, they are not values-in-themselves, but are subsumed under the value of self-surpassing and are only good when Gide uses them well and maintains control of his destiny, keeping up a disciplined comportment, a disciplined spiritual transcendence. The moment that they threaten to take over is the moment of their metamorphosis into evil and useless ways of being in the world.

Underlying those particular assessments of behavior is his cherishing of and focusing on the freeing process itself. At one point in Le Retour de l'enfant prodigue, his younger brother assumes that the prodigal son sought in his wanderings in the desert a sour fruit which would quench his thirst, to which the prodigal replies, "Non; mais il fait aimer cette soif".[6] Gide is enamoured not of the achievement of happiness, but rather of the struggle for it.[7]

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[6]Gide, Le Retour de l'enfant prodigue précédé de cinq autres traités (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p. 206.

[7]Claude-Edmonde Magny, "A propos du Thésée: l'éthique secrète d'André Gide", Poésie, no. 36 (décembre 1946), 87.

In Les Cahiers d'André Walter the young Gide reveals a conception of happiness which will continue to underlie his world view for the rest of his life:

> Ils ne comprendront pas ce livre, ceux qui recherchent le bonheur. L'âme n'en est pas satisfaite; elle s'endort dans les félicités; c'est le repos, non point la veille: il faut veiller. L'âme agissante, voilà le désirable -- et qu'elle trouve son bonheur, non point dans le BONHEUR, mais dans le sentiment de son activité violente. -- Donc la douleur plutôt que la joie, car elle fait l'âme plus vivace; quand elle ne prosterne pas, les volontés s'y exaspèrent: on souffre, mais l'orgueil de vivre puissamment sauve des défaillances.[8]

He is enamoured not only of the struggle but of the alertness of the soul, and especially of the awareness or consciousness a person could have of his experiences, for in that lies his chance for growth and transcendence. Wending one's way is far more fascinating and valuable than arriving at a destination. Gide emphasizes in many works the extreme danger involved in focusing too much on the arrival rather than on the journey. Michel in L'Immoraliste is a prime example: a person who cannot stop scheming for and grasping at liberation, but who forgets to worry about the nature of that liberation and its ramifications for himself vis-à-vis the world.

But not only is the voyage more important than the

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[8]Gide, Les Cahiers d'André Walter, p. 27.

destination, Gide requires a disciplined manner to be upheld throughout the travelling. That is to say, freedom's basic guarantee resides in the ability to avoid becoming the victim of one's very quest. Gide reprimands Michel for faltering and becoming a prey to his efforts towards liberation, by setting him up as a non-hero at the end of the book, bereft of the knowledge as to what to do with the newly achieved freedom. Alissa of La Porte Etroite is also chastised for her fanaticism and enslavement; her search for an attainment to God is totally undermined.

The domination over the self of a goal, a way of being or a trait, even an admirable one, is regarded as enslavement, non-freedom and evil. Propensity for evil, that is, for losing control of his will, especially in the sense of becoming enslaved by his quest for freedom, confronts man at every moment of his life and must be met with a healthy, dynamic human will which is bent upon the superhuman task of going beyond itself without losing control. Striking is Paul Tillich's similar conceptualization of this notion:

> Human freedom is human peril. The ability to transcend any given situation implies the possibility of losing one's self in the infinity of transcending one's self.9

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[9]Paul Tillich, "The Conception of Man in Existential Philosophy", Journal of Religion, XIX (July 1939), 208.

As well, Tillich's ideas about man's will and his nature tend to elucidate Gide's approach to freedom and evil:

> It is a matter of free choice. Innocence cannot be lost by a natural process but only by a spiritual decision. If this decision is made, man's existence as determined by this decision contradicts his essential nature. Man's freedom is surrendered to servitude; but servitude is not necessity. It is servitude only because it is the servitude of him who is free in his essential nature. Man does not cease to be man.10

Although Gide may never have used Tillich's precise words, he was convinced that man "is free in his essential nature" and that man loses his innocence "only by a spiritual decision". The best example of his belief in man's initially free and innocent nature is found in Theseus, especially as this character cannot even understand Oedipus' image of an originally sinful man let alone agree with it.

From this perhaps it may become apparent that a discussion of Gide's notion of freedom inevitably draws into itself the issue of authenticity, a topic to be developed a bit further on. The reason for this is that in Gide's view, man's nature is to be free; man begins his existence, before society or anything else, as a free entity. His self begins to be differentiated and acquire other characteristics only upon making a wilfull choice, a "spiritual decision". Man may create his own servitude, or other men

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10 Tillich, "The Conception of Man in Existential Philosophy", 209.

may do it to him if he allows, but he is not born in servitude -- it is not a given, whereas freedom is. Implied then is that man has a specified nature. He is initially free and innocent and possesses a will. He does not begin with nothing or with no characteristics and does not only acquire them through action. Man is not a blank slate, a tabula rasa, as in the sociologist's theories or the existentialist's notions, he is something to begin with.

Gide envisions freedom and the nature of man in dynamic terms, terms of tension, movement, mobility. His notions of change -- as when man's self moves forward, surpassing itself and going through myriad transformations in the process -- involve the break-down or death of conditions which previously held sway over the self.

But in all of these considerations about freedom, in Gide's view individual man, free and innocent at the genesis of his existence, wills his destiny and, as the critic Magny perceives, acts sinfully only when he fails to do so.[11] The writer would condone "l'abandon aux pentes de sa nature" provided the person had decided or willed to do so, therefore the critic is absolutely correct when she states that he requires that one live "selon une orienta-

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[11]Magny, "A propos du Thésée . . .", 87.

tion".[12] According to Magny, Gide's is an ethic of pure will:

> Mais une telle éthique enveloppe immédiatement une présupposition d'ordre métaphysique: elle implique que tout acte volontaire soit par là même bon, quel qu'en soit l'objet, le point d'application . . . .En d'autres termes l'éthique de la pure volonté suppose la non-réalité du mal, la non-existence du Diable.13

This makes sense when one recalls Gide's aesthetic posture, his belief that:

> La question morale pour l'artiste, n'est pas que l'Idée qu'il manifeste soit plus ou moins morale et utile au grand nombre; la question est qu'il la manifeste bien. -- Car tout doit être manifesté, même les plus funestes choses: "Malheur à celui par qui le scandale arrive," mais "Il faut que le scandale arrive."14

Yet to say that Gide assumes the non-reality of evil is to talk about his ethic of pure will in terms of a world view which by its very nature is in direct opposition, a world view in which evil exists regardless, with or without the use of man's will. From this perspective Gide appears lamentably naïve. From Gide's standpoint a view in which evil is a "given" in man, before he can act or use his will, is impossible to allow, because it says that man is not free in his essential nature.

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[12] Magny, "A propos du Thésée . . .", 87.

[13] Ibid., 90-91.

[14] Gide, Le Traité du Narcisse, p. 21.

Underlying all of Gide's assumptions about freedom is not only the notion that man is free to begin with, but also the idea that man qua man has reality, validity, and worth before and outside of society. His is indeed a remarkably highly evolved individualism on a striking number of levels of sophistication. The finest example of a free Gidian individual who ultimately triumphs is Philoctète whose success is described by Vinio Rossi:

> The virtue Philoctète enacts is one of self-abnegation for a fuller and more authentic expression of himself. Alone on his island, he expresses himself in total freedom and without the inhibiting presence of an audience. . . .Completely isolated, he is completely free to be; he is no longer a Greek but just a human being, free to create a non-ethnic identity for himself. Thus Philoctète not only argues in favor of his virtue but, by putting it into action, demonstrates its validity.15

And not only does he succeed by putting his virtue into action, he succeeds by maintaining an independence from the idea of virtue to which he dedicates his action. This means that Philoctète, in Gide's eyes, remains free and in control of his behavior as well as his destiny. In other words, virtue does not become an "idée fixe", a tyrannical force in Philoctète's life; he maintains a distance from the value system that he chooses to adopt. It does not hold sway over him completely or swallow him up.

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[15]Vinio Rossi, André Gide: The Evolution of an Aesthetic (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1967), pp. 149-150.

Thésée remains aloof enough to control his experience in the labyrinth and does not become the victim of any one logic or system of ideas. Thésée embodies the attainment to Gide's rendition of freedom; a highly ethical opportunist, Thésée's subtle humour glints in the sunlight and lends him contours as well as a peculiar kind of constant motion. In any case, both Philoctète and Thésée use their value systems but do not become sucked into them and victimized; they enact a controlled commitment to a value system and their willing capacity is thus always intact.

CHAPTER VII

FREEDOM IN ACTION: AUTHENTICITY

Though Gide prided himself on his ability and determination to draw every belief, every preconception into question, he made a number of basic assumptions about man which never really changed during his life. A discussion of the issue of authenticity in his works must necessarily be initiated by an examination of those assumptions.

Firstly, Gide could not accept the notion of original sin; in his view man begins with certain innate qualities and abilities, before anything else, before society. As in Philoctète, he is "virtuous" away from other men. Man's authenticity does not emanate from any other source but himself, not from God, not from society. In Thésée the idea comes through very clearly that man is not obliged to begin with sin (Oedipus' "original stain of some sort") or as being required to redeem himself through suffering. Thus, Gidian man is innately real and good before he begins interacting with other men. He does not begin as a sinner, and he should not be obliged to depend on "divine aid" to be liberated or to cope with the human condition. Thésée diplomatically declines to agree with Oedipus' belief that man needs divine aid to rid himself of sin:

> Mais ma pensée, sur cette route, ne saurait accompagner la tienne. Je reste enfant de cette terre et crois que l'homme, quel qu'il soit et si taré que tu le juges, doit faire jeu des cartes qu'il a.1

The very term "authentic" reveals a great deal about Gide's view of man and society. Society is the place where man begins to interact with other men, so it is the arena in which he is in danger of being false or inauthentic. Potential evil lies in the potential slackening of man's will -- the source of his freedom, reality and self-transcendence. The critic Magny describes it:

> En d'autres termes, le seul péché pour Gide, le péché capital et unique, c'est la démission de la volonté, le fait qu'elle renonce à être elle-même, c'est-à-dire à se tendre. Il n'y a d'autre mal que le laisser-aller, la paresse sous toutes ses formes, l'abandon aux pentes de sa nature, le refus de vivre selon une orientation, quelle qu'elle soit.2

When man allows a lack of the use of his will into his life he becomes insincere and false to himself and to others.

His "true" self is the one who wills his own destiny and is a paragon of self-discipline. Michel of L'Immoraliste seeks "l'être authentique" under layers of corruptive "civilization". What is Gide implying? That authenticity

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[1]Gide, Thésée, p. 122.

[2]Claude-Edmonde Magny, "A propos du Thésée . . .", 87.

lies within man at his inception and that inauthenticity arises when he conforms to conventional morality and indulges in rôle playing. Failure to transcend self or to experience freedom occurs when the protagonist submits to the exigencies of society, the institutions, or when he succumbs to the tyranny of a single force within himself, even if it is a force that may be considered admirable by many people. Michel's fascination with the roots of his existence, the pre-civilized Michel, is his tyranny. Alissa's obsession to attain to God dominates her being. And submission to the exigencies of society falsifies man, as best illustrated by Profitendieu in Les Faux-Monnayeurs.

The terms in which Gide conceptualizes his ideas reveal his implicit assumptions. Institutions tend to be false, tend to falsify and corrupt the "authentic" in man. In other words, individual man is always primary and most real, and those associations between men or among many people such as family or school are secondary and less real. One might ask what else he was to say or how else he was to say it. A conservative of the nineteenth century, or a person with a heritage from that era, sees man's "reality" in terms of what he derives from, or where he is placed in, society, because the fount of reality is society. To be more accurate, the sociologist Louis Dumont's term "holistic" would be superior to "conservative", because

holism focuses on society as the reality and is a more precise counter-part to individualism.[3] For instance, to say one's vision of the world is grounded in one's societal position, a notion with holistic roots, would be impossible for Gide to believe, since for him man's authenticity and reality stem from himself and nowhere else. When society "forces" roles upon the person, such as family, church, school, then indeed man only receives oppression from it, not identity, self-hood, or authenticity. The opposing notion sees society's bonds as supports and comforts, the means to fulfillment and happiness, the only milieu in which we can derive a sense of being someone. The critic Wallace Fowlie conceptualizes very completely the way in which Gide sees man versus society:

> . . .the problem is identical in all the books: how can an individual man live, think, behave, in accord with his instincts, desires and convictions, and yet remain within a society, as a member of a social group whose laws demand subservience to a standardized behavior and morality? If survival in such a world is cherished by an individual, must he abdicate those values that are most deeply personal to him, and accept less authentic values? Must he play the roles forced upon him by his family, his school, his city, and his country, when these roles contradict his own personality, and when by dint of playing them they will form a new and false personality, so contrived that the original self is irretrievably lost?4

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[3]Dumont, "The Modern Conception of the Individual", 14-17, 60-61.

[4]Fowlie, Climate of Violence, p. 123.

Gide himself states in his Journal of 1930,

> Le seul drame qui vraiment m'intéresse et que je voudrais toujours à nouveau relater, c'est le débat de tout être avec ce qui l'empêche d'être authentique, avec ce qui s'oppose à son intégrité, à son intégration.5

In Si le grain ne meurt he cries out, "Au nom de quel Dieu, de quel idéal me défendez-vous de vivre selon ma nature?" Having striven to submit to Christian morality, he experienced "un profond désarroi de tout [s]on être".[6]

In Gide's view there are not merely a few agents that keep the individual from being authentic, not just the person himself with his weaknesses or lack of discipline, not just certain institutions. All institutions require compromise and submission; any organized body of thought, political or intellectual in nature, any established morality or tradition requires submission and presents the danger of falsity on the part of man. As Guerard sums up the message in Les Nourritures Terrestres, written in 1897, "various forces -- moral and intellectual heritage, family, books, childhood, obligations, principles, habits -- conspire to impose on each man a mechanical and factitious self".[7] Justin O'Brien asserts that for Gide, ". . .the

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[5]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 995.

[6]Gide, Si le grain ne meurt, p. 287.

[7]Guerard, André Gide, p. 9.

gratuitous act is no more than a device for revealing the profound personality, the real one hidden beneath the social personality. That superficial, external self which each man presents to the world is a false or counterfeit image."[8]

In other words, man's social self is false and inauthentic in Gide's world view. This is self-evident from the numerous preceding quotations. But set along side the contemporary social scientist's view of man, Gide's individualistic posture may appear more striking. Implied in the writings of social scientists is the notion that man is but a social self, a "constellation of roles", to speak in their terms.[9] Man's very meaning, reality, validity, security, sanity -- his very humanity -- are derived from society. Alone, or before society's existence, he is nothing, a mere fiction. One might ask what a person with this notion of man would make of the drama Philoctète.

Philoctète successfully divests himself of all externally imposed identity, his Greekness, his fame as the possessor of the bow and arrows, and he achieves virtue, actually "a fuller and more authentic expression of him-

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[8]Justin O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide (London: Secker & Warburg, 1953), p. 193.

[9]Peter L. Berger, Invitation to Sociology (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 105.

self".[10] Away from other men, Philoctète claims he is completely able to be true to himself, to execute a totally disinterested action, and to manifest his authentic self. From this drama it appears that man is innately virtuous, without guile, and totally sincere before his contact with society. It seems that at the point of contact with the Other, a conflict occurs between the desire of the individual to manifest his freedom and authenticity up against the almost inevitable compulsion of the Other, or society, to foist upon him a stultifying, external identity.

By the time Gide is writing Les Faux Monnayeurs there emerges a new, or at least changing view of the Other as well as certain qualifications to his notion of authenticity. In other words, Gide's conception of the Other and his definition of authenticity are inextricably bound up, for they are both aspects of the same thing: a way of being in the world. His ideas about the Other and authenticity undergo some alterations by this point in his career, and though his individualism remains basically intact, his notion of authenticity becomes problematic. Always an adamant seeker of the roots of existence, a believer in specified, innate characteristics in man, Gide is simultaneously a seeker of the self's freedom, on-going emergence,

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[10] Vinio Rossi, André Gide: The Evolution of an Aesthetic, pp. 149-150.

and transcendence. Thus, there is the simultaneous belief in a defined nature of man and a belief in the need to struggle to surpass and transcend self. Indeed these are two aspects of an evolving individualism. They lie along the same continuum: a belief that reality resides within the individual man as opposed to the interrelationships among men. What occurs is that later in Gide's life the value of self-emergence gradually increases in importance over the value on finding "le substrat".

Edouard of Les Faux Monnayeurs succeeds in sensing the roots of his existence, but he responds negatively:

> Ce n'est que dans la solitude que parfois le substrat m'apparaît et qu j'atteins à une certaine continuité foncière; mais alors il me semble que ma vie s'alentit, s'arrête et que je vais proprement cesser d'être. Mon coeur ne bat que par sympathie; je ne vis que par autrui; par procuration, pourrais-je dire, par épousaille, et ne me sens jamais vivre plus intensément que quand je m'échappe à moi-même pour devenir n'importe qui.[11]

Able to grasp his true being for a moment, Edouard describes the experience as death-like, and goes on to consider that he may really live only in response to others and in their response to him. Clearly Gide is no longer as confident about man's independent self-reliance, perfectibility and indestructibility as he once was, but he always maintains that during interaction between people there is the danger

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[11] Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs (Paris: Gallimard, 1925), pp. 89-90.

of being insincere and inauthentic. And this means that the reality resides in the individual person, not in the interaction between people.

The fact is that Gide always feels a terrible need to dictate the grounds for the reality of his own self, and accompanying this need is the belief that all people desire and should be able to do this. It follows logically that the Other, other people, are necessarily obstacles to this self-realization in one's own terms. But man is obliged to live among men, who oblige him to be other than who he "really" is, that is, to live in their terms, yet he needs them in order to live and to derive a sense of self, and Gide never gives up the pursuit of a sense of self. Definition of the Other as well as of authenticity becomes problematic for Gide, but the terms in which he describes the dilemma of living in society are virtually always the same, always individualistic. And that is really the most important point to notice in this study: regardless of the gradual changes that may occur in Gide's assessment of existence, his perceptions are consistently in individualistic terms. Living with other human beings, loving them, being married to them or simply being related to them presents the likelihood of false behavior and the inauthentic expression of self. Edouard sees a good subject for a novel:

> . . .au bout de quinze ans, de vingt ans de vie conjugale, la décristallisation progressive, et réciproque des conjoints! Tant qu'il aime et veut être aimé, l'amoureux ne peut se donner pour ce qu'il est vraiment, et, de plus, il ne voit pas l'autre -- mais bien, en son lieu, une idole qu'il pare, et qu'il divinise, et qu'il crée.12

The results of fifteen or twenty years of married life Gide terms "decristallisation", meaning that the two human beings set about the gradual destruction and falsification of each other from the outset. The implication is that each one had been "crystallized" or whole at the beginning of marriage. There is definitely no gain, no accrued self-hood, by entering into conjugal life, not according to Gide. On the contrary, such close contact appears to have built into it a harsh, abrasive quality, as in certain chemical combinations where inevitable decomposition is in the offing.

As Gide experienced in his own life in regards to Madeleine, Edouard realizes that he is living totally in terms of Laura, of what she thinks and how she feels. "J'abandonne mon émotion et ne connais plus que la sienne." She is his sole reality referent:

> Il me paraît même que si elle n'était pas là pour me préciser, ma propre personnalité s'éperdrait en contours trop vagues; je ne me rassemble et ne me définis qu'autour d'elle.13

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[12] Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, pp. 91-92.

[13] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

He reflects on their relationship in which he concludes that neither he nor Laura truly dominated the situation, rather:

> . . .par un étrange croisement d'influences amoureuses, nos deux êtres, réciproquement, se déformaient. Involontairement, inconsciemment, chacun des deux êtres qui s'aiment se façonne selon l'exigence de l'autre, travaille à ressembler à cette idole qu'il contemple dans le coeur de l'autre . . . . Quiconque aime vraiment renonce à la sincérité.14

Each inadvertently dominated the other in the sense that, loving the other, each formed himself according to his interpretation of the other's image of him. In Gide's view this situation does not lead to selfhood, fulfillment and meaning, as an opposing view might assert; rather, it leads to insincerity and the falsification of the "real" self. Edouard and Laura each "deformed" the other, implying that at the beginning each was the owner of an acceptable and fully formed self. Conjugal love, any deep love it seems, has thus a predominately negative, compromising and distorting aspect for Gide. The destructive elements of close human relationships loom large. In fact, they are implicitly defined as comprising the nature of human interaction, just as man is defined as a being whose nature it is to have a free will.

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[14]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 88.

Edouard has the sudden realization that, ". . .je ne savais pas que ce n'était que par amour pour moi qu'elle s'intéressait passionnément à tout ce dont elle me voyait m'éprendre".[15] Filled with dismay and painful disappointment, he sees that in all of Laura's spiritual and intellectual development alongside of him, nothing of it responded to a basic need in her nature, nothing was undertaken as a giving in to some intimate personal need, but only as a means to be near him. What does not occur to Edouard is that Laura's deepest need may have been to manifest her love for him, that she may have been manifesting her authenticity to the fullest extent when she became involved in things that she could share with Edouard. He on the other hand is so sure of her falsity that he predicts that the day will come when her "true being" will reappear and that time will take off all those "borrowed clothes", of feigned interested, role playing and pretense.

Implied in all facets of this world view is that man has something to start with inside before he ever has relationships with other people. This is in direct opposition to the tabula rasa view of man in which there is nothing in man until he starts interrelating with other

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[15]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 88.

humans; until that time he is a nothing, a blank. Through interaction with others he receives or builds a self that would otherwise not have the opportunity to exist. But this is the process of falsification in the eyes of our writer, for man has an authentic self at the outset, a self which must maintain its truth and integrity throughout all the experiences, pressures, and temptations involved in living among men. That is the challenge the human condition embodies. Rather than to see man's aim as being to acquire a self from life's lessons and experiences, he sees man's ultimate goal as to preserve his initial integrity throughout all the hammering and chipping away that life does to a person's soul. But since Gide always believed that truth emanates equally as much from the process of change, death and re-birth, he frequently experienced some doubts as to the nature of sincerity -- the putting into action of authenticity.

CHAPTER VIII

AUTHENTICITY IN ACTION: SINCERITY

Gide defines sincerity as man's authenticity and freedom put into action. A sincere act is an act of will not affected by outside forces such as society, the institutions, conventional morality, etc., but emanating solely from the autonomous individual. Being adamantly anti-institutional and so completely individualistic, Gide was fascinated by the idea of a pure act, one done for its own sake and for nothing outside itself. He says, "Nos actes les plus sincères sont aussi les moins calculés . . . ."[1] In 1928 he stated that he did not believe in the gratuitous act, an act not motivated by anything, and that there are no effects without causes.[2] Justin O'Brien may very likely be correct when he posits the notion that Gide used the gratuitous act as a device, a means to uncover the profound and real personality hidden beneath the social one.[3] Implied of course is that the social self is superficial, external and not real, and that socially oriented action, such as

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[1]Gide, Si le grain ne meurt, p. 369

[2]Gide, "Fait-Divers", Nouvelle Revue Française, XXX (juin 1928), 841-842.

[3]Justin O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide, p. 193.

role playing, is insincere action. The "gratuitous act", on the other hand, is Gide's device for illuminating in his art an act of man's free, pure will, an act not dictated by personal self interest, not obeying ordinary laws of motivation, and free from secondary implications. Such was his intense desire to strip away from man's action all forces but one, man's will. Such was his conviction that all those other forces were outside of man, external to him, secondary, and lacking in the reality and legitimacy that man's inner, unaffected motivation embodies. As Justin O'Brien phrases Gide's valuing of the gratuitous act:

> Apparently a deviation from the individual's normal development, an irrelevance, on the contrary it pierces through the stiff exterior and reveals the true personality beneath. Hence it often becomes the one essential act of his career, the only really relevant one.[4]

Examples are given such as Philoctète's giving up of the bow and arrows and King Candaules' sharing of his wife with Gyges to illustrate how through the single, unusual act the spectator comes to know the man as he comes to know himself, to assert his individuality, consequently "integrating himself".[5] O'Brien's description serves two purposes: first, it is a fair paraphrasal of some of Gide's views, and second, he furnishes us with a vocabulary used by the people who hold

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[4]Justin O'Brien, Portrait of André Gide, p. 192.

[5]Ibid., p. 193.

the opposing view and who find ludicrous everything Gide stands for. For these people, the unexpected, initially inexplicable act is exactly as O'Brien says, "a deviation from the individual's normal development". However, it is not irrelevant to them, because society and the norm are their sources of reality and legitimacy; the "deviant" is difficult to account for and thus becomes problematic, not irrelevant. The use of the unusual act for Gide is to "pierce the exterior and reveal the true inner personality". The opposition sees the social personality as the true one and thus sees deviant action not as sincere, but false. Not only that, the unusual act is not the assertion of a man's real self and not the time of integration. Rather, the man has faltered, gone out of step with society, and is disintegrating.

In sum, it is not the efficacy of Gide's philosophical handling of the gratuitous act that is important in this discussion. In any case he is quoted as not believing in its reality per se. It is the purpose for which he uses it, it is the world view revealed by his handling of it that is valuable, especially in contrast with the opposition's approach to unusual, inexplicable action.

It is now more possible to see with clarity the subtle changes which occur in Gide's dealing with the issues of authenticity, freedom, and sincerity -- his re-evaluation of the Other. Marriage and the family are

situations in which people act as abrasives upon each other, where they inadvertently or purposefully cause each other terrible distortions. Edouard concludes from his experience with Laura, "Quiconque aime vraiment renonce à la sincérité".[6] Shortly afterwards he cries out:

> Que cette question de la sincérité est irritante! Sincérité! Quand j'en parle, je ne songe qu'à sa sincérité à elle. Si je me retourne vers moi, je cesse de comprendre ce que ce mot veut dire. Je ne suis jamais que ce que je crois que je suis -- et cela varie sans cesse, de sorte que souvent, si je n'étais là pour les accointer, mon être du matin ne reconnaîtrait pas celui du soir. Rien ne saurait être plus différent de moi, que moi-même.[7]

This is much different from Philoctète's assertion that he can only experience a pure and really disinterested action away from society.[8] Though keeping one's sincerity intact despite hourly inconsistency becomes troublesome, neither character has ceased to define himself to himself. Edouard's sincerity is problematic, because it varies from morning to night; it is volatile, but he continues to be the repository of his own reality, not the Other. What changes seems to be Gide's notions of individual self-containment and self-reliance; they are not so simple and direct, not such "givens" anymore. Nor is he so convinced that an

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[6] Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 88.

[7] Ibid., p. 89.

[8] Gide, Philoctète, p. 117.

individual can succeed in being totally sincere if he simply puts out the extreme effort of his will.

From Philoctète's island of ice and snow where he achieves virtue in a desired isolation the focus turns to confrontation between people in marriage, family and love relationships where it becomes extraordinarily difficult and complex to remain unaffected and self-sufficient. Gide clearly does not experience joy or satisfaction from the alterations in his view of human relationships revealed especially in Les Faux-Monnayeurs. His "discovery" of human interdependence is perplexing to him. The point to realize is that though Gide's notions about the human condition may metamorphose to some extent by the 1930's, his response to those new ideas is consistent with the way he always views the world; living with human beings will always be more potentially compromising, oppressive, falsifying, etc., than fulfilling, self-building, or happiness-creating. Perhaps the change in approach could be described as the realization that people are more in danger of being torn apart by life's compromising situations than he had originally conceived as a young man. But that those situations, such as love, marriage and the family could be the avenue to self-fulfillment and self-integration was always inconceivable to Gide.

Though Gide may rail against such problems as decentralization and volatility of self, they fit into his

conception of mobility and change and definitely do not violate it. All that has been said is that the Other takes on problematic proportions as the mature Gide writes Les Faux-Monnayeurs. But the individualistic frame of reference remains intact. His approach to volitization of the self, to sincerity as problematic in love relationships and to society as a falsifier and oppressor continues to develop in the same direction, with minor alterations.

A crucial factor in his consistency of outlook can be found in his conception of mobility and change. The most predominant characteristic of Gide's personal individualism is his involuntary repulsion in the face of any type of structuring or organizing of human action into patterns. For rather than see this as a good thing for man, or a way to achieve order, or a necessary condition to allow people to live nicely together, he sees habits and patterns as behaviour which falsifies and distorts man, destroys his dignity and integrity, and prevents him from the progressive experience of self-realization, self-transcendence, and increasing consciousness. Put more simply, he sees that a person's unity can only be achieved through autonomous and spontaneous action, never through group or repetitive action. Germaine Brée says of his search for the term "gratuitous": "He wanted a word to designate precisely

those acts that break with established patterns . . . ."[9] Habits and other structured action are seen as components in the making of a fabricated self that covers over an individual's true self. Change and mobility are the ways through which to avoid being encased and stultified by a false personality. They represent hope, liberation, and the Good to Gide the man and the artist. Change and motion liberate man from the crushing weight of social convention and tradition.

Thus, sincerity is basically defined in terms of mobility and spontaneity, and sincerity is at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of Gide's individualism. Society's very existence rests on the reliability and predictability of its members; their norms and expectations of each other are the structures and supports which allow the growth and survival of the group. But in Gide's mind, institutions, education, conscience and duties ("socialization" is a synonym), all conspire against men to produce artificial selves. He put a value on "being oneself", as well as on maintaining "disponibilité" and self-detachment, for these lead to self-fulfillment. The writer placed an extremely high level of importance on initial action and felt extra-

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[9]Brée, Gide, p. 30.

ordinary repugnance towards repetitive action. As he states in his Journal:

> Tout ce qui a eu lieu en nous, ne fût-ce qu'une fois, peut reparaître, le temps y aidant, la volonté s'y taisant.10

Repeating an action is seen as the giving up of one's free will, which in the Gidian view is the worst possible transgression. Everything outside of us conspires to weaken our will, says the narrator in Paludes:

> Et c'est justement là ce qui m'irrite -- c'est que tout le dehors, les lois, les moeurs, les trottoirs aient l'air de décider nos récidives et de s'attribuer notre amour des reprises.11

The protagonist in La Tentative Amoureuse complains of the oppression of the past on his soul:

> . . .j'ai souhaité de moi quelque éclosion plus parfaite. J'ai souhaité d'être heureux, comme si je n'avais rien d'autre à être; comme si le passé pas toujours sur nous ne triomphe; comme si la vie n'était pas faite de l'habitude de sa tristesse, et demain la suite d'hier, -- comme si ne voici pas qu'aujourd'hui mon âme s'en retourne déjà vers ses études coutumières, sitôt délivrée de son rêve.12

The critic Joseph Brennan likens Gide to Bergson, since both felt the tension between man and society so

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[10]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 87.

[11]Gide, Paludes, p. 123.

[12]Gide, La Tentative Amoureuse, p. 31.

keenly. In Brennan's words, they each saw:

> . . .the internal ethic of the authentic self against conformity to legislative morality, the freedom of vital impulse contrasted with anti-individualistic social constraint. Each in his own way, metaphysician and novelist are drawn to the idea of mobility, the creative novelty of life versus static mechanism, the automatism of routine.13

Bergson perceived that society constrains the individual and that consequently he should learn to "set up as a judge and wrest from it a moral transformation".[14] Gide certainly was not as assertive about changing society, being more interested in constructing his own personal ethic in order to make his existence tolerable and meaningfully built around "some orientation". But both he and Bergson were in agreement that the individual should be a legitimate judge of society and the best source of energy for changing it.

The final aspect of Gide's concept of sincerity has to do with the non-acceptance of ignorance. As Germaine Brée rightfully asserts, Gidian sincerity has certainly more involved in it than mere candor or a strict adherence to ethical principles.

> All Gide's work asserts that life and rigid ethical systems are incompatible and explores the devious forms of self-deception that lurk beneath the mask of candor . . . .Sincerity, as Gide understood it, consisted of first in never allowing himself to evade facts, and more particularly those facts

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[13]Joseph Gerard Brennan, Three Philosophical Novelists, (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 94-95.

[14]Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Religion and

> which elude reason, in never refusing to go behind the scenes.15

When one acts sincerely, then he is not engaged in purposefully ignoring the right way. In Les Faux-Monnayeurs "le diable amusé" watches Vincent put the key in the lock at Lillian's apartment.[16] Germaine Brée tells us that Gide called the "devil's share" in life "all that in any existence eludes understanding".[17] What this implies, and perhaps correctly, is that Gide really believed in the initial goodness of man who remains that way if he maintains his free will, and that evil resides outside of man and consists in that area which is beyond his rational comprehension. One statement which bears this out is in the following passage:

> Doctrine du péché: étant capable de tout le mal n'en rien faire, et voilà le bien; volonté privatrice; je n'aime point cela. J'aime que la cécité pour le mal vienne de l'éblouissement du bien; sinon vertu est ignorance -- pauvreté.18

Gide, similar to many of his peers, was fascinated

Morality, trans. R. A. Andra and C. Brereton (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1954), p. 100.

[15]Brée, Gide, p. 192.

[16]Gide, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, p. 70.

[17]Brée, Gide, p. 193.

[18]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 88.

by the mysterious qualities, the hidden traits in man, otherwise known as the realm of the subconscious, as it is referred to in present-day psychology and psychiatry. Accounting for evil action was not always simple, Gide discovered, just as for example accounting for "deviant behaviour" is sometimes difficult for the social scientist. When he calls "the devil's share in life" that realm which eludes rational understanding, then he might well be criticized for removing the onus from man in a rather unrealistic way. Magny is probably accurate when she perceives that most likely had Gide taken evil fully into account, his art form would have crumbled[12] from the strain. But that is actually not a fair accusation when we are reminded of his notion of sincerity, or at least of its basic aspects. A sincere act is an initial, free, spontaneous act, a vital impulse of the will which is free from the outset. As well, man begins pure and virtuous; he does not receive his virtue from interaction with society. In fact, he must struggle to keep his virtue in spite of society and may experience and perpetrate evil if he fails. We might ask how else someone with that assessment of man's nature could account for evil except by saying it resides in the realm beyond our understanding.

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[19]Magny, "A propos du Thésée . . .", 93-94.

CHAPTER IX

SINCERITY ACHIEVED: PROGRESS

The novelist's approach to the notion of progress lends an interesting twist to his varied responses to the problem of evil. Gide uses the idea of evil in several ways to accomplish a number of different aims, but underlying all is the implication that evil is instrumental in the promotion of "progress". As a very young man he writes:

> Car tout doit être manifesté, même les plus funestes choses: "Malheur à celui par qui le scandale arrive," -- mais "Il faut que le scandale arrive."[1]

So the greatest value for the young Gide is to "manifest", that is, for man to go beyond himself by revealing a bit of the unknown and by increasing consciousness and awareness. That is apparently what he means by "progress". Implied seems to be the thought that the primary value is on man's manifesting; only secondarily and inevitably pernicious acts may be performed in the process. Evil is sometimes made synonomous with the free act. Gide implies in a Journal entry of May, 1927, that when an individual exercises his curiosity he may become lost, but without perdition of the individual no progress would be possible.[2]

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[1]Gide, Le Traité du Narcisse, p. 21.

[2]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 835.

At other moments evil is synonomous with a break from conventional morality. Guerard says that Gide insisted on the educative value of what men normally call evil, since it can be an independent, insubordinate, and spontaneous act; however dangerous in itself, it promises a possible progress to a different state of being.[3] In other words, the act which breaks with accepted behavior may permit a man to transcend himself, provided he does not remain in a constant state of lawlessness. Says Guerard: "Gide believed in progress, but where others sought progress through provisional order, he preached provisional anarchy".[4] While he strongly believed that men are required to live according to some orientation, he saw that progress was only possible through change, and change meant a break from the past, a release from the constraints of traditional patterns and institutions. But these two elements of change and orientation are not contradictory. Underlying both is the value on the individual's innate free will. Therefore, Gide's orientation was always in terms of change; he constructed an orientation out of the value on mobility. While this was logical to him, it appeared paradoxical to men who, like Guerard, envision it as "provisional anarchy". Perhaps

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[3]Guerard, André Gide, pp. 31-32. (my underlining.)

[4]Ibid., p. 31.

this is because they view established society as the state of order and the time of change as the era of chaos between periods of organized living.

A general view opposing Gide's might see release from tradition as the very cause of social and political chaos and personal disorganization, the very cause of breakdown and regression. Gide saw submission to external authority and conventional morality, the suppliers of order in the other view, as the very cause of an individual's breakdown of will and the disintegration of self, resulting in chaos and lack of orientation.

Underlying this opposition is the issue as to whether man is good or not good to begin with. If his innate characteristics are favorable, then indeed society may be seen to be a corrupting force, an obstruction in the path of man's progress and improvement. If innately he possesses more potential for bad deeds than for good ones, then of course society may be seen to be his only hope for guidance and salvation. Thanks to Freud, one image of man emerged which portrayed him as a creature with a strong motivation to be selfish and greedy who needed guidance and constraint from society in order to mould and shape him into an acceptable being. Implied in this notion is that if society succeeds in its task of human sculpture, then man will improve; but if society fails, so will man. For Gide, the onus was upon man, not society.

In Le Prométhée mal enchaîné with great irony Gide plays with the ideas of progress and man's reason for being. He has Prométhée declare:

> Ce que je sais, c'est que, non satisfait de leur donner la conscience de leur être, je voulus leur donner aussi raison d'être. Je leur donnai le feu, la flamme et tous les arts dont une flamme est l'aliment. Echauffant leurs esprits en eux je fis éclore la dévorante croyance au progrès. . . .Non plus croyance au bien, mais malade espérance du mieux. La croyance au progrès, Messieurs, c'était leur aigle. Notre aigle est notre raison d'être, Messieurs . . . .Je n'aimais plus les hommes, c'était ce qui vivait d'eux que j'aimais.5

His tone is mocking as he calls man's belief in progress a "sick hope for the better". Without taking into consideration his "Préface" to St. Exupéry's Vol de Nuit the reader might get the impression that Gide sees that kind of belief in progress as tyrannical and unacceptable. But in the "Préface" Gide reveals great admiration for the "true" heroism, the subordination and self-sacrifice of the central character. Rivière, he protests, is not dehumanized.[6] On the contrary he rises to a superhuman virtue, surpasses himself and achieves an impressive "noblesse". An echo can be heard of Gide's early call to "manifest" hidden truths

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[5]Gide, Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, pp. 92-93.

[6]Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Vol de Nuit, préface d'André Gide, ed. F. A. Suffrey (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1952), p. 1.

from his writings on aesthetics and morality. Prométhée's voice is present as well, as Gide says:

> Que l'homme ne trouve point sa fin en lui-même, mais se subordonne et sacrifie à je ne sais quoi, qui le domine et vit de lui.7

Like Prométhée the novelist professes a great love for that which lives through and on man, over man himself. He defends Rivière's hatred of man's imperfections, protesting that the hero works against them, not against man himself. So enamoured of Rivière's heroism is Gide that he never seems to notice the extreme impersonality and the undertones of fascism that run through Vol de Nuit. It may appear rather strange, except that historically it was at the era of Vol de Nuit's publication that great disillusionment was emerging in the Western world. Ferociously Gide clung to the belief, the prescriptive belief in man's perfectibility. This means that man should manifest and surpass himself by stretching his will to its greatest capacity, and as a consequence he should enjoy spiritual and even material progress. Gide simply could not see it any other way.

He was not a man of hopelessness, anxiety, or anger at the human condition; in fact, he possessed an "innate optimism" that Brée says "led him to trust that each human being would sift out for himself what was best, given the

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[7]Saint-Exupéry, Vol de Nuit, p. 2.

circumstances".[8] She contends his central theme is not torment but happiness and quotes him as saying that if he had been capable of anxiety he would not have been able to write and also that people criticized him for not being unhappy.[9] Brée claims Gide's literary world reflects some of the austerity, formality, naïveté and optimism of the "precarious golden age of the early 1900's".[10]

Indeed, it seems he did tend towards a positive outlook and truly was not capable of experiencing the feeling of anxiety as it is interpreted in the present. We must remind ourselves that one of the basic reasons for this lack of despair was, to put it simply, that Gidian man began with some innate characteristics, with an innate self, while modern existential man begins with nothing and only becomes when he acts. The issue for Gide was how to act in the world in order to become. The other main issue for Gide was how to "manifest" the hidden truths in ourselves in the best fullest way. The question was not whether or not man possessed these truths within himself, but how to get them out.

In a way it might be quite clear to say that Gide's notion of progress is the other side of the coin to his

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[8] Brée, Gide, p. 2.

[9] Ibid., p. 18.

[10] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

aesthetic outlook. Most striking is his definition of human history: "L'histoire de l'homme, c'est celle des vérités que l'homme a délivrées".[11] We must recall that he wrote:

> Les choses ont besoin de nous pour être, ou pour se sentir être, et sans nous restent dans l'attente.12

Clearly human beings have a specified nature in Gide's mind; and they truly have the ability to give existence to things. More importantly, when they succeed in giving those things waiting in the unknown their thoughts, increased awareness and consciousness will occur. This is Gide's version of progress: a time when, successfully revealing the dark and hidden, man transcends self and reaches a new and different state. That is advancement and improvement. As with the philosophes of the Enlightenment, Gide's change meant progress, and progress meant a release from the irrational constraints of tradition and the liberation of the free, autonomous individual. Being free, man would automatically experience material and social progress, but especially for Gide, moral and ethical perfection.

The writer was simply not capable of envisioning a world without progress:

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[11] Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 91.

[12] Ibid., p. 93.

> C'est ainsi que peu à peu l'humanité se délivre. Mais si peu qu'elle ne s'en aperçoit point.
>
> Et pourtant ne t'en va pas croire au progrès sinon pour ceci que:
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> N'importe quelle marche, fût-ce celle d'une écrevisse, ne peut s'imaginer qu'en avant, et même quand tu tournerais toutes tes faces vers lui, le passé ne s'en irait pas moins dans le passé. Ce qui est fait n'est plus à refaire.13

Forward movement in man's history is a given, especially since the opportunity to experience improvement rests with the exercise of one's free will, not in abstinence from evil action. Implicit in his world view is the belief in a "secret law of progress", as Hughes claims, as well as in a certain logic to human events and in man's ability to create and control his own destiny. Compared with the existentialist's world of absurdity and purposelessness, Gide's universe looks quite hopeful.

CONCLUSION

It is therefore contended that individualism is definitely a more basic theme to characterize the world view in Gide's life and art than paradox, contradiction, or any other concept denoting the struggle of opposing forces within a single being. Many of the writer's so-called antinomies lose their complex and vital appearance when regarded through the dimension of individualism.

Critics discuss a conflict in Gide between his ascetically inclined spirit and his homosexually inclined flesh.[1] There may be some small merit to this idea when his relationship with Madeleine is taken into account, for he held her in great esteem and keenly regretted causing her such extreme suffering. But aside from his constant longing to stop hurting his wife, the connection between his spiritual and sexual selves possesses a complementary character.

Homosexuality is actually an extremely individualistic response to human relationships. Through Edouard of Les Faux-Monnayeurs Gide reveals his disparaging attitude towards

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[1]Gide, Journals, 1889-1913, p. 5.

love and family relationships. Marriage partners "de-crystallize" and distort each other over the years until the original people are unrecognizable. Experiments in living and interrelating with others are interpreted more as an endurance test than as a means to happiness and fulfillment. Role playing is seen to be an inevitable requirement in any relationship; lovers, husbands and wives, parents and children, all require that one enact a role from a particular position in a structure. Gide despised role playing, "taking parts", even assigning "parts" and characteristics to the characters in his works. He saw them all as orphans until the very end when he tacked on particularities and features. He complains in Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs:

> . . .mais, dès qu'il faut les vêtir, fixer leur rang dans l'échelle sociale, leur carrière, le chiffre de leurs revenus; dès surtout qu'il faut les avoisiner, leur inventer des parents, une famille, des amis, je plie boutique. Je vois chacun de mes héros, vous l'avouerais-je, orphelin, fils unique, célibataire, et sans enfant.[2]

Common in homosexuality is the hatred of playing a role, as if to copy the assigned ones in the heterosexual relationship and thus lend to it legitimacy or superiority. Rather, a supreme value is placed upon person-to-person contact devoid of all labels, so that the basis for love

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[2]Gide, Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p. 57.

and friendship is an appreciation of the person's special, individual traits.[3] A value system of this kind may be seen as highly revolutionary in the sense that if it were to become prevalent, the institutions of marriage and the family would be in jeopardy. We must recall Gide's hatred of both marriage and the family and how he also attacked the Church as well by pointing out that Christ taught "par son exemple et par sa voix à n'avoir plus de possessions sur la terre, plus de lieu où reposer sa tête".[4] From a careful scrutiny of the Gospels, Gide claimed there was no word of Christ that strengthened or even authorized the family and marriage. In fact he concluded that they negated them, since Christ relentlessly recruited disciples and had no respect for the dead, for mother and brothers, etc.

Heterosexual experiences require possession of the Other or by the Other, either arrangement denying the free will and thus falsifying the person. Family membership assigns one to a "place". Gide's prodigal son explains to his mother that he left home not to seek happiness but to

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[3]As it was explained in a talk given by Dr. Kameny of the Washington chapter of the Mattechin Society on "Under Attack", a C.T.V. production in late 1969.

[4]Gide, Journal, 1889-1939, p. 96.

find out who he was, to which she responds that he is ". . .fils de tes parents, et frère entre tes frères",[5] an unsatisfactory and meaningless answer, in Gide's view. Church membership requires one to refer questions to a higher authority, an impossible, will-destroying task. Keeping his free will intact was Gide's greatest aim, we must remember, which he saw as incredibly hard to do in love, family or religion, all structure-ridden situations. So we must conclude that Gide's spiritual and physical tendencies complemented rather than conflicted with each other.

O'Brien suggests that there was antinomy between "life and art" for the writer, an inconsistency between how Gide lived -- his ethics -- and what he created aesthetically.[6] On the contrary, they are inextricably bound up. Both rest solidly on an individualistic base. His belief in the individual's reality and free will, as well as in man's innate goodness and initial innocence and his potential for improvement and self-betterment cannot be overlooked in any piece of his work, any treatise, or in any act of his personal life. Aesthetics and morality, that is, how to act in the world, are the same thing in the writer's mind,

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[5]Gide, Le Retour de l'enfant prodigue précédé de cinq autres traités, p. 193.

[6]Gide, The Journals of André Gide, p. xiv.

and man's duty and life purpose is to "manifest" the special truth which resides in him alone, to subordinate himself to the Idea that he represents.

Incapable of being lured by the Church into participation in its realm, he saw both Catholicism and Protestantism as a betrayal of the original Christian ideal. A brief encounter with Communism ended in disaster, for Gide so believed that "Each artist is necessarily an individualist, however strong his Communist convictions may be and his attachment to the party".[7] Though he loved and esteemed Madeleine, he could not live a lie or be dishonest with her. Though he saw himself as an artist and believed in certain aesthetic values, he could not hesitate to write a criticism of his artistic milieu in Paludes. Underlying all the criticism and iconoclasm that often appeared wantonly destructive to so many was a supreme faith in man's potential for moral and ethical perfection and the belief that only each one of us could be the agent as well as judge of this quality. Only from within each individual could the "élan" spring.

There was no true conflict between Gide's desire for expression and restraint. Both were equally desirable and valid, provided the individual maintained strict discipline and total control of his will, for in that manner, he would

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[7]Gide, The Journals of André Gide, p. xii.

always be manifesting his authentic being. Again we may notice that the view rests on a solid base of individualism, and does not contain any trace of struggle. His direction was generally towards commitment, but in an extremely particular and individualistic sense: let us involve ourselves in causes, but let us not become enslaved, victims of any one tyrannical logic or ideology. Let us take action but stay in control. That may have the appearance of contradiction, if commitment is seen as a state in which detachment is not possible. But Gide made detachment a mandatory principle for acting in the world in order to maintain integrity and freedom.

In other words, underlying his values on commitment, realism, experimentation, expression, freedom, and so forth, as well as the values on detachment, a modern romanticism, classicism, restraint, discipline, and so forth, is the value on man's retaining the power over his own free will and destiny. The afore-mentioned sets of values would clash only if an individual experienced a total domination by one set or another, thus compromising the man's entire view of the world, as the happy group in the centre of the Minotaur's labyrinth underwent. In contrast, Thésée held fast to Ariadne's thread, kept his head clear, accomplished his mission, and felt no commitment to Ariadne upon his exit from the labyrinth. Such is the way we should address life. Thésée's ability to judge situations and make vital decisions

is portrayed in glowing terms. Skilled in knowing how hard to hang on to a situation and to what length, Thésée is the admirable hero in Gide's eyes.[8] Germaine Brée lends striking clarity to this issue when she says there is a commitment to noncommitment in Gide:

> One can be grateful to Gide for stubbornly warning against all forms of doctrinaire contagion and for pointing out the dangers we run when we fail to think and decide for ourselves. There is a commitment to noncommitment in Gide . . . .Gide's wisdom proposes a dynamic form of individual opportunism kept within bounds by a sense of human dignity: one should follow one's inclination, but, he insisted, upward.9

Using individualism to characterize Gide's view of the world indeed collapses a good number of the contradictions often attributed to him. But that does not alter the fact that there truly is a Gidian tension ever-present in his life and art from which comes a well-spring of vitality. It stems from his individualistic stance against society, organized or patterned behavior, and the Other. All are interpreted as challenges or burdens to the individual and never as the avenue to self-realization, mainly because man is an integrated being, a someone _a priori_ to all the rest, and must struggle to maintain his original integrity, that

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[9]Brée, _Gide_, p. 2.

is, the harmonious integration of his goodness, innocence, and free will. Even if, as is true, later on Gide experiences great difficulty in maintaining his ethic of sincerity, because, as he has Edouard complain, his self in the morning is not the same as the one in the evening, this does not alter the fact that his basic stance is individualistic. By the writing of Les Faux-Monnayeurs it is apparent that Gide has begun to regard the self more in terms of action and volatility and less favourably in terms of defined characteristics and of a specified nature of man. But it is important to realize first, that he never gives up his belief in innate characteristics in man -- in a "given" or a priori self -- and second, that seeing self in terms of action, as he did more and more, is a logical extrapolation from his ethic of mobility and is not in contradiction with his individualism.

If he possibly becomes less certain about man's ability to maintain total sincerity and laments bitterly the difficulties which the Other presents, this is in fact an individualistic response to a modern dilemma which the existentialists began to deal with also, but in another manner altogether. First, there was the belief that there was no reality or utility in talking about a self with specified characteristics. Then, a new and positive assessment was made of the potential in man's relationship to the communality. Neither of these positions were ever

to appeal to Gide, even though he was to live twenty years into the new "era". Though he dealt with such problems as being-in-the-world, freedom and authenticity, which may of course be seen to be an anticipation of existentialist preoccupations, his search does not culminate in their conclusions about the self or the communality. For as was pointed out in the chapter on authenticity, in Gide's world view man has something to start with inside before he ever has relationships with other people. He has an authentic self at the outset, a self which must maintain its truth and integrity throughout all the experiences, pressures, and temptations involved in living among men. That is the way in which Gide interprets the human condition: man's ultimate goal is to preserve his initial integrity and freedom, withstanding all the hammering and chipping away by life, and simultaneously to try to progress to a different state of being, to transcend himself.

One final consideration has to do with the use of Gide's early and later works in this study. The extensive use of the earlier works, such as Philoctète and the other treatises, as well as Les Cahiers d'André Walter, and Paludes, was in an attempt to establish and then maintain in the reader's mind first, the roots of Gide's individualism, and second, what the author meant to say in actual philosophical terms concerning his views on individual man and society.

And certainly as a result there are more explicit statements of individualistic conviction from those sources since the early works have an appreciably more philosophical or moral tone than later ones.

It might be construed that the study relied more heavily on the writer's early works to make a convincing case for individualism except for one very important fact. Within the pivotal chapter on authenticity, as well as all along the way where the key concepts of Gide's view were being examined, L'Immoraliste, Les Faux-Monnayeurs and Thésée furnished most of the illustrations. They thus became the sources for the most crucial examples of Gide's implicit but less philosophical, individualistic ideas, ideas which alter very little throughout Gide's career. What does change appreciably is the scope of his awareness as can be noticed from the shocking narrowness of his view in 1890 compared with a tremendous widening and lengthening of vision by Les Faux-Monnayeurs. But his basic response to the human condition and his initial interpretation of human interaction do not change much at all. Early or late works, explicit or implicit declaration, Gide believed that being-in-the-world was a compromising situation from the start and a storm to weather as best one could.

So though there are more numerous and explicit statements from the early philosophical and moralizing works in this study, the less obvious messages in the later

works play just as crucial a role in illustrating the development of Gide's individualistic stance. In fact they tend to more successfully reveal the contours of the writer's posture, since they were of a symbolic nature and were not analytical or ideational as were his early overt attempts to formulate a value system.

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