

PHENOMENOLOGY AND
LITERARY INTERPRETATION

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By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: In this thesis I am concerned to reveal the limitations of both the theory and the practice of contemporary Anglo-American literary criticism. In the first part of the thesis I try to show to what extent these limitations have been determined by prevailing "Cartesian" interpretations of man and human nature. In the second part of the thesis I introduce Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of man as an alternative to Cartesianism. I suggest that an approach to literature grounded in this understanding of man would not be subject to the same limitations as one based on traditional Cartesianism. In the third part of the thesis I try to substantiate this claim concretely by exploring some of Heidegger's themes in greater detail and by tracing their relationship to literature.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will centre upon the subject of "interpretation", and more specifically upon literary interpretation. The motive behind the choice of topic is a marked dissatisfaction with current methods of literary commentary which tend to emphasise the structure and the form of a literary work to the exclusion of its immediate "significance" for the individual. The movement is essentially away from the universality problem. I suspect that this is because no satisfactory solution has ever been formulated to the questions: why do literary works move us? and, what makes literature possible? The aim of the thesis is to show that such questions have remained unanswered because they have been asked within a philosophical tradition which has not been capable of producing an adequate philosophy of man, and his relationship to the world. This tradition I shall speak of as "Cartesian"¹ and it continues through Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume to contemporary British philosophers like A.J.Ayer, Gilbert Ryle and P.F.Strawson. I hope to demonstrate that

¹When I speak of a philosopher as "Cartesian" I am not suggesting that such a one holds precisely or approximately the same philosophical position as Descartes on particular issues. Nevertheless, despite any explicit rejection of Descartes' conclusions, such a philosopher, I believe, is "Cartesian" in the sense that he takes Descartes as his starting point and "modifies" rather than rejects strictly Cartesian ways of looking at and interpreting man and the world. He is "Cartesian" because his own philosophical position is consistent with and the logical outcome of Descartes' initial selection, formulation and treatment of the issues.

an approach to literature grounded in an understanding of man as "Dasein",¹ as Heidegger analyses him in Being and Time would better equip the literary critic to account for the lasting significance and the very possibility of a work of literature. My quarrel, therefore, is not so much with the literary commentator, as with the philosopher who supports him.

¹"Dasein" literally means "there-being". Heidegger uses the expression whenever he wants to refer to "man", "human nature", or "human being". The connotations of the word "Dasein" are, of course, rather more obscure and these will be dealt with in Part II of the thesis.

PART I

Heidegger's philosophy of Dasein is posited in contrast with the more prevalent Cartesian interpretation of man, wherein man is regarded essentially as a "rational animal", a subtle combination of mind and matter. It is within this tradition that social scientists, psychologists and sociologists have attempted, in turn, to interpret man and his behaviour, and to throw some light upon our concept of "human nature". And it is against the background of their conclusions and "discoveries", that the literary commentator does his work. Naturally, the status we give to a literary work and the nature of man's relationship to it will be largely determined by what we think a man essentially "is", what we think regulates his behaviour, and what we believe is the significance of his projects. Where man is understood as an aggregate of genetically and environmentally conditioned responses to external stimuli (as he is often understood today) it would certainly be foolish of the critic to treat his literature as some sort of revelation of "truth" or as some sort of meaningful communication. In such circumstances the literary commentator cannot be blamed for retreating inside the work in order to formulate a judgment about the work. He cannot really be blamed for treating the literary work as a self-contained, autonomous object, a datum independent of both author and public, to be judged on the grounds of its internal structure and pattern, coherence

and consistency. Given the prevailing behaviourist interpretation of man and his relationship with the world, a more adventurous, less exclusive literary commentary, dealing with the purpose, the effect and the experienced "meaning" of the work, would be wide open to attacks of "unverifiable", "unrealistic", "speculative", "subjective", and so forth.

My objection returns, therefore, to the philosophical pre-suppositions, this time of the social scientists, which rendered their behaviourist conclusions well-nigh inevitable. The efforts of the social scientist to clarify human nature have been continuously and seriously impaired by: (1) the initial inadequate understanding of man which they inherited directly from philosophy, and by: (2) a rigorous devotion to the scientific method and the demands of objectivity, which they inherited from the physical sciences and from the positivists within the philosophical tradition. These two influences, I believe, combined to produce the "Behaviourist" school of thought, characterised by Watson, Skinner and Pavlov, who, as Koestler expressed it:

. . . counted the number of drops which his dogs salivated and distilled them into a philosophy of man.¹

Indeed, if the psychologist is to purge from his study all "references to consciousness" and exclude

¹Arthur Koestler, Ghost in the Machine, p. 25

. . . from his scientific vocabulary all subjective terms such as sensation, perception, image, desire, purpose, and even thinking and emotion as they were subjectively defined . . . ¹

(as he is required to do by the founding father of the movement), can it really be "human nature" as we prephilosophically know and "live" it that he is investigating? Surely, by this method, the psychologist can only aid our understanding of man to the extent that he aids our understanding of rats and pigeons under artificial laboratory conditions, and then only by a tentative analogy. His efforts will never clarify specifically human phenomena, like ethics, politics, religion and aesthetics. Yet it is against just such a limited behaviourist understanding of man (philosophical and sociological now, as well as psychological) that the aesthetician and the moral philosopher has, for the most part, to struggle. We cannot be surprised, therefore, when the literary critic restricts his interests to the intrinsic features of an artwork when we recall the behaviourist's interpretation of human activity, creativity and receptivity, which lurks in the back of, dare I say, his mind. Consider the following two accounts of artistic creativity and scientific discovery given, respectively, by Watson in 1928 and Skinner thirty years later. It must be remembered that these represent the "official", almost "orthodox" interpretation of human behaviour:

¹J. B. Watson, Psychological Review 1913, pp. 158-167

One natural question often raised, is how do we ever get new verbal creations such as a poem or a brilliant essay? The answer is that we get them by manipulating words, shifting them about until a new pattern is hit upon . . . How do you suppose Patou builds a new gown? Has he any 'picture in his mind' of what the gown is to look like when it is finished? He has not . . . He manipulates the material until it takes on the semblance of a dress . . . Not until the new creation aroused admiration and commendation, both his own and others, would manipulation be complete - the equivalent of the rat's finding food . . . The painter plies his trade in the same way, nor can the poet boast of any other method.¹ (Emphases added)

One wonders how a Cezanne or a Lawrence would react to such an absurd reduction of his creative efforts; there is no reference here to the thought, mood, emotion, conviction, meaning, communication, precision, perseverance, decision, or "hard work" which the creation of an artwork is traditionally believed to involve. On the contrary, the creation of a novel we are told, is simply the result of a manipulative exercise motivated by an anticipated (in some sense) reward, comparable to the rat's bar-pressing for food in a Skinner's box. Skinner explains with greater technical detail how original discoveries in science, for example, are made:

The result of solving a problem is the appearance of a solution in the form of a response . . . The relation between the preliminary behaviour and the appearance of the solution is simply the relation between the manipulation of variables and the emission of a response . . . The appearance of the response in the individual's behaviour is no more than the appear-

¹J. B. Watson, Behaviourism 1928, p. 198 ff

ance of any response in the behaviour of an organism. The question of originality can be disposed of . . . ¹

That psychology should take such a behaviourist turn is not really very surprising when we consider the philosophical tradition, the first of the influences mentioned above, from which it emerged and in which it continues to work. The tradition begins with Descartes' radical bifurcation of nature into mind and matter, and his identification of man's "essence" with "thinking":

To speak accurately I am not more than a thing which thinks, that is to say a mind or soul, or an understanding or a reason . . . a thing which thinks . . . My essence consists in the fact that I am a thinking thing.²

At the same time the emphasis shifts to the quest for certainty in philosophy, with mathematical a priori certainty as the ideal. Two fundamentally different ways of looking at the world and exploring the nature of "reality" grew from Descartes' initial dualism, the one focusing on mind as key-concept, and the other on matter. The two distinct philosophical approaches are, first, the way of the philosophical "sceptic", and second, the way of the philosophical "realist". Hume is a good example of the former, and perhaps Gilbert Ryle of the latter. The sceptic takes "consciousness" ("sensation", "perception", "subjectivity") as his starting point or root-axiom and recognises only

¹B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behaviour, p. 252

²Descartes, Meditations II, p. 88

experiential evidence as grounds for any possible knowledge of reality:

"It must be some one impression that gives rise to every idea", Hume tells us over and over again. He begins with the world-in-self and tries to clarify the nature of reality by explaining the constitutive activity of consciousness. For example:

. . . the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examined, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas. For from thence it evidently follows that identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions and uniting them together; but is merely a quality which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them . . .¹

The philosophical realist, on the other hand, takes the external world as his root-axiom and will recognise only objective physical evidence in his attempts to explain reality. He begins with self-in-the-world and attempts to clarify the vagaries of consciousness and world-in-self by an exploration of how the world is given in experience. For example:

. . . while my eyes and nose are organs of sense, 'my mind' does not stand for another organ. It signifies my ability and proneness to do certain things and not some piece of personal apparatus without which I could or would not do them.²

It must be noted that both the sceptic and the realist appeal to experience, but from radically different perspectives, the "subjective" and the "objective" respectively. As a consistent sceptic, Hume concludes, naturally, that there is no logically respectable way out of

¹Hume, Treatise of Human Nature, "Of Personal Identity", I.iv.6

²Ryle, The Concept of Mind, p. 161

the subject's world in self. Given his sensationalist starting point, he cannot move from the world-in-self to the public external world, i.e., from the "idea" to the "reality", without logical inconsistency. Similarly Ryle, as a consistent realist, can say nothing about "consciousness" which cannot be tested according to the Verification Principle of A. J. Ayer. That is:

. . . a statement is directly verifiable if it is either itself an observation-statement, or is such that in conjunction with one or more observation-statements it entails at least one observation-statement which is not deducible from the other premises alone.¹

This means that the realist can talk about consciousness only in terms of observation statements; and this is equivalent to speaking in terms of publically observable behaviour - and this means that he does not talk about consciousness or "mental" phenomena at all.

Given the mind-matter bifurcation there seems to be no way of avoiding these inadequate accounts of man and his relationship to the world and no way of reconciling them such that all our prephilosophical convictions and experiences are coherently and consistently interpreted in one theory. It seems that we must choose between a rational and consistent account which explains consciousness and perceptual phenomena but not our knowledge of the existence of an external world and a rational and consistent account which explains the world, but not consciousness. Since the psychologist aims to be both rational and scientific he requires objectively verifiable phenomena for his subject-

¹ A. J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, p. 13

matter; he must therefore opt for the realist's position, denying consciousness and concentrating on the external public world of human behaviour. By making this choice, however, he accounts for only one aspect of man's prephilosophical and lived world - that aspect which is articulated in terms of the physical public world external to any individual particular consciousness. He discounts the other equally strong prephilosophical conviction - that for each man there is a particular consciousness, to which the external world "appears" or is "given", which is itself not a datum in that world, and which is in many ways "private" and inaccessible to any second party.

One way to avoid the inadequate conclusions above is to resort to speculation; another is to resort to inconsistency; another is to abandon the Cartesian starting point. Heidegger chose the final alternative, and he has produced a totally new philosophy as a result. He adopts a completely different starting point and a different philosophical approach to the subject-matter: one which accepts neither the mind-matter bifurcation, nor the mathematical-rational method as fundamental; one which does not instinctively strive for scientific objectivity in its method. It is the existential-phenomenological approach to which I shall turn in Part II.¹ Meanwhile let us look at

¹This is not to suggest that only two ways of doing philosophy are possible, the way of the "Cartesian" positivist, or the way of the "Heideggerian" phenomenologist. Valuable contributions to the philosophy of man have been made by others who have realised the deficiencies of Cartesianism and attempted to break away from the tradition, e.g. Wilhelm Dilthey, William James, John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, Ernst Cassirer, and by those like Nietzsche whose philosophy defies categorisation. Heidegger's phenomenological analysis of Dasein is favoured for two reasons. Firstly, it represents the only deliberate, self-conscious and total break with the Cartesian tradition; and secondly, it offers the most complete philosophy of man, his experiences and his world.

the state of literary commentary today, as it endeavours to say something meaningful about literature and art, within a tradition of thought which possesses no "clear and consistent idea of man" to which we can all consent.

In the predominantly Cartesian Western world, man as "res cogitans" is for the most part regarded as an autonomous, independent, self-conscious subject, certain only of his own conscious experiences and insurmountably separated from "res extensa", the world of objects. The world itself is seen as an object to be explored, explained and mastered rationally - by man, the essentially rational animal. Scientifically, conceptually and thematically the world is controlled by man; "out-there", the world for the Cartesian is a strictly epistemological issue.

A work of art interpreted within this framework appears to the subjective consciousness similarly as a datum; as an object "out there", with an autonomous, independent existence and like all objects it poses an epistemological problem - it must be explored, examined and explained rationally and thematically. The "art object" as it is often called, (compare "work of art"), is granted a discrete and unique existence distinctly other than either its creator or its public; and as far as possible, it seems, the "human" element is excluded from the commentary (probably because we have no clear, consistent and adequate idea of what a man "is" in which to ground any such remarks). As a result of this "scientific" approach to his subject-matter, the professional critic concerns himself solely with the intrinsic features

of the work:

. . . the intent of the good critic becomes therefore to examine and define the poem with respect to its structure and texture.¹

This objective analytic approach to literature has served to remove at least one irrelevant consideration from literary commentary: the meaning of the work is no longer naively expected to coincide with the author's known or conjectured precise intentions.² This proviso has, however, led to the complete rejection of the author from all considerations of the work, particularly where questions of meaning are concerned. Consequently a virtual anarchy prevails, whereby the text is said to have no single "real" meaning, but any number of equally possible and valid meanings. Regretfully the movement towards multiple meanings has established no new norms or limits to interpretation by which we may judge between conflicting meanings. Indeed it cannot, where:

To banish the original author as the determiner of meaning was to reject the only compelling normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.³

The use of quotations and tests of coherency, which tend to be offered in support of particular interpretations, are totally inadequate means of validation, once we realise the essential circularity of the interpretative procedure:

¹John Crowe Ransom, The Intent of the Critic, quoted by Andor Gomme in his Attitudes to Criticism, p. 13

²See W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" in Sewanee Review 1946

³E.D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation, p. 5

. . . every interpreter labours under the handicap of inevitable circularity; all his internal evidence tends to support his hypothesis because much of it was constituted by his hypothesis.¹

As a result, an unwholesome subjectivism and individualism has been encouraged in the field of literary interpretation and evaluation. (In practice the two are scarcely separable.) It is "unwholesome" because it inspires scepticism in its public, e.g.

I often have the feeling that even at the best of times literary criticism is fraudulent, since in the absence of any accepted standards whatsoever - any external reference which can give meaning to the statement that such a book is 'good' or 'bad' - every literary judgment consists in trumping up a set of rules to justify an instinctive preference. One's real reaction to a book, when one has a reaction at all, is usually, 'I like this book' or 'I don't like it', and what follows is a rationalisation.² (Emphases added)

It is "unwholesome" also because, as Orwell puts it, it is a "rationalisation". The critic's interpretation professes to be regulated, not by an immediate, preconceptual grasp of the work's meaning and significance; on the contrary, it is said to operate by means of a conscious, controlled, rational analysis of the "text" and its related "parts":

It is in fact the opposite of any criticism which starts with the critic's own meeting with the work.³

By this method of objective analysis, elaborate and detailed thematic "meanings" are, as it were, gleaned from the text, from its images,

¹Hirsch, Ibid., p. 166

²George Orwell, "Writers and Leviathan", in England your England, p. 18

³Andor Gomme, op. cit., p. 6

rhythms and word-patterns - an approach to literature evidently grounded in philosophical "realism":

It looks on literary works as objects of a sort which can be analysed, broken down, into component parts. It talks about the literary work in essentialistic language, using such terms as 'image', 'symbol', 'idea', 'form', all of which suggest that being is composed of rigid or at least recognisable categories. American criticism employs a classical faculty psychology and therefore discusses, 'reason', 'imagination', 'impulse', 'attitude', 'emotion', and so on, as if they were distinct and necessary categories of the mind.¹

All of which reveals a naive and simplistic understanding of "meaning" itself: in what it consists, how it is grasped, its structure, scope and limits, its relation to significance and interpretation, etc.

Meaning, it is held, is not that which is experienced immediately in a direct first encounter with a work; on the contrary, meaning is what is "worked out" subsequently in the rational analysis of the text. Meaning is what the critic excavates and paraphrases:

. . . many poems cannot be paraphrased and are therefore defective.²

If the prior experienced meaning is recognized at all it is only in order to dismiss it as the merely "psychological", as a peculiarity of the individual psyche, irrelevant to any possible "objective" meanings of the text in hand. This itself is a rejection of the "hermeneutic circle", i.e. the essential circularity of the interpretative procedure.

¹Neal Oxenhandler, "Ontological Criticism in America and France", in Modern Language Review 1960

²Ivor Winters, In Defense of Reason, p. 31, quoted by Gomme, op. cit., p. 66

Meaning, it is held, is discovered rationally and technically by a close textual analysis. The fact that works of literature can and do profoundly affect the reader is either overlooked or belittled or rejected as a problem for the psychologist. Take, for example, the following declaration from John C. Ransom:

. . . a beautiful poem is an objective discourse which we approve, containing objective detail which we like . . . liking is interest and ultimately I suppose it is part of our unarguable biological constitution.¹

Alternatively, it is "explained" in terms of "aesthetic response" to "aesthetic form". I shall myself demonstrate how the structure of art evokes a certain "aesthetic" feeling of pleasure in the face of an artwork, but this vague feeling of aesthetic delight is not the same thing at all as the profound affect which some works occasion. It remains to be shown, however, by the contemporary critic, why and how merely formal and abstract features of an artwork "move" us, sometimes in an overwhelmingly powerful fashion.

Ultimately, then, access to the work of literature, within the Cartesian tradition is essentially rational (as befits the essentially rational animal), as opposed to experiential. Personal "lived" experience of, and response to, the work is rejected (re: the "affective fallacy") for the sake of a rational and systematic reconstruction of the work's message:

The first law to be prescribed to criticism . . . is that it shall be objective, shall cite the nature of the object rather than its effects upon the subject.²

¹Quoted by Gomme, op. cit., p. 20

²Arthur Ransom, as quoted by Gomme, op. cit., p. 6

One of the consequences of this "objective" approach to literary criticism, which insists on excluding the "human" aspects of the artwork from consideration, is that the question of the "truth" of the work becomes increasingly difficult to deal with. Since the work is invariably regarded as a piece of assertive discourse, as the conveyor or source of a message, of an explicable thematic meaning, the truth-value of the work has been assumed to accord with the demands of a Correspondence Theory of Truth. But the problem now arises as to what we require literature to be true to - to the world of the writer? to the world of the reader? to how life was? is? will always be? True to human emotions, reactions, experience? And for whom should literature be true? - for the writer's contemporaries? the writer alone? for the reading public now? for the reading public always? - or is the work to be true only to itself? Once it was quite proper to demand that a work be "true" in some sense, not defined, for all men at all times. However, such a claim is too vague for contemporary critics; it requires a clear, consistent and complete understanding of "man", "human nature" and "life" if it is to act as the final standard of truth for all literary works. Since no detailed descriptive content has ever been given to such a truth-value, the more rigorous critics, understandably, do not appeal to it. Instead they resort to what may appear to be the only alternative, the less comprehensive, but more realistic and practicable, Coherence Theory of Truth. The work is required to be true to itself, by this standard. In this sense it can be said to attain to "universal truth", since if it is coherently true now, it will in principle, be coherently

true for all men at all times, who use the same language. If "truth" is considered at all by contemporary Anglo-American critics, this is the sort of "truth" which is in question. Indeed, where the writer's intentions and the reader's response have been eliminated, what remains to guide an inquiry after truth, except the work itself and its intrinsic features? And yet, as non-academics, and non-philosophers, this is not the sort of "truth" we actually do demand from literature, nor is it the sort of "truth" we actually find there, in our everyday spontaneous experiences of novels, plays, poems etc. The sort of "truth" with which the critic concerns himself, for the most part, is one of no real "human" significance; it is purely academic and theoretical in its appeal, located entirely within the work itself and in need of no external justification. We can only agree with Oxenhandler, when he says of these critics, that for them:

. . . The fulness of truth given by a literary work comes not from the loftiness of its statement but from the fact that its meaning, however trivial or banal is incorporated in an organism which has a greater ontological value than the abstract statement.¹

Some examples of this sort of "objective" literary interpretation would perhaps be welcome at this point, to demonstrate that the practice of the contemporary literary commentator reflects his theory, as outlined above. Current book reviews provide one sort of example in favour of my argument. They deal only with the plot, the characters,

¹Neal Oxenhandler, op. cit.

the theme and the technique of the work under review, and rarely consider its overall "meaning", "significance" or truth-value. It might be replied that the latter are "big" issues, and that lack of space necessitates their exclusion. But this itself reveals the true concern of the contemporary critic; the discussion of the "truth" and "significance" of a work, it appears, are low on his list of priorities. It seems that the work can be adequately summarised and evaluated without their consideration. I quote one example from The Times Literary Supplement, August 13, 1971. It is a review of The Tower and the Rising Tide, by Caroline Glyn.

Alastair, eighteen and irritable, feels trapped in a world of "nothing much", as a result of a series of betrayals. He is conscious not only of being "out of step" with his parents, to whose purposeful world he half wishes to belong, but also of having failed his girl-friend Susi, who, he finally sees, was engaged in the same search for true identity as himself.

Fragile and neurotic, Susi is haunted by the conviction of her own death and by the face of Christ. She disappears after Alastair's final failure to join in her questioning and Alastair, made to realize her importance to him, finally follows her to Germany. He finds she has died, having fulfilled her (Christian) vision and enabling him to achieve his own. While he has taken photographs, she has painted - and given, not grabbed.

Running parallel to this tale, and continually interrupting it as a kind of parable commentary, are the scenes of Alastair's early childhood. This is the setting of his original self-betrayal and here the symbols dominating his adolescence - the gleaming tower of challenge and promise, the tide of darkness constantly but necessarily threatening to overcome him - have their roots in well-observed particular incidents. The sense of a child's patterning of things into significance carries more conviction than their later refinement. A certain smugness sets in with the adult reflections: the honey-feel of the

child's enclosed world turns into the cosiness of being "a lover of beauty and goodness and all the lovely true old things" and into the rhetorical vagueness of Alastair's poetic composition: "The poetry came through me again, thundering, flooding".¹

We might expect greater discussion of the overall meaning, significance and truth of a literary work in books of criticism where space can be no object, but I have not found this to be so. Whilst the reviews treat literature as though it were written merely to entertain, books of literary commentary tend to treat it as though it were simply an academic exercise in expression. I have chosen D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers as a focus for some examples, the book because it is well-known and obviously of some depth; the author because he has himself so often professed a philosophy inseparable from his literary works, e.g.

Even art is utterly dependent on philosophy: or if you prefer it, on metaphysic. The metaphysic or philosophy may not be anywhere very accurately stated, and may be quite unconscious in the artist, yet it is a metaphysic that governs men at the time and is by all men more or less comprehended, and lived. Men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision.²

One recently published book (1966) entitled D.H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers, is perfectly consistent with the critical theory described above. In no way does the author deal with the novel as an experienced "whole" and at no time does he consult his first "emotional"

¹T.L.S. 13.8.71, p. 961

²D.H. Lawrence, from the Foreword to Fantasia of the Unconscious, p. 13

response to the work. His commentary is prefaced by David Daiches as follows:

It has become increasingly clear in recent years that what both the advanced sixth-former and the university student need most by way of help in their literary studies are close critical analyses and evaluations of individual works . . . ¹

In order to fulfil this need Salgado proceeds through Sons and Lovers chapter by chapter providing the required close textual analysis.

This is how he begins his commentary on "Chapter One":

The chapter heading is perfectly ordinary and the opening deeply conventional. Both might have come from any one of those three-volume novels about which Miss Prism has warned us not to speak slightly. The opening sentence is intriguing, if not arresting. "'The Bottoms' succeeded to 'Hell Row'." But this is not a three-volume novel and it is not long before we are aware that Lawrence wears his conventionalism with a difference. For one thing, the panoramic survey which often precedes the bringing into focus of the events and characters which are the novelist's real interest is carried out here with great deftness and economy; what ordinarily consumes half a chapter is done here in just over a page. But there is no sense of hurry or fluster either. Lawrence never loses the confident rhythm of the narrator who moves easily through a known landscape - "The brook ran under the alder trees, scarcely soiled by these small mines, whose coal was drawn to the surface by donkeys that plodded wearily in a circle round a gin" - and a familiar tract of time -

"Then, some sixty years ago, a sudden change took place. The gin pits were elbowed aside by the large mines of the financiers." ²

The rest of this book continues in the same tone and with the same

¹Gamin Salgado, D.H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers, p. 5

²Ibid., p. 7

emphases. The overall meaning, significance and possible truth of the novel are not mentioned. Such questions are obviously not considered important by the commentator. The ability of the novel to profoundly move the reader is ignored. Lawrence's work is treated as if it were a highly complicated piece of engineering and the whole is examined in great detail, in all its parts, to find out how it works. Why the piece of machinery was designed in the first place, what it achieves, what it reveals about man - these questions are not considered. Salgado's commentary is, needless to say, entirely intrinsic and no reference beyond the text is required to establish the validity of any evaluations and interpretations he chooses to make.

A second book, entitled Profiles in Literature. D.H. Lawrence and published in 1969, is prefaced in rather the same way as Salgado's book:

This series is designed to provide the student of literature and the general reader with a brief and helpful introduction to the major novelists and prose writers in English, American and foreign literature.

Each volume will provide an account of an individual author's writing career and works, through a series of carefully chosen extracts illustrating the major aspects of the author's art. These extracts are accompanied by commentary and analysis, drawing attention to particular features of style and treatment . . .¹

The book itself is divided into four sections dealing with "Style", "Characterisation", "Themes" and "Symbolism" respectively. As

¹R.D. Draper, op. cit., p. v

a result of this division the novels are already dissected when they are introduced, and each is presented in a piecemeal fashion according to the interests of the chapter headings. The meaning and significance for the individual reader of a work taken as a whole or as an experience, is once again overlooked for the sake of the details of its construction. The truth of the work and its ability to profoundly affect the reader are not considered.

Other works of commentary which I consulted followed very much the same pattern, refusing to consider individual works as "wholes" and neglecting that first encounter with the work as an experience. Invariably the commentator concentrated on a particular aspect of Lawrence, his Freudianism, his "genius", the symbolism in his work, the autobiographical content in his work, and so forth, and analysed the work in detail in order to demonstrate his point or substantiate his argument. They are happy, it seems, to consider the novel in terms of what it reveals about Lawrence but not in terms of what it reveals about man.

Fortunately, not all critics reach such extremes of academic abstraction when discussing and evaluating a work of literature. Some do venture beyond the "art object" itself into the world of man which produced it, and for which it was produced; demanding, for example, that the characters and to some extent the plot of a play or novel be "true to life", and that a poem be "true to human experience". F.R. Leavis is perhaps the best known of such critics; in The Great Tradition he explicitly states that a great novel should concern itself with

"life" and reveal the human possibilities thereof. For example, he refers us to:

. . . the major novelists who count in the same way as the major poets in the sense that they not only change the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers, but that they are significant in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life.¹

Similarly, Andor Gomme regards the literary work as inseparable from its human situation. In this respect he insists upon the relevance of the reader's response to the meaning of a work:

What we cannot do without is the initial human meeting with the object . . .

I suggest that 'an adequate grasp of the theme' of anything so profound and complex as Macbeth, will be more than just rational, and that in such a case 'statement' or 'theme' is not discussible, in isolation from the feeling it gives rise to.²

And he agrees with Leavis that we do share a "fundamental human sensibility" to which a writer appeals in his work. Most eminent writers themselves support these literary convictions:

. . . the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life.

Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced on the critic by the book he is criticising.³

¹F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, p. 2.

²Andor Gomme op. cit., pp. 7 & 82

³Henry James and D.H. Lawrence respectively, quoted by Gomme, op. cit., pp. 115 & 6

John Hospers likewise appeals to external phenomena as criteria for judging an artwork:

In every case, human nature as described in works of literature is anchored in human nature as it exists outside of literature . . .

It is life that provides the touchstone by which we measure the truth of a characterisation in literature.¹

Unfortunately, such commentators as these are not in a position to explicate their implicit understanding of the meaning of their crucial concepts, "life", "human nature" and "human sensibility", and neither traditional philosophy nor modern psychology can help them here. These key-concepts require detailed descriptive content if they are to fulfil (as I believe they should) their important function of "grounding" literature and literary experience. As long as their precise meaning remains unarticulated, however, your vague interpretation of human nature could always differ from mine. And although we might agree on the truth of a particular work we may do so from irreconcilable philosophical positions. To ground the agreed truth claim, therefore, features intrinsic to the work will be appealed to, upon which all will agree. Consequently, the final and lasting "truth" of the literary work will be ultimately located, not in its relation to and significance for men (as these will be vague and indefinite, tentative theories), but within the work itself, the relation of its parts with each other - matter to form, symbol to image.

The task of adequately explicating the meaning of the "crucial

¹John Hospers, in Aesthetic Inquiry, ed. Beardsley and Schuller

concepts" like "human nature", mentioned above must go to the philosopher. He must clarify the meaning of "man" in such a way that our implicit but unthematic prephilosophical understanding of "man" is described in all its aspects and in sufficient detail that all human phenomena are accounted for. I hope to show in Part II that Heidegger went far towards fulfilling this demand in his existential analysis of Dasein.

Closely associated with the difficult question of the truth of a literary work is the problem of its lasting success. How do we account for it? What have Sophocles and Shakespeare, D.H. Lawrence and William Faulkner in common such that they are all recognised as great writers? Why and how do works continue to move us despite vast cultural and temporal distances? Unless, like Leavis, he posits a common but unspecified human nature, the "Cartesian" critic, intent on objectivity, is forced to locate the success of the work, once more within the work itself - either in terms of the content, or in terms of the form. But since, for example, the rites and rituals of the Greeks are no longer integral and relevant aspects of contemporary life, some critics argue that it cannot be the content, of say Antigone, which affects us. Since the crucial beliefs, religious and moral, upon which the drama depends have long since been abandoned, their portrayal cannot be responsible for any affect the play may have on a present day public. Such a critic must, therefore, turn to the structure and form of the work to explain its lasting success. Aesthetic response, once again, is interpreted as response to aesthetic form - and again without further explanation.

It is simply that form seems to be all that is left, after the elimination of the content. Where the content is considered relevant to the lasting success of a work the critical approach is usually historical. One is encouraged to "think" oneself back into the historical situation in which the work was written (or the story set), to imagine oneself living in Medieval England, for example, holding the religious and philosophical beliefs of Shakespeare's time. Or one is exhorted to suspend one's disbeliefs and approach the work with an "open mind" - free from twentieth century presuppositions.

Both approaches are inadequate; for neither the formalist nor the antiquarian reflect in their thematic accounts the real nature of one's first meeting with the work. One grasps the meaning and significance of the work long before one consciously becomes aware of either formal or historical features. Both the formalist and the antiquarian reveal, once more, an oversimplified interpretation of what is involved in the writing of literature and what is involved in the understanding and appreciation of what has been written. As members of the "objective analytic" school of literary criticism they make several (Cartesian) assumptions concerning literature with which I must take issue. These are:

1. In the first place, the formalist assumes that the literary work is a self-contained, complete object, distinct from author and public, and capable of being understood and appreciated with reference to neither, nor to anything else external to the work.
2. Both the formalist and antiquarian further assume that a pre-

suppositionless, strictly rational and objective analysis of the work is both possible and appropriate to the appreciation of the work.

3. Together with the subject-object, subjective-objective dichotomy, they both accept the emotive-cognitive distinction as absolute, and associate genuine literary response with the latter. Understanding a literary work is, for them, an epistemological concern, demanding intellectual skills of verbal analysis. "Emotional" response to a work is discarded as the merely subjective, and hence of no real significance.

4. Associated with the above, is the belief that the work is essentially propositional; that it represents a thematic statement of something or other, a statement which can be explicated and described, in other words, by means of a rational, objective textual analysis.

5. In connection with the above, they seem to overlook the circularity of any and all interpretative procedures and the subsequent need for extrinsic criteria of judgment.

6. Finally, for the positivist critic, all meanings are (and must be) thematic and as such can be (and must be capable of being) described in ordinary language.

I shall argue, to the contrary, that, for example:

1. A literary work is meaningful only to the extent that it is understood to be "situated" within the human context, and only to the extent that it does take account of the humanity of its author and reader. Evaluations of literature which do not depend on values and/or experiences extrinsic to the work can at best be only arbitrary and

accidental. It is my belief that an aesthetic theory which separates art from life and denies the relevance of human value-experiences to literature "relegates art", in the words of Ivor Winters, "to the position of an esoteric indulgence possibly though not certainly harmless, but hardly of sufficient importance to merit a high position among other human activities."¹

2. I believe further that "meaningfulness" is not restricted to the thematic, nor to what can be paraphrased and expressed in ordinary language. One can grasp a "meaning" and yet not be able to express that understanding conceptually and thematically. Similarly, "understanding", I shall argue, is not restricted to the rational, conceptual and explicit. One understands pre-conceptually, pre-thematically and implicitly; one has grasped the "meaning" of some state of affairs well before one articulates that meaning and often in spite of one's inability to articulate that meaning. It is just such a pre-conceptual understanding of meaning which grounds all explicit, conceptual articulated interpretations.

3. I shall deny, as a corollary of the above, the philosophical importance of the emotive-cognitive dichotomy and consequently the possibility of conducting a purely rational and objective analysis. Nor do I think that such an approach, were it possible, would be appropriate to the understanding and appreciation of literature - which is, after all, a human project, traditionally seen as being fused with individual feelings and value-judgments.

¹Quoted by Gomme, op. cit., p. 35

4. I shall dispute the assumption that a literary work is essentially propositional and so also the applicability of a Coherence or Correspondence Theory of Truth. The formalist demands that the "information", the assertions of the work, be properly and suitably expressed, the antiquarian that they conform with the "facts". But both miss out on what literary works and all works of art are essentially. They are not statements of fact, but, rather, disclosures of man's possibilities in the world, and as such they are disclosures of what it means to be a man in a pre-given world.¹ A work truly reveals the "meaning" of human "being", in some sense, each time it evokes a response of "how true!", or "that's just how it is!". Such a response to the "truth" of an artwork is experienced by the reader intuitively, prior to any conceptual textual analysis. I am interested to discover what it is in man's nature which makes such a response possible, and what the significance of that response is for literature.

Unfortunately, few critics will treat the work as it is "situated" within this context of human significance. On the contrary, they contemplate the artwork objectively, as if it could be divorced from its origin and situation, within the horizon of human concern. The philosophical assumptions which ground this outlook on art are

¹"Pre-given" is a phenomenological expression the meaning of which should become clear in Part II of the thesis. Briefly, it denotes the fact that we exist in the world necessarily, i.e., that the world is a "given" of our existence and not something we choose to recognize or dwell in. Self-consciousness is nothing other than the consciousness of self as a being-in-the-world, a world which is, as it were, thrust upon one.

thoroughly Cartesian. The initial dualism of mind and matter generates the further dualisms of subject and object, subjective and objective, and these give rise in turn to the dualism of Self and Other. These all combine to provide a philosophy which at its most extreme posits the isolated subject as reader, and sense-perception in the form of the receiving of impressions, as the mode of access to the work, in such a way that:

. . . according to this conception, the subject contemplating the aesthetic object, is an empty consciousness receiving perceptions and somehow enjoying the immediacy of pure sensuous form. The 'aesthetic experience' is thus isolated and discontinuous from the more pragmatic realms . . . It does not relate itself to the self-understanding of the subject or to time; it is seen as an atemporal moment without reference to anything but itself.¹

Where these extremes of rationality are not reached, the notions of "life" and "human nature" which are appealed to as extrinsic criteria for literary truth and success are too vague and indefinite to do the job required of them. Philosophers and psychologists have attempted to give more precise descriptive content to these concepts, but none have done so adequately, such that we now have a clear, concise, complete and agreed understanding of "man". Besides, as Cartesians, they have invariably approached the subject-matter in terms of an abstract, thematic, rational, epistemology of what is the case, objectively speaking. Whereas an extensive interpretation of man, grounded in

¹R. Palmer, Hermeneutics, p. 167. This is Palmer's personal interpretation of the positivist's position and not the voice of the positivist himself.

every-day average lived experience would provide a more concrete, more readily recognisable, more immediately "true" understanding of human "being". As Dilthey warned:

In the veins of the 'knowing subject' constructed by Locke, Hume and Kant, runs no real blood.¹

Strawson's individuals as explicated, seem even more remote and bloodless than those of Hume; a "person" being described as that:

. . . type of entity such that both predicates ascribing consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics . . . are equally applicable to an individual entity of that type.²

Nevertheless, despite the inadequacy of his concepts, the critic who reserves these ultimate appeals to "life" is closer to understanding literature than either the formalist or the antiquarian. He is closer to understanding the meaning of a work in particular, and the possibility of profound affects of literature in general.

One of the most distinctive trends in contemporary literary study is myth criticism, perhaps best represented by Northrop Frye. This approach to literature does attempt to deal with works of art in terms of man's "being"; in terms of his lived, pre-conceptual experiences of life and its "meaning". The relevance of the human author and reader is reinstated. Like Leavis, the myth critic treats literature as it is "situated" within the human framework and his efforts represent a search for the grounds of the literary phenomenon and its significance.

¹Quoted by Palmer, op. cit., p. 9

²Strawson, Individuals, p. 204

"The first question to answer", says Frye in his 'Polemical Introduction' "is, what follows from the fact that it (literature) is possible? . . ." ¹ Archetypal criticism, he continues, is "primarily concerned with literature as a social fact and as a mode of communication." It attempts to find a common ground for literature thus conceived, anthropologically, by interpreting literature in terms of its myth content, and interpreting myth, in turn, as a universal response by all men and cultures to the human condition - which is in turn indicative of a common human nature. John B. Vickery, in the introduction to his anthology of myth criticism, outlines four general principles which he believes are shared by all myth critics. I shall quote him at some length, to demonstrate how the "direction" of this sort of criticism is the right one, i.e., towards an understanding of human "being".

First, the creating of myths, the mythopeic faculty is inherent in the thinking process and answers a basic human need. Second, myth forms the matrix out of which literature emerges, both historically and psychologically. As a result the literary plots, characters, themes and images are basically complications and displacements of similar elements in myth and folk-tales. How myth gets into literature is variously explained by the Jungian racial memory, historical diffusion, or the essential similarity of the human mind everywhere. Third, not only can myth stimulate the creative artist but it also provides concepts and pattern which the critic may use to interpret specific works of literature . . . Fourth and last, the ability of literature to profoundly move us is due to its mythic quality, to its possession of 'mana', the 'numinous' or the mystery in the fact of which we feel an awed delight or terror at the world of man. The real function of literature in human affairs is to

¹N. Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 10

continue myth's ancient and basic function to create a meaningful place for man in a world oblivious to his presence.¹

I have emphasised those phrases which reveal the myth critic's need for a "definition" of man and those which reveal his need for an existentialist interpretation of man in particular, such as the one which follows in Part II. Such a critic is "properly concerned" with literature. His question is the fundamental one: what makes literature possible? The ubiquity of myth suggests to him that there is a common human nature which, if only we knew it, would provide the explicit answer to the question. His reference to the "essential similarity of the human mind everywhere", and to the function of literature which is "to create a meaningful place for man in a world oblivious to his presence", reveals an implicit understanding of the nature of man's "being", which corresponds with the explicit interpretation of "Dasein" given by Heidegger. Unfortunately, few critics are familiar with Heidegger's descriptive phenomenology of man, and further attempts to elucidate this "human nature" rely too heavily upon current (Cartesian) psychological ideas, which somewhat weaken the force of the myth critic's argument. For example, Frye makes the following comment upon contemporary writers:

The thematic poet of this period is interested in himself not necessarily out of egotism but because the basis of his poetic skill is individual, and hence genetic and psychological.²

And later he resorts to a naive faculty psychology to explain the mythopoic

¹J.B. Vickery, Myth and Literature, Introd. p. ix

²N. Frye, op. cit., p. 60

ability which characterizes man. He explains it in terms of what he regards as the innately human conflict between desire and actuality which is expressed individually in dreams and socially in myth and ritual. To my mind, this suggested conflict between desire and actuality represents in fact a massive oversimplification of what really grounds literature - that feature of human being which is explicated by Heidegger (and later by Sartre) in terms of man's "facticity" and his "transcendence". But more of this later.

Nevertheless, despite the inadequacy of some of the key-concepts, an approach to human nature which is anthropological, which endeavours to clarify human being by an interpretation of primitive myth and man, is certainly more likely to reap significant rewards than a biological or psychological approach. The primitive response to life is rarely hampered by Cartesian presuppositions, neither by the bifurcation of Man and Nature, nor by a rational epistemology which recognizes only the thematic as "meaningful" and the objective as "knowledge". Heidegger himself sees some value in this approach to "Being":

To orient the analysis of Dasein towards the 'life of primitive peoples' can have positive significance as a method because 'primitive phenomena' are often less concealed and less complicated by extensive self-interpretation on the part of the Dasein in question. Primitive Dasein often speaks to us more directly in terms of a more primordial absorption in 'phenomena' (taken in a pre-phenomenological sense). A way of conceiving things which seems, perhaps rather clumsy and crude from our standpoint, can be positively helpful in bringing out the ontological structures of phenomena in a genuine way.¹

¹Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 51 of the German

However, working through myth to knowledge of what it means to be a man will never be totally successful. What is discovered will not have been revealed directly nor concretely (i.e. not phenomenologically) to the understanding Dasein. Rather, it will be an abstract rational interpretation of less "primordial" data, rationally analysed to yield results. When knowledge is so founded (i.e. in theory) there will always remain the possibilities of (1) new and conflicting interpretations better fitting the data, (2) new data inconsistent with the interpretation, and (3) flaws in the argumentation in favour of a particular interpretation. To test an interpretation for its validity would not be possible, in view once more of the circularity of interpretative procedure. The same evidence can serve in support of conflicting hypotheses, depending on the point of view of the interpreter.

Attempts have been made to give adequate descriptive content to the still vague concept of "human nature". Since most of them remain at the behavioural level of understanding they never really reach the "heart" of the matter, that co-ordinating principle by which all human actions may be understood. For example:

The isolated action - did anybody ever do this or that particular thing? means very little as a test of truth to human nature. What has to be considered is not the isolated action but the whole context and background of the character; would a person so endowed and so motivated in this situation do this thing?"¹

¹John Hospers, op. cit.

This is not an adequate account of what we mean by true to life or human nature; we do not want a likely copy of what is. Argument can be endless, as to whether some action is psychologically feasible or not, and the final result need in no way affect the real "truth" of the work as a whole. Totally credible characterisation is consistent with a literary work's being "untrue"; similarly, a work can be "true" in spite of unrealistic characterisation.¹ Likewise, a work may be true to life and meaningful despite its unlikely sci-fi plot. Psychological and physical feasibility of character and action is no guarantee of the honesty of a work (although the correlation between the two is no doubt high).

The phenomenologist would argue, therefore, that we have no clear, consistent view of man because we have not yet discovered the correct approach to the subject-matter. His efforts represent an attempt to find that approach by breaking with the tradition, its methodology, its concepts, its standards of inquiry. He would argue that previous philosophers who have attempted to solve the "problem of man" have invariably done so from the Cartesian perspective; they have examined man as if he were an object in the world, encountered in the same way as any other object in the world - and they have produced by this method no satisfactory results. Moreover, their investigations have been dogged by their purposes which have been invariably political, religious, or moral, (e.g. Hobbes, Butler, Rousseau). This, of course, has produced

¹cf. Aristotle: "Again one should prefer things which are impossible but probable, to such as are possible but improbable", from the Poetic, ch. xxiv

distortions, and their conclusions have really thrown very little light on the phenomenon of man. It appears that the task of elucidating human nature has now passed to the psychologist and sociologist. Their efforts have already been summarised and dismissed as having only marginally improved our understanding of man. Their scientific and objective and now behaviourist approach to the subject-matter distorts and reduces the nature of man from the outset, and in many ways begs the question. (They proceed on the assumption that man is a rational animal, distinguished from other animals only by his superior intelligence. It is upon the grounds of this assumption that they feel justified in using the results of experiments involving rats and pigeons to make predictions about, and suggest explanations of, human behaviour.)

The phenomenologist would continue to point out that up until now no theorist has approached the issue concretely, experientially, i.e., in such a way that he has been able to describe what it is like to be a man - what it is like to be this distinctly rational animal, as opposed to being any other "thing". And this is the important sense of "common human nature" which repeatedly eludes the literary critic searching for the grounds of literary experience. Ernst Cassirer expresses the same insight in his philosophy of culture:

All the so-called definitions of man are nothing but airy speculations so long as they are not based upon and confirmed by our experience of man. There is no other way to know man than to understand his life and conduct.¹

¹Ernst Cassirer An Essay on Man, p. 13

It is my belief that Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein goes far towards providing these grounds of the literary phenomenon. He reveals concretely and explicitly what the novelist reveals implicitly, i.e., that a primordial pre-cognitive understanding of being (of what it means to be human) characterises every Dasein, and this grounds not only literary understanding and interpretation but also all understanding. Interest will now shift, therefore, from the literary phenomenon within the Cartesian tradition, to "Dasein" as Being-in-the-World, so as to disclose phenomenologically that pre-understanding of human being in which all our actions are grounded.

PART II

It is important to comment first upon the phenomenological method itself before considering its "disclosures" as the method determines the starting point of the inquiry and this itself could be considered controversial, particularly when viewed within the framework of traditional Cartesian philosophy and methodology. Firstly then:

Phenomenology is not to be thought of as a discipline that differs from others by having a special subject matter, phenomena, as theology in turn differs from say geology by dealing with God rather than with the earth.¹

Secondly, as a method, phenomenology, unlike traditional philosophy, does not aim to produce a valid deductive or inductive argument, which moves step by step, from premises to entailed conclusion. Thus, standards of validity, of correct philosophical procedure, will not be the same for phenomenology, as those of traditional Cartesian philosophy. We must not, therefore, expect phenomenology to conform with these traditional standards of correct procedure. Phenomenology, on the contrary, aims to reveal or disclose "Being", i.e., to reveal what is and how it is, by explicating what is already implicit in everyday lived experience:

. . . to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself.²

¹Richard Schmitt, Martin Heidegger on Being Human, p. 144

²Heidegger, op. cit., p. 34

Phenomenology concerns itself, as such, with meaning and the possibility of meaning. In Being and Time Heidegger aims to explicate the meaning of human "being" as it is intuitively but unthematically "known" by all men; he aims to capture in a new philosophical conceptual scheme what all men "understand" pre-conceptually and "pre-ontologically". To this end we are returned "to the things themselves" and to the way the world is "primordially" encountered and understood by the individual in his pre-philosophical, pre-theoretical lived experience. The fundamental guiding principle of the inquiry will be, therefore:

. . . that every originarily giving intuition is a legitimate source of knowledge and that everything which presents itself to us originarily in 'intuition', so to speak, in its bodily presence, has to be taken simply as what it presents itself to be, but only within the limits in which it presents itself.¹

To better describe and explicate these somehow "cognitive" intuitions as they are actually experienced, Heidegger adopts a new philosophical vocabulary, so that from the very beginning he can avoid traditional and Cartesian ways of conceptualising, and thus interpreting, man and his world, since:

. . . in using established vocabularies we take over the philosophical commitments that have been built into them.²

Because the philosophical vocabulary of Being and Time is so very different from the traditional Cartesian conceptual scheme, it often

¹Edmund Husserl, Ideas,

²Schmitt, op. cit., p. 95

meets with exceedingly strong criticism from those who refuse to put into question their Cartesian assumptions. For example, Heidegger uses familiar philosophical concepts in unfamiliar ways, most notably the "epistemological" concepts of "truth", "meaning", "understanding" and "knowledge". Furthermore, he gives to unfamiliar philosophical concepts like "mood" and "death" previously unacknowledged philosophical significance. In addition, he ignores the traditionally revered dualisms of, for example, mind and matter, subject(ive) and object(ive), inner and outer, emotive and cognitive, and introduces in their place previously unrecognised distinctions. "Things" in the world, for example, which are traditionally regarded as all of the same ontological type (extended in time and space, etc.), Heidegger divides into three distinct and significant ontological types: those "ready-to-hand", i.e. tools and instruments; those merely "present-at-hand", of which we cannot say they are "for -" anything, like pebbles, and being-in-the-world which is man. Consequently, he distinguishes "properties" into "categories" and "existentials", the former characterizing the ready-to-hand and present-at-hand and the latter characterizing only human being-in-the-world. He differentiates, further, two sorts of knowledge: the thematic and objective articulated knowledge, acknowledged traditionally as the only type of real "knowledge", and pre-thematic and inarticulate knowledge, not formerly recognized. Likewise, a philosophically relevant distinction is drawn between moods and emotions, while the more usual distinction between cognition and emotion is ignored. Consequently, Heidegger's language and conceptual scheme, provide a major stumbling

block for those philosophically nourished on Cartesianism who attempt to understand phenomenology. In all events, however, his interpretation of man must not be examined by the light of traditional philosophy; the concepts he uses must be reconsidered in the light of the new criteria for their use, which Heidegger provides in the course of his analysis. Concepts like "world", "existence" and "possibility", for example, must not be treated as if they had only one possible meaning and use, that dictated by Cartesian philosophy. On the contrary, we must understand them on the grounds of their new interpretation and within the context of the whole new conceptual vocabulary by which we are exhorted to understand anew man and the world. Our task is, therefore, one of unprejudiced understanding; we can legitimately test Heidegger's concepts only by the criteria he himself provides for them and only within the philosophical context he himself constructs. We must endeavour to free ourselves from the inevitable Cartesian pre-suppositions which are incorporated in our very language and try to discover the significance of this new philosophical approach, to appreciate its vocabulary, which as Heidegger so readily admits, often flies in the face of the philosophical tradition.

Heidegger takes as the starting point of his analysis of human being man's everyday average being-in-the-world, since this is how man is encountered and understood "proximally and for the most part". In order to reveal concretely what being human means, however, he requires us to make two assumptions. The first is that we, each of us, do in fact have that pre-understanding of the meaning of "Being"

(which I take to mean human being) which he is about to describe explicitly and phenomenologically:

What we seek when we inquire into Being is not something entirely unfamiliar even if proximally we cannot grasp it all.¹

Heidegger is here making a point similar to the Socratic one that "learning" is the recovery of what is already, in some sense, known. In addition, he is recognizing the essential circularity of the interpretative process, mentioned in Part I and referred to hereafter as the "hermeneutic circle". By this we understand, for example, that every inquiry is guided by what is inquired about, and every search by what is sought. For, indeed, if we do not know in some sense what it is we are looking for, we shall never find the object of our search - for we shall not recognize it when it appears. That which is inquired about to some extent must be understood by the inquirer; otherwise the initial formulation of the question would not have been possible. So, we are told, it is out of man's vague and "proximal" understanding of "Being" that the explicit question of Being arises:

The meaning of Being must therefore already be available to us somehow. We suggested that we are never without some understanding of Being. From it springs our explicit question about the meaning of Being as well as our inclination to grasp it conceptually in certain ways.²

The question about the meaning of human being has led us to assume that

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 6

²Ibid., p. 5

we already understand being. It has not led us to assume however, that we are able to talk about it. Indeed, it is our inability to talk about it that has provided the impetus for the inquiry. The understanding of being, which Heidegger assumes we have, is therefore inarticulate. The work of the myth critic would support this assumption. Confronted by the ubiquity of myth, he interprets it explicitly in such a way that it supports his presupposition, his prior but unarticulated understanding, that there is a common human nature - a way of being, common to all men. Richard Schmitt offers the following illustrations of how this pre-understanding of being reveals itself in pre-philosophical experience:

Here are some examples of this understanding: no-one in his right mind would shake a door-knob and twist the hand stretched out to greet him. If, to take a rest, I were to sit down on a person, I would either apologise profusely or ostentatiously neglect to do so. I would not dream of apologising to a stone . . . We might ask the fisherman whether we may borrow his boat, but we do not ask the boat whether we may borrow the fisherman. All these are examples of our preconceptual preontological understanding of different categories, different senses of 'to be'. We understand these different senses of 'to be', and therefore conduct ourselves appropriately in relation to entities that belong to different categories. The task of ontology is to provide the vocabulary for formulating this understanding.¹

This pre-understanding, this pre-conceptual knowledge is rather like "knowledge by acquaintance" or "knowledge how"; it is demonstrated not by our talking, but by acting. It must not however, be confused with these two sorts of knowledge; they are "possibilities" of man, potential

¹Schmitt, op. cit., p. 18

attributes, while pre-understanding is an "existentiale" of Dasein, an essential constituent of human being. It is a necessary feature of being human.

The second assumption we are required to make is: that man is that being for which being is an issue. This too is an existentiale, a necessary feature of being human:

Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being that Being is an issue for it . . . this is a constitutive state of Dasein's Being and this implies that Dasein in its Being has a relationship towards that Being - a relationship which itself is one of Being.¹

The fact that we are currently involved in an interpretation of human being goes some way towards validating this assumption. In our everyday being, this concern with being is less obvious however, more implicit and in need of phenomenological disclosure. Again, it must be noted: "that being is an issue for man" is not to be regarded simply as one of man's possibilities, as an accidental property to be tagged on to whatever man essentially "is". It must be understood, rather as an existentiale, as a necessary and determining constituent of human being. No other thing is concerned to be in this sense; everything else is already some precise thing or other. But man is not a thing; there is for him no definitive discernible unchanging "essence"; man "is" nothing other than what he makes himself by his actual "existence". He is "something or other" only to the extent that he is himself concerned to

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 12

be "something or other". He only has properties to the extent that he conducts himself and thinks about himself in a certain way. We do not and cannot, therefore, define man in terms of a fixed "what", but only in terms of his way-of-being, in which he is concerned "to-be": as such man is pure "potentiality-for-being"; being human is being-able-to-be. Human beings are therefore described by Heidegger, in such a way that the traditional distinction between "essence" and "existence" cannot apply; and "existence" is given a new meaning, namely "understanding and projecting". Only human beings are said to "exist" in this specific sense; and in this sense, the "essence" of human being is "existence". This assumed truth of human being will be disclosed concretely in the course of the analysis.

Heidegger anticipates the objection of circularity here because of these initial assumptions. He admits the circle, but denies its viciousness and encourages us to "leap" into the circle knowingly, as he does not consider it in any way detrimental to his inquiry. In reply to the objection, he points out that his is not a logical argument, neither deductive nor inductive, and as this would be the only place where such a charge would be relevant, the objection is misplaced:

Such presupposing has nothing to do with laying down an axiom from which a sequence of propositions is deductively derived . . . the issue is not one of grounding something by such a derivation; it is rather one of laying bare the grounds for it and exhibiting them.¹

¹Ibid., p. 8

We must leap into the hermeneutic circle of understanding knowingly in order to reveal concretely what it means to understand in this sense and what it is which is understood. The task of hermeneutic phenomenology is, therefore, not to derive an argument from given premises but to explicate what is already implied in the everyday existence of man, to reveal what has always been there but has never been thematically grasped, i.e., the meaning of human being. The aim is to permit Dasein to disclose of his own accord what he is and how he is.

The first and basic constitutive state of man is his being-in-the-world:

. . . to Dasein Being-in-the-World is something that belongs essentially.¹

. . . with its Being-there something like the world is already revealed to it.²

This being-in as an existentiale of man must not be understood spacially, as the water is "in" the glass, nor as trees, rivers and houses are "in" the world. It does not mean that, "as it happens", man is to be found in the world amongst other entities. Being-in-the-World denotes a far more intimate relationship between man and world, than that of their simply existing side by side with each other. As an essential constituent of Dasein, being-in-the-world defines human being in two ways. Firstly, it draws attention to the fact that, for Dasein "with its Being-there, something like the world is already revealed to

¹Ibid., p. 13

²Ibid., p. 55

it".¹ I.e., that as soon as man is aware of himself, he is aware of himself as a creature with a world in which he is absorbed. And secondly, being-in-the-world belongs to man essentially in the sense that Dasein exists in the world in the mode of concerned understanding of "itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world".² No other entity has a world with which it is concerned in precisely this sense. Heidegger suggests several definite ways by which this being-in reveals itself:

The multiplicity of these is indicated in the following examples: having to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining . . . All these ways of Being-in have concern as their kind of being.³

John Dewey makes a similar point in Art as Experience when he acknowledges the "dependence of the self for wholeness upon its surroundings". Life, he says, goes on "in" an environment, "not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it". Man himself is characterized by a primordial understanding of these conditions of human being, and his whole way of being is determined by this understanding. Man is in-the-world, in the sense that, as the source of all his possibilities to-be, the world is something which matters to him. He is with the world through his concern and involvement with the world, things of the world and his own being-in-the-world.

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 55

²Ibid., p. 56

³Ibid., pp. 56-7

Dasein is in the world in the sense in which the broker is in stocks and shares.¹

It is part of the meaning of man, that he be in the world.

The significance of this essential structure of human being is that it by-passes the Cartesian dualism of the isolated subject "inside" groping for the public world "outside" - and the related epistemological and ontological difficulties which accompany such an interpretation. As being-in-the-world, and nothing at all if not that, man is already "outside" in the public world when he first encounters that world and when he first becomes aware of himself.

. . . its primary kind of Being is such that it is always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered.²

Man can only be described or distinguished essentially in terms of his possibilities and his possibilities are his world. The existential structure of man as "outside himself" in the world will eventually disclose the "nothingness" at the heart of his being, which I shall suggest is that non-thematic pre-understanding of human being which makes possible literary creativity and literary response.

Entities within the world are revealed to everyday Dasein primordially as equipment or "gear". In man's everyday existence in-the-world he reveals himself immersed in the countless pre-occupations of life. This routine practical encounter with life reveals things in

¹Macomber, The Anatomy of Disillusion, p. 33

²Heidegger, op. cit., p. 62

the world as "for -" some purpose or other and as "affective" objects, a point made by Dewey in his own reaction against Cartesianism:

Things are poignant, tragic, beautiful, humorous, settled, disturbed, comfortable, annoying, barren, harsh, consoling, splendid, fearful; and are such immediately and in their own right behalf . . . These traits stand in themselves on precisely the same level as colours, sounds, qualities of contact, taste and smell. Any criterion that finds the latter to be ultimate and 'hard' data will, impartially applied, come to the same conclusion about the former. Any quality as such is final, is at once, initial and terminal; just what it is as it exists . . ."¹

This primordial encounter with things, as we are immersed in them, is primary and prior to any rational interpretation of experience. It is not, therefore, to be regarded simply as a form of applied theory, for it is the most intimate and immediate way in which man exists and in which he encounters things. Theory and objective knowledge are themselves derivative modes of this prior being-in-the-world. To everyday man in his lived and pre-philosophical experience things first manifest themselves as they are useful or available for his human projects. The kind of being such things possess Heidegger calls "zuhandensein" - they are ready-to-hand. What we are first aware of therefore, "proximally and for the most part" are instruments and not merely "meaningless" thing-objects. As instruments, the ready-to-hand are said to be "meaningful", and here Heidegger strays from the conventional use of "meaning" concepts whereby only words and other symbols are said to have meanings. Instruments are "meaningful", in Heidegger's sense, in that

¹Dewey, quoted by Cassirer op. cit., p. 86

they "signify", i.e., they point towards, they indicate, or reveal a particular gear context. They point towards other instruments in the environment, the end for which they are used, and the being which they serve. The latter two significations are ultimately the same, i.e., man. The first signification is to the totality of equipment which is, in effect, man's environment, his world.

Taken strictly there 'is' no such thing as 'an' equipment. To the Being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is
 Equipment - in accordance with its equipmentality - always is in terms of its belonging to other equipment; ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These 'things' never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of realia and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us (thought not as something taken as a theme) is the room
 Out of this the arrangement emerges, and it is in this that any 'individual' item of equipment shows itself. Before it does so a totality of equipment has already been discovered.¹

Nature is primordially encountered in the same way - as equipment, "zuhanden", either negatively as a hindrance to man's projects (a river to be forded, a storm to be contended, a forest to be removed, etc.), or positively as instrumental to man's projects:

The wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock, the river is water-power, the wind is 'wind in the sail'.²

This being-for is not simply an aspect added to a thing but an onto-

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 69

²Ibid., p. 70

logical type. It accounts for the value and significance we attribute to worldly things and for the fact that we consistently behave as if the world mattered to us. Heidegger does not stick values on initially bare and meaningless objects, as the Cartesian does in terms of subjectivity, and secondary and tertiary qualities; on the contrary, he reveals that what we, as beings-in-the-world, primarily encounter in our ordinary experience are objects which "mean", objects together with their values and significance. Once more John Dewey makes a similar point:

There is, therefore, no such thing in perception as seeing or hearing plus emotion. The perceived object or scene is emotionally pervaded throughout. When an aroused emotion does not permeate the material that is perceived or thought of, it is either preliminary or pathological.¹

And Ernst Cassirer echoes his thought:

We cannot speak of 'things' as a dead or indifferent stuff. All objects are benignant or malignant, friendly or inimical, familiar or uncanny, alluring and fascinating or repellent and threatening.²

Once more traditional dualisms and their associated problems are by-passed: the subjective - objective, emotive-cognitive, and the fact - value distinctions are not considered relevant to this interpretation of human experience.

However, although the world as a matter of fact is disclosed in this way, we find that:

¹Dewey, Art as Experience, p. 53

²Cassirer, op. cit., p. 84

All the efforts of scientific thought are directed to the aim of obliterating every trace of this first view.¹

Our encounter with the world is traditionally described in terms of the subjective consciousness receiving impressions from objects existing "out there", not in the mode of meaningful "zuhandensein" but in the "reduced" mode of the "vorhandensein". They are described as merely present-at-hand, existing apart from man, "out there" in their "thingness", unique and independent entities signifying nothing - like the pebble on the beach. But as Heidegger points out, this is a very sophisticated and derivative mode of viewing the world, grounded necessarily in a more primordial and meaningful lived understanding of the significance of the world. We come to understand things as present-at-hand only by a subtle and rational process of abstraction which can only follow after the initial encounter with them as instruments. A contemplative, detached and quite sophisticated effort of mind is required to thus abstract things from their total referring environment. For example, as long as the hammer we are using continues to function properly as an instrument, we are not aware of it as a meaningless "thing", and it poses no problem. When the head comes off the hammer the whole thing becomes conspicuous in its unreadiness-to-hand. It troubles us because its existence has been rendered superfluous or "meaningless" and merely present-at-hand, "for -" nothing at all; it just is. Its existence now calls for justification and explanation.

¹Cassirer, op. cit., p. 84

Now this is how all things in the world are interpreted in Cartesian philosophy: as independent and distinct objects present-at-hand, in need of rational explanation and domination by man. The world is posited as an object opposite which man stands and contemplates. Things abstracted from the significant world of man are seen as completely alien to and other than man. Any value such things are said to have has to be explained in terms of the psyche of the perceiving subject, in the same way that "secondary qualities" are explained.

When artworks are discussed and interpreted by the critics, they too are treated contemplatively and theoretically; they are abstracted from their significant context of origin and treated as if they were objects of the ontological type of the present-at-hand, when primordially and phenomenologically artworks are things ready-to-hand, meaningful and significant. The literary work is first encountered in concrete, practical lived experience, and, as such, the work is grasped originarily as something which matters, with a meaning, and with an ability to affect the reader. It is encountered in this primordial experience, as significant, pointing towards both the writer who created it and the reader for whom it was created. If the ontological category of the ready-to-hand were more generally recognized and distinguished from the merely present-at-hand, and if it were realised that to be "meaningful" is not necessarily to be assertive, then the fact that we are often profoundly affected by literature would not be the inexplicable mystery it seems to be today:

. . . change the metaphysical premise; restore that is to say, immediate qualities to their rightful position as qualities of inclusive situations, and the problems in question cease to be epistemological problems.¹

As the voice of an understanding human being, every work explicates in an individual and characteristic way what is understood by us all implicitly, that is: the meaning of human life as being-in-the-world and possibility-to-be and all that this involves. Naturally some works reveal certain aspects of being-in-the-world more directly and explicitly than others, but every work, by its very structure as articulated pre-understanding, discloses human being in some sense.

A further aspect of being-in-the-world which has not yet been clarified, is being-in-the-world as being-with. Man is being-with in the sense that he is in the world with other entities which are neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand but are of the same ontological type as Dasein himself, i.e., they are beings-in-the-world. To better disclose being-with as being-with others of the same ontological type, Heidegger poses the question of the Who? of Dasein-with. He rejects the obvious answer that Dasein is "me" or "I" or the "self", because phenomenologically these answers are groundless:

. . . mere formal reflective awareness of the 'I' as the 'subjectum' is not primordially given in the phenomena nor is it phenomenological interpretation . . .²

¹Dilthey, quoted by Cassirer, op. cit., p. 86

²Heidegger, op. cit., p. 115

. . . of man as exhibited in the phenomena. The Who? of Dasein must be interpreted existentially, not rationally. In everyday being-in-the-world things are encountered as ready-to-hand not only for me but also for others with my sort of being, for example, shops, streets, books, cars, houses etc. The individual Dasein in such encounters is said to "free" other entities as "there-too" and "there-with". This "with" and "too" are not mere accidents, potential properties of being-in-the-world; they, once more, are existential-ontological constituents of human being. Man's world is always a with-world, a "Mitdasein". Furthermore, proximally and for the most part, each person is immersed in the public world of others, not distinguishing himself in any significant sense from everyone else who is there-too-in-the-world. As such, self-consciousness, knowledge of the "I", is a derivative interpretation of man, founded upon the more primordial originally disclosed they-self. The answer to the original question, therefore, of the Who? of Dasein, phenomenologically discovered, is not "I" or the "self", but "das man", "they". Proximally and for the most part we live according to the way the world is publically interpreted by "das man"; absorbed in everyday concerns, we are dominated by the "they-self" and so relieved of our being as possibility to be, as pure potentiality-for-being. The freedom and corresponding responsibility to-be is forgotten in the face of all-embracing social customs and conventions, rules and regulations, laws, beliefs, suspicions and interpretations of the world and man. Any primordial encounter with one's own being-in-the-world is obscured by the public interpretation which we inevitably inherit through

language and social life. (In this respect myth and folk-lore can be seen as derivative public ways of being-in-the-world.) In this kind of being-with man is seduced, as it were, into thinking of himself as "ens realissimum", as a "thing", an entity with a definite essence, which is distinct from his existence. In thus forgetting being, as pure possibility-to-be, man is said to live "inauthentically" in the sense that his life and behaviour are not his "own", but, as it were, "borrowed" from the public "they" which own them: inauthentic man behaves and is as "they" expect him to behave and be. Such a man fails to face up to his ownmost responsibility to be, to "exist", and acts as if he were already some definitive thing or other, e.g., a doctor, a husband and father, or a waiter as in Sartre's illustration in Being and Nothingness:

. . . he is playing at being a waiter in a cafe . . .
 the waiter in the cafe plays with his condition in
 order to realize it.¹

In other words, inauthentic Dasein acknowledges his facticity, his having-to-be, but neglects his transcendency, his ability to transcend a given situation by virtue of his potentiality-for-being.

The advantage of this analysis of human being as being-with is that it renders solipsism, which has its source in Cartesian dualism, a bogus problem. Human being is being-in-the-world; and being-in-the-world is equiprimordially being-with. The world is primordially and originally encountered and revealed to every man as a with-world. As soon as

¹Sartre, op. cit., p. 59

I "know" the world through my experience of it, I understand it as a world-for man and a world in which other men like me exist. The External World and the Other are therefore equiprimordially given in everyday pre-philosophical experience. On the other hand, consciousness of a self is not primordially given but is a rationally and conceptually derived understanding of being grounded in the concrete disclosure of Dasein as being-with-in-the-world. Descartes' order of knowledge is thus reversed. The traditional problem of Other Minds is likewise avoided together with the related question: how can I ever be sure that you are a being like me, a man with a mind? Theories of analogy and empathy are not required; besides, they could only provide an abstract, approximate and derivative understanding of man, not one primordially, i.e., phenomenologically, founded in concrete lived experience.

Once more it can be seen how a Heideggerian interpretation of man works towards explaining how literature can move us. Since we each have a pre-understanding of being (verified in our actions) as being-in-the-world, potentiality-for-being, and being-with, and since we each have a similar encounter with the world which matters and with others from whom we hardly distinguish ourselves proximally and for the most part, we have a great deal in common in terms of primordial experience and pre-philosophical understanding in which to ground the possibility of literary experience. We cannot be surprised if we are at times profoundly affected by the personal explication of the being we know and live but rarely manage to articulate.

We now move to what is possibly the most interesting question:

how do we understand pre-ontologically and pre-conceptually the meaning of human being? - particularly when that meaning is so well obscured thematically in traditional philosophical theories about the nature of man.

To explicate the how of our pre-understanding of the meaning of being, Heidegger directs our attention to an unfamiliar philosophical concept "moods" or "states-of-mind", and this will become the key concept in the present interpretation of man and meanings. Moods, we shall see, disclose primordially man's being-there with all its constituents: as potentiality-for-being, as being-in-the-world which matters, as being-with others of the same ontological type, as being-towards-death, as "thrown" being-there, as "fallen" being-there, and so on. The distinction between theoretical, articulated knowledge and untheoretical, unarticulated knowledge moves to the forefront of the discussion. The knowledge disclosed by moods is, of course, of the latter, more primordial, pre-conceptual, concrete type. And as such it cannot be expected to reveal itself in well-formulated thematic statements of "fact":

If one identified what moods disclose with whatever Dasein in this mood knows theoretically 'at the same time', one would completely mistake the phenomenal characteristics of what moods disclose and how they disclose.¹

The traditional division of man into mind and matter is, of course, ignored, and consequently that also of his "psychic" phenomena into volition, cognition and emotion:

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 135

Being in a mood does not primarily refer to a mental state; it is not an inner state that mysteriously gets to the outside to rub off on persons and things.¹

Instead a new distinction is drawn between moods and emotions, which primordially speaking, are not the same sort of lived experiences at all. Mood is the more primordial phenomenon, of which emotion is a derivative mode. Being pointlessly depressed or generally happy, serene or anxious are examples of moods. They differ from the corresponding emotions of sadness or joy, of being unperturbed in "the face of X", or being afraid in "the face of X", in that emotions have specific objects whilst moods do not. Emotions can be regarded as accidentals, or potential properties of man, whilst mood is an existentielle, a defining characteristic of human being. Even what is normally regarded as "evenly balanced lack of mood" is itself a state-of-mind, only possible because state-of-mind is an essential constituent of man's being. Heidegger uses the differences between fear and anxiety (or dread) to illustrate the difference between an emotion and mood. As a mode of state-of-mind fear is an existential "dormant possibility" of man. What we fear is always something fairly definite, an object, person or event, capable of spatio-temporal location. What one dreads, on the other hand:

. . . is not an entity within the world . . . of all those entities that are ready to hand or present at hand within the world, none function as that which dread dreads . . . It is characteristic of what we dread that what threatens us is not anywhere.²

¹Ibid., p. 137

²Ibid., p. 186

Similarly emotions are conditioned by beliefs about the world; moods are not. If a belief makes someone afraid, acceptance of a contradictory belief will reassure him and remove his fear. If a man is dying of thirst, for example, his fear is allayed by the belief that he is approaching or drinking water. Moods on the other hand, are not conditional on specific beliefs, and thus cannot be removed by showing that these beliefs are false:

A given mood is compatible with any belief and the contradiction of any belief. A man may be depressed because of a certain belief, but he may also be depressed in spite of it . . .

moods are not related to beliefs like emotions of a more specific sort, like fear or pride, because moods are themselves one of the conditions that determine how a certain belief will affect one.¹

You will not cheer up a depressed friend by reminding him of his good fortune: that the sky is blue and the sun shining, that he has a good social and economic status, that he has a loving family and trusted friends. For he is not depressed about anything in particular, but about "nothing really".

What does such a mood disclose about human nature? Firstly, it shows man's essential affectivity, his "ontological disposition", as Richardson expresses it. Secondly, it discloses man's there-being as an issue for man; it is his own being-in-the-world with which he is

¹Schmitt, op. cit., pp. 160-161

concerned. Thirdly, it reveals Dasein as "already-there-being", as what Heidegger calls, "thrown" being-there. By this we understand man's facticity; his having-to-be, his being-delivered-over already to his own being-in-the-world, to a world and an existence not of his choosing, with which he is henceforward "burdened" (or "graced" depending on the mood). And fourthly, it reveals man's essence as "existence", as understanding and projecting being. Dasein's thrown being-there-in-the-world is disclosed in moods as pure potentiality-for-being; man is possibility to be; his being is to be concerned with his own being, which cannot be referred beyond himself, he is being "pour-soi". In contrast with the being of instruments, the "en-soi", which is meaningful, purposeful and significant, human being is revealed in mood as essentially meaningless and so absurd:

. . . the mood brings Dasein before the 'that-it-is' of its 'there', which as such stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma.¹

In the face of this multiple revelation by mood man has two options; he either welcomes his being as pure possibility-to-be, as a positive freedom to be explored adventurously and authentically, or he turns away and flees it as a terrifying responsibility, inauthentically.

The way in which the mood discloses is not one in which we look at thrownness, but one in which we turn towards or turn away.²

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 136

²Ibid., p. 136

Thus the word "mood" can be extended to apply to one's sense of what one can do, both in the specific sphere of skills and in the more general sphere which we have designated "existence".

Authentic Dasein turns towards the being which is revealed; inauthentic Dasein flees that being. Both, however, disclose an understanding of human being on behalf of the person concerned, since:

A state-of-mind always has its understanding even if it merely keeps it suppressed.¹

This is that nonthematic, pre-conceptual understanding of being with which we began the inquiry. It is a non-theoretical and non-propositional and as such non-evidential, grasp of human being as being-there. This being, we know, whether we like it or not, and whether we theoretically and thematically "know" it or not. It is the power in all of us to grasp our own possibilities for being within the context of the "Lebenswelt" in which we exist. ("Possibilities" is used here in an unconventional sense, whereby "death" is our "ownmost" possibility.) It is an understanding which is co-original with our existing; by it we grasp the significance of the world, its meaning for man as the ground of his possibility to be at all, and the "for-sake-of-which" the world is, i.e., Dasein. What is within the world is disclosed as there "for" man, and the only possible meaning objects in the world could have is one derived from their reference to man; such things are primordially encountered as ready-to-hand-for Dasein. This understanding discloses

¹Ibid., p. 143

man as very different from these things; things are, whilst "Dasein is what is not yet actual and what is not at any time necessary". He is "thrown possibility through and through". As "thrown", he is thrown into the kind of being which Heidegger calls "projecting". Dasein, as such, is "being-towards-the-future" and "being-ahead-of-itself". This constituent of human being represents man's "transcendancy", his ability to change the status quo and to choose his own "essence".

Finally, we arrive at "interpretation", which like fear, and unlike "understanding", is a "dormant possibility" of man. As fear is a derivative mode of mood, so interpretation is a derivative mode of understanding. It is a rendering explicit of what is already implicit in ordinary lived experience. That which is interpreted explicitly has already been grasped pre-conceptually by the individual concerned, within a meaningful context of significant relationships, i.e., within a Lebenswelt. Interpretation cannot therefore, be regarded as an arbitrary matter of "sticking a value on a naked object", as some critics would have us believe. On the contrary:

As the appropriation of understanding, the interpretation operates in Being towards a totality of involvements which is always understood.¹

Thus interpretation, as it is grounded in pre-understanding, which always has its mood, can never be a purely rational and objective procedure:

¹Ibid., p. 150

. . . never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us.¹

Interpretation is characterised by a fore-having, a fore-seeing, and a fore-conception, and this structure characterises in turn pre-understanding at one extreme and discourse at the other. Prior to any explicit verbal interpretation of meaning (tacit or vocal), that meaning has been grasped in a non-thematic, pre-conceptual understanding disclosed by mood or by a derivative emotion.

Assertion and discourse are derivative modes, in turn, of interpretation. What is talked about has been already interpreted by the individual, this interpretation depending upon a prior, primordial understanding of the subject in hand (which indirectly is always Dasein, but directly can be anything at all). Where the issue is the meaning of human nature, the pre-conceptual primordial understanding disclosed in moods is invariably concealed by thematic, rational interpretations. This may be because "proximally and for the most part" man flees the truth of human being as potentiality-for-being, and this inauthenticity is reflected in his articulate interpretations of life or because no suitable philosophical conceptual vocabulary is available for an undisguised explication of human being. (These two would not, of course, be independent influences). Traditional theories assume, in the first place, that man is of the same ontological type as things present-at-hand. In addition, they fail to distinguish things primordially

¹Ibid., p. 150

discovered as tools ready-to-hand from things disclosed as merely present-at-hand, and they assimilate the former to the latter. Heidegger points out that in so doing, traditional philosophy has modified the primordial and "existential-hermeneutical" as-structure of interpretation to the "apophantical" as-structure of assertion. He means, for example, that in disclosing the hammer as an independent object present-at-hand, assertion at the same time conceals the hammer as a tool. In other words, the "Lebenswelt", the totality of involvement, is neglected in assertion, in favour of presenting the object as an isolated and independent entity, intrinsically unrelated to any person or other thing.

In its function of appropriating what is understood the 'as' no longer reaches out into the totality of involvements . . . The 'as' gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand.¹

The literary work is similarly interpreted: as estranged from its significant horizon of involvements, and as a thing present-at-hand, unrelated to author or public upon which the literary commentator must stick a meaning and a value, to be justified as the end-product of a careful, rational, objective, analysis of the text. But this cannot be a "true" representation of what interpretation involves when all meaningful assertion, authentic and inauthentic alike, whether it reveals or conceals being, remains one of man's possibilities ONLY on the grounds of the existential as-structure of primordial interpretation,

¹Ibid., p. 158

"wholly wrapped up in concerned understanding", which is itself an essential constituent of human nature. Apart from these roots in existence, assertive discourse could have no meaning. Speaking, then comes to be seen as an expression (directly or indirectly, authentically or inauthentically, revealed or concealed) of primordial, unspoken, lived understanding; it is "situation coming to explicitness in words".¹

Since literature is a form of written discourse, it too is founded upon a prior "circumspective interpretation", a primordial understanding of being. It too, as discourse, is "situation coming to explicitness in words", and as such, its meaning is rooted in "existence". Since existence is an essential and determining characteristic of human nature, have we not found here some fact upon which the possibility of literature and the literary experience can be grounded? If so, our approach to literature must be consistent with our understanding of its ontological status. And thus we are returned to our starting point, literature, now viewed within the context of a Heideggerian interpretation of man.

¹Palmer, op. cit., p. 139

PART III

Firstly the work must be considered as it is "situated within a world which signifies and matters to man. As the expression or "assertion" of an individual, it must be recognised as the articulation of his personal interpretation of what being human is all about. Consequently, the critic must concern himself, amongst other things, with explicating the meaning of being which is articulated in the work, something few Anglo-American critics actually do. If the writing is authentic, it will disclose for the reader, with varying emphases, human being in all its aspects: as thrown being-there, as being-in-the-world, as potentiality-for-being, as being-ahead-of-itself, as being-towards-the-future, as fallen being-there, as being-towards-death, etc. The "truth" of the work will depend upon how authentically it discloses and explicates what is implicit in life and in our primordial lived understanding of life. The "true" work will disclose at once both man's facticity, his having-to-be, and his transcendence, his possibility-to-be. The fact of the work's existence, regardless of its content and quality, will always reveal the transcendence of man; this, I believe, is the source of "aesthetic pleasure":

It is at this base-level of the art elements that we first encounter our own seeming miraculous capacity to overcome, to transcend the brute given world and

as spontaneous free agents transform it into our own kind of substance and into our own life world.¹

Our understanding of the work, at the most basic level, will be revealed in the mood or emotion the work occasions. The presence of the emotion itself discloses that something has been understood, although that meaning may be inexplicable at the time. The critic, endeavouring to give a valid interpretation of the work's meaning, will therefore attend to the emotion or mood produced by the work, since every mood has its understanding, and it is the critic's job to make explicit this understanding. The relevance of the reader's response is thus reinstated:

The human judgment must be one that springs from 'our profoundest sensibility' because this is at the root of our feeling about what matters in life and what life is.²

To explicate the meaning of a text in greater detail the literary commentator will, of course, have to analyse the work in some depth. But such a textual analysis will be neither objective nor presuppositionless, since such an "interpretation" flies in the face of the way understanding and interpretation actually operate:

It must be remembered that one has already had an experience of the object to be interpreted whose meaning must be laid bare through interpretation.³

The body of already given and granted presuppositions is what Heidegger

¹Fallico, Art and Existentialism, p. 43

²Andor Gomme, op. cit., p. 115

³E. Kaelin, Art and Existence, p. 291

uncovers in his analysis of understanding and state-of-mind. We can only verify his analysis, as a phenomenological interpretation of human nature, by matching it to our own experience of how it is with man. Heidegger has provided us with new categories and concepts by which we may articulate our experiences as men and our understanding of the "human condition". I think that this new vocabulary better equips the literary critic to fully explicate and describe the meaning and significance of an artwork. He is no longer restricted to "internal", "intrinsic" verbal meanings, for he can now draw upon his own understanding of being, as being-in-the-world and all that that entails. He has also a whole new conceptual scheme at hand in which to express his understanding of a work, and reliable external criteria by which to judge its worth.

The existential "categories" of experience upon which the critic may draw in his appreciation of a work are: fear, dread, anguish, anxiety, aloneness, conscience, freedom, responsibility, authenticity and inauthenticity, choice, death and "nothingness". These categories are derived from Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of man as thrown potentiality-for-being, torn between facticity and transcendency. I shall talk about anxiety, death and nothingness in connection with literature, since these three will necessarily include the other "categories", and also because they have been mentioned earlier to illustrate the analysis of being-there. Also, these three phenomena - anxiety, death and nothingness - in one form or other, provide much of the explicit subject-matter of "great" and

lasting works of literature, revealing, as they do, a certain pre-ontological understanding of human being on the part of their creators. The well-known "existentialist" writers, like Dostoevsky, Kafka, Camus, Satre and de Beauvoir, will not be appealed to, as these obviously prejudice the issue in my favour. Instead I refer to a number of works, whose authors are not generally associated with "existentialist" thought, in the hope of demonstrating that this "theory of literature" is truly generalisable.

Anxiety has been characterized above as one of man's most revealing moods, distinguished from fear by its lack of object; "that in the face of which one is anxious is completely indefinite". It is nothing present-at-hand, nor ready-to-hand within the world but being-in-the world itself. One is anxious about oneself, one's gratuitous being, one's indefinite and yet-to-be-decided future, one's thoroughly arbitrary existence. Anxiety thus discloses at once, man's facticity and thrownness, his having-to-be, and at the same time his existentiality and transcendence, his potentiality-for-being. Man is disclosed in anxiety as free to choose his what, but not free to choose that he will be. In anxiety man is revealed as burdened by this responsibility to-be and by the knowledge that at the heart of his own being is nothingness. By absorbing himself in a mood, man further reveals himself as "fallen" being-there:

. . . anxiousness as a state-of-mind is a way of Being-in-the-world; that in the face of which we have anxiety is thrown being-in-the-world; that which we have anxiety about is our potentiality-

for-being-in-the-world. Thus the entire phenomenon of anxiety shows Dasein as factually existing Being-in-the-world. The fundamental characteristics of this entity are existentiality, facticity and Being-fallen.¹

By "being-fallen" Heidegger indicates that inauthentic mode of existence by which man flees from the truth of his revealed being-there and shirks his attendant responsibility to-be, which this knowledge entails. He immerses himself in the things of the world to escape facing his "being"; he busies himself with supposedly "necessary" tasks; and accepts the official public interpretation of man's "essence" and role in the world. He is thus fallen-away from his own authentic being-there in existence.

Anxiety also discloses man as alone in the world. It individualises, by throwing man back completely on his own resources to-be. It reveals the "lonely Dasein", he who alone can determine his "what", by his own choices and actions; it reveals human being as "concern":

The Being of There-Being is to be concerned with its own Being and therefore cannot be referred beyond itself.²

In this respect each man is indeed an island, isolated and self-determined. It is from the acknowledgement of this understanding that man flees when he (sometimes obsessively) absorbs himself in his job, his family, the they-self; or more obviously in religion, alcohol or

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 191

²Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, p. 55

drugs.

All literature of "initiation" deals explicitly with these aspects of being revealed primordially in anxiety. The hero (or anti-hero) is actually portrayed as "anxious" in these works, anxious about his own being-in-the-world. The constant themes of such literature are the essential loneliness of man in the world, the gratuitousness of his existence, the arbitrariness of his decisions, the significance of these same decisions and the consequent inability to arrive at a choice in the face of that significance, the inauthenticity of the "they-self", and the need for each man to "strip" himself of conventional and social trappings in order to reveal the "truth" of being, the overwhelming responsibility to-be which accompanies the realisation of his "absolute" freedom, and the temptation to flee that freedom by adopting the role which society has prepared for him and the standards and values which are easiest and most acceptable. Examples of literary works of "initiation" are: the novels of D.H. Lawrence, L.P. Hartley, Alan Sillitoe, Carsons McCullers, and William Faulkner, the short stories of Ernest Hemingway, classics like Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by Joyce, and Brighton Rock by Graham Greene. Similar truths of human being are disclosed in many other works: explicitly in King Lear and Hamlet, in the works of George Orwell, Saul Bellow, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Scott Fitzgerald, Conrad, Tolstoy, Pasternak, Solshenitzyn, implicitly and more subtly in Henry James, Jane Austen, E.M. Forster.

As thrown being-in-the-world and being-towards-the-future, man is revealed (by mood) as being-towards-death. Once more, death,

like mood, must not be regarded simply as one of man's "dormant possibilities" or as an accident which, as it happens, occurs to man. Death is rather a determining constituent of human being, an existentielle. It is man's only certain possibility and his only sure choice. Human being is therefore necessarily and ultimately being-towards-death, being-towards-the-possibility-of-his-own-impossibility. This thrown being-towards-death is once more disclosed primordially in anxiety. Again, Dasein either turns towards or turns away from this revealed truth of his being. Authentic Dasein, Heidegger tells us, faces up to his ownmost possibility, death, in "anticipatory resoluteness". Inauthentic Dasein does not face his own death resolutely but flees it by treating it as an unfortunate accident which will eventually befall him, whilst it is in fact a necessary feature of "human" being. Inauthentic being-towards-death attempts to forget death, deny the possibility, or run away from death; he regards death as an empirical event occurring in the world which happens to men as an unfortunate accident. Such a man does his best to ignore his ownmost possibility by absorbing himself with affairs of the world in the hopes of concealing from himself the knowledge he already has of his "true" destiny. Cowardly fear characterizes inauthentic being-towards-death in contrast with the:

. . . impassioned freedom towards death - a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'they' and which is factual, certain of itself and anxious . . .¹

. . . which characterizes authentic being-towards-death.

¹Heidegger, op. cit., p. 266

I scarcely need mention to what extent death provides a constant theme in literature, an authentic being-towards-death being presented as an ideal in most Greek drama (e.g. Antigone), in Anglo-Saxon poetry (Beowulf), even in Medieval Romances (e.g. Gawain and the Green Knight), certainly in Shakespeare, and I believe, in all literature, from the most "folk" to the most sophisticated works. It is one of Hemingway's most explicit themes, authentic being-towards-death being a necessary mark of "maturity" and "virility". This can only be achieved (in the context of Hemingway's fiction) through an actual confrontation with death, either with that of others, that of a hunted animal, or the near death of oneself. (This is equivalent in Heidegger to an authentic facing up to the being-towards-death which is revealed primordially in mood). The hero, once he has confronted death and accepted it as his ownmost possibility, is distinguished by a physical wound, which symbolises that close, primordially revealing, encounter with death and thus with "being". The character most despised by Hemingway, is the one who fears death and reveals this cowardly fear by euphemising death, by trembling at the threat of death, or by turning pale at the bull-fight. He is a character not yet wounded and therefore not yet "initiated" into authentic manhood; he has not yet grasped authentically that understanding of being-there which he has primordially and which he reveals (in a concealed fashion) in all his actions. William Faulkner likewise takes death as one of his most explicit themes, e.g. As I Lay Dying.

Man's original confrontation with "nothingness" occurs when

there is a break in the referential structure of his world, and this again is an explicit theme of literature of initiation, as well as of most "modern" novels, plays and poems in which man is traditionally "stripped" of his unquestioned preconceptions, prejudices and assumptions. (See also all social satires and most tragedies).

Heidegger illustrates this break in the referential structure of the world, phenomenologically, by returning us to our encounter with the ready-to-hand. When the hammer breaks, for example, it no longer exists in the mode of the meaningful and significant ready-to-hand. This marks the break in the referential structure of the lived world. At this moment, Dasein stumbles upon a void, a space between himself and things, which forces him to become aware of the world as distinctly other than and alien to man, a way of seeing the world which was not possible so long as his absorption in his work and projects continued. He has been given space for abstract (as opposed to concrete) thought. In literature, the hero takes a journey away from home, in search of himself and understanding, and this represents the primordially experienced break between man and his significant environment. It provides a time and a space in which the hero can be "initiated" into life, i.e., into authentic understanding of the meaning of human being. Such a hero need not be a young man; King Lear, for example, suffered such a break in his significant environment and was left with literally "nothing" at all. But his encounter with this "nothingness" revealed to him human being; it was the source of his own authentic understanding of himself in the world. With this break in significance, a gap appears

in the environment, so to speak, a clearing between Dasein and his world, and this gap not only makes possible the familiar distinctions of object and subject, intellect and thing, it also secures the possibility of "truth", in the sense of disclosure. The "nothingness" revealed by this break between man and his environment is essentially the discovery of the "meaninglessness" of the world, when viewed as the merely present-at-hand. Divorced from human being, things in the world have no value and no significance; they cannot be said to be "for -" anything at all; they simply are. Similarly, once man is separated from his familiar and significant "Lebenswelt", he sees more easily that his being also is "meaningless" and superfluous; it is "for -" nothing, and signifies nothing. Moreover, man is at any precise moment essentially "nothing". Since his essence is his existence, he is always ahead-of-himself, he is always about-to-be; but he is at no time anything definitive. In such a mood, which reveals being as "nothingness", all choices appear arbitrary, each of them equally "meaningless" and gratuitous - except one, the only certain choice, the decision to die. But this itself is to choose "nothingness", oblivion. Anxiety reveals all this. It has no other object; we invariably answer "nothing really" when asked about the object of our mood. In anxiety, there seems to be nothing to hold on to, except the being-there about which we are anxious, which is itself a being-towards-nothingness, i.e., a being-towards-death. Even as being-towards-the-future, being-there remains being-towards-nothing, since it is being-towards possibilities not yet actualised and never finalised. Likewise, being-towards-death reveals to Dasein that he is no-thing; his

essence is his existence, and his existence is always towards his own death, towards the possibility of his own impossibility. Nothingness, once more, throws man back completely on his own resources to "exist", on his freedom and corresponding responsibility to make the world meaningful, by making it his own, by transcending his facticity. And this is what every creative writer in fact does: his work is at once both a recognition and a transcendence of his facticity; its very existence affirms man's possibility-to-be authentic understanding

Dasein:

Each painting, each book, is a recovery of the totality of being. Each of them presents this totality to the freedom of the spectator. For this is quite the final goal of art: to recover this world by giving it to be seen as it is, but as if it had its source in human freedom.¹

It is the perception of this essential structure of an artwork which occasions "aesthetic pleasure" of the most basic kind. When the "texture" of the work reveals the metaphysics which determines this structure, i.e., when it reveals human being, we are more profoundly moved by our experience of it. Thus:

It follows from the above that the critic's job is not to reduce a work of art to a simple logical statement; rather it is to analyse the structures of the work in such a way that a viewer who has failed to perceive the work or understand its significance in the act of

¹J.P. Sartre, What is Literature? p. 57

perception, may be put into a position to have the experience it affords . . . In the final analysis the meaning of artworks is judged by human individuals in a direct first-hand experience.¹

The principal task of the literary critic becomes, therefore, not to simply describe the what and the how of literature, the deciphering of the work's "message", the recommending of its formal structural virtues. These things he will continue to do, of course, but as a means towards a more significant end. His principal role is more concrete, less abstract, more practical, less academic, it is to explicate and describe the meaning of the work in terms of the "truths" of human being which it discloses, and this will be a meaning which goes beyond any precise verbal meanings. Such a critic will analyse, in order to synthesise, "destroy", in order to "recreate", and he will do so by "situating" the work within the significant environment of human concerns. Heidegger's existential "categories" of experience are recommended, as they provide the most extensive and exhaustive conceptual vocabulary for interpreting man yet available. In such literary criticism, the emphasis shifts from the analysis to the synthesis, and correspondingly there is a marked difference in "style". Jean-Paul Sartre is perhaps the best-known exponent of "creative criticism", and he proceeds, most notably, by piling up metaphor upon metaphor in order to recreate more explicitly the original pre-conceptual experience of the work for the reader and to clarify in greater detail the existential "meaning" contained within the work. His essays on

¹Kaelin, An Existentialist Aesthetic, p. 304

specific literary works range over such topics as the meaning and significance of "time" in the work, its treatment of "freedom", "consciousness", "causality", "change", etc. Perhaps the most important feature of Sartre's criticism is that he refuses to separate "content" and "form". For him a philosophical idea is not the content of a novel, although it does dictate the novel's concrete form. The writer reveals his understanding of "reality" in the way he actually presents his material. This belief about literature, naturally, poses a problem for censorship: it does not permit one to appreciate a work for its formal features, whilst rejecting it on account of its "immoral" content. Such a move can only be one of hypocrisy, of "bad faith". The fuss over Jean Genet's work represents one case where such "bad faith" on behalf of the "critics" was most evident; to many, his writing was admirable, but what he had to say was immoral and corrupting. This sort of "bad faith" results from the mistaken ideas that literature can be treated objectively, as if it were the merely present-at-hand, and that the content of the work is distinct from the form, whereas:

A fictional technique always relates back to the novelist's metaphysics. The critic's task is to define the latter before evaluating the former.¹

The most stimulating literary commentary, in my experience, has been that which has demonstrated just how much content and form are one and inseparable.

¹Sartre, "On the 'Sound and the Fury': Time in the Work of Faulkner". in Sartre On, p. 84

CONCLUSION

To conclude, then, I shall restate my recommendations to the literary critic:

First, that he be more "creative" in his approach to specific literary works.

Second, that in order to fulfil the above, he abandon certain "Cartesian" assumptions: (1) that the correct approach to literature is the rational, objective and analytic one, (2) that "meaning" is restricted to verbal meaning, (3) that the cognitive and the affective are different and distinct ways of interpreting the world.

Third, that he replace his vague, theoretical understanding of man, as "rational animal", with a concrete, lived, and phenomenological understanding of "how it is with man", i.e., that he reject the rational, in favour of the experiential.

I anticipate the objection that I am recommending that every literary critic be an "existentialist" or at least a "philosopher". In a sense this is true; I am prescribing that literary critics show concern for the meaning of life as it is articulated in artworks and understood pre-philosophically by all men, in their everyday lived experiences. But this does not mean that critics must, consciously, do some philosophy before they do some criticism. I ask only that they become aware of those "Cartesian" assumptions about man and his projects

which determine their approach to literature and in my opinion limit their appreciation of particular works. Merleau-Ponty dealt with a similar issue in his article Metaphysics and The Novel, which is a reply to those who protest that philosophy and literature are different disciplines and, as such, should not trespass upon each other's territory. Within the Cartesian tradition this was very sound advice - and had literary commentators followed their own advice more rigorously, I would probably not have felt the need to write my thesis on this particular topic. However, it is impossible to evade Cartesian ways of interpreting the world when those ways are incorporated in one's language, everyday as well as academic, unless one makes the conscious effort to examine those assumptions and present alternatives against which to test them. The literary critic does not seem to be aware to what extent his "working hypotheses" are determined by the prevailing philosophical climate - which in England and America is Cartesian, in the sense outlined in Part I. Given a different understanding of man and his world, a new approach to the literary phenomenon will naturally follow which could be more rewarding, more relevant. Existential phenomenology could provide this new philosophical background for literary interpretation; modern French critics have been working against this background for over a decade. Sartre formulated a literary theory based on phenomenological existentialism, as far back as 1947.¹ His contemporaries include, besides Merleau-Ponty, Richard Blanchot (who said of the literary critic, "this task of sympathy is his only

¹Qu'est-ce que la littérature?

justification), and Bachelard. Neal Oxenhandler has characterised these French critics thus:

What the critic wants above all is to participate in the life of the literary work and bear away from the participation some quickening sense of truth . . .¹

The critic's is thus a double role of co-operation: first to have "performed" the work, experienced it, and second to help others do the same. Cartesian rationalism can only hinder his endeavours to fulfil his second and more important role; the concepts it dictates for understanding such experience and the method of analysis it recommends for articulating the experience are not adequate to the experience, its meaning and significance. The critic is quite right to demand that such philosophy keep its recommendations to itself, since . . .

. . . classical metaphysics could pass for a speciality with which literature had nothing to do, because metaphysics operated on the basis of 'uncontested rationalism, convinced that it could make the world and human life understood by an arrangement of concepts . . .

While:

. . . Everything changes when a phenomenological or existential philosophy assigns itself the task, not of explaining the world, nor of discovering its 'conditions of possibility', but rather of formulating an experience of the world, a contact with the world which preceded all thought about the world.²

And this sort of metaphysics, as I hope I have demonstrated, does have something to say to the literary critic.

¹Oxenhandler, op. cit., p. 23

²Merleau-Ponty, "Metaphysics and The Novel", in Sense And Nonsense, p. 27

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