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THROUGH PROSE FICTION.

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ENCOUNTER CRITICISM: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH PROSE FICTION

William Patrick Riley

A dissertation presented to the
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ENCOUNTER CRITICISM: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

THROUGH PROSE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

ENCOUNTER CRITICISM: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PROSE FICTION

by William Patrick Riley

This dissertation integrates selected principles of existentialism and humanistic psychology with certain approaches to writing about and teaching prose fiction to formulate encounter criticism. A critical method designed to promote identity development, encounter criticism approaches literary works to blend relevant historical factors, close internal analyses, and personal responses and applications. This method is demonstrated in an analytic and personal essay on Joseph Conrad's Victory. This study also describes how student-centered teaching can stimulate effective and meaningful use of encounter criticism.

The first part of the dissertation draws on the writings of existential and humanistic thinkers to suggest why certain imbalances in contemporary American life make the self-conscious discovery and creation of one's identity a difficult but necessary task. My argument then defines individual identity as the interrelation of inner being, personal experience, and interpersonal relationships. Because inner being is the weakest and most threatened facet of identity, education should emphasize its development.

William Patrick Riley

Essential to such development is the ability of the individual to be self-conscious, to perceive, verbalize, and communicate as many facets of himself as possible. Thus, to stimulate self-consciousness, educators should stress the exploration, discovery, and creation of personal meanings in what students learn.

The second part of this dissertation describes how encounter criticism can promote this educational objective. This part relates the process of self-consciously discovering and creating one's identity to the particular qualities that make fiction a potentially significant stimulator and source of identity development, and shows the parallels between self-consciousness and fictional study. Here encounter criticism is presented as a method that brings the personal, subjective self to bear in literary study and thereby promotes not only intellectual growth, but emotional and psychological maturity as well.

By adding personal responses and applications to traditional critical approaches, encounter criticism stresses the psychological processes central to reading fiction well and meaningfully, views fiction as an integrative-disruptive complex, and focuses on the interpenetrations between life and fiction. Technically, this method emphasizes the unity of form and meaning, the implied author, point of view, and the relationships among the author, his work, and the reader.

William Patrick Riley

The third part of this study employs an essay on Joseph Conrad's Victory to exemplify how encounter criticism can be used by a practiced student of fiction as an extension of analytic critical methods or as an alternative to them. This essay demonstrates a substantial understanding of the novel's ideas and techniques, while integrating personal responses and applications into the critical explication. In doing so, this exemplary essay suggests the value of systematically rather than incidentally verbalizing, organizing, and communicating personal responses and applications.

Finally, this dissertation shows that student-centered teaching is vital to the integration of identity development into fiction courses. The four facets of student-centered teaching are described as providing a relatively open classroom environment. First, student goals, values, interests, and abilities are used as the basis for a course's structure and objectives. Second, the teacher limits his roles as expert and formal authority and stresses his roles as facilitator and person. Third, the student-centered discussion gradually becomes the central classroom activity. Fourth, the teacher and student work together in the evaluative process.

In sum, this dissertation has interrelated the existential emphasis on the subjective nature of knowledge and

William Patrick Riley

experience, the humanistic psychologists' description of the need for and nature of individual identity development, and certain aspects of prose fiction to develop encounter criticism and to suggest techniques for its effective implementation in fiction courses.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.1
II. INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT.	9
III. ENCOUNTER CRITICISM.57
IV. ENCOUNTER CRITICISM OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S <u>VICTORY</u>103
V. TEACHING FICTION VIA ENCOUNTER CRITICISM.	170
VI. CONCLUSION.215
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	229

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This dissertation integrates some principles of existentialism and existential psychology into a study of writing about and teaching prose fiction. These principles call attention to the importance of the discovery and creation of one's individual identity. This process of identity development is also known as self-actualization, full humanness, value development, autonomy, full growth, and self-fulfillment. Such discovery and creation emerge from one's experiences and interpersonal relationships and take place when one becomes self-conscious, freely expresses his inner nature, and makes responsible choices. One is given an existence, but he must assume responsibility for its essence, its meaning and value.

The first part of the dissertation explores the imbalances and incongruencies of contemporary American life and discusses why they make individual identity development an especially important educational goal. By linking these imbalances and incongruencies with certain philosophical and psychological premises about the nature of man, this part also defines the concept of individual

identity. Finally, this definition is applied to education in general and to contemporary college and university curricula in particular to show that identity development is a viable concept applicable to learning and teaching.

The second part of the dissertation applies the process of discovering and creating one's identity to fictional study. It does so by linking this process to the particular qualities which make fiction a potentially significant stimulator and source of identity development. It also shows the parallels between self-consciousness and the study of fiction. Finally, this second part explains encounter criticism. A method of studying and teaching fiction based mainly on Walter J. Slatoff's With Respect to Readers: Dimensions of Literary Response, encounter criticism brings the personal, subjective self to bear in literary study and thereby promotes not only intellectual growth, but emotional and psychological maturity as well. In doing so, encounter criticism extends rather than displaces other critical methods. It utilizes particular works so as to integrate relevant historical factors, close and careful internal analyses, personal responses, and personal and social applications.

The third part demonstrates the techniques of encounter criticism in an analytic and personal essay on Joseph Conrad's Victory. This essay shows both my

competence as a literary critic and my thoughts and feelings as a unique individual responding to and applying a literary experience. To achieve these ends, I give a general description of how I approach the novel and in the process synthesize Conrad's ideas. I also present these ideas and then respond to and apply them to myself. Lastly, I do an extended analysis of Victory to show how my approach and Conrad's ideas interrelate to provide an effective and meaningful fictional experience.

In the fourth part, the dissertation explains student-centered teaching, shows why it is central to effecting the identity-development approach to fiction, and demonstrates how it can be integrated into fiction courses. First of all, student-centered teaching provides a relatively open classroom situation and atmosphere. Student goals, values, interests, and abilities are integral to the course structure. Second, the teacher de-emphasizes his roles as expert and formal authority and emphasizes his roles as facilitator and person. Third, passivity and boredom are minimized by student-centered discussions and other forms of group involvement. Fourth, the student is actively involved in the evaluative process.

The final portion of the dissertation draws conclusions about the role encounter criticism can play in the study and teaching of fiction in the college and

university English curriculum, about how it can play that role most effectively and meaningfully, and about why it should play that role.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation was prompted by a personal feeling that there is much fruitlessness in the study and teaching of fiction in the college curriculum because what is essentially a deep personal experience, reading fiction, is often corrupted in critical writing, lectures, and classroom discussions by the tendency to make fiction, first and foremost, an object to be categorized, classified, and analyzed. While this tendency has its place and can, in fact, deepen and enrich one's personal responses and applications, that place should be secondary to showing students how the study of fiction can have direct and personal effects on their identities. If getting students to utilize fiction for self-discovery and self-creation becomes central to our study and teaching of fiction, I am convinced that the cultural impact of fiction upon college students and graduates will increase significantly.

Having long studied fiction primarily for identity development, I was prompted to write a thesis verifying Wayne C. Booth's idea in The Rhetoric of Fiction that the modern critical emphasis on authorial objectivity and impersonality is illusory, that an author is almost always

seeking to communicate his thoughts and feelings and to convince the reader of their value. In this sense, the author is seeking reader responses, and if the reader articulates his responses, the reader can better understand and create himself. Slatoff's With Respect to Readers stimulated my thinking on the nature of reader response. With his ideas in mind, I saw in existentialism and existential psychology principles applicable to writing about and teaching fiction as subjective experience.

In short, this dissertation focuses on fiction, brings to bear ideas from philosophy and psychology, and has a definite pedagogical slant. My hope is that its three-fold nature will add significantly to the work already done on the importance of the ideas of existentialism and existential psychology to fiction and to education in general. In any case, the dissertation shows that fiction is not merely valuable in and for itself as aesthetic experience, but is also important as a facilitator of identity development. Fiction and identity development are to be studied and taught together.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study implies the broad educational applicability of the identity concept, it does not elaborate on such applicability but adheres to the presentation and

illustration of the identity concept as it applies to the unique qualities of fiction.

Furthermore, this dissertation does not seek to substitute the study of existentialism and existential psychology for the study of fiction, nor does it propose studying only fiction relevant to the identity concept; all fiction is open to the encounter critical approach.

Next, my essay on Victory is not primarily intended as a significant contribution to literary scholarship. I have merely picked a work that is particularly meaningful to me to illustrate how a practiced student of fiction might bring himself subjectively to bear on literature.

Finally, although the portion of the study on using encounter criticism in fiction courses is based in part on personal experimentation with such courses, it is not a presentation based on a systematic empirical study of students and teachers in such courses but on the logical application of encounter criticism and selected principles of student-centered teaching.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

A major premise of this dissertation is that students will find the study of fiction of greatest value not as a means of acquiring cultural and aesthetic knowledge and not merely as intellectually challenging analysis. Although

both of these processes have value, responding to and applying fiction personally and subjectively and to a certain extent discovering and creating one's identity through those responses and applications are the most enriching processes.

It also assumes that such an approach is of special significance to the contemporary student who lives in an era in which the necessary task of developing an identity is especially difficult. The assumption that encounter criticism is best inspired in a student-centered teaching situation is quite important. For a teacher merely to tell students that they are free to write about and discuss fiction personally and subjectively is not enough; he must cultivate an atmosphere in which freedom and openness are central.

PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA

1. Extensive study of the major writings of existentialism and existential psychology to discover the importance and nature of the identity concept.

2. Careful investigation of theories concerning the study and teaching of fiction, especially Slatoff's With Respect to Readers and works he recommends as useful in defining reader response.

3. A thorough study of Conrad's Victory that includes a survey of criticism of the novel and of Conrad's aesthetic techniques.

4. A specific study of the various principles of student-centered teaching and related ideas as means of promoting encounter criticism.

CHAPTER II

INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Many writings of existential and humanistic psychiatrists, psychologists, philosophers, social commentators, and educationists suggest that individual identity development can and perhaps should be an integral part of contemporary college and university general education curricula. These writers arrive at rationales for this position by integrating analyses of the contemporary American cultural, social, psychological, and educational situation with philosophical and psychological premises about the nature of man and about his relationship to the world around him. In combination, these analyses and premises provide the foundation for defining individual identity development as a viable concept applicable to learning and teaching. These writers either imply or directly assert the necessity of incorporating this concept into American education to rectify the imbalances and incongruencies that dominate contemporary American life.

An individual value vacuum, accompanied by varying degrees of passivity, indifference, and apathy, is emphasized in some of these writings as the central problem of modern American society. This vacuum has resulted from a

gradual "upheaval in standards and values"¹ and a subsequent "total collapse" of all sources of values outside the individual.² We are thus in limbo between old systems of values that have failed and new ones that have not yet evolved.³ Walter Lippmann perceived the advent of this limbo in the late 1920's as a consequence of conventional religion's losing its certainty, authority, and relevancy. He saw twentieth century American life to be full of "vacancy" and "contrary moods" because many people are caught between the impossibility of reconstructing "an enduring orthodoxy" and the impossibility of living well "without the satisfactions which an orthodoxy would provide."⁴ Consequently, as Erich Fromm observes, many people live in "a state of moral confusion in which value judgments and the ethical norms are exclusively matters of taste or arbitrary preference" instead of matters of self-knowledge and experience.⁵

¹Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself (New York: New American Library, 1953), p. vii.

²Abraham H. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, 2nd ed. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1968), p. 10.

³Abraham H. Maslow, Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1964), p. 83.

⁴A Preface to Morals (New York: MacMillan, 1929), pp. 3-7.

⁵Man For Himself (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1947), p. 15.

This emergence of individually arbitrary "lifestyles" instead of individual value-based identities has occurred because modern man's responses to his value vacuum have been dominated by varying degrees of conformism, superficiality, externalization, and escapism. Clark Moustakas points to an excessive emphasis on "external directions and values that will bring recognition, status, prestige, and power" that has resulted in "the deterioration of meaning, the breakdown of values, the increasing substitution of machine for man, of program for person, of mass for individual, of modeling and copying for inventing and creating."⁶ David Riesman's earlier study of contemporary American society reveals how its "outer-directed" nature has led to these conditions and others. He pictures the dominant cultural milieu as one "in which people systematically question themselves in anticipation of the questions of others" and shows how it has resulted in their feeling passive, indifferent, or apathetic about both individual value development and meaningful interpersonal relationships.⁷

⁶Personal Growth (Cambridge, Mass.: Howard A. Doyle, 1969), pp. 1, 27. See also Albert Camus, "Encounter with Albert Camus," in Albert Camus: Lyrical and Critical Essays, ed. Philip Thody, trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 35; William Barrett, Irrational Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), p. 3.

⁷The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950), p. 256. See also May, pp. 25-26; Fromm, pp. 249-250.

While viewing these traits as dehumanizing in themselves and especially in their extremity, some commentators on our value dilemma see them as logical consequences of factors that have accompanied and intensified the conflicts stemming from modern man's being stripped of traditions, customs, and beliefs formerly basic to his sense of an adequate self. Lippmann was among the earliest to anticipate one of these elements--a tremendous explosion of knowledge and change and mass media that bombard the individual with a multiplicity of externals and possibilities. He asserted that amid this "dissonance composed of a thousand voices" comes the difficult, yet necessary, task of developing "inner guidance."⁸ Carl R. Rogers adds that this bombardment has now reached the value level: "Divergent and contradictory value claims" have disoriented contemporary man and necessitated his pursuit of "a sound or meaningful value approach" that can be sustained amid the great flux that is upon us.⁹ But modern man has refused to accept the responsibility or to cultivate the inner strength necessary to achieve this objective. Instead, as Arthur W. Combs, Donald Snygg, and others have pointed out, he has taken

⁸Lippmann, pp. 61, 102, 131.

⁹"Valuing," in Person to Person, eds. Carl R. Rogers and Barry Stevens (New York: Pocket Books, 1967), p. 4. See also Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1941), pp. 141-205; Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), p. 50; May, pp. 48-49.

what he thinks is a less anguishing route--superficial living and automaton-like conformity that tend to make him rigid, narrow, and overly concerned with self-defense, traits which "are the very antithesis of what a fluid, open, dynamic modern society requires."¹⁰

Accompanying the possibility of anguish, another power has played an equally significant role in dissuading most of American society from responsible development of the inner strength essential to achieving a meaningful value approach based on self-knowledge and experience. The primary force at work in restricting this development is our overwhelming emphasis on scientific, technological, political, and consumer materialism. Its pervasiveness has limited man's point of view on himself, on his identity, on his values, and on his release and use of his inner energies.¹¹ As Paul Tillich notes, "The man-created world of objects has drawn into itself him who created it and who now loses his subjectivity in it. He has sacrificed himself to his productions."¹² Thus, if the modern American has any identity at all, it is most likely a

¹⁰Arthur W. Combs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 189. See also Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970); Paul Tillich, Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1952), p. 62.

¹¹Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 14.

¹²Tillich, p. 139.

"specialized-technological" one, not "the universalist-humanist" identity necessary to a meaningful life in the latter half of the twentieth century.¹³

This widespread materialistic orientation--coupled with the value vacuum and with a highly complex and ever-changing society and with reactionary tendencies toward conformism and superficial values--has left modern man in a highly precarious condition in which he needs a strong sense of individual identity but tends to lack the impetus or encouragement to formulate it. Such personality fragmentation has led to several other disturbing conditions of modern American society. There exists a propensity to see the size and complexity of the contemporary world as indicative of the insignificance and powerlessness of the individual, thus lessening his sense of "worth and dignity."¹⁴ Accompanying this view is the loss of "the sense of the tragic significance of human life" which implies a respect for the rights, destiny, freedom, and needs of the individual.¹⁵

This unnatural depersonalization of human experience and human relations is the ultimate factor in people's loss of "the inner capacity to affirm, to experience values and goals as real and powerful for themselves."¹⁶ We must

¹³Erikson, p. 38.

¹⁴May, pp. 49-51.

¹⁵May, p. 65.

¹⁶May, p. 185.

be able to listen to ourselves and to concentrate our attention and efforts to use this capacity effectively. Since we accentuate the approval of others as central to our values and actions and find it difficult to be alone with ourselves without being lonely, we cannot easily listen to any inner voices.¹⁷ Since "our culture leads to an unconcentrated and diffused mode of life, hardly paralleled anywhere else," it keeps us from the intense focus germane to developing an affirming capacity.¹⁸

Fortunately, while all these forces have snowballed into an icy barrier against modern man's achievement of the individual identity that can give his life spiritual quality, they have resulted in such powerful anxieties and in such residual side effects as deteriorating interpersonal relations and abounding and disproportionate mental health problems that some people have begun privately counteracting them through self-discovery, self-creation, and meaningful interpersonal and social involvement. Although he fails to place enough emphasis on the inner growth facets of this integration or to distinguish its superficial manifestations from its substantial ones, William Glasser has nevertheless usefully described our gradual movement into an "identity society" where what one

¹⁷Fromm, Man For Himself, pp. 164-168; May, p. 26.

¹⁸Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Bantam Books, 1956), p. 91.

is is becoming increasingly more important than what one does, where there is much concern for self-awareness and human potential, and where the young are rejecting goals that do not "immediately and directly" reinforce their basic humanity.¹⁹ This emerging "society" puts the "quality" of life first and accentuates "social and intellectual involvement" as the best method of achieving a fulfilling identity.²⁰

In view of the fundamental anxieties stemming from the dehumanizing effects of modern American life, this movement toward an identity development focus is essential to conquering these anxieties. Unlike fear, anxiety lacks a definite object; but fear is not entirely separate from anxiety. In the broadest sense, "anxiety is the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing."²¹ When the power of nonbeing becomes so strong that the individual cannot affirm himself, he suffers the pain of "despair." Tillich sees life as a continuous effort, for the most part successful, to avoid despair.²²

Tillich points out three general anxieties in human experience that man must quell to avoid despair. First,

¹⁹William Glasser, The Identity Society (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 26-36.

²⁰Ibid., p. 15.

²¹Tillich, p. 25. See also May, pp. 33-35.

²²Tillich, pp. 54-56.

"the anxiety of fate and death" makes one feel a "lack of ultimate necessity." Second, "the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness" threatens man's spiritual life. Emptiness is the relative threat to the specific contents of one's life; while meaninglessness is the absolute threat to spiritual identity itself. Finally, "the anxiety of guilt and condemnation" threatens man's moral choices. When man fails to make responsible moral choices or when he feels ambiguity between good and evil, he feels guilt. Extensive guilt feelings lead to condemnation--a sense of "moral nonbeing."²³

Tillich has also observed that while fate and death anxiety dominated ancient civilization and moral anxiety pervaded the middle ages, the modern humanism of the Enlightenment brought the predominance of spiritual anxiety. Of course all the anxieties have been present and effective in each era in varying degrees. For instance, there were elements of spiritual anxiety during the Renaissance, the Reformation, and among the mystics.²⁴ But modern humanism's accent on the individual as "a unique expression of the universe, incomparable, irreplaceable, and of infinite significance" calls for the pursuit of salvation and

²³Tillich, pp. 42-52.

²⁴Tillich, pp. 57-60.

renunciation to be replaced by self-affirmation, "the courage to be."²⁵

During most of the modern era man has been successful in relieving the anxieties connected with this courage by participation in institutions and ways of life that made it less necessary to confront questions about spiritual meanings. But as we have moved deeper into the twentieth century, these sources of anxiety relief have gradually lost their effectiveness,²⁶ and the dehumanizing conditions and solutions described earlier in this chapter have ensued. Thus our general inability to cope well with the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness has afflicted our age with "a lack of purpose, lack of meaning, lack of commitment on the part of individuals."²⁷ We have lost what is most essential to overcoming these lacks--"a meaningful world and a self which lives in meanings out of a spiritual center."²⁸

The solutions of conformism, superficial living, and materialism have served only to intensify the insecurity and strain connected with this loss because we have further lost touch with our inner selves by relinquishing our

²⁵Tillich, pp. 19-20. See also May, p. 39.

²⁶Tillich, p. 62.

²⁷Carl R. Rogers, Freedom to Learn (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1969), p. 271.

²⁸Tillich, p. 139.

center of valuing to others.²⁹ Many people lack a clear sense of their desires and feelings. They cannot understand why they often feel empty and lonely despite being successful conformists and materialists. They fail to see that while man needs meaningful relationships with others to help orient himself, he also needs a sense of meaning and fulfillment in and through himself.³⁰ Many people thus remain somewhat empty and lonely because they are overly dependent upon social and cultural conditioning for their identities and are consequently alienated from their authentic selves and unique potentialities.³¹

There are similar imbalances and incongruencies in contemporary education in general and in higher education in particular that tend to compound these social, cultural, and psychological problems rather than to help remedy them. Several educators assert that our limitations in dealing effectively with these problems stem from a lack of "convictions" about what is necessary to live well and meaningfully " in the present violently turbulent world."³² Thus many educators have taught well what is easiest to

²⁹Rogers, "Valuing," pp. 11-12. See also Fromm, Escape from Freedom, p. 206.

³⁰May, pp. 14-28.

³¹Moustakas, p. 1.

³²Malcolm S. MacLean and Ester Raushen, "General Education for Students," in General Education, ed. Nelson B. Henry (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 169.

teach far out of proportion to its individual worth and relevancy--information, facts, and knowledge--and have done far too little in helping students use these fundamentals to develop personal meanings that benefit their lives and behavior.³³

This overemphasis on fundamental cognitive processes and neglect of the affective processes that should parallel them have helped fragment a student's responses as a "total organism" or "whole being."³⁴ Several studies have invalidated the widely held assumption that the development of mental skills and abilities will automatically lead to corresponding emotional sensitivity and maturity. Lewis B. Mayhew's research at Michigan State University revealed little relationship between attitude change and growth of knowledge,³⁵ while Philip E. Jacob in a much more extensive study went even further to show that there is almost no

³³For fuller discussion, see Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, ASCD 1962 Yearbook Committee (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1962), p. 184; Combs and Snygg, p. 383; Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., Taxonomy of Educational Objectives--Handbook I: Cognitive Domain (New York: David McKay, 1964), pp. 34, 166; David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Betram B. Masia, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives--Handbook II: Affective Domain (New York: David McKay, 1964), p. 16.

³⁴Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, pp. 7, 14. See also J. Samuel Bois, The Art of Awareness, second ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1970), p. 37.

³⁵"And in Attitudes," in Evaluation in the Basic College at Michigan State University, ed. Paul L. Dressel (New York: Harper, 1958), pp. 214-231.

evidence that college experiences produce a significant change in students' values, beliefs, or personality.³⁶ George F. Kneller implies that the general education curriculum must help facilitate identity development in these areas, especially because our failure to do so is compounding modern man's psychological and social problems. Also, "the ever-increasing emphasis on vocationalism, applied arts, professionalism, and other types of training" is having "a detrimental effect on education as a personal, aesthetic, academic experience, valuable in its own right and liberating in its effects."³⁷

Two basic problems relevant to these weaknesses need to be corrected before widespread progress can be made toward general education programs that are meaningful to contemporary students. Historically, higher education's situation has changed from a design "intended to educate a socially and intellectually homogeneous group of young men for the law, the church, the universities, or for lives of cultural leisure" to one in which there is increasing variation among students "in scholastic intelligence, in social attitudes, in creativity and energy, in emotional depth and stability." The problem is that there are too

³⁶Philip E. Jacob, Changing Values in College (New York: Harper, 1957).

³⁷Existentialism and Education (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), pp. 40-41.

many remnants from the old design inherent in our general education curricula, as well as in our preparation of college teachers.³⁸ The second difficulty stems from the prevalent idea that we cannot effectively integrate cognitive and affective educational objectives because while the "Achievement, competence, and productivity" measured by the former are "public matters," the individual's "beliefs, attitudes, values, and personality characteristics" revealed by the latter are "private matters."³⁹ Hopefully, this study's examination of certain existential and humanistic philosophical and psychological approaches to life and its subsequent definition of identity development will demonstrate the limitations of this point of view.

Although existentialism reached contemporary significance and widespread exposure through the twentieth century writings of Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus, its roots begin with Soren Kierkegaard's refutation of Hegel's view that "pure thought and its development represent the only genuine reality." Some of its roots are also inherent in the philosophy of Frederich Wilhelm Nietzsche.⁴⁰ For

³⁸MacLean and Raushen, p. 171.

³⁹Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 17.

⁴⁰Ernst Breisach, Introduction to Existentialism (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 15.

Kierkegaard, because the thinker can never forget himself there is no such reality as "pure thought." Instead, truth is far more "subjective and inward" than it is "objective and systematic," making "Human choice, decision, and action" far more important than "tricks of reason."⁴¹ From these basic premises, Kierkegaard concludes that philosophy's primary concern should be with the nature of existence, of subjective being or identity.

Central to man's existence is his "particular" ethical reality; anything "abstract" has no reality for the subjective being. While "ethical self-contemplation" is the central activity of being, it must have an interpersonal impetus stemming from "infinite interest" in and involvement with others.⁴² Beyond these points, one cannot develop an "Existential System" because "persistent striving" characterizes "the existing subject's ethical view of life."⁴³ Kierkegaard adds, though, that such an approach to life necessitates "faith" to bridge the gap between "the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty." Without risk in the hope of spiritual meaning and fulfillment through an integration of

⁴¹Breisach, pp. 25-26.

⁴²Soren Kierkegaard, "The Subjective Thinker," in Reality, Man, and Existence: Essential Works of Existentialism, ed. H.J. Blackham (New York: Bantam Books, 1965), pp. 38-46. Hereafter referred to as Reality.

⁴³Kierkegaard, "An Existential System is Impossible," in Reality, p. 19.

ethical self-development and interpersonal involvement, man may end by being overwhelmed by this "objective uncertainty" to the point of anxiety and even despair.⁴⁴

While echoing many of Kierkegaard's ideas on existence and subjective being, Nietzsche emphasizes man's failure to recognize their validity and his subsequent failure to become an authentic person. He asserts the absolute interrelation between "actions" and "valuations" as testimony to the need for individual ethical growth, but laments that man "adopts" most of his values from others and thus lives "in a haze of impersonal and half-personal opinions."⁴⁵ Nietzsche sees this condition as tragic because man cannot have spiritual significance in his life unless he "stands personally related to his problems."⁴⁶ Man can achieve this position only when he "comes to consciousness" with his "whole being" as a response to the fundamental problems of life--"the will to truth." Life is ultimately senseless and meaningless unless man gets as close as possible to his authentic self as the means to truth.⁴⁷ This judgment is based on Nietzsche's

⁴⁴Kierkegaard, "Truth is Subjective," in Reality, pp. 24-28.

⁴⁵Nietzsche, "The Dawn of Day," in Reality, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁶Nietzsche, "We Fearless Ones," in Reality, p. 68.

⁴⁷Nietzsche, "The Genealogy of Morals," in Reality, pp. 87-94.

view that all so-called "facts" contain "elements of interpretation," that "Truth is always a subjective creation, knowledge always contains evaluation," and that scientism is prevalent only because it is useful and "not because it is the ultimate truth."⁴⁸ For these reasons, man must cultivate analytic, interpretative, and evaluative thinking skills in his personal growth and be skeptical regarding moral values.⁴⁹ He must also acknowledge that such activities are not mere intellectual indulgences. Truth involves "creative commitment." One should thus live according to the moral and social systems he evolves from his experiences; he should also make the knowledge he accepts have consequences in his life. For Nietzsche, experimentation with oneself and with one's life is an ultimate necessity.⁵⁰

Working from these Kierkegaardian and Nietzschean perspectives, twentieth century existential philosophers have broadened and deepened them enough to pave the way for their use in developing a new approach to psychology. Martin Heidegger, for instance, emphasizes the possibility of a spiritual transcendence in the achievement of existence. According to him, one can achieve a sense of

⁴⁸Breisach, p. 42.

⁴⁹Nietzsche, "The Will to Power," in Reality, p. 96.

⁵⁰Breisach, pp. 49-50.

integrative communion with "Being" or God if he lives in the manner outlined by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche "so that the awareness of and openness to Being is preserved in each act and thought." To do so, man must avoid "the abandonment of himself to the everyday" by de-emphasizing material and social security and accepting the challenge of self-creation.⁵¹ Relevant to this viewpoint is Gabriel Marcel's idea that this communion is achieved or not achieved to the degree that one opens or closes his subjective self to experience.⁵²

It is, however, Karl Jaspers' emphasis on "freedom" and "Possibility" that brings one closer to what has evolved as central to modern existentialism. Freedom results from the individual's "coming to the basis in himself in the medium of reflection," while its achievement confronts him with possibility--"the form in which I permit myself to know about what I am not yet, and a preparation for being it." Jaspers adds that to utilize these fundamentals well one must pay special attention to the "sources of human communicability," for one grows mostly through his experiential encounters.⁵³

⁵¹Breisach, pp. 81-92.

⁵²"Outline of an Essay on the Position of the Ontological Mysteries and the Concrete Approaches to It," in Reality, p. 169.

⁵³"Reason and Existenz," in Reality, pp. 129-131.

This condition of freedom and possibility leads one to modern existentialism's guiding principle--Jean-Paul Sartre's assertion that "existence precedes essence," that "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world--and defines himself afterwards. Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself."⁵⁴ Man's life thus has no fixed content; his birth does not automatically make him "something." Freedom and possibility are not just factors in his life; they entail total obligation and responsibility for himself. Sartre's ultimate view is that there is "no hope for any meaning and regularity in the world" other than that which individuals create. He concludes that the world of objects will gradually enclose and dehumanize those who seek to escape this situation, and that this enclosure and dehumanization will result in varying degrees of anxiety and despair.⁵⁵ Man must instead find effective methods of living in and through this condition.

Although he thinks Sartre overly pessimistic about man's dilemma and weak in humanistic concerns, Albert Camus demonstrates the nobility of the individual who

⁵⁴Existentialism, trans. Bernard Riesman (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), p. 18. See also Kneller, p. 19; Gordon E. Bigelow, "A Primer of Existentialism," in The World of Ideas: Essays for Study, eds. Michael W. Alssid and William Kenney (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1964), p. 204.

⁵⁵Breisach, pp. 99-101.

accepts his freedom and possibility and shows the destructive effects of man's general failure to do so. First, life must have meaning and purpose to the individual; he must judge whether or not it is worth living and ascertain why or why not.⁵⁶ Camus acknowledges the validity of the "existence precedes essence" dictum and sees subjective self-creation as the only possibility. After all, he concludes, man "can understand only in human terms," and meaning can come only within "The frame of reference of my individual experience."⁵⁷

For Camus, existentialism's great contribution is that it begins by picturing the world's lack of meaning and "ends up by finding a meaning and depth in it."⁵⁸ Despite the difficulty of self-development, without it one suffers a spiritual death that makes one's relationship to the world almost as "absurd" as physical death ultimately makes it. Camus demonstrates the human condition through the mythical Sisyphus, condemned to push a rock up a hill while the gods push it back to its original position. One can never achieve a total and complete identity; all his efforts at spiritual meaning will encounter

⁵⁶Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," in The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 3.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 38-42.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 31.

limitations. But he can experience the greatest meaning in the effort itself; he can become "superior to his fate."⁵⁹

In another work Albert Camus analyzes what can happen when man either fails to make this effort or misconstrues the nature of the "rebellion" that is basic to its successful implementation. The "proud search for absolutes" is the main dehumanizing force in both cases.⁶⁰ Formalized morality, religions' substitution of "imaginary meanings" that prevent the discovery of authentic ones, conformity, collectivism, revolution, and totalitarianism are all absolutes that arise often from man's failure to exercise his freedom at all.⁶¹ But they can also result when his freedom is an absolute, when he refuses to respect the limit freedom "discovers in itself--a limit where minds meet and, in meeting, begin to exist."⁶²

When man acts with complete freedom, his preliminary effort is going to be to subject the majority to his will, his ultimate effort to murder that majority.⁶³ Camus

⁵⁹Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 91.

⁶⁰The Rebel, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 59.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 69-124, 234.

⁶²Ibid., p. 22.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 42, 160.

concludes that while man's search "for the unity his existence lacks" must focus on his affirmation of his "interior reality," it must have as its underlying principle that "we must live and let live in order to create what we are."⁶⁴ Since the necessity of modern individual identity development stems from frustrations about meaning and fulfillment and because the human condition is incomplete, because of death, and wasteful, because of evil, Camus implies that we cannot deny our basic humanity for the sake of any absolute or superficial order.⁶⁵

Most commentators on existentialism as a philosophical position concur that it has been a major force in enlarging the scope and significance of this basic humanity. Existentialism is effective in this regard because it is not a philosophy per se but a philosophical approach or methodology that seeks to overcome modern depersonalization and the drift toward a standardized mass society by finding ways "to allow the greatest, freest, and most genuine expression of the individual human personality."⁶⁶ This approach demonstrates that all abstract knowledge must use "personal, subjective experience" as its foundation.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Camus, The Rebel, pp. 252, 262-265.

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁶⁶Kneller, pp. viii-xi. See also Barrett, p. 32; Breisach, pp. 212-217.

⁶⁷Maslow, p. 9. See also Barrett, pp. 14-19; Kneller, p. 26.

In fact, such experience is basic to life because, as the existentialists tell us, individual thoughts, feelings, and actions are the only things that can give life meaning.

Specifics central to achieving that meaning include "aspiration, invocation, response, personal involvement and responsibility, decision-making and creative engagement."⁶⁸ While acknowledging that man must deal with "a determinate situation" in these activities, the existentialists' emphasis on "existence as an object of inquiry" and on living as a process of becoming demonstrates the secondary nature of this situation and also man's potential to transcend or integrate it into his identity.⁶⁹ Ernst Breisach excellently summarizes the implications of the existential approach to life: "the need for the constant overcoming of what man is at a given moment in favor of a richer personality; the never-ending breaking through to an immediate experience of life; the recurrent struggles against that which has already been formulated like public opinions, doctrines, and world views; in short, never to know the answer before the problem has been experienced;

⁶⁸Blackham, "An Introduction to Existential Thinking," in Reality, pp. 4-13. See also Kneller, pp. 61-62; Breisach, pp. 221-223.

⁶⁹Kneller, p. 35.

never to be a prisoner to a once formed self, a routine world, an easy secondhand life."⁷⁰

The complex task of bringing these implications into the realm of realistic possibility has been assumed by a number of psychiatrists and psychologists who label themselves both "existential" and "humanistic." They have evolved approaches and principles about human identity that build upon those of the existential philosophers. They see in the study of human identity issues that are as integral to contemporary life as the study of sexuality was in Freud's day. Working from the observation that values are no longer hierarchical and objective but relative and based on individual judgment and utility, they take issue with B. F. Skinner and the behaviorists' scientific psychology that would develop a system of artificial absolute values and condition society to live by them.⁷¹ B. F. Skinner admits that behaviorists are working to formulate "a careful cultural design" that would control "the inclination to behave--the motives, the desires, the wishes."⁷²

⁷⁰Breisach, p. 234. See also Fromm, Man For Himself, pp. 203-204.

⁷¹Igor A. Caruso, Existential Psychology (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), p. xi. See also Perceiving, p. 84.

⁷²Walden Two (New York: MacMillan, 1948), p. 262.

Many existential psychologists refute the theory that "all the effective causes of behavior lie outside of the individual and that it is only through the external stimulus that behavior takes place." They see the behaviorists' emphasis on "reconditioning" and "conditioning" as dehumanizing, as "making out of man an object" not for the sake of "understanding and prediction" but primarily for the sake of power and control.⁷³ In contrast, these existential psychologists point out that "the fact that our lives are determined by the forces of life is only one side of the truth; the other is that we determine these forces as our fate." For this reason, these writers focus upon "the existing person and emphasize the human being as he is emerging, becoming" through his inner nature's experiential encounters. They believe that "Man's particular nature is his power to create himself."⁷⁴ They are convinced that "the way to understand is from within" and that man needs "a climate free from threat to self" where "choice constitutes the core of his existence."⁷⁵

⁷³Rogers, Freedom to Learn, pp. 260-265.

⁷⁴Rollo May, "Existential Psychology," in Existential Psychology, ed. Rollo May (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 11-26. See also Caruso, p. xix; Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 220; Rogers, Person to Person, p. x.

⁷⁵Carl R. Rogers, "Two Divergent Trends," in Existential Psychology, ed. May, pp. 85-89.

One study suggests the value of these emphases. In this study the conditioned conformists the behaviorists would create could cope less well with stress, had less of a sense of competence and personal adequacy, were less open and free in emotional processes, and had less insight into their own motives and behavior than independent persons.⁷⁶ Yet behaviorism is currently far more prevalent in psychological circles than is existential psychology. Behaviorism is part of the objective consciousness of our technocratic society that would "ruthlessly exclude all theory or speculation that reads purposiveness, ethical meaning, or personal communion into nature."⁷⁷ It is a consciousness that refuses to acknowledge the interrelatedness of science and humanism, that refuses to see that while "Humanism can gain from science methods which would increase the validity and reliability of observation, science can get from humanism the varied, provocative, and question-awakening richness of individual experience."⁷⁸

Most existential psychologists maintain that contemporary man's failure to cultivate such richness is the

⁷⁶R. S. Crutchfield, "Conformity and Character," American Psychologist, 10 (1955), 191-198.

⁷⁷Theodore Roszak, Where the Wasteland Ends: Politics and Transcendence in Postindustrial Society (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), p. 478.

⁷⁸Wilson Van Dusan, "The Natural Depth of Man," in Person to Person, pp. 215-216.

direct cause of his psychological and interpersonal problems and limitations, since what he is doing is repressing or blocking off facets of his consciousness.⁷⁹ They demonstrate that the healthy person is one who is working toward self-actualization (full humanness, individuality, autonomy, full growth, and self-fulfillment) through the free expression of his inner nature. Man is distinguished from animals by his self-awareness, reason, and imagination and should use these powers to create an "essence" for himself.⁸⁰

If man fails to use his powers to move toward self-actualization, he finds not just stagnation; but "pent-up potentialities" that can bring on anxiety, morbidity, despair, and destructive activities.⁸¹ Several of these thinkers conclude, in fact, that anxiety and creativity are two sides of the same capacity. Those who have the courage to develop their identities resist despair by taking anxiety into themselves and turning it into creative activities, while those who fail to discover and create themselves settle down "to a fixed, limited and unrealistic self-affirmation" and suffer varying degrees and types of

⁷⁹May, "Existential Psychology," p. 79. See also Maslow, p. 8.

⁸⁰Maslow, pp. 24-25; Fromm, Man For Himself, pp. 17, 36, 48.

⁸¹May, Man's Search for Himself, pp. 22, 83; Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 218.

neurosis.⁸² Thus, as Abraham H. Maslow asserts, psychic sickness results not only from man's failure to satisfy his "basic needs for life, for safety and security, for belongingness and affection"; it also occurs when people warp, suppress, or deny their innermost selves. Maslow calls what occurs "intrinsic guilt" that stems from an "intrinsic conscience" more deeply rooted in human personality than the authoritarian superego of Freud.⁸³

Maslow adds, however, that impulses and tendencies toward self-fulfillment, though instinctive, are weak and can be drowned out by habit, by wrong cultural attitudes toward them, by traumatic episodes, and by misdirected education. Secondly, there is a special tendency in Western culture to consider our basic instinctive needs bad or evil; thus many cultural institutions control, inhibit, or suppress them. For these reasons, many people have no authentic identity and little power to make their own decisions and choices well in an era in which conditions demand these and related qualities for meaningful living.⁸⁴ Because these conditions are so pervasive, Tillich seems accurate in his belief that modern man is

⁸²Tillich, pp. 66-68; Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety (New York: Ronald Press, 1950), p. 356; Combs and Snygg, p. 45.

⁸³Maslow, p. 177. See also Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 162.

⁸⁴Maslow, p. 164.

still aware of what he has lost and still has a basic urge toward self-actualization.⁸⁵

Several humanistic psychologists point out that the major misconception or wrong attitude in our culture that restricts that urge from coming to life is to equate an emphasis on it with selfishness and self-absorption. These qualities are, of course, antithetical to the Judeo-Christian tradition--a tradition which defines a loving person as one who places God and others before and above himself and freely gives himself to God and others. According to this tradition, happiness and fulfillment come only through such love. Humanistic psychologists assert that under relatively stable, harmonious, and balanced cultural and social conditions there would be no need to emphasize self-actualization as the key to being a loving person. But under the imbalanced and incongruent conditions under which we live, many people cannot actualize this Judeo-Christian ideal unless they are actively engaged in developing their individual identities. In fact, these psychologists maintain that only through genuine self-knowledge that yields value clarity can anyone go on to gain genuine knowledge of others and thus relate well to them. Selfishness and excessive self-concern really

⁸⁵Tillich, p. 135.

come from an inner self-hatred. A healthy self-involvement stems from a sound experience of one's own worth. Without these qualities we will not feel a genuine brotherhood with the rest of humanity; we will have fragmented personalities and often relate mechanistically to others.⁸⁶

Perhaps this perspective's validity will become clearer as we synthesize the existential psychologists' ideas on what processes and qualities constitute effective and meaningful individual identity development, some of which have already been mentioned. This synthesis will picture such development as a paradoxical integration of inner being, personal experience, and interpersonal relationships. As May notes, genuine identity development achieves a medium between growing purely in one's inner world and "dispersing one's self in participation and identification with others until one's being is emptied."⁸⁷ Man can thus, Fromm asserts, "be free and yet not alone, critical and yet not filled with doubts, independent and yet an integral part of mankind."⁸⁸ The emphasis given

⁸⁶Maslow, pp. 10-21; Fromm, The Art of Loving, pp. vii, 49-51; May, Man's Search for Himself, pp. 87, 178-179; Rogers, Freedom to Learn, p. 274.

⁸⁷"Existential Bases of Psychotherapy," in Existential Psychology, ed. May, p. 76. See also Tillich, p. 187; The Committee on the Objectives of a General Education in a Free Society, General Education in a Free Society (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1946), p. 10.

⁸⁸Escape from Freedom, p. 257.

in this synthesis to the inner being of identity reflects the facts that when inner being is weak, all other aspects are equally weak and that it is inner being that is most threatened by contemporary social conditions and by the resultant degeneration of identity into collectivism and conformity.⁸⁹

In the broadest sense, a man's inner being is his unique spiritual pattern of "constitutional, temperamental, anatomical, physiological, and biochemical needs, capacities, and reactions."⁹⁰ This pattern is "authentic" and meaningfully fulfilling only insofar as its integrated segments emerge from one's own self as such, from one's experiences and relationships, from one's conscious choice and affirmation of his values and actions. Man must avoid working from a preconceived structure. For this emergence to occur, the individual must do three things to cut his "psychological umbilical cord." First, he must confront the seriousness and profundity of living, as opposed to the shallow and superficial life. He must secondly avoid using activity as a substitute for self-awareness. Finally, he must avoid allowing external forces to displace his inner being's development. In these ways the individual can minimize his becoming an "object" or being reduced

⁸⁹Tillich, p. 112.

⁹⁰Maslow, p. 185. See also May, Man's Search, p. 79; Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 20.

to a mere speck in a mass society. The moments and experiences that transcend these refuges from self are thus what give man his authentic essence.⁹¹

An integrated organic unity or wholeness is also characteristic of a genuine identity. The past, present, and future are viewed as segments of one's self, not as separate facets of time in one's life. The future is just as much a part of the present as is the past. One's potential for growth is just as integral to him as what he is at present. He lives in suspension between these facets of himself, but feels them all active within him at the same time.⁹² An individual growing through an authentic selfhood also experiences thinking, feeling, and acting as a unified process of inseparable segments. One of these aspects of being may be prevalent at any particular time, but the others are present and exert a significant influence.⁹³

⁹¹May, Man's Search, pp. 79-81, 100-104. See also Abraham H. Maslow, "Existential Psychology," in Existential Psychology, ed. May, p. 54; Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 188-189; Fromm, Man For Himself, pp. 80, 95, 97; Heidegger, "Being and Time," pp. 254, 257; Gabriel Marcel, "Sketch of a Phenomenology and a Metaphysic of Hope," in Reality, pp. 191, 194.

⁹²Maslow, Psychology of Being, p. 10; Kneller, p. 67; Heidegger, "Being and Time," p. 279.

⁹³Stephen M. Corey, "Psychological Foundations of General Education," in General Education, p. 59; May, Man's Search, pp. 80, 94; Bois, p. 22.

The unified pattern of a fulfilling identity is not something that is ever totally definite and complete. Instead, it is a process of becoming and building that pervades one's life from beginning to end. Describing such a process is thus central to understanding the nature of authentic inner being. In general, this process requires the self-disciplined cultivation of a concentrated meditation that brings together introspection, keen observation, and intuition into the integrated activities of self-discovery and self-creation. Modern man needs the courage and strength not only to face what he finds within himself but also to create what he does not find but wants and needs. One must know and accept his present needs, values, attitudes, sensitivities, and potentialities before he can effectively embark on self-creation.⁹⁴ He can then begin to actualize his potentialities, to use meaningfully his values, attitudes, and sensitivities; to make intelligent choices among alternatives when conflicts arise; to eliminate qualities within himself that he possesses but now dislikes; and to create qualities within himself that he admires but lacks. He is also free to open himself to new experiences and relationships that may lead to new character dimensions.

⁹⁴For fuller explanation, see Lippmann, p. 147; Fromm, The Art of Loving, p. 18; Van Dusen, pp. 228-232; Glasser, pp. 116-127; Heidegger, "Being and Time," p. 260.

For authentic self-discovery and self-creation to occur to any significant extent under contemporary conditions, it is not enough to become self-aware, to cultivate a vague, impressionistic sense of self; one must become self-conscious, able to verbalize and communicate as many facets of himself as possible. In this manner he can experience himself as the subject of his inner world. Lippmann excellently defines self-consciousness as "the Socratic dialectic of the self" in which we are able "to observe our own feelings as if they were objective facts, to detach ourselves from our own fears, hates, and lusts, to examine them, name them, identify them, understand their origin, and finally to judge them" so that we become the masters of our motives.⁹⁵

We can thereby learn from the past and plan for the future. We can see ourselves as others see us and have empathy with others. Self-consciousness also enables one to bolster his self-image, to gain a relaxed spirit from the discoveries that stimulate him to integrate the best parts of himself and to overcome the worst. In addition, he is able to feel in control of himself through his improved ability to think and feel with concentration, clarity, and coherence. He also becomes highly open to

⁹⁵Lippmann, p. 147. See also May, Man's Search, p. 74; Nietzsche, "The Will to Power," p. 113; Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 20; Rogers, Person to Person, p. 284.

experience because he feels confident of his ability to relate it to his present conception of himself and of the world around him.⁹⁶

Of course, self-consciousness has its limitations. One cannot always comprehend himself as an entity and often can only grasp aspects of himself which he will only be able to integrate later in life. There are also subconscious and unconscious forces at work within him that he cannot bring to self-consciousness. No matter how concentrated and integrated one's feelings, thoughts, actions, and imagination, he cannot conceptualize the authentic self in its entirety through self-consciousness.⁹⁷ Despite these factors, what self-consciousness can do merits its extensive use in identity development.

The self-conscious discovery and creation of a genuine inner being can occur only in conjunction with the sufficient satisfaction of one's fundamental human needs "for safety, belongingness, love, respect, and self-esteem." One must first of all recognize and consciously work to gratify these needs. The basic conflict one must face in this task is between enlarged self-awareness, maturity, freedom, and responsibility and man's tendency

⁹⁶May, Man's Search, pp. 73, 90, 141; Maltz, pp. 43, 58; Combs and Snygg, p. 243; Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: W.W. Norton, 1963), p. 282.

⁹⁷Breisach, p. 113.

to remain a child and cling to the protection of parents and parental substitutes. While ultimately unsatisfactory, dependency is often used as a flight from anxiety. Inhibitions, repressions, and childhood conditions are also factors in keeping one from inner growth. The more these factors and dependency dominate the individual, the more narrow and rigid is his approach to life; consequently, he is less able to profit from experience. One must have the positive view of self that need gratification provides to be open to experience.⁹⁸

Maslow gives us an excellent idea of the qualities inherent in identity development when he discusses the differences between "need motivated" and "growth motivated" people. First he points out the tragedy of our age, that many people do not fit into either category; they have good need satisfaction but fail to grow toward self-actualization and are somewhat anxiety-ridden because they live on "coasting values." While need gratification is merely the relaxation of tensions, growth is never satisfying and is challenging rather than frustrating. The extent to which one is need motivated is the extent to which one is controlled by his environment, since needs can be satisfied only by other people. The growth

⁹⁸Maslow, Psychology of Being, p. 21; May, Man's Search, pp. 166-167; Fromm, Art of Loving, p. 8; Perceiving, pp. 185-187.

motivated individual, on the other hand, determines himself self-consciously as outlined earlier. Preoccupied with his needs, the person primarily need motivated is less able to bear losses connected with "adverse external circumstances" than is the growth motivated individual. While one who is need motivated loves predominantly out of gratitude for usefulness, one who is growth motivated can love the whole person and that person's "objective, intrinsic qualities." The growth motivated person is thus free to benefit from empathy with others, free to plan through his encounters, to discover himself, to select potentialities to develop, and to construct a life outlook. The need motivated man tends to project "his own system of classification, motives, expectations and abstractions" on the real world, but a growth motivated one can come much closer to seeing it as it is.⁹⁹

Each of these motivations is a matter of degree and frequency rather than an all or none affair. Maslow's guiding principle in the movement from one motivation to the other is that "Safety needs are prepotent over growth needs." When growth delights and safety anxieties are greater than growth anxieties and safety delights, we grow forward toward self-actualization. Man has both a

⁹⁹Maslow, Psychology of Being, pp. 30-38. See also May, Man's Search, pp. 206-207; Combs and Snygg, pp. 240-242; Maltz, pp. 4-33; Rogers, Freedom to Learn, p. 295.

fear of and a need for self-knowledge. While fulfillment of this need, Maslow tells us, can reduce anxieties by rendering them "familiar, predictable, manageable, controllable," some self-knowledge is too painful to bear. Therefore, an individual's value system must seek to understand the world insofar as possible and defend against it insofar as necessary.¹⁰⁰

Since the major aspect of inner identity development is the discovery and creation of one's values, it is important to explain valuing as it occurs in growth motivated people. As one group of psychologists and educationists asserts, such people "have sincere beliefs and values with a high degree of clarity and have the courage of their convictions. These beliefs and values are not just intellectual or abstract ideas but, rather, deep and consistent convictions which affect actions."¹⁰¹ Rogers points out, however, that such depth and consistency are characteristic of "value directions" and not of specific values, which are held tentatively and subject to change through experience and growth. According to Rogers, "fully functioning people" have a "flexible, fluid" valuing process in which accumulated experiences blend with the new impact of a particular encounter to stimulate a

¹⁰⁰Maslow, Psychology of Being, pp. 47-49, 63-66.

¹⁰¹Perceiving, pp. 198-199. See also Kelley, p. 19; Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 44.

value synthesis or the emergence of a new value. Such a valuing method is self-enhancing only to the degree that the individual is open to experience. For those who have a great openness to experience, there is "a commonality of value directions" that provide a model for those who lack such openness to work toward. These value directions are "sincerity, independence, self-direction, self-knowledge, social responsibility, social responsivity, and loving interpersonal relationships."¹⁰²

This valuing process and the value directions that emerge from it clearly indicate what almost all writers on identity demonstrate--that despite a necessary emphasis on inner being, individual identity development is predominantly "intersubjective," evolving from and interpenetrated by one's interpersonal relationships and experiential encounters. Discovery and creation of self not only leads one to think well of himself, but to think well of others and to see their importance to his identity. As Martin Buber concludes, what is central to identity "is neither the individual nor the collective but man with man,

¹⁰²Rogers, "Valuing," pp. 12-21. See also Thomas S. Szasz, "Moral Man: A Model for Humanistic Psychology," in Challenges of Humanistic Psychology, ed. James F. T. Dugental (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 50; Caruso, pp. 125-131; May, Man's Search, pp. 149-162, 203; Maslow, Psychology of Being, pp. 159-163, 181-183.

completing one another in mutual contribution."¹⁰³ The only way an individual can grow, Sartre points out, is for his inner being "to transcend itself in order to make known to itself by means of other realities what it is."¹⁰⁴

For these reasons, existential philosophers and psychologists stress social, cultural, and interpersonal involvements as the means to an authentic and complete selfhood, because only through them is new meaning created and recognized. Tillich suggests that while most existentialists are not conventionally religious, they achieve both a sense of God and a communion with God through intersubjective identity growth. They integrate "self-affirmation as oneself and self-affirmation as a part," especially when they act as participants "in the creative development of mankind." This integration leads them to God, to "being-itself," to the "ground of being," through faith. They thereby experience the power of being which supplies the courage to affirm themselves despite the threat of nonbeing and the anxieties that accompany it.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Martin Buber, "What Is Man?" in Reality, p. 234. See also Maurice Merleau Ponty, "Phenomenology of Perception," in Reality, pp. 353-369; Camus, "Interview," in Lyrical and Critical Essays, pp. 346-347; Erikson, Identity, pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁴"Being and Nothingness," in Reality, pp. 317, 327, 341. See also Rogers, Freedom to Learn, p. 228.

¹⁰⁵Tillich, pp. 107, 123-124, 156-176.

Buber and Fromm suggest that love, a genuine interpersonal communion, is the model for an intersubjectivity that leads to God. According to Buber, man must regard his fellow man as a "person," not as an "individual" or as an "object," an "it." He must concentrate not on "differentiating" himself from others but on "entering into relation" with them. The "I" has no "reality" unless it is "sharing" with a "Thou," another person. In this way one is living his humanity, of which his individuality is an integral part but not the whole.¹⁰⁶ Working from these ideas, Fromm gives a more specific explanation of genuine love. It is a love which does not entail submission or dominance but has its basis in preserving one's integrity and individuality. Practicing such love is, in fact, the key source of one's strength, wealth, and power as a person. Fromm characterizes authentic love as "an active concern for the life and growth of that which we love." It requires an involved response to "the needs, expressed or unexpressed, of another human being." It also calls for a "respect" for the beloved so that he "should grow and unfold as he is." Finally, one must do his utmost to know that person as well as he can. Fromm seems justified in viewing such love as the ultimate reality in selfhood:

¹⁰⁶"I and Thou," in Reality, pp. 317, 327, 341. See also Rogers, Freedom to Learn, p. 222.

"In the act of loving I find myself, I discover myself, I discover us both, I discover man."¹⁰⁷

Maslow effectively places genuine love and the intersubjective nature of identity in the broadest possible context when he describes the role "peak experiences" play in their emergence. He defines such experiences as "the total immersion of self" in such activities as "love, the mystic or natural experience, the aesthetic perception, the creative moment, the intellectual insight, the orgasmic experience." During them there is a fascination with or complete absorption in the whole without comparison, evaluation, or judgment. A peak experience exemplifies Christ's paradox of losing oneself to gain oneself. It needs no justification beyond its own intrinsic worth. Disorientated in space and time, the person undergoing a peak experience is caught up in a world unto itself where the "essence of reality" is captured more profoundly than is normally the case.¹⁰⁸

Maslow also points out the consequences of peak experiences. Viewing these happenings as "acute identity experiences," he asserts that they cause one to feel that he has integrated himself, that he has merged all aspects

¹⁰⁷Fromm, Art of Loving, pp. 17, 19, 22-26. See also Buber, "Dialogue," in Reality, p. 224.

¹⁰⁸Psychology of Being, pp. 73, 79-81. See also Breisach, p. 128; May, Man's Search, pp. 120, 182.

of himself. One thus feels an integration of his potentialities and his actualities and a transcendence of his limitations. The more a person undergoes peak experiences, the more he feels "free of blocks and inhibitions, free to be more expressive, more natural, more uncontrolled and freely flowing outward." Peak experiences thereby help people become "self-accepting and insightful." They are then free to implement a "self-actualizing creativity" in which their deeper selves emerge because they are often positively challenged rather than threatened by the unknown, the mysterious, and the puzzling.¹⁰⁹

This synthesized explanation of identity clearly demonstrates how it is a complex and paradoxical integration of self-conscious inner selfhood, experiential encounters, and loving and deep interpersonal relationships. Moustakas has summarized well the facets of this integration. One must first have a sense of "belonging," the fulfillment of his basic needs that "establishes connection with the universe." Secondly, one needs to evolve a sense of "being," a process of self-discovery in which he "differentiates and identifies his potentialities by respecting himself as the center of his own experience." He must also engage in "becoming"; he must open himself to new possibilities for involved growth. Ultimately, the person

¹⁰⁹Maslow, Psychology of Being, pp. 107, 137-138. See also Fromm, Man For Himself, p. 221.

seriously involved in identity development must achieve an integrity that stems from an intersubjective "befitting" or balancing of self and others and self and experience.¹¹⁰

Using the ideas of existential psychologists and philosophers, many educationists and others concerned about educational quality have drawn conclusions that support the thesis that individual identity development can and perhaps should be an integral part of contemporary college general education curricula. Many of them concur with the general conclusion of one committee: "The fullest possible flowering of human potential is the business of education. It is our reason for being. Whatever we decide is the nature of the fully functioning, self-actualizing individual must become at once the goal of education."¹¹¹

Although agreeing in principle with those who assert that this goal is best fulfilled through the provision of essential knowledge (facts and ideas), the cultivation of intellectual skills, and the building of substantial

¹¹⁰Moustakas, pp. 17, 73. See also Charolotte Buhler, "Human Life as a Whole as a Central Subject of Humanistic Psychology," in Challenges, p. 86; Kelley, p. 51; Erikson, Childhood and Society, pp. 263-268.

¹¹¹Perceiving, p. 2. See also Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, pp. 171-172; Kneller, p. 90; Maslow, Religions, pp. 48, 57; MacLean and Raushen, p. 172.

personality and character traits,¹¹² existential and humanistic thinkers on education are convinced that to achieve this objective well the accent must be on "personal meanings," the discovery and creation of self through what one learns. After all, they suggest, learning is not significant unless it affects behavior. And the more personally significant an educational experience is, the more likely it is to affect behavior. The more pertinent and applicable it is, the more likely that what one learns will stick with him. In fact, learning itself is viewed as nothing more than "the exploration and discovery of personal meanings." Education must therefore actively engage the individual's "world of feeling, believing, understanding, hoping, wishing, dreaming; his world of aspirations, desires, wants, needs."¹¹³ Martin Schurer points out that such a personalized emphasis is essential lest we dichotomize and fragment an individual's development, because behavior is "embedded in a cognitive-emotional-motivational matrix in which no true separation is possible."¹¹⁴

¹¹²Earl J. McGrath, Liberal Education in the Professions (New York: Teachers College Press, 1959), pp. 18-25; Committee on General Education in a Free Society, pp. 73-75.

¹¹³Perceiving, pp. 68-69, 102. See also Breisach, p. 159; Combs and Snygg, pp. 149, 195, 371; Moustakas, p. 33; Corey, p. 53.

¹¹⁴Handbook of Social Psychology, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954), p. 123. See also Bois, p. 10.

Existential educationists believe that we must look carefully at motivation and at the kinds of educational activities that are most motivating and valuable. Students should be motivated and orientated to integrate their formal and informal educational experiences in terms of purposes they discover and create for themselves. Corey does well in pointing out that the intimate and personal nature of motivation is often overlooked in general education. Instead, "Motivation becomes a problem of getting students to see that what someone else has decided they should learn is worth learning."¹¹⁵

Jacob's study reveals that teaching in general education "which deals exclusively with the recognition (identification and definition) and recall of facts has little influence on behavior." On the other hand, "learning growing out of personal involvement and commitment is likely to make a difference in behavior."¹¹⁶ One group of educationists, having hierarchically integrated "cognitive" objectives, suggests that several objectives are most effective in promoting such meaningful, personal learning. First, it is necessary to emphasize skills and abilities that help the individual maintain "his integrity as an independent person." Such skills and abilities must

¹¹⁵Corey, p. 53. See also Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 58; Moustakas, p. 43.

¹¹⁶Jacob, p. 174.

promote "problem-solving," synthesizing, and the application of knowledge to personal experience and new situations.¹¹⁷

Horace T. Morse reflects the conclusions of existential educationists when he differentiates between traditional "liberal education" and what "general education" should be. Liberal education puts subject matter content first, while general education puts the "learner as human being" first. Liberal education has a fixed content; general education has a varied one. Liberal education imparts our cultural heritage and stimulates the development of powers of creative and reflective thought, but general education develops the "individual on a broader scale--intellectual, emotional, and personal--with as full an integration as possible among the facets of a learner's experience and behavior." While liberal education is "puristic," general education's ultimate intent is "pragmatic" on the personal level.¹¹⁸

If these facets of general education are emphasized in colleges and universities, perhaps the imbalances and incongruencies of contemporary American life can become less insistent and the self-conscious discovery and

¹¹⁷Bloom, ed., pp. 40-42, 122, 166.

¹¹⁸"Liberal Education and General Education: A Problem of Differentiation," in General Education: Current Ideas and Concerns, ed. James G. Rice (Washington, D.C.: Association for Higher Education-NEA, 1964), pp. 8-9.

creation of individual identity can become more active. Nevertheless, this study concludes that there is a substantial body of writings that demonstrate the significance to modern life of individual identity development and the importance of this concept's application to college and university general education curricula. The general emphasis throughout these writings is on the centrality of the personal and subjective dimensions of experience to the best achievement of a meaningful and fulfilling life.

CHAPTER III

ENCOUNTER CRITICISM

Having examined individual identity development and established its importance to contemporary American life and education in the previous chapter, this study will now describe encounter criticism--a personal and subjective approach to the study and teaching of prose fiction that facilitates the self-conscious discovery and creation of individual identity. This approach accentuates the qualities and characteristics of fiction which make it a potentially significant stimulator and source of identity development. It also stresses the psychological processes and factors central to reading fiction well and meaningfully, views literature as an integrative-disruptive complex, and calls for a focus on the interpenetrations between life and fiction. The unity of form and meaning, the implied author, narration and point of view, and the relationship between author, reader, and work are concepts also important to encounter criticism.

In emphasizing these aspects of fiction this approach works from the premise that to use fiction well for self-discovery and self-creation we must study and teach it as a unique experiential encounter with life to be read,

written about and discussed from a subjective and personal point of view. Such a premise does not mean that those who practice encounter criticism wish to displace the traditional literary historical and analytic approaches to fiction. Rather, it is intended as an extension of these approaches that can be used in its various modes by scholars, critics, teachers, and beginning students as a way to discover the role fiction can play in their self-development.

Encounter criticism, in fact, in its most extensive mode studies particular works so as to integrate relevant historical factors, close and careful internal analyses, personal responses, and personal and social applications. The problem of modern literary criticism that necessitates this integration is, as Nathan A. Scott points out, our culture's failure to discover or create for literature "a valuable or an irreplaceable function." Scott asserts that the major task of modern criticism should be the definition of the "unique and indispensable role in the human economy that is played by imaginative literature and that can be preempted by nothing else."¹ Susan Sontag argues convincingly that such a definition must somehow merge "the twin aspects of art: as an object and as a function, as artifice

¹"The Collaboration of Vision in the Poetic Art: The Religious Dimension," in Literature and Belief: English Institute Essays, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 108-109.

and as living form of consciousness, as the overcoming and supplementing of reality and as the making explicit of forms of encountering reality, as autonomous individual creation and as independent historical phenomenon."²

M. H. Abrams' historical examination of criticism's development and of prevalent contemporary critical ideas suggests that this merger has not yet taken place, although we have reached a point at which it can and perhaps should occur. He first points out "the mimetic orientation--the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe," as the basic concept from which all other critical views have stemmed. While sharing this orientation, Plato and Aristotle disagreed as to whether art is a world unto itself, "independent of statesmanship, being, and morality." Plato claimed that artistic questions "can never be separated from questions of truth, justice, and virtue," while Aristotle described art as a purely aesthetic experience that transcends political, individual, and ethical questions. Plato's contention prevailed as of the late sixteenth century, when the pragmatic theories of Sir Philip Sidney and others began their reign. According to them, a literary work was an "instrument" for creating "moral and social effect," and

²Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in Against Interpretation and Other Essays (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 40.

its value was judged as to how well it achieved that end. The result was "subtly rationalized neo-classic ideals of literary craftsmanship."³

Although the pragmatic approach has had the longest duration and greatest number of followers, the "expressive" theory's reaction against its rigid conceptions about literary values has made a significant contribution to criticism. By emphasizing the writer himself as the major generator of "both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged," Wordsworth and others were able to show how literature is a shared experience between the writer and the reader--how the writer works to affect the reader and how the reader enters "into the mind and heart" of the writer as a person. But this critical perspective often led away from the works themselves to an emphasis on the biographical, social, and historical factors relevant to them.⁴

The "objective theory" developed in response to the excesses of this emphasis. It "regards the work of art in isolation from all these external points of reference, analyzes it as a self-sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations, and sets out to judge it

³M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953), pp. 8-21.

⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.

solely by criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being."⁵ One would like to believe that this theory would integrate what came before it and not degenerate into excesses itself, but such has not been the case. In viewing the work as a purely aesthetic structure, many modern critics and students have been led to a puristic critical liberalism that overemphasizes "literary appreciation," critical judgments on a work's artistic merits and demerits, and that asserts in its most extreme form that "No beliefs are relevant to aesthetic appreciation."⁶

As Robert M. Adams asserts, this criticism has cultivated "intensity or sensitivity for its own sake" and has thereby created an abyss between literary qualities themselves and their effects upon and relationships to the reader as a person.⁷ Morse Peckham seems accurate in his view that to focus exclusively on judging a work's artistic virtues or lack thereof is "the greatest hindrance imaginable to the adequate response to a work of art."⁸ Why

⁵Abrams, p. 26.

⁶Abrams, "Forward," Literature and Belief, pp. viii-ix. See for example, John Crowe Ransom, The World's Body (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 343; I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1926), pp. 11-25.

⁷Strains of Discord: Studies in Literary Openness (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 189-190, 210-212.

⁸Man's Rage for Chaos (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1965), p. 312.

then does modern criticism persist in this focus? One logical view is that "a pretense about universal adaptability" among many critics has clouded the truth--that literary relevancy and intensity are highly subjective.⁹ This subjectivity remains true even in reading a work in which the author has effectively established "a common base of human sympathies and values"; there are always conflicts between what writers say and what readers believe or have discovered to be true.¹⁰

These and other subjective factors must be integral to any definition of literature's unique role in human development that seeks to blend literature's heretofore dichotomized aspects into a paradoxical complex. We cannot merely acknowledge, as Abrams does, that reading literature involves our "whole being, including the complex of common sense and moral beliefs and values derived from our experiences in the world." Such cursory acknowledgement does not keep Abrams from later maintaining that a literary work should be read "for its own sake, independently of the truths it may communicate or the moral and social effects it may exert."¹¹ Instead, we must begin with Walter J. Slatoff's proposition that "Works of literature are

⁹Adams, p. 212.

¹⁰Abrams, "Forward," p. x.

¹¹Abrams, "Belief and the Suspension of Disbelief," in Literature and Belief, p. 11.

important and worthy of study essentially because they can be read and can engender responses in human beings."¹²

Our task is thus not only to look at these works themselves but to understand them in relation to ourselves as readers. For this understanding to occur, we must somehow incorporate self-conscious responses and personal and social applications into our analyses of fiction without distorting the works themselves. We should recognize with Abrams and Slatoff that "unverbalized attitudes, propensities, sentiments, and dispositions" are the subjective factors that give literary analysis itself vitality and meaning.¹³ We can then begin to see the qualities and characteristics of fiction that demonstrate the great engagement and innumerable possibilities it can engender as a stimulator and source of identity development. Slatoff provides an excellent summary of these traits that suggests how significant a peak experience reading fiction can be:

As one reads one has the feeling one is moving into and through something and that there is movement within oneself--a succession of varied, complex, and rich mental and emotional states usually involving expectancy, tensions and releases, sensations of anxiety, fear, and discovery, sadness, sudden excitements, spurts of

¹²Walter J. Slatoff, With Respect to Readers: Dimensions of Literary Response (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1970), p. 3.

¹³Abrams, "Belief," pp. 16-17; Slatoff, pp. 35, 68.

hope, warmth, or affection, feelings of distance and closeness, and a multitude of motor and sensory responses to the movement, rhythm, and imagery of the work, as well as a variety of activities and responses--recognition, comparison, classification, judgment, association, reflection-usually spoken of as intellectual. Very few experiences engage one's consciousness in so many ways and give one such a sense that something is going on within oneself.¹⁴

This description's accent on the reading process points to the fact that fiction has no real life other than that which our minds give it, none other than that which our total beings bring to life in it. The power of literature to arouse our imaginations so completely is what allows it to confront us "far more acutely" than other art forms with questions of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and meanings.¹⁵ As Albert Camus says, great literary works afford man the opportunity "of overcoming his phantoms and approaching a little closer to naked reality."¹⁶ Because these intense confrontations are vicarious, they permit us possibilities for discovery and creation of self without the emotional anxieties that

¹⁴Slatoff, pp. 6-7. See also Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, The Noble Lecture on Literature, trans. Thomas W. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 3; Richards, pp. 32-35.

¹⁵Slatoff, p. 24.

¹⁶"The Myth of Sisyphus," in The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 85.

would accompany direct experiences of a similar nature.¹⁷ Simon O. Lesser points out other factors that draw us to fiction. In life we must endure many deprivations, dissatisfactions, and cultural restrictions on the scope and depth of our experiences. Reading fiction helps us transcend these limitations and in part compensate for them imaginatively. We can thus indirectly satisfy our powerful emotional need for an experiential depth and scope that motivates identity growth, as well as relieve some of our anxieties and assuage some of our guilt feelings and fears.¹⁸

We are capable of achieving these growth-promoting ends because, as Slatoff demonstrates, when we read fiction we find ourselves in the paradoxical condition of being at once a participant in the action and a detached spectator of it. We both give ourselves to the story and bring ourselves to bear upon it. Because there are significant variations in how involved or detached we are in relation to a specific work or parts of that work, we can learn something about ourselves if we look closely at our responses. For example, does a particular character merely attract our attention, or do we feel genuine concern for

¹⁷Slatoff, p. 34; Wallace A. Bacon and Robert S. Breen, Literature as Experience (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 24.

¹⁸Fiction and the Unconscious (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 35-39. See also Bacon and Breen, pp. 19-20.

him? Does he support or nourish our sense of self, or does he threaten it? We are self-conscious in reading fiction because we are not merely viewing an experience but are feeling the act of observing it. In essence, the fullest and deepest experiences of literary involvement may bring about a heightened sense of self through this rich and varied combination of involvement and detachment.¹⁹

What aspects of the fiction reading process cause such a blending? D. W. Harding stresses two elements in human psychology that link the reader to the fictional experience. Foremost is the "simple horror and distress that this thing is happening to living people, whom he values as fellow-beings and whose sufferings he can imagine." Second is "his recognition that similar things may have happened to him."²⁰ These factors combine, as others have noted, to invite "us to move out of ourselves, to get into an 'act,' to be another self in a fictive drama."²¹ Norman Holland and others suggest that such an invitation can lead us to a peak experience. In imaginative involvement we in varying degrees "cease to pay attention to what is outside the work of art" to the point where

¹⁹Slatoff, pp. 37-46. See also Lesser, p. 140.

²⁰"Psychological Processes in the Reading of Fiction," British Journal of Aesthetics, 2 (1962), 135.

²¹Reuben A. Brower and Richard Poirer, In Defense of Reading (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962), p. 11.

we focus wholly on it and "begin to lose track of the boundaries" between ourselves and what we are reading. As in other peak experiences, this involvement blurs "Our ego boundaries between self and not-self, inner and outer" and leads to an "undifferentiated self" in which "we absorb and become absorbed into the literary experience."²² An important qualification here is that although the author in writing his work has played upon this process to shape our responses to fit his vision, he cannot govern their strength and intensity, nor the values, beliefs, and attitudes we bring to bear on the work.²³ These subjective dimensions as they relate to a particular work are what make personal responses and application viable and essential features of literary study.

For these reasons, we need to examine further the reading process as both an integrative and disruptive experience in which both factors work together to form a paradoxical complex that provides stimulation and materials for self-discovery and self-creation. According to Lesser, a literary experience promotes an ego integration, a harmony among various psychic states, through its "tendency

²²Norman Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 66, 78-119. See also Lesser, pp. 49, 161; Slatoff, pp. 50-59; Jean-Paul Sartre, Literature and Existentialism, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Citadel Press, 1949), p. 50.

²³Slatoff, pp. 61-63. See also Holland, p. 151.

to see a problem from every possible point of view, to balance demands, to harmonize claims and counter-claims." Thus the "moments of revelation" that result from this balancing lead to a "more complete self-acceptance" than is possible in ordinary life. When we "analogize" a literary experience and "our own emotional problems," we discover "possibilities of achieving harmony which the ego might overlook."²⁴ The literary experience also provides emotional "purity and clarity" stemming from our feeling of the writer's ordering and structuring powers "as though they were our own." While our emotions appear less intense than in direct experiences "because we don't expect to act on them," they are actually stronger because our motor inactivity leads to a greater engagement of our intellectual and emotional selves. We are thereby free to accept and transcend what we find of ourselves in the fiction rather than suppress or judge that knowledge.²⁵

We can achieve this end, however, only because writers minimize anxieties which would be a part of similar experiences in everyday life. They make protagonists take our burdens and responsibilities upon themselves, while at the same time disguising and concealing the connections between

²⁴Lesser, pp. 80, 84, 93. See also Bacon and Breen, pp. 46, 51.

²⁵Holland, pp. 101-102. See also Harding, pp. 144-145.

the story and our lives by orienting "our interest not toward action but toward perception and understanding." We as readers are thus able to have a sense of "mastery or control" over the experience because "our desires, fears, and inner conflicts" have been objectified and externalized in it.²⁶ This integrative aspect of reading fiction for self-knowledge parallels the self-consciousness so essential to contemporary identity development, especially in that fiction "translates what was internal and amorphous, or too close to be seen clearly, into something outside ourselves easy to perceive; a series of images delineating a specific action, its causes, and its consequences."²⁷ Perhaps by reading fiction well and by responding to and applying it personally, we may be better able to employ self-consciousness effectively under other circumstances. As Peckham points out, in reading fiction we are exposed "to the tensions and problems of a false world" so that we may endure exposing ourselves "to the tensions and problems of the real world."²⁸

Because of the subjectivity inherent in reading fiction, especially regarding the degree to which one is involved or detached, we need to look more precisely at the

²⁶Lesser, pp. 134, 150. See also Bacon and Breen, p. 60.

²⁷Lesser, p. 151.

²⁸Peckham, p. 314. See also Slatoff, p. 127.

integrative effects literature can produce or fail to produce. Holland demonstrates how precise responses to fiction stem from the author's interplay of "anxiety-arousing" and "drive-gratifying" situations. Some writers accentuate the latter, some the former. Some mingle the two equally. Some authors exercise a great deal of control over this interplay; some exercise very little.²⁹ Writers often, however, employ "strategems" which "intensify issues and yet deal with them in a way which minimizes anxiety." For instance, they sometimes conceal "anxiety-producing layers of meaning" from consciousness but communicate them "to the unconscious with extraordinary vividness." They also "distance" and "bind" their material "to keep our involvement from being too complete."³⁰ All of these integrative effects of fiction combine to capture the concrete universal essence of an experience, "a fictional telescoping of time" that aids our understanding and perception of the human condition. Fiction helps us compensate for the fact that our lives are often too chaotic and move too slowly for us to see the patterns and significance with a satisfying degree of clarity.³¹

Sartre therefore seems accurate in declaring that these integrative characteristics of fiction lead to an

²⁹Holland, p. 307.

³⁰Lesser, pp. 173-178.

³¹Lesser, p. 169. See also Sartre, p. 160.

aesthetic joy which emerges from the "meanings" we discover in a work, from the imaginative transformation of "the given into the imperative and the fact into a value."³² It is when we turn to examine the nature of these meanings that we find the disruptive aspects of fiction mingling with the integrative, that we see how fiction can disorient us and create emotional and cognitive tensions within our "high walls of psychic insulation."³³ Such tensions occur because "the most passionate affirmations of literature show an awareness of all the considerations that can be urged against them" to create an attitude "of poised and sustained ambivalence."³⁴

As Ernst Kris shows, because of this ambivalence we cannot speak of the meaning of a literary experience. Rather, we can only specify our "range of responses" and organize those responses into "clusters." When we do so, we discover the possibility of five types of aesthetic ambiguity--the "integrative," the "conjunctive," the "additive," the "projective," and the "disjunctive." When a work's "manifold meanings evoke and support one another," we have "integrative" ambiguity. Though multiple, the meanings are unified into one complex perspective. Second is "conjunctive" ambiguity, in which "the separate meanings

³²Sartre, pp. 59-60.

³³Peckham, p. 313.

³⁴Lesser, p. 87.

are jointly effective in the interpretation." "Additive ambiguity" is somewhat less unified in that the separate meanings, though "alternative," are only to some extent included one in the other. The most subjective ambiguity is the "projective" kind in which "clustering is minimal so that responses vary altogether with the interpreter." Finally, we have "disjunctive" ambiguity, which is disruptive because "the separate meanings function in the process of interpretation as alternates, excluding and inhibiting each other."³⁵

Since it is the multiple meanings and multiple layers of significance in fiction produced by these ambiguities that enrich and intensify our responses and make possible our applications, Slatoff seems justified in asserting that these are what we need to accentuate in critical analysis. We should be most engaged by the conflicts, strains, tensions, or ambivalences in the narrator's attitudes, values, or feelings. Here lies a wealth of possibility for personal response and application. Literature has been studied a great deal for its patterns and for its unifying aspects, while its "disorderly, disruptive, and explosive" ones have been often ignored. But we must not neglect the important roles played by unity, harmony,

³⁵Ernst Kris, Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art (New York: International Universities Press, 1952), pp. 244-245. See also I. A. Richards, Practical Criticism (London: Routledge & Kegan Ltd., 1929), p. 247; Adams, p. 13.

resolution, pattern, and order in fiction. They are essential to our ability to become self-conscious and to profit from the disruptive aspects of fiction with minimal anxiety. What we must also see about the integrative characteristics of fiction is that they produce an intensity and excitement that should stimulate and promote personal growth. While the work comes to rest, our spirits should not come to rest but rather should be deeply moved to carry the literary experience beyond the work itself and to ourselves and the world.³⁶ Viewing the integrative-disruptive complex in these ways, we can best implement fiction's power to activate the human potential for personal depth and scope of experience and character.

Another critical tendency that must be overcome before this objective can be an integral part of the study and teaching of fiction is that of viewing the literary work as an object to be analyzed, as something apart from life and experience, instead of as a human expression to be responded to and understood. The theory of encounter criticism concurs with the view of Slatoff and others that for literature to have a unique and indispensable role in human life we need to emphasize the interpenetrations between life and literature rather than the distinctions between them. Slatoff specifies the nature of these parallels:

³⁶Slatoff, pp. 14, 126-127.

"Literature's chief relevance and connection is with life and experience, not narrowly defined within the limits of time and space, but as ways of feeling, acting, and talking and the cumulative understanding, knowledge, and awareness that a human being has acquired."³⁷ The extent to which we stress these aspects of experience as they occur in fiction is the extent to which we enhance its value to humanity. The extent to which we accent the alienation of literature from life is the extent to which we damage its significance.

We cannot, however, neglect consideration of structure, form, and technique if we are to picture literature as unique and indispensable, because these are the features that make it so. But we should deal with them only insofar as they make the literary experience something richer and deeper than average, everyday experience. For instance, they should help us to see that literature provides an experiential encounter with life unique and valuable "in its mysterious wholeness, in the number of elements embraced, and in the variety and closeness of their relationship."³⁸ To achieve these dimensions, the writer uses

³⁷Slatoff, pp. 167-168, 183. See also Bacon and Breen, pp. 7, 61; Sontag, p. 30; Lesser, p. 293; Solzhenitsyn, p. 19; Albert Camus, The Rebel, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 269.

³⁸Brower and Poirer, p. 9. See also Holland, pp. 108, 157, 161; Abrams, "Belief," p. 30.

appropriate techniques to clarify, intensify, and extend the primary data of human experience so that our duller perceptions may be sharpened and our self-knowledge extended. The "unity, order, and fullness" of literary encounters not only make them experiences in themselves but "evaluations" of those experiences that bring the "mixed, uncertain, and confused" attitudes and values of real life into perspective. We as readers thereby find in literature a synthesis of "the concrete and the abstract, the sensuous and the spiritual, the actual and the ideal" not possible in direct experience.³⁹ Encountering such a synthesis is in itself an important facilitator of identity development, which emphasizes the achievement of an integrated unity within oneself similar to that which fiction provides.

Fictional unity--the blending of the integrative and the disruptive, of technique and content--is central to both the writer's craft and to the reader's responses. As Cleanth Brooks notes, "the primary concern of criticism is with the problem of unity--the kind of whole which the literary work forms or fails to form, and the relation of the various parts to each other in building up this whole."⁴⁰

³⁹Bacon and Breen, pp. 8-10, 60, 120. See also Camus, The Rebel, p. 269; Holland, pp. 102-103; Abrams, "Belief," p. 30; Harding, pp. 137-138.

⁴⁰"My Credo!," Kenyon Review, 13 (Winter 1951), 72.

The "coherence" achieved through effective unity gives us a sense of the writer's perspective on "certain human actions and reactions, responses and valuations."⁴¹ Several writers emphasize the integrative relationship between form and content or meaning as the key to the unity and coherence of fiction. Joyce Cary asserts, for instance, "Your form is your meaning, and your meaning dictates the form. But what you try to convey is reality--the fact plus the feeling, a total complex experience of a real world. If you make your scheme too explicit, the frame work shows and the book dies. If you hide it too thoroughly, the book has no meaning and therefore no form."⁴² The fundamental principle in this regard is that in a meaningful literary experience the content does not overwhelm the form, while the form does not overrun the content.

What the reader encounters in great fiction is thus a total expression, the author's vision as it emerges in and through the particular work as a unity of form and meaning. Modern criticism, though, has discounted the author's vision through its critical emphasis on "authorial objectivity and impersonality." It is no longer

⁴¹Cleanth Brooks, "Organic Theory of Poetry," in Literature and Belief, p. 71.

⁴²"Interview with Joyce Cary," in Writers at Work: Paris Review Interviews, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking Press, 1958), p. 55. See also Camus, The Rebel, p. 27; Lesser, p. 295; Scott, p. 134; Adams, p. 2.

acceptable for a writer to tell a reader something; he must always show him. The author should provide, as Percy Lubbock points out, an objective exposure to the thoughts, feelings, and observations of the characters or narrators.⁴³ Taking a similar stance, E. M. Forster affirms that when the writer openly comments on his characters, he does harm and guides the reader away from them and to the writer's mind.⁴⁴ What he fails to note is that most readers are, in fact, seeking the writer's mind through the literary experience. As Camus tells us, "the artist commits himself and becomes himself in his work." The writer and his work are in integrative communion.⁴⁵ Sartre adds that responses the author generates through the characters and actions are ultimately intended to lead us to reflect upon the authorial vision that emerges through them.⁴⁶

⁴³The Craft of Fiction (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 186.

⁴⁴Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1927), p. 82. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, "Francois Mauriac and Freedom," in Literary and Philosophical Essays, trans. Annette Michelson (New York: Collier, 1955), p. 9; Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery," in Essays in Modern Literary Study, ed. Ray B. West, Jr. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1952), p. 196.

⁴⁵"The Myth of Sisyphus," p. 72. See also Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Bantam, 1956), p. 14.

⁴⁶Literature and Existentialism, p. 72. See also Scott, p. 128.

For these reasons, Wayne C. Booth believes that one can so overemphasize technique in general and objectivity in particular as absolute guidelines for critical analysis that he can forget that the primary job of the artist is to go "beneath the surface of the action to obtain a reliable view of a character's mind and heart" in order to communicate as effectively as possible.⁴⁷ In this sense, the relationship between the author and the reader is of major import in a thorough experiencing of any literary work. As Booth notes, "the author's voice is never really silenced."⁴⁸ Authorial objectivity or impersonality is illusionary, the product of various rhetorical devices and techniques. Therefore, no matter how much showing (objectifying) a writer does, he is, in essence, still telling (conveying meaning). A key term in Booth's remarks about the relationship between the author and the reader is "implied author": the version of himself the author seeks to communicate to the reader of a particular work through a gradually achieved overall view of that work.⁴⁹ Encounter criticism approaches fiction with the view that to experience a work well and to employ personal response and

⁴⁷The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 3.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 60. See also Louis D. Rubin, Jr., The Teller in the Tale (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1967), p. 187.

⁴⁹Booth, p. 71.

personal and social applications meaningfully, we must give special attention to the author-reader relationship, to what the implied author conveys, and to the methods used to solidify this relationship and to communicate experientially the author's vision.

Encounter criticism also concurs with Booth's idea that it is the writer himself who must decide "What to dramatize fully, what to summarize and what to heighten." How objective he decides to be should depend upon the writer's purposes in the particular work and not upon any critical laws. How "involved or detached" the implied author is also depends on the individual work.⁵⁰ As Louis D. Rubin, Jr. adds, authorial presence is unartistic only when it hinders the fullest possible experience of a particular work.⁵¹ One might go beyond Rubin to say, in more specific terms, that authorial presence is unartistic when a reader is unable to both watch with and watch a character. Norman Friedman summarizes the crucial concerns in the fictional encounter that stem from these points: "the relationship between the author's values and attitudes, their embodiment in his work, and their effect upon the reader."⁵²

⁵⁰Booth, pp. 64, 83.

⁵¹Rubin, p. 34.

⁵²"Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, 70 (1955), 1161.

In creating this complex, as Booth notes, "The author creates an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement."⁵³ Writers can do so, as Abrams points out, only by working from the premise that the human race's "central moral consciousness" is sound. They can thereby determine "which of our beliefs will be called into play, to what degree, and with what emotional effect." Aside from the subjective dimensions of interpretation and response mentioned earlier, the failure of the author to merge the reader with himself most often occurs either when the work's "substance is too inadequately human to engage our continuing interest" or when our consent is required "to positions so illiberal, or eccentric, or perverse that they incite counterbeliefs."⁵⁴

Because of the writer's efforts to merge himself and his reader and because a central aspect of our responses to literature is the consciousness that we are encountering another human being, the author, who is trying to communicate with us, narration, point of view, and rhetorical devices and techniques relevant to them merit special

⁵³Booth, p. 138. See also Sartre, Literature and Existentialism, p. 71.

⁵⁴Abrams, "Belief," pp. 17-28.

attention if we are to use fiction well to promote identity development.⁵⁵ In fact, our willingness and ability to suspend disbelief and "subordinate the evidence of our own experience to the task of evaluating the experience" of the work depend to a great extent upon our awareness of these aspects of fiction.⁵⁶ We must be aware of how the particular qualities of the narrators relate to specific effects. For instance, is a given narrator dramatized in his own right or are his beliefs and characteristics shared by the author? In certain instances, a combination of these two possibilities may be achieved within a particular narrator.

The significant critical manifestation of the modern emphasis on showing over telling has been a greater concern with point of view. Friedman comments that "'Point of View' is becoming one of the most useful critical distinctions available to the student of fiction today."⁵⁷ Mark Schorer adds that point of view is not merely a rhetorical device for dramatic elevation by narrowing or broadening the reader's perspective but also "a means toward positive definition of theme." Therefore, it not only contains thematic implications; it also "discovers" them.⁵⁸ Cary

⁵⁵Slatoff, pp. 93-99. See also Bacon and Breen, pp. 81-113.

⁵⁶Bacon and Breen, p. 164. ⁵⁷Friedman, p. 1161.

⁵⁸Schorer, p. 194.

acknowledges, for instance, that "the only truth that a writer can give is a point of view."⁵⁹

One of the first writers to accentuate point of view in fiction, Henry James was concerned mainly with finding the proper "vessel of consciousness" through which to present as deep a view of life as possible in a particular situation.⁶⁰ He added that the most significant points of view in a work are those which transmit a direct impression of life.⁶¹ The work should, therefore, focus on a character whose consciousness is capable of "fine intensification and wide enlargement" and who is both a dramatic part of the work's conflicts and an objective observer of them.⁶² Building on James' theory, Lubbock emphasized point of view as the primary technical consideration of modern criticism. We should be concerned mainly with the significance of our exposure to the thoughts, feelings, and observations of the narrators.⁶³ Richard M. Eastman notes that this concern is paramount when we realize that point

⁵⁹Joyce Cary, Art and Reality: Ways of the Creative Process (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 116-117.

⁶⁰The Princess Casamassima (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908), p. ix.

⁶¹"The Great Form," in Henry James' The Future of the Novel, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Random House, 1958), p. 29.

⁶²James, Princess, p. xii.

⁶³Lubbock, p. 186.

of view is a major method through which the author can control the reader's judgment of the action.⁶⁴

Several literary techniques integral to narration and point of view also merit attention. As Booth notes, the establishment of "patterns of imagery and symbol" is important because it allows the author to reveal judgments, establish tones, and mold reader responses. These patterns are also significant in what they suggest about the particular narrator or character with whom they are associated.⁶⁵ Because an author can make narrators unreliable or semi-reliable, such as the barber in Lardner's "Haircut" and Jason in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg stress narrative irony as a technique germane to point of view considerations. A sophisticated narrative has four points of view: the narrator's, the reader's, the author's, and the characters'. Narrative irony results from a "disparity of understanding" among those four viewpoints.⁶⁶ This, of course, demands reader involvement not only in the author's illusion of reality but in the actual creative process of that illusion. Technique is thus directly tied to meaning in the

⁶⁴Richard M. Eastman, A Guide to the Novel (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965), p. 34.

⁶⁵Booth, p. 272.

⁶⁶The Nature of the Narrative (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 240.

fictional experience. Such irony can also be used to create conscious authorial ambiguities (multiple meanings and multiple attitudes toward characters) and paradoxes.

Two other techniques that relate to point of view are interior monologue and focal shifts. As Robert Humphrey asserts, interior monologue seeks to capture both the verbal and non-verbal flow of a narrator's mind. What the technique achieves, he adds, is usually known as stream of consciousness. Psychological free association--based on memory, guided by the senses, and given "elasticity" by the imagination of the particular narrator--is central to interior monologue.⁶⁷ We are thus able to see "not only what someone thinks but the way in which he thinks" through this "literary representation made to appear like unmediated thought."⁶⁸ The writer's control of this thought flow permits him to present his point of view indirectly, to blend himself with the literary experience. A final rhetorical device relevant to this study's consideration of point of view is the omniscient author's use of focal shifts both to suggest meanings and to give his work an artistic symmetry it might otherwise lack. Such shifting allows the omniscient author to juxtapose key scenes and

⁶⁷Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1962), p. 43.

⁶⁸Rubin, p. 166.

convey his meanings to the reader through implication and the illusion of objectivity rather than through direct commentary.

Our concern with point-of-view techniques should enable us to see how the writer merges himself and his work to provide an experiential encounter both with himself as a person and with life. The writer's ultimate goal, as Sartre sees it, is "to yield himself without seeming to do so." The writer "neither foresees nor conjectures; he projects."⁶⁹ Walter J. Ong points out that these characteristics of the literary experience are what make reading fiction an I-Thou interpersonal involvement and communion between reader and author. The very fact that "the speaker wears a mask" is what generates and makes "insistent" reader participation and response. The reader must engage in role-playing; he must take "the part of the other within who is not himself." A literary encounter, in fact, is a stimulus and source of personal growth because it demonstrates "the distance and remoteness which, paradoxically, is part of every human attempt to communicate."⁷⁰ Perhaps by learning to experience fiction well, we may be better able to communicate and learn from our direct experiences and interpersonal relationships.

⁶⁹Literature and Existentialism, pp. 32, 41.

⁷⁰"Voice as a Summons for Belief," in Literature and Belief, pp. 84-89.

Another parallel between living and experiencing literature that emerges from the interactivity of the author, the work, and the reader is that it gives us a sense of "Actuality, the sense of living through an event with its emotional quality and enjoyment or suffering."⁷¹ While the reader follows the direction of the author in bringing to imaginative life the objective reality of the particular work, that reality is "refracted" through the reader's personal responses. Therefore, students of literature may acknowledge with Brooks that the revelations of literature are primarily self-revelations.⁷² As Slatoff adds, we need to bring to bear on our literary encounters the fact that the "reading self" and the "personal self" are closely related, that one is a reflection of the other.⁷³ In doing so, encounter criticism becomes central to literary study. Personal responses and personal and social applications take into account what Harding declares is very important to literary study--the reader's acceptance or rejection of what the author presents, the experience itself and the author's values and attitudes as conveyed through the events, characters, and actions.⁷⁴

⁷¹Bacon and Breen, p. 7.

⁷²"Organic Theory of Poetry," p. 76.

⁷³Slatoff, p. 55.

⁷⁴Harding, p. 139.

If we are to approach fiction in these ways, if we are to deal with literature as a mode of experience the intensity of which often threatens and challenges our customary manner of seeing, thinking, and feeling with minimal anxiety--if we are to do these things, we must integrate what we have described about fiction itself, about the writer and his techniques, with further consideration of the reading process, the ways in which a reader is detached and involved in a literary work. This consideration is essential because for an authentic literary encounter to provide "an impetus for further inquiry and self-realization," it must first come to us as "an aesthetic moment of revelation or disclosure."⁷⁵ Thus we need to reiterate here that the reader as a spectator looking at events finds his values and attitudes modified and extended, as well as reflected by them. Harding, in fact, shows how "the detached and distant evaluation" that we make of fictional events "may be more formative than events in which we take part" because it often avoids "the blurrings and bufferings that participant action brings." The reader is thus able to see events in "a broader context" than he can in direct experience.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Clark Moustakas, Personal Growth (Cambridge, Mass.: Howard A. Doyle, 1969), p. 19.

⁷⁶Harding, pp. 135-136.

But to arrive at these perspectives the reader must also be somewhat involved with the characters and in the events themselves. Such involvement can be most successful if the reader is conscious that he is willingly participating "in a convention of communication, in an accepted technique for discussing the chances of life." He will then be capable of engagement in even the impossible modes of fiction (science fiction, fairy tales, ghost stories, and supernatural narratives), as vehicles for discovering experiential realities.⁷⁷ At the same time he is imagining and becoming involved with a character as a full person, the reader must acknowledge the disparity between his "verbal constructions" about that character and "the psychological entity or living being."⁷⁸ He must also qualify his fictional involvements by recognizing "that the subtlest and most intense empathic insight into the experience of another person is something far different from having the experience itself."⁷⁹

With these qualifications in mind we can better establish how we should become involved in reading fiction. In the broadest context of involvement we should not seek to become merely a passive sharer of authorial point of view. Reading fiction should be "an active revelation,"

⁷⁷Harding, p. 139.

⁷⁸Slatoff, p. 15.

⁷⁹Harding, p. 145.

not a "passive toleration." We should not merely integrate the conflicts we experience to a level of acceptance. Instead, we should expect them to stimulate thought and feeling and at times to be so spiritually disruptive as to spur value development.⁸⁰ Harding shows that the terms "identification and vicarious experience" as they relate to specific characters and events are "vague and loose." It is better to use more specific terms because of the subjective variations one finds in reader involvement. In fact, the ways in which we experience fictional events and characters reflect to some extent the ways in which we live and relate to others. We must therefore specify, for instance, if our involvement with a character is "recognition of resemblances," "admiration," "a model for imitation," or "absorbed empathy."⁸¹

Fictional involvement seems to call for us to look into ourselves as well as into a work's characters, "for it is we who recreate the characters and give them a sense of reality." Our "wishes and defenses" are implicit in this recreation to the point that character identification becomes "a complicated mixture of projection and introjection."⁸² This fact should caution us against modifying the

⁸⁰Slatoff, p. 168; Bacon and Breen, p. 70; Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1941), p. 321.

⁸¹Harding, pp. 140-142.

⁸²Holland, pp. 277-280.

characters and events in a particular work to suit our "predispositions." This caution can best be observed if we avoid sentimentality, sympathy, or pity for the characters, because these emotions blur our understanding of the characters and thus impair our judgments of them. Instead, if we can achieve "an empathetic involvement" with the characters, we will be able both to feel from their points of view and to understand them without becoming them in any real sense. Using this approach, our felt understandings of the "disruptive" emotions of characters should "excite" in us "integrative responses."⁸³ The reading process thus parallels the blend of self-involvement and distance from self characteristic of the self-consciousness so necessary for identity development in contemporary society.

Thus far this study has demonstrated the numerous ways that fiction, viewed as both an integrative and disruptive imaginative experience that interpenetrates life, can stimulate and provide resources for self-discovery and self-creation. Above and beyond these considerations are other significant reasons why fictional analyses should include personal responses and personal and social applications. Lionel Trilling shows, for instance, how modern literature is particularly relevant to encounter criticism. Such

⁸³Bacon and Breen, pp. 24, 31, 43; Slatoff, p. 52; Harding, p. 145; Richards, Practical Criticism, pp. 257, 270.

literature has "a shockingly personal" nature, a "special intensity of concern with the spiritual life"; it asks us more questions about ourselves than it does about our culture.⁸⁴ A broader concern, though, is the disparity between our expectations about literary effects and the actual effects. As Faust shows, it is generally hoped among writers and teachers of fiction that reading and studying great literary works "will induce a wide range of profitable reflection on the major problems of man and his career in the universe."⁸⁵ But the conditions of modern life and education discussed in the previous chapter suggest that more than to hope must be done for this reflection to occur; we must act to promote its frequent occurrence. That the reader abstracts "a number of sharp and deeply felt insights into the meaning of the human story that control our transactions with the world that lies before him" does not necessarily mean that he automatically makes use of them.⁸⁶

Encounter criticism, of course, seeks to provide an approach to fiction that will stimulate students of literature to use the insights it provides for self-conscious

⁸⁴Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 8.

⁸⁵Faust, p. 103. See also Sartre, Literature and Existentialism, p. 159.

⁸⁶Scott, pp. 120-123.

identity development and to provide also a methodology for doing so. Because fiction most often provides "diagnoses rather than remedies" regarding knowledge of the human condition,⁸⁷ it is well suited to encounter criticism. These diagnoses should prompt the reader to relate them to himself and to his world. Both in doing this and in interpreting the work itself, the reader must do what several educationists see as highly valuable to learning: use cognitive skills to achieve emotional and psychological growth by translating "his behavior into a set of verbal terms describing the value involved."⁸⁸ Both in critical analysis and in personal responses and application the "meanings" one discovers come through this process, as one transforms the complex mental and emotional states generated by the reading experience into social, moral, and intellectual terms.⁸⁹ This process exemplifies self-consciousness as it works in promoting self-discovery and self-creation and in making one growth-motivated.

These considerations necessitate further explanation of specific methods possible for integrating personal responses and personal and social applications with critical analyses. We do not begin by consciously reading with the

⁸⁷Brooks, "Organic Theory of Poetry," p. 75.

⁸⁸Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 51.

⁸⁹Holland, p. 12. See also Sontag, pp. 31-34.

mind turned inward, asking "Where are the connections with myself?" Of course, we do so unconsciously or subconsciously in all our reading. But consciously this aspect of encounter criticism comes only after close study of the work itself. Without this close study, we may distort or misuse the totality of the experience because the personal responses and applications are "extrinsic or derivative."⁹⁰ Lesser shows how both critical analysis itself and personal response and application are secondary facets of literary experience. The primary process is "in following the story as it develops and in grasping its manifest meaning." Where encounter criticism differs from Lesser's view is in its belief that personal response and application, while done "incidentally" in reading, can and should be practiced "systematically" in writing about literature.⁹¹

In interpreting a work a critic tests the value of the writer's revelations "by a kind of sympathetic and critical imitation of the actions and reactions" found in it. But when he systematically integrates personal responses and personal and social applications with this analysis, he is doing what Bacon and Breen say should be done in literary involvement: he is going beyond mere "attraction and repulsion" responses, reflecting on "the relationships between the text and life," and entertaining

⁹⁰Bacon and Breen, p. 56. ⁹¹Lesser, p. 195.

"implicative speculations that branch out from the text." The reader can engage in these activities, can examine the author's ideas and the characters' behavior and link them to himself and his experiences, because he is responding to the literary experience not through acts but through attitudes.⁹²

Central to encounter criticism's methodology is a personal and subjective version of what Lesser and Holland term "analogizing"--making connections, allusions, parallels, echoes, associations, and juxtapositions between the work's ideas and characters and the reader. This technique helps "shed light on our external problems or give form to our internal ones," as we discover in a work "ideas, memories, and fantasies which are analogous to its particulars rather than identical with them."⁹³ Analogizing is a particularly viable procedure for integrating analysis and personal response and application because the practitioner's analogies are "closely bound by the particular events which instigate" them.⁹⁴

Harold B. Dunkel has formulated a fiction inventory, one area of which is "self-development." The points for response in this area describe the possibilities for

⁹²Bacon and Breen, pp. 9-10.

⁹³Lesser, pp. 241-243; Holland, p. 331.

⁹⁴Lesser, p. 204.

self-discovery and self-creation through literary encounters if analogizing is used well:

- (1) Feeling that I am developing my personality.
- (2) Feeling that my reactions have become richer and more sensitive because of the fiction I have read.
- (3) Gaining experience which adds depth to my personality.
- (4) Having my attention called to things I have never thought much about before.
- (5) Knowing that because of my reading many things in life will become more meaningful and interesting to me.
- (6) Finding apt expressions of ideas which I have felt but have never been able to express so well myself.
- (7) Getting suggestions about the kind of person I want to be.
- (8) Getting beyond the limits of personal experience by reading which broadens my horizons.
- (9) Becoming acquainted with people and places different from those with which I am familiar.
- (10) Being stimulated emotionally.
- (11) Being stimulated to think more deeply.
- (12) Being stimulated to constructive action.
- (13) Being encouraged to stand by my ideals.
- (14) Getting courage and inspiration to live well.⁹⁵

Stemming from these possibilities and also relevant to analogizing are some personal questions the reader employing encounter criticism might ask himself in relation to a particular work: (1) Do I agree or disagree with the author's ideas or view of a certain subject or character, and why? (2) Did the author show me something about myself or about life of which I was previously unaware? (3) If so,

⁹⁵Harold B. Dunkel, General Education in the Humanities (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1947), p. 301.

how might I utilize that insight? (4) Did the author's ideas or my encounter with a certain character or characters alter my thinking or feeling in any way? (5) Did my encounter with the work reinforce, affect somewhat, or change significantly what I have learned from personal experiences or my perspective on those experiences? (6) If so, how?

To integrate their answers to these questions into their analyses of fiction, students can employ the mode which adapts best to their needs and interests. While the most extensive mode would be the integration of thorough critical analysis of a specific work with appropriate personal responses and applications, such scope is not always possible and might place a frustrating burden upon the writer. If one is confident that he has experienced the work well, he might dispense with much of the textual explication and focus on those aspects most relevant to himself. He could briefly summarize those relevant aspects as they occur in the work and concentrate his energies almost completely on his personal responses and the personal and social applications of them. On the other hand, if one feels a need to do a thorough written analysis of the work, he may have less space and energy for the personal dimensions and may want to be very selective in integrating only the most significant or immediate ones. Such a writer on

fiction may be able to overcome this restriction if he focuses his analysis and responses on a certain character or idea in a work. Another mode of encounter criticism is necessary for students of fiction who have personal responses and see personal applications but prefer or feel compelled to keep them to themselves. Because writing out these concerns promotes better internalization of them, these students can transcend their reluctance by generalizing their comments so that they disguise their actual personal nature. If even this possibility disturbs them, they can confine themselves to the broader social applications of the work.

These final modes are necessary because, as Richards shows, "The personality stands balanced between the particular experience and the whole fabric of its past experiences and developed habits of mind. What is being settled is whether this new experience can or cannot be taken into the fabric with advantage."⁹⁶ For some people, the personality "reconstruction" needed to do so is very great. Thus our efforts to promote identity development and the use of encounter criticism are as limited as the openness to experience and to self-discovery and self-creation of particular people. As several psychologists reveal, many people establish a stable "phenomenal self" that resists

⁹⁶Practical Criticism, p. 303.

change by ignoring aspects of their experience which are inconsistent with it or by selecting perceptions in such a way as to confirm the concept of self they already possess.⁹⁷ Despite this study's emphasis on how the fictional experience minimizes the anxieties that cause such resistance, this resistance must still be viewed as a limiting factor in fiction analysis itself, as well as in personal response and application.

Other problems and limitations connected with encounter criticism also merit discussion. As Richards shows, the root problem is how "the intrusion of what is not germane to the meaning" of a work may affect our understanding of it. Personal memories may steer one's response to a reminiscence instead of to the work. A train of thought that does not spring from the meaning but is "an accidental by-product of a reading which does not realize the meaning" may intervene. The intrusion of "the hobby-horse or obsession" must also be watched for. Although analogizing or comparing personal feelings with feelings active in the work facilitates identity development and provides "a standard, a test for reality," we must be careful not to allow "recollected feelings" either to "overwhelm and distort" the work or to cause us to lose touch

⁹⁷Arthur W. Combs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 159.

with it as a total experience. We must keep in mind that the work "exists perhaps to control and order such feelings and to bring them into relation with other things, not merely to arouse them." In brief, our responses and applications should call into play only knowledge, experiences, and associations which are "genuine and relevant" and which "respect the liberty and autonomy of the work"; they must not distort the context.⁹⁸

Even if we are able to avoid all these pitfalls, Richards adds, we must be aware of our propensity to make "stock responses." Although such responses are legitimate and necessary aspects of literary experience and are often intentionally generated by the author, they can be "disadvantageous and even dangerous" when they "get in the way, and prevent, a response more appropriate to the situation." Responses and applications are most appropriate when they are made to the scope and depth of the work as a whole and to the context in which each part is integral to the whole. We must respond to the experience of the story rather than to isolated fragments. Richards seems justified in viewing the chief cause of both these "ill-appropriate and stereotyped" responses and applications and the intrusions and distortions, as "withdrawal from experience," the narrowing

⁹⁸Richards, Practical Criticism, pp. 236-240. See also Slatoff, pp. 77-78.

of selfhood that Combs and Syngg see as characteristic of many people. For this reason, literary study needs to focus on "actual experience in evoking and developing responses."⁹⁹

We can logically conclude that the problems and limitations of literary response and application stem from the problems and limitations of being self-conscious and growth-motivated enough to discover and create our identities. Lesser exemplifies this conclusion in another way when he tells us that we must acknowledge the subconscious and unconscious dimensions inherent in literary interpretation and response and in doing so recognize the limits of our conscious intellect and its power to control.¹⁰⁰ These points parallel this study's earlier qualification that our ability to be self-conscious and to know and create ourselves through this ability has equal limits in relation to our direct experiences and interpersonal relationships.

In light of these restrictive considerations, what justifiable claims can we make for the effects to be wrought by encounter criticism? They are the same claims that Holland makes for literary experience in general. We cannot say that literature has a "long-term moral effect"

⁹⁹Richards, Practical Criticism, pp. 241-246.

¹⁰⁰Lesser, p. 300.

on most readers or that it directly causes any permanent change in their characters. But we can assert that it "may open for us some flexibility of mind so that growth from it and other kinds of experience remains possible."¹⁰¹ Fiction, as Bacon and Breen show, can achieve this end because it promotes empathy, sensitivity, and awareness.¹⁰² Perhaps this study has not completely described fiction's unique and indispensable role in human experience, but maybe its synthesis of the ideas of numerous theorists and its extension of them into the realm of identity development have contributed to this objective. We may be able to find in this synthesis and extension ideas that make our study and teaching of fiction more meaningful and effective than they might otherwise be. Conceivably, in these ways the possibilities for personal growth through literature can, more than ever before, become actualities.

It is hoped that the emphasis in this study on the addition of personal responses and personal and social applications to literary analysis has not in any way lost touch with literature itself as its central concern. As Slatoff says in his call for a similar emphasis, it does not mean that we allow "lax impressionism" to enter the study of literature, nor do we turn that study into moral instruction or psychotherapy. Instead, it means that we

¹⁰¹Holland, pp. 334-340. ¹⁰²Bacon and Breen, p. v.

remain within the confines of the work we are experiencing and responding to, while at the same time bringing ourselves to bear upon the work.¹⁰³

The conviction emphasized here is that we can best achieve this goal if we are self-consciously concerned with fiction as an integrative-disruptive complex through which we encounter captured essences of human experience and with fiction as a unity of form and meaning in which the implied author uses narration, point of view, and related rhetorical techniques to bring himself, his work, and the reader together. We must also be sensitive to the psychological process of reader involvement in and detachment from the fictional experience, as well as to the other subjective dimensions of reading fiction that are often ignored in literary criticism. Finally, in an era in which most individuals must be self-conscious about the discovery and creation of their identities to live rich and meaningful lives, we need to accentuate the parallels between the fictional experience and the identity experience and to utilize those aspects of fiction which stimulate and provide resources for personal growth.

¹⁰³Slatoff, p. 168.

CHAPTER IV

ENCOUNTER CRITICISM OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S

VICTORY

Joseph Conrad's Victory provides a provocative and moving literary experience that merits thorough analysis, as well as personal response to and application of the understandings one reaches through it. Conrad has effectively integrated the characters' modes of involvement-detachment through dramatic shifts of focus and other rhetorical devices to prompt the reader's consideration of some significant philosophical and psychological issues. A character's mode of involvement-detachment refers to the values, attitudes, and psychological factors that cause him to involve himself in certain situations and to detach himself from other situations. While the novel focuses on Axel Heyst's ambivalent and paradoxical mode of involvement-detachment, its thematic unity very much depends upon the reader's blending of the other characters' modes with Heyst's. As Frederick R. Karl points out in the most thorough published commentary on Victory, Conrad's major thematic intent is to probe "the ironies inherent in the conflict between a theoretical view of life which advocates

withdrawal and a practical view of life which accepts events as they are enforced upon one."¹

Karl does not go far enough beyond his emphasis on the structural unity provided by "four simultaneous levels of action."² We should further analyze how Conrad blends the characters' modes of involvement-detachment to give the novel thematic unity. But structural unity and thematic unity are interdependent. In fact, that they go together so well is what makes Victory such a provocative literary experience. The four levels of action Karl stresses thus merit attention in any study of Victory. They are "(1) Heyst, the Hermit, influenced by the philosophy of his father; (2) Heyst committed to the rescue of Lena; (3) Heyst being slandered by Schomberg as thief and murderer; (4) Heyst the victim of plotting by Schomberg and Jones."³

My analysis of Victory, though, will demonstrate the secondary role of these levels of action and the primary role of the characters' modes of involvement-detachment. When shifts of focus from one level of action to another occur, they are mainly intended to provide additional information on the characters' modes of involvement-detachment. Thus, the reader's task is to synthesize this

¹Frederick R. Karl, The Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad, rev. ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969), p. 70.

²Ibid., p. 86.

³Ibid.

information and to gain a full understanding of Conrad's outlook on the questions he wants the reader to consider while experiencing this novel. These are not only questions about involvement and detachment, but also questions about the part circumstance or chance can play in a person's life, about his need and ability to cope with evil, and ultimately about the constructive nature of human values and the destructive nature of amoral or nonhuman values.

An examination of Conrad's general views on the literary experience lends further validity to the argument that Victory calls for a synthesis of points of view and a response to and application of the issues raised by that synthesis. A work of fiction is to Conrad a captured essence of life because it is created out of "perishable activity" into "imperishable consciousness."⁴ Fiction is viewed as "human history . . . based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena."⁵ But Conrad acknowledges the difficulty of integrating these forms and observation to give his reader the essence of human experience. Karl points out that such difficulty stems from Conrad's belief in the necessity of aesthetic distance and

⁴Joseph Conrad, "Henry James: An Appreciation," in Notes on Life and Letters (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921), p. 13.

⁵Ibid., p. 17.

authorial impersonality to preserve "the uncertainty, the 'half-knowledge' necessary to all points of view."⁶

The implication that logically follows from this perspective is that no one character speaks for the author, nor do isolated authorial comments constitute a total point of view on any idea or character. Instead, the reader must work to blend all facets of the novel--both structural and thematic--before he can make any judgments about its meaning or about its merits as a work of art. Conrad adds that while he often distances himself from his characters and their experiences, he is not indifferent toward them. He structures them and comments upon them with "a conscientious regard for the truth of my own sensations."⁷

In other words, Conrad employs aesthetic distance for optimum dramatic impact to give only the illusion of authorial impersonality, which the reader should not mistake for actual authorial indifference. Conrad has very definite feelings about the philosophical and psychological questions he raises in Victory, even though he remains intentionally cryptic or noncommittal on some points,⁸

⁶Karl, p. 32.

⁷Joseph Conrad, "Author's Note," Typhoon and Other Stories (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1929), p. ix.

⁸For further discussion on Conrad's authorial perspective, see Wesley Carroll, "The Novelist as Artist," Modern Fiction Studies, 1 (February 1955), 2-8.

perhaps to stimulate reader response to and application of the issues to the specific circumstances of his own life. As W. F. Wright points out, Conrad's ultimate goal in each work was "to provide perspectives from which a reader could look at reality."⁹ Conrad, in fact, is more explicit as the implied author in Victory than he is in many of his other works. He makes numerous generalized comments on the characters and on the significance of their experiences that might have been dramatized or made more implicit.

The novel, though, is not dominated by such explicitness, much of which appears necessary to give the numerous focal shifts and complex character relationships organic unity. Wesley Carroll may be accurate in attributing much of Conrad's directness to a concern for capturing "the 'ideal' value of things, events, and people."¹⁰ Yet Conrad does not carry this concern so far that he neglects making the literary experience real and dramatic. Karl is stressing this fact when he emphasizes Conrad's skill in creating "the semblance of events lived and felt so that their organization constitutes a completely experienced reality."¹¹

Before turning to analysis of, response to, and application of the novel, one needs to examine further the techniques Conrad uses in Victory to provide the reader

⁹Romance and Tragedy in Joseph Conrad (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), p. 1.

¹⁰Carroll, p. 6.

¹¹Karl, p. 36.

with an experiential encounter. The major concern of this study is, as I have said, the primacy of the thematic unity provided by the blending of the characters' modes of involvement-detachment and its relationship to the structural unity of Karl's four levels of action. Integration is achieved as each shift of focus supports or corrects another, as it introduces new material, new elements, new effects, and especially as Conrad merges the reader's overall point of view with his. As the blending process takes place in the reader's mind, it compels him to become involved not only in Conrad's conception of reality but also in the creative process. In short, the reader gradually, and perhaps only after several readings, becomes the center of consciousness as Conrad guides him through a process of discovery. Because this process requires both time and patience, the reader posited here is not a casual but an ideal one who has carefully studied the work. The integration process may, therefore, be somewhat idealistic and will certainly not inevitably take place in every reader.

One facet of this process is what Karl calls a "delving into attendant and antecedent circumstances to produce an effect of power not speed."¹² But rhetorical devices other than the gradual introduction of events and ideas contribute to the blending process inherent in Victory.

¹²Karl, p. 249.

For instance, there are subtle point of view alterations within many of the focal sections that enhance the novel's dramatic effectiveness. Another technique that heightens Victory's dramatic impact and helps reveal meaning is Conrad's integration of the past and the present. As Karl demonstrates, one of Conrad's most effective techniques in the integrative process is his skill in making "traces of past time react upon and combine with present circumstances."¹³ Finally, Conrad employs ambiguity, irony, and paradox to reveal aspects of the various modes of involvement-detachment, to integrate the modes, and ultimately to promote understanding of the complexity of the major characters and their relationships in Victory.

By combining this discussion of the basic techniques used in Victory with a concern for the philosophical and psychological issues of involvement and detachment raised by the novel, I can now analyze Victory itself as an experiential literary encounter with life and respond to and apply the understandings that analysis reveals to me. The insights provided by my encounter with Victory are especially meaningful to me because they have modified and clarified some of my attitudes toward my own experiences. By understanding the conflict between withdrawing from life and meeting life as it comes, especially as this conflict

¹³Karl, p. 68.

occurs in Heyst, I have gained some insights into life's essentially tragic nature and into man's frustrated efforts to give his life order, structure, meaning, and spiritual quality.

Foremost of these discoveries is life's precariousness--how fate, chance, or circumstance can victimize one. As if this fact were not enough, man has been burdened with other restrictions. His point of view toward his fellows and toward his experiences is always limited by his inability to penetrate others or to integrate the outward bearing with the inner person. Through his own narrowness of mind, he can also compound this restriction to bring about distortions of an already foggy perception. Conrad also shows that point of view limitations may eventually lead to misunderstanding, distrust, and frustration in one's relationships.

I find Conrad's emphasis on how life's precariousness can victimize one provocative because it helps me to put in perspective my early life as just such a victim. Having been hurt by life's uncertainty through the early death of my loving mother and the abdication of my weak father from parental responsibility and through five years of abuse and unlove in a foster home, I tended to withdraw from involvement because I felt insecure, abnormal, and fearful of being hurt. At the same time, I felt anguished at the

abyss between myself and others. I wanted love and a sense of belonging. Because of my victimization and subsequent withdrawal, satisfaction of these basic needs had to be particularly intense for me.

Thus, when I was able to relate to others who were very understanding and tolerant of me, I demanded an intensity and intimacy possible only over an extended period with a few people. I felt most acutely the inability to know others well that Conrad suggests is often characteristic of human experience. I also distorted the little knowledge that I had of them by attributing qualities to them they lacked, qualities essential to their satisfaction of my intense needs for love and belongingness. With such high but unrealistic expectations and intense but abnormal emotions, I came down hard when I eventually discovered how false my point of view was. As Conrad suggests can happen, I misunderstood my friends, judging them by false criteria. I gradually distrusted them and ended up feeling frustrated at not having my needs met as well as I felt they should have been. Conrad's insights into these tragic aspects of human experience have given me a better conscious understanding of these facets of my own experiences.

By relating my early life to Conrad's treatment in Victory of life's precariousness and the limitations of human relations, I can also concur with Conrad on the

validity of some of Heyst Senior's philosophy. Life is full of incompleteness and imperfection; death can make it absurd and meaningless. There may not be enough joy and meaning in one's fragmented life to compensate him for all he must endure to win the little vouchsafed him. Conrad himself points out several times man's need for "illusions" of joy, purpose, worth, and faith in others just to keep living. He also points out how self-deceptive those illusions can be.

I sometimes find these cynical outlooks pervading my life. At times I am distressed because I wish for an order, a wholeness, a unity that is just not there. I sometimes despair over the gap between my potential for good and the actual good I do, as well as over the flaws in everything I and others do and create. I also often wonder whether the time, energy, and anguish necessary to my achievements are meaningful and joyous enough to balance out, especially when I acknowledge that the value I attach to them is not "authentic" in any objective sense; it is a product of my illusions. I am also hurt when my faith in others is not realized in everyday living, as well as frustrated when my faults and limitations make me acknowledge what I would rather forget--that that faith is perhaps unwarranted, a necessary illusion created to ward off despair. But I see this creation of faith, purpose, worth,

joy, and meaning as both the burden and the challenge of humanity. We as human beings give reality its essence, its meaning, its value. Without that creation, there is a spiritual void.

It is not as easy, however, to convert the other tragic aspects of life that Conrad confronts us with in Victory to a positive perspective. Many of these come in the form of the amoral, immoral, or dehumanized people we find in the novel: the hypocritical, selfish, and self-deluded Schomberg; the perverse, amoral, sensual evil of Ricardo; the sick, intellectual evil of Jones; and the automatic pragmatism of Wang. Conrad shows how such people tend to shield or justify these ultimately destructive traits. By doing so, he has increased my awareness of the profound difficulty of knowing that people possess such qualities and of dealing with them once these characteristics surface. But what had the greatest impact on me was that Conrad made these characters so real that I began to sense how each of their negative qualities was to a limited extent present in me at times and how I sought to conceal or justify them. His effective dramatization of the devastating potential of these traits made me conscious of my need to minimize and eventually eliminate their impact on my values and relationships.

Through Heyst Conrad also dramatizes in Victory how the past exerts such a powerful influence on the present. Heyst is given a parent who shapes him in his image with attitudes and values that conflict with his natural temperament and with his experiences and that stifle gratification of his basic human needs. Any such strong conditioning, Conrad demonstrates, is dangerous because human character should always be emerging from experience rather than being shaped from preconceived notions or from externally imposed values, lest personal growth be completely smothered or be severely limited.

My encounter with Heyst as he exemplified these ideas has made me conscious of my own process of developing attitudes and values. I can feel empathy with Heyst's extremely conditioned character, not because I have experienced it but because I have experienced the opposite-- little or no conditioning. I have been relatively free to discover my inner propensities and to shape my identity according to them through my experiences. Although my basic needs have not been stifled because of inner conflicts between conditioned values, natural temperament, and experiences, I have suffered from a lack of relationships in which to fulfill them. In short, encountering Heyst as an opposite has made me see more clearly than before that my life has been too free, too open, too much

of a total responsibility for myself. Consequently, it has had too little direction and too little sense of unity and communion with my fellows. On the other hand, the dehumanizing effects of Heyst's conditioning in Victory have increased my sensitivity to the positive facets of my extreme lack of conditioning. I have become very open to experience and adaptable to fluctuating circumstances. I feel always ready to grow, to try new things or consider new ideas or approaches to life. At the same time, I am gradually establishing values based upon my inner nature and experiences and living by them with some sense of stability, direction, and interpersonal communion. My increased awareness through Heyst is ultimately that one must be conscious enough of the forces affecting his identity to judge how well they fit him. To whatever extent possible, he must control these forces rather than allow them to control him.

Thus, by encountering these varied tragic dimensions of Victory through Conrad's vision, I have been able to know myself better. But several critics have misconstrued the nature of Axel Heyst's tragedy in Victory and have judged the novel less meaningful than it truly is. Thomas Moses, for instance, stresses how "Chance blurs responsibility" and sees Heyst as "a good man brought down by

chance and other people."¹⁴ While Conrad exploits these partial truths to create sympathy for Heyst and thereby to emphasize understanding him more than judging him, Conrad's ultimate purpose is to accentuate that Heyst's approach to life's tragic aspects is unsatisfactory because it is dehumanizing. That this approach is conditioned in Heyst and that all circumstances go against him make him no less responsible for himself. In fact, Heyst's tragedy stems in part from his failure to be responsible to himself; this extreme skeptic failed to be skeptical about this imposed skepticism until it was too late.

I agree with Conrad's implied judgment here. Despite the circumstances given us, we must accept responsibility for ourselves. Only then can we progress by building up the humanizing dimensions of what we are given and by conquering the dehumanizing ones. When we are responsible in these ways, we are also better able to do with our lives whatever we choose than if we blame others or God or fate for our limitations and deficiencies. We are capable of such free choices because our sense of responsibility makes us better able to exert control over ourselves and over whatever confronts us. Also, a major part of being

¹⁴Thomas Moses, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1966), pp. 141, 156. See also Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 273-275; Kingsley Widmer, "Conrad's Pyrrhic Victory," Twentieth Century Literature, 5 (October 1959), 124.

responsible is not accepting without question whatever we encounter, whatever others would have us believe, however others would have us live. In the final analysis, it is often the very people who fail to question and thereby exercise whatever conscious control is possible over their development who seek to pass the responsibility for the negative consequences of this failure to someone or something else.

Through Heyst and his relationship to Lena, Conrad has also convinced me that it is not so much the tragic nature of life that is important but the attitude and approach I take to it, the conclusions I reach regarding it. Heyst's detached perspective, his excessive idealism, his refusal to listen often enough to the promptings of his natural temperament, and his absorption in weighing the costs of involvement combine to dehumanize him by restricting his ability to love and thereby the possibility of somewhat transcending life's tragedies through a spiritual quality not entirely unlike Lena's. Conrad is not, however, suggesting that detachment in itself is dehumanizing. As a matter of fact, he asserts in the "Author's Note" to Victory that it accompanies man's "power of endurance" in making him "adaptable" to life's tragedies.¹⁵

¹⁵Victory (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1915), p. x. Further references to this work will be noted parenthetically in the text.

As my specific analysis of the novel will show, the extremity of Heyst's detachment ultimately causes his involvements to be equally extreme, and this realization suggests that what is necessary for effective living is an integration of the two. Conrad has clearly shown me that either extreme can be equally detrimental to one's humanity, detrimental to effective action in critical situations.

Conrad's vision in Victory thus has positive implications for me stemming from Heyst's character. I may be able to cope with evil, to manage life's precariousness and other tragic features and to come away with a sense of life's spiritual qualities only if my attitude and approach are sound. I can have ideals, but I must see them as such and not expect them necessarily to parallel realities. I must satisfy rather than suppress my basic needs for love and human communion. I must integrate rather than dichotomize the varied aspects of my often ambivalent and paradoxical character. As Karl points out, Conrad is telling me that I must recognize that "moral courage in confronting difficulty is finer than complete withdrawal."¹⁶ It is also necessary for me to understand, as William Wallace Bancroft declares, that "self-knowledge and dignity" come only from a sense of "Human Solidarity" and that "moral

¹⁶Karl, p. 265.

degradation" ensues without that sense.¹⁷ In short, I must acknowledge that I cannot separate myself from others and from the community and expect to live even a satisfactory, much less meaningful, life.

I wish neither to idealize nor to make superficial these positive implications. Conrad stresses in Victory the profound difficulty of achieving sound attitudes and approaches. He reminds me that in whatever meaningful inspiration I find there will be some degree of illusion and self-delusion. He leaves me with no other choice than to avoid Heyst's aloofness and to seek a sound identity, for "the avoidance of the absurd destructiveness of the world results in the greatest destructiveness of all."¹⁸ I must, Conrad also implies, yield to the necessity of action, involvement, commitment, and moral courage despite incomplete and imperfect satisfactions such yielding provides. My ultimate impression of Victory is that Conrad has dramatized well in it the nobility of this approach to life and the ignobility of its opposite.

In deriving Conrad's authorial vision from Victory and in formulating my general responses and applications, I experienced the novel as a dramatic interrelation of focal shifts employed to guide me to blend Heyst's mode of

¹⁷William Wallace Bancroft, Joseph Conrad: His Philosophy of Life (New York: Haskell House, 1964), pp. 8-9.

¹⁸Widmer, p. 126.

involvement-detachment with the modes of the other characters. My analysis will emphasize the focal shifts most significant to discovering Conrad's ideas through the novel's integrative process, those that develop Heyst's character, Lena's character, and their relationship. Other focal shifts will be summarized as they come to show how the novel's minor characters relate to its two central figures and thereby give a total literary experience of Conrad's vision.

Part one of Victory, the briefest of the four parts, consists of seven focal sections and is the only part not controlled by totally omniscient narration. Instead, Conrad employs a local resident of the Southeast Asian island where part of the novel's action occurs and has him relate much of the information he has obtained about Axel Heyst from observations, gossip, and conversation with Captain Davidson, who, as a local boatman travelling the islands, has had numerous encounters with Heyst. At times, however, this narrator's comments have too much depth to be taken as anything other than thinly disguised omniscience. Nevertheless, the whole is quite effective in giving an indirect view of Heyst and in providing almost all of the elements to be developed in subsequent parts.¹⁹

¹⁹For further discussion, see Karl, pp. 248-249.

Conrad opens the novel with the paradoxically slim distinction between "the practical and the mystical" (p. 1). These relations between involvement and detachment are to be central to Heyst's character and to the meaning of the novel. Conrad conveys this paradox by having his narrator refer to the "very close chemical relation between coal and diamonds" (p. 1) and then by having him discuss two basic points of view on coal. The great amount of it necessary to make it valuable also makes it a burden; yet it is fascinating as "the supreme commodity of the age" (p. 1). The narrator then emphasizes Heyst's peculiar character, his "persistent inertia" (p. 1) as he lives alone on the isolated island where he was manager of the now defunct Tropical Belt Coal Company. "His nearest neighbor . . . an indolent volcano" (p. 2) is next introduced, a symbol which will be reiterated as the novel develops to accentuate the ambivalent mixture of detachment and involvement in Heyst. This symbol may also be taken to suggest the blend of destructive and creative potential in Heyst, since volcanic fires are destructive, but volcanic earth is extraordinarily fertile.

Other points in this first chapter extend our insight into Heyst's mixed character. The narrator mentions the preoccupation of Heyst with "the books left him by his father" (p. 2), which haunt his identity and contribute to

the detachment in his character that made his life a series of "aimless wanderings" (p. 3). Next, however, the reader is confused. How could a man of inertia and aimless wandering be concerned with a "stride forward" (p. 3) to improve civilization in the area? Also, how can the reader reconcile the disparity between Heyst as "enchanted" (p. 4) and as a "Utopist" (p. 5) with his statement, "There's nothing worth knowing but facts" (p. 5)? Conrad apparently is leading one back to the opening statement regarding the ambiguous connection of the practical and the mystical, of involvement and detachment. Yes, as the narrator concludes, "There is no reason to think that Heyst was in any way a fighting man" (p. 6). But there are implications that his life is not totally inert or directionless either.

Such implications are made explicit as Conrad focuses the narration on Heyst's involvement with Morrison, a trader with "too much altruism" (p. 7), a "true humanitarian and rather ascetic than otherwise" (p. 8). Heyst accidentally meets Morrison, who is in despair because his brig has been seized and because he has no money to bail it out. At first, not knowing the circumstances, Heyst is merely shocked by his distressed look and manner and then sympathetic to his depressed mental and emotional state. Heyst manages, though, to keep his distance, to conceal somewhat this shock and sympathy, but he responds more

openly when he learns that the incident is a confidence game often pulled by local authorities. Heyst shocks Morrison by lending him the money; but when Morrison exhibits strong feelings of gratitude, Heyst tries to tone down his involvement; he merely wants "to be of use" (p. 12). Conrad then summarizes this facet of Heyst's mode of involvement-detachment: "No decent feeling was ever scorned by Heyst. But he was incapable of outward cordiality of manner, and he felt acutely his defect" (p. 14).

Conrad also effectively uses Morrison as a contrast to Heyst in this chapter. Morrison's self-denying tendencies contrast with Heyst's tendency to be self-protective. Morrison's commitment to his trading endeavors, despite his lament over his inability to make money, is the antithesis on the "unattached, floating existence" of Heyst (p. 14). Heyst emphasizes the accidental nature of their encounter, while Morrison sees it as a facet of the universal order of divine providence. Their rationales for keeping the incident and loan a secret also reflect character contrast--Morrison to maintain his integrity, Heyst to avoid publicity as Morrison's "heavenly messenger" (p. 15). But this secrecy leads to a rumor spread by the local innkeeper Schomberg that Heyst has great power over Morrison and is devouring him as a spider would a fly. This ironic juxtaposition of Heyst's involvement and

Schomberg's slandering of it further complicates my viewpoint on just what Conrad is saying about involvement and detachment. Conrad is definitely not saying that the former is always virtue, the latter always vice.

The ironic impact deepens in the third section as Schomberg abuses human nature's "general propensity to believe an evil report," while Heyst remains "serenely unconscious" of that abuse (p. 17). When Morrison imposes a partnership on Heyst in a coal mining company out of an excessive sense of obligation and then dies on a trip home, one aspect of Heyst's emphasis on detachment blossoms. Involvement brings responsibility and some fear of "reproach" (p. 18) if something goes wrong. Even though Morrison's death was far from Heyst's fault, Conrad uses Schomberg's rumor that Heyst caused that death to extend our sense of the complex inter-relatedness of involvement and detachment. Conrad further develops this theme when he shifts focus and presents Captain Davidson's point of view on Heyst as island recluse, sitting on the wharf reading one of his father's books. Davidson had gone to the island suspecting that Heyst wanted to leave after the company's demise; but Heyst tells him of his "taste for solitude" (p. 23), while Davidson notes the distance Heyst seeks to keep from others--one cannot speak "familiarily" to him.

But the Morrison experience has wrought at least one significant change in Heyst; he is now "done with facts" (p. 24) because, as Wright notes, he has realized that he can no longer separate them from the deceptive and emotion-charged contexts in which he experiences them.²⁰ The Morrison experience, the narrator's comment that "apparently Heyst was not a hermit by temperament" (p. 26) and his foreboding of the "trouble" Heyst's incomplete detachment from the world may bring--all serve to clarify the logic of Heyst's change regarding facts. In this chapter Conrad also brings us closer to the relationship between Heyst and his father by having Heyst return to the mainland to pick up his father's belongings, most of which are books. Conrad integrates this event with Heyst's being "touched" by Davidson's deep concern about his odd life situation. The juxtaposition of these two opposing incidents is another way of pointing out the ambivalent nature of Heyst's character.

The fifth chapter sustains Conrad's focus on Davidson's viewpoint, but this time as it relates to Heyst's reinvolvement of himself on a rationale similar to that regarding Morrison--the rescue of Lena from a miserable existence and from Schomberg's lustful clutches. All this comes in a well-dramatized gradual revelation. As Davidson

²⁰Wright, p. 101.

seeks Heyst at Schomberg's hotel, he encounters an ominous atmosphere there--"solitude, shade, and gloomy silence--and a faint, treacherous breeze" (p. 29). Davidson is concerned that Heyst is missing from the hotel, but Schomberg dismisses that concern to hide his embarrassment at what has occurred. Davidson's sympathy, aroused by "the sordid conditions and brutal incidents" (p. 32) connected with lady-orchestra touring groups, prepares for Heyst's action regarding Lena.

The introduction of Mrs. Schomberg, the fact that she permits her husband to treat her with indifference and even distaste, and the general tendency to regard her as "an automaton, a very plain dummy" (p. 33)--all combine to create effective dramatic irony. This occurs when Davidson learns from her of Heyst's rescue of the girl and when he is shocked at her role in effecting their escape. Of course, the reader learns that she was merely acting to protect her personal security as a wife because Schomberg was seeking the affections of Lena. But Mrs. Schomberg's mixed character heightens the dramatic impact of Heyst's ambivalent character, especially as Davidson reacts with disbelief, doubts that Lena will be content on Samburan, and views Heyst's act as "madness" (p. 37). Mrs. Schomberg's actions also exhibit another case in which detachment can suddenly shift to involvement. In this case,

identity is threatened, whereas in Heyst's case a temperamental humanitarianism is at work.

Conrad then shifts his revelations to the hypocritical and selfish nature of Schomberg's values. Pretending a concern for "the good name of his house" (p. 39), Schomberg now curses Heyst out of jealousy and then twists Heyst's goodness to make it seem like selfishness and deceit. Such twisting underscores how Heyst himself has allowed his natural propensities toward involvement to be twisted to detachment, except in such extreme cases as those of Morrison and Lena. Although the scandal was widely discussed and many took Schomberg's side, the narrator and Davidson discount any sexual motive and conclude that the action "was in its essence the rescue of a distressed human being" (p. 42).

We learn more about Heyst and Lena through Davidson in chapter six. Upon calling Davidson to the island "to preserve appearances" (p. 44), Heyst stresses the negative aspects of the rescue. His statement "I allowed myself to be tempted into action" (p. 45) implies the proposition that all action, all involvement is "sinful" per se. Heyst is also cynical because "this world is evil upon the whole" (p. 45); yet he reiterates that the "intelligent observation of fact" (p. 46) is no longer a satisfying refuge from the "sins" of action and cynicism. Conrad, however, never

fails to balance this philosophical detachment of Heyst with his temperamental drive toward involvement in cases in which humanitarian values prompt him, nor does he fail to juxtapose this ambivalence with someone else's mode of involvement-detachment.

Here Mrs. Schomberg's defense of "her position in life" (p. 47) is reiterated, while Heyst tells Davidson that he acted because Lena's plight "was a case of odious persecution" (p. 47). When Heyst concludes that he and Lena "can safely defy the fates on the island" (p. 47), his judgment is more than an ironic foreboding of tragic events. It brings the contrasting facets of Heyst's character into paradoxical perspective as the reader begins to experience them this early in the novel, not as contradictions but as a complex psychological reality. Davidson's concluding remark, "Funny notion of defying the fates--to take a woman in tow!" (p. 47), further heightens the dramatic impact of this reality. After all, he is thinking, is not a man entangled with a distressed woman the height of involvement? Meanwhile, Schomberg keeps the incident alive with distortions. He terms Heyst's pursuit of out-of-the-way facts "spying," calls Heyst's relations with Morrison robbery and murder, and sees the rescue of Lena as kidnapping.

Part one of the novel then ends with an apparently unrelated comment which foreshadows the appearance of the amoral Jones and Ricardo; Davidson suspects gambling at Schomberg's place and is amazed that Schomberg would permit it. This development is the first of numerous shifts in action that add an aura of mystery and suspense to the novel and that intimate the fragmented nature of knowledge and experience.

Conrad moves to total omniscience in part two and thereby frees himself to take the reader deeply inside Heyst, into his experience of rescuing Lena, and into the powerful influence of his father in shaping his values. Heyst has come to Schomberg's full of "thorough disenchantment" (p. 53) with life because he has violated his vow of detachment through his involvement with Morrison. He feels "a sort of shame before his own betrayed nature" (p. 53). In addition, he has experienced failure once he did become involved, a failure that he compounds into guilt over Morrison's death. But now, we discover that it is more than humanitarian concern that is going to compel him to rescue Lena. His "taste for silence" is overcome by a "sense of loneliness" (p. 54) at the very moment he is ready to renounce the world completely. He is plagued by "the shock of sharp contradictions that lacerate our intelligence and our feelings" (p. 54).

Entering Schomberg's domain to quell his shock, Heyst finds the musical group making terrible music and his temperamental sympathy moves him to pity the orchestra ladies as "exploited, hopeless, devoid of charm and grace" (p. 58). This response is merely a prelude to the "impulse" that compels him to involvement with Lena. First, he observes her as unique among the flock; second, he sees her being abused. Ultimately he is "seduced" by the "amazing quality" of her voice (p. 61). The obvious lack of anything to sing about in her life penetrates to the place in Heyst "where our unexpressed longings lie" (p. 61). At this point the reader is confronted with Conrad's view that one may try to shape his experiences to fit preconceived notions or externally imposed values, but experience will sometimes "lacerate" them and lead one in a different direction.

Evidence of this anomaly appears early in the next chapter when Conrad presents an irony related to Heyst: "Those dreamy spectators of the world's agitation are terrible once the desire to act gets hold of them" (p. 63). Conrad is apparently suggesting that those who practice extreme detachment are often, ironically enough, compelled by their imaginations to an equally extreme involvement. As Wright points out, Heyst gets involved in the extreme and responds melodramatically to the results of that

involvement because he fails to perceive "that his own solitariness of mind lets him imaginatively enter the minds of others who are similarly isolated and that that imaginative creation compels him to identify himself with their destiny."²¹

Conrad uses the rest of this chapter to present the beginnings of the relationship between Heyst and Lena. Heyst is overwhelmed with "immense sadness" as she tells him of her life in "the hopeless grip of poverty" (p. 64). Her ambivalent reaction to Heyst reflects his conflicting personality traits. His "friendliness" attracts her at first because she has never had a friend, and she likes his "quiet, polished manner" because it contrasts to Schomberg's coarseness and vulgarity. Nevertheless, later in their conversation Lena sees a cold detachment in Heyst, reflected in his manner of speaking as if he were "amused with people" (p. 69).

Conrad has also effectively integrated her mixed reactions to Heyst with Heyst's recollections of his commitment to detachment and their contrast with the strong feelings knowing her engenders. He sees her desperate in her despair and cannot "defend himself from compassion" (p. 65). He senses in her smile the potential to "deceive";

²¹Wright, p. 103. See also Morton Zabel, "Conrad: Chance and Recognition," Sewanee Review, 53 (1945), 15.

yet it "had given him such an ardour to live which was very new to his experience" (p. 66). Her most powerful effect, though, is to blur the mental vision that has led him to extreme detachment, that of "seeing life outside the flattering optical delusion of everlasting hope, of conventional self-deception, of an ever-expected happiness" (p. 67). In relating to her, he is no longer able to employ "his skeptical mind" to prevail over his "fulness of heart," even though he realizes "that he had engaged himself by a rash promise to an action big with incalculable consequences" (p. 68).

After giving Lena's responses to Heyst and his reaction to her, Conrad begins to establish a basis for their relationship in which she is to seek fulfillment and to be inspired to involvement through Heyst's love. Her earlier expression of a need for friendship and tenderness, of course, implies this mode of involvement-detachment. But she intensifies it when she says, "There's nothing so lonely in the world as a girl who has got to look after herself" (p. 70). Next, although she has been called the obviously symbolic names of Alma for soul and Magdalan for renewed spirit, she requests him to name her and he does, calling her Lena. In essence, he is to give her a new identity through his love. Knowing what he does of Heyst, the reader wonders if he will be able to provide

this mode of involvement. Conrad, the master of ironic juxtaposition in this novel, at first leads one to suspect he might. Heyst reaches a sense of communion with her when he takes her hands and "was affected, almost surprised, to find them so warm, so real, so living in his grasp" (p. 71). But Conrad ends the chapter with Heyst alone, his thoughts and feelings once again overwhelmed by "a system of restless wanderings" whereby he could pass through life without suffering and almost without a single care in the world--"invulnerable because elusive" (p. 74).

Conrad has also ended chapter two this way as a lead-in to the next one, the first part of which reveals the roots of this philosophical outlook and its resultant detachment. Heyst's father, a nihilistic cynic who advocated absolute moral and intellectual freedom, had a three-year direct influence on an impressionable Heyst, who had never known his mother, that resulted in a "profound mistrust of life" (p. 76), an excessive indulgence in thoughts on the cost of involvement, and a choice to drift as "my defense against life" (p. 76). In contrast to this point of view, Lena stands out as "the most real impression of his detached existence--so far" (p. 76).

The reader's encounter with Heyst and his relationship to Lena is suspended midway in this chapter and remains suspended in the final five chapters of part two. Instead,

Conrad returns the reader to the hypocritical, selfish, and now self-deluded Schomberg and then introduces the reader to the amoral, sensual evil of Ricardo and the amoral, intellectual evil of Jones.

Schomberg's view of Lena and how he confronts losing her to Heyst are presented in the latter half of chapter three. Sensing Lena's weak psychological state and being self-deluded about his own "personal fascination" (p. 77), Schomberg's ego is dealt a severe blow when Lena rebuffs his advances and when Heyst seems to win her with apparent ease. This blow not only compels him to heighten his abuse of Heyst but to develop a desire for revenge that is amenable to "reckless expedients" and to become open to "moral weakness" and corruption (p. 80). Schomberg's confrontation with the overwhelming evil powers of Ricardo and Jones in the last five chapters of part two eventually motivates him to combine all three of these traits as a means of getting rid of this incomprehensible and uncontrollable pair and of getting back at Heyst and Lena. He does so by telling Ricardo that Heyst has much money hidden on Samburan and by reinforcing his lie with a summary of all his previous distortions of Heyst's character and actions. His motivations are so strong that Schomberg becomes eloquent and highly persuasive, easily able to overwhelm all Ricardo's apprehensions. Schomberg even details how to get

to Samburan and agrees to provide all the necessary means. Conrad ends part two with the volcano as a paradoxical symbol to foreshadow that both destruction and creation are going to occur as a result of this scheme.

But these last five chapters of part two also detail the characteristics of Jones and Ricardo that are going to affect Heyst and Lena when the four come together on the island. A sickly "gentleman at large" (p. 85) who abhors women, "plain Mr. Jones" (p. 85) acts with cold calculation upon a philosophical perspective in which "he depends upon himself, as if the world were still one great, wild jungle without law" (p. 94). Conrad employs the images of "starved spectre" (p. 98) and "wicked ghost" (p. 100) to suggest Jones's intellectual evil.

While Jones provides the philosophical rationale and does most of the plotting in their adventures, Ricardo "serves" him by discovering adventures to bring Jones out of his periodic fits of laziness and boredom and by doing much of the dirty work in their plots. Ricardo is a pure amoralist who talks either nonchalantly or pleurably of killing. As Richard Curle points out, in Ricardo's eyes man exists to be exploited, while human life is "the merest trifle."²² Ricardo himself attributes his traits to a lack of tameness. In actuality, such a lack is a lust for

²²Joseph Conrad and his Characters (Fair Lawn, N.J.: Essential Books, 1958), p. 249.

sensual power and wildness, characteristics intimating sensual evil when Conrad likens Ricardo to "an enormous savage cat" (p. 104). Ricardo takes an equally ironic pride in his commitment to Jones as a "gentleman" because the latter is clever, has a distinguished look and manner, and reacts calmly under pressure.

Putting Ricardo and Jones together, the reader can see the validity of Schomberg's observation that they are "indeed well matched in their enormous dissimilarity, identical souls in different disguises" (p. 108). Conrad also uses Schomberg to imply that their modes of involvement-detachment are at the negative end of a continuum of worth. Despite his own immorality, hypocrisy, selfishness, and self-delusion, Schomberg is given sufficient moral sense to be appalled at Ricardo and Jones's amorality and disrespect for life, and Schomberg can see through their rationalizations of obviously immoral acts.

In the first five chapters of part three, Conrad shifts the focus back to Heyst on the island and provides fuller development of his father's philosophical impact on him. He also presents Wang, the servant to Heyst whose automaton pragmatism is but another circumstance that victimizes Heyst in his efforts to be detached. Lena's character is further developed in this half of part three as Heyst's ambivalence leads her to the point at which she is

uncertain that he can meet her needs, even though she is deeply committed to him. In the last five chapters of this part, Conrad effectively blends Jones and Ricardo into the complex relationship between Heyst and Lena and uses Wang to complicate Heyst's efforts to deal with this evil duo. Into all of these dramatic developments Conrad integrates many of his ideas about the tragic nature of human experience.

In the opening chapter Heyst is practicing "solitary meditation" (p. 141) in an attempt to understand his vacillation between the detachment his father had imposed and his natural tendency toward humanitarian involvement. The island is the appropriate setting for this activity because, as Karl notes, its mixture of the desolate and the idyllic reflects the reality of "Heyst's own desiccated spirit."²³ In this situation, where much of his practice of detachment has taken place, Heyst cannot see what really makes him become involved, but attributes it to having "a lot of the original Adam" (p. 141) in himself. Adam here is symbolic of "Action--the first thought, or perhaps the first impulse, on earth" (p. 142).

As an impetus toward avoiding action in the future and toward making his life "a masterpiece of aloofness" (p. 142), Heyst recollects the death-bed conversation with his

²³Karl, pp. 263-264.

father in which he was told "to cultivate that form of contempt which is called pity" and to "Look on--make no sound" (p. 142). Feeling sorry for others is "contemptuous" because it allows one to detach himself from a genuine confrontation with the absurdity and meaninglessness of life. It is death, the young Heyst understands after his father's funeral, that makes man's relationship to the world ridiculous and without significance. Therefore, Heyst chooses detachment to avoid confrontation with such a relationship. The "soul" in the things his father left him continues to dominate Heyst despite his experiences along "the broad, human path of inconsistencies" (p. 144) and despite his experience of the "spiritual starvation" (p. 145) Davidson feared he would eventually suffer.

After this revelation of Heyst's enigmatic character, Conrad presents Wang, a character simple and direct as a servant, but not without an inexplicable mystique, a distance from humanitarian concerns unlike the hypocrisy of Schomberg, the amorality of Ricardo and Jones, or the philosophically conditioned detachment of Heyst. Conrad summarizes this mystique when he has Heyst envy "the Chinaman's obedience to his instincts, the powerful simplicity of purpose which made his existence appear almost automatic in the mysterious precision of facts" (p. 148).

Ironically, these "practical and automatic" qualities (p. 150), evident in Wang's commandeering the keys and isolating himself and his wife on a little garden plot, foreshadow actions that will be unfavorable to Heyst in his relationship with Ricardo and Jones. Wang will become involved only on these levels, never on a personal and intimate basis, and only when there is no threat to his situation. Chapter two illustrates these points, especially the latter one, as Wang observes Heyst with the girl and considers "the unexpected possibilities of good and evil which had to be watched for with prudence and care" (p. 151) because her arrival is a mysterious and unusual event.

Chapter three focuses on Lena's mode of involvement-detachment through her responses to Heyst's revelations about his detached perspective. Equally important, though, are the revelations themselves in what they contribute of Conrad's outlook on Heyst. For example, Conrad has previously said that Heyst is by natural temperament a humanitarian. Now he comments that Heyst "could not help being temperamentally, from long habit and set purpose, a spectator still" (p. 152). Paul L. Wiley seems accurate in pointing out the "artificiality" of this "temperament" as indicative of Heyst "the false hermit, his ideals belied

by his senses."²⁴ Heyst's inner war between this artificial detachment and his natural impetus toward involvement is effectively dramatized when he must confront Lena openly asserting her dependency on him for her identity. First, he sees as a "reproach" her assertion that if he were to stop thinking of her she would cease to exist. The problem is intensified because with each moment of communion "she seemed to abandon something of herself to him" (p. 155).

On the surface, her abdication of self-responsibility parallels the detachment of Heyst, but her identity is not that simple. Conrad, for instance, questions whether that abdication is "stupidity or inspiration, weakness or force--or simply an abysmal emptiness, reserving itself even in moments of complete surrender" (p. 158). Eventually Conrad integrates all these characteristics in Lena, but at this point in chapter three Conrad returns to Heyst and has Heyst reveal to Lena more of his father's influence. Heyst also tells her his view of his relationship with Morrison. Obviously, the insights into Lena are going to come mainly from her responses to the statements and actions or inactions of Heyst.

While Heyst displays some improvement in self-knowledge in this conversation, he also seeks to retreat

²⁴Paul L. Wiley, Conrad's Measure of Man (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1954), pp. 151-154.

completely to his total detachment. He admits the great impact of his father's ideas and even asserts that "There is something of my father in every man who lives long enough" (p. 161). The part of that "something" emphasized here is man seen as "an unforeseen accident" who cannot possibly find enough joy and meaning in life to compensate him for all the suffering he must go through to get them. Because the disillusion many people experience only after a lifetime of effort came to Heyst early, he chose to avoid the effort, sacrifice the joy and meaning it might bring, and thereby avert the agony of the great disparity between the two.

This perspective causes even Heyst's little self-knowledge to take a distorted departure when he fails to give significant emphasis to his humanitarian motives in helping Morrison. Instead, he speaks totally as his father might have, seeing Morrison as "so representative of all the great victims of the Great Joke" (p. 163) and claiming that he became involved with him because "What captivated his fancy" (p. 163) was that he, the epitome of detachment, should have been called upon to aid a distressed person. Ironically, he then claims that he is still the image of his father, except for a lack of genius and a lessening of scorn, despite what he has just done for Lena. His only undistorted admission is to "suppose" that "the sight of

this particular distress was disagreeable to me" (p. 164). The irony of Heyst's self-distortions reaches its height when Conrad comments on how Lena gave Heyst "a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life" (p. 164). Perhaps Heyst has tried to distance himself from Lena with these statements so that she will not expect too much of him, so that she will prepare herself to act on her own if necessary.

Such distancing and Lena's responses to it reach a climax in chapter four, in which their discussion of Morrison continues with Heyst becoming defensive as Lena becomes more open about her needs. Conrad effectively integrates the interaction of assertions and responses to dramatize the ambivalence in their modes of involvement-detachment. For instance, Heyst displays facets of his needs and motivations when he takes pride in his masculine possession of a woman and when he admits a sensitivity to Morrison's delicate feelings and his effort not to damage them. Lena, meanwhile, has responded to Heyst's earlier revelations with "an irresistible desire to give herself up to him more completely, by some act of absolute sacrifice" (p. 168). Since to her Heyst seems so dehumanized, "a strange being without needs" (p. 166), she senses that this act may be the only way to win his love and subsequent commitment to her. In answer to Conrad's query

into her motives, I suggest that Lena may thereby be able to fill her "abysmal emptiness," while employing inspiration and force, if necessary, to overcome her experiential limitations, her weaknesses and her fears.

Her impetus toward such action is momentarily quelled, though, when Heyst reiterates his determination to "remain free from the absurdities of existence" (p. 166), but admits that life has a way of provoking involvement. He also admits that when he does become involved he becomes committed too, although the aspects of commitment--"Truth, work, ambition, love itself"--are perhaps "only counters in the lamentable or despicable game of life" (p. 167). While somewhat uplifted here, Lena is hurt by Heyst's belief that people cannot share deep communions with others; there can only be "appearances" (p. 167). She is most shocked, however, when Heyst mentions Morrison by name for the first time because she had heard Schomberg's distortions about Heyst's relationship with Morrison back at the hotel.

The puzzle of Heyst's character, coupled with Lena's fears and weaknesses, disorients her perspective on Heyst; she is not sure whom to believe. Above all, she sees herself as another Morrison in Heyst's life and fears that "he should grow weary of the burden" (p. 172). Heyst has, after all, said that what he disliked most about Morrison

was "that he could do nothing without me" (p. 166). And has she not revealed her great dependency upon Heyst? The talk was, of course, that he had murdered Morrison. Might he not do the same to her? Nevertheless, she is committed to Heyst and must believe in him, but not without doubts and fears because of his strange outlook.

Heyst himself, meanwhile, sees in her comments and reactions the vindication of his father's philosophy and yet he remains with her even when she requests him to leave. Heyst is, on the one extreme, a melodramatic idealist who feels frustrated over the incompleteness and imperfections of life. He sees incompleteness in his inability to understand Lena or to enter into a strong communion with her, the pain of which is intensified because she has broken into his heart and made him vulnerable to "shame, anger, stupid indignations, stupid fears--stupid laughter, stupid actions" (p. 172). Now he feels imperfection because she has doubts about his character and may never be able to have complete faith in him. This dual impurity of experience is, for Heyst, what makes life's gifts "a delusion and a snare" (p. 174). On the other extreme, Heyst sees himself as a passionless man, one who has never killed or loved either directly or vicariously. Passionless and idealistic? These are his extremes as he sees himself, but in reality Heyst possesses a suppressed

passion for justice and love that transcends at times his father's philosophical influence and the ideals that accompany it. This potential passion for justice and love may be what causes him to be hurt by the irony he sees in Schomberg's lies and distortions and to draw closer to Lena, not only because of her beauty but because "she has a special grace in the intimacy of life . . . the secret of individuality which excites--and escapes" (p. 177).

Conrad has written elsewhere, "Wherever he stands, at the beginning or end of things, a man has to sacrifice his gods to his passions or his passions to his gods."²⁵ By emphasizing the extremes of idealism and passionlessness in Heyst, Conrad clearly makes this conflict central to Heyst's mode of involvement-detachment. Lena further accentuates this conflict in Heyst in chapter five when she seductively implores him to love her for herself and only for herself in a lifetime commitment. Of course, this is what Heyst's passion tells him to do, but his thoughts and feelings are in flux. He is both disturbed by a lack of knowledge and intuition regarding women and tormented by the extremes of his feelings regarding her, extremes that stem from "the imperfection of their relations" (p. 183). He desires "her constant nearness"; but when she is not near, she becomes "so vague, so elusive and illusory"

²⁵"Henry James: An Appreciation," p. 16.

(p. 183). Ironically, when dominated by his passions, Heyst finds life's imperfections prompting involvement rather than lessening it. Such domination does not prevail, however, as Heyst retreats from "intellectual impressions . . . reflected in movements of carnal emotions" (p. 180) to his father's books and to the dictum that "Of the strategems of life the most cruel is the consolation of love" (p. 180).

Such vacillation, as it contrasts with the single-minded amorality of Ricardo and Jones, is but one implication of the difficulty Heyst is going to have with them in the first half of part four. Another is his dramatically ironic conviction that "Nothing can break in on us here" (p. 184). But the major forewarning occurs when Heyst reads a passage from his father's writing which admits that men with "criminal imagination" have a greater awareness of life than those of "a peaceful, resigned cast" (p. 181). Heyst Senior also asserts in the passage that "it is easier to believe in the misfortune of mankind than in its wickedness" (p. 181). In an earlier remark, Heyst himself acknowledges his "great delicacy in the perception of inhuman evil" in response to Lena's expressed fear of "wickedness" (p. 179). But Conrad leads me to surmise that this fear is secondary to Lena's determination to win Heyst's love through self-sacrifice, if necessary.

Heyst's ambivalent character and his limited ability to understand and handle evil, Lena's impetus toward winning love through self-sacrifice, and the amoral evil of Ricardo and Jones come together in part four to complete Conrad's ideas on the tragic dimensions of human experience and to balance them with an authorial vision of their positive implications and the possibilities for conquering or transcending them. Conrad implies that the arrival of Ricardo and Jones is going to climax in such a balanced vision when he has the astonished and baffled Heyst recollect, most appropriately, the Polynesian myths "of amazing strangers, who arrive at an island, gods or demons, bringing good or evil to the innocence of the inhabitants-- gifts of unknown things, words never heard before" (p. 188).

With the arrival of Ricardo and Jones in chapter seven of part three, Conrad builds upon this implication in the final three chapters of this part in preparation for the drama of part four. For instance, in chapter seven Conrad blends with their appearance the significance of chance or circumstance in shaping human experience, as he relates how Ricardo and Jones survived only by luck since the winds and currents had thrown them off course and since Schomberg had filled one of their jars with salt water. Equally important in this chapter is Heyst's baffled and disturbed responses to Ricardo and Jones. He does not know what to

make of Ricardo's abuse of the servant Pedro or of Jones's preoccupation with appearances and his educated but lifeless voice.

In chapter eight Heyst asserts merely that "nothing pleasant" (p. 204) can come from their arrival, but nevertheless feels drawn closer to Lena because of it: "He no longer belonged to himself. There was a call far more imperious and august" (p. 202). He vows to focus his attention on her and away from the new arrivals. He is disturbed, though, by the gap he sees between them because despite his revelations she cannot identify with the "peculiar stagnation" (p. 204) inherent in him from his life of detachment. Lena contrasts to him in that her approach to their relationship is more positive and determined than his and is without regard to the strangers. She will work to hold him as long as she can and not allow his self-containment to irritate her despite the abyss it sometimes places between them. Her outlook has arisen from a joy and meaning unprecedented in her experience.

The ninth chapter finds Lena still without concern about the amoral duo, while Heyst's fears mount when he discovers his revolver missing and concludes that the pragmatic, automaton Wang--who has been running amuck in obvious distress since the strangers' arrival--has stolen it to protect himself. Of course, Heyst does not tell Lena

exactly what is missing; his ploy is to keep her as innocent as possible of his apprehensions. The gap between them is reiterated when Lena reacts to what she misinterprets as distrust of her, when in reality he is asking her if she saw Wang in the room that night. The focus of this chapter, though, is on how this incident heightens Heyst's general sense of "the general precariousness of human life" (p. 211). The outside world is increasing its threat to his detached ideal. First, the revelation of Schomberg's slander, next the strangers' arrival, now the revolver stolen--all provide a "moral stab in the back . . . that so cruelly seemed to have taken some of his strength from him" (p. 213). The implication at this point is that his impetus to protect Lena has degenerated into apathy because the winds of fate have blown too much of a storm in his direction.

Conrad uses Ricardo and Jones in the final chapter of part three to illustrate through various ironies how narrow points of view based on preconceptions and unquestioning faith in others can distort reality and lead to human suffering. He does so by first contrasting the "passive renunciation" of Heyst with the "active warfare" of Ricardo and then by demonstrating how both extremes can be equally blinding. While Jones questions the truth of Schomberg's story, Ricardo--the victim of a simple, unquestioning faith

in those to whom he commits himself--compulsively attributes Heyst's self-possession to a guilty conscience and the hidden money. For Conrad, the irony of both Ricardo and Jones's perspectives in analyzing Heyst is "a striking illustration of the untruth of appearances" (p. 219).

A further irony is evident in the rationales behind their commitment to the venture--Jones out of mere boredom, Ricardo out of desperation to relieve that boredom and out of his own lust for action. Life is not "precarious" enough under normal circumstances; men often make it more so with their arbitrary choices and judgments. At the end of part three Ricardo and Jones's confusion regarding the character of Heyst disorients them to the point at which the ironies inherent in their speculations imply the total absurdity of what is happening. For instance, they cannot reconcile Heyst's atrocious and tame "treachery" (p. 221) with his "armour" of "solitude" (p. 222). Is he really free "from common feelings" (p. 221)? Is he "a cold-blooded beast" (p. 227)? Will he "start prancing when one didn't expect it" (p. 227)? Just how artful is Heyst?

Building upon this ridiculous but real situation, Conrad effectively blends a great deal of direct action with provocative insights and ironic juxtapositions in the final part of Victory to integrate the varied modes of involvement-detachment and to imply an ultimate perspective

on what that integration means. This integration and its implications are well dramatized by various focal shifts that not only create suspense but interrelate to reveal character conflicts and motivations and their meaning. For instance, Conrad begins part four with Ricardo, who in frustration over his inability to "size up" Heyst (p. 232) creates the "illusion" that he can read Lena rather easily and then loses self-control and attacks her. But before unveiling the actual clash between Ricardo and Lena, Conrad uses Wang's rationale for leaving to imply some things about Heyst. First, Wang views Heyst as not only "disarmed but half vanquished" (p. 237), reiterating that Heyst's habitual detachment will restrict his ability to act. Second, Heyst is "doomed" (p. 237), which implies a key view--Heyst as a victim rather than a benefactor.

Such a viewpoint on Heyst serves to intensify Lena's role in relation to Heyst as it manifests itself in her struggle with Ricardo. She knows that Heyst is disarmed, that he is detached and will thus find action difficult; she even senses something of the irony of his experiences. But, unlike Wang, she is drawn closer to Heyst because of them rather than farther away; he needs her love more than he might without these burdens weighing upon him. In contrast to her conflict with Schomberg, Lena is inspired against Ricardo by more than "the force of instinct"

(p. 238): "She was no longer alone in the world now. She resisted without a moment of faltering, because she was no longer deprived of moral support; because she was a human being who counted; because she was no longer defending herself alone; because of the faith that had been born in her--the faith in a man of her destiny, and perhaps in the Heaven which had sent him so wonderfully to cross her path" (p. 238).

There are, of course, obvious ironies in this assertion in light of how Heyst has related to her thus far; in part it is one of the "illusions" Conrad mentioned earlier as necessary to perpetuate humanity. At the same time, though, it is the central psychological facet of Lena's character, a positive approach to life that serves to counteract the negativity of Schomberg's hypocrisy and selfishness, of Ricardo and Jones's amoral evil, of Wang's automatic pragmatism, of the cynical nihilism of Heyst Senior, and of Heyst's vacillation between detachment and involvement.

Some critics imply that Lena is merely a stereotypical idealization of Conrad's conception of femininity,²⁶ but the rest of this chapter and the novel reveals her counteractive role and confirms Karl's judgment that she is "a powerful figure who acts intuitively on what she knows and

²⁶Widmer, p. 124; Guerard, pp. 273-275.

feels."²⁷ She learns of Ricardo and Jones's pursuit of the nonexistent hoard of money. Even though Ricardo's belief in Schomberg's lies and distortions distresses Lena, her faith and determination are bolstered rather than slackened by the appalling situation. Her commitment encompasses a sense of responsibility for what is happening to her and to Heyst that transcends the question of whether or not Heyst actually loves her. Her commitment is not merely a vague emotional desire to work herself and Heyst out of this situation. Instead, she creates "Duplicity" (p. 243)--a plot in which she pretends cooperation with Ricardo to obtain the plunder.

Conrad further dramatizes Lena's mode of involvement-detachment by pointing out superficial psychological affinities between her and Ricardo and by accentuating the ironies inherent in them. Lena is able to create an aura of security and trust in dealing with Ricardo because, like him, she is not "tame," and she also follows a "gentleman." Both of these resemblances are ironic because of the contrast of values behind them. Lena possesses these traits out of committed love, Ricardo as a result of a scorn and defiance of life. Conrad has once again shown the disparity between appearance and truth and the limitation of a single point of view in perceiving this disparity. At

²⁷Karl, p. 261.

the same time, Conrad reveals another facet of Lena: her actions, her involvement, and the dangers accompanying them combine to bring a sort of spiritual awakening to her, a sense of worth. But the image of the sun "all aquiver with the effort to set the earth on fire, to burn it to ashes" (p. 249) intimates the destructive aspect of her actions.

In chapter four Conrad shows that Lena is going to carry her deceptive tactics a step farther; she is going to act as much as she can on her own. Even though she lacks a plan and looks only to securing periods of safety, she distrusts Heyst's ability to act on her knowledge. Her judgment appears valid considering that her knowledge would merely aggravate Heyst's already extreme sense of life's absurd precariousness and perhaps move him to further detachment. Lena also displays a desire to give herself away, "the sweetness of surrender" (p. 252). Lena is thus prepared to act on her own for Heyst's sake to demonstrate her committed love in the hope that she can atone for the trouble she has caused him and that she can eventually win his love and protection.

Effective dramatic integration of the disparities among Heyst's, Lena's, and the criminals' points of view occurs in chapter five, when Heyst relates his meeting with Jones and Ricardo to Lena. Heyst is disturbed throughout

this revelation by Lena's seeming preoccupation with something else and feels frustrated at not being able to know her, to penetrate her mind. Mystified by Jones's comments, Heyst also feels frustrated because he cannot "penetrate their inner meaning and outer bearing" (p. 263). Several factors based on the conflict between Heyst's habitual and ingrained detachment and his temperamental involvement combine to heighten the anguish of these frustrations. He is distressed not only by his inability to act but also by his disorientation when confronted with "evil intelligence, instinctive savagery, arm in arm" (p. 269). In this regard, his guilt would be unbearable should he kill someone, even in self-defense. But because of Lena, he cares more about how to handle the crisis than he would otherwise; he cannot be openly defiant of their intrusion.

Heyst's anguish is also increased because a fundamental need in his character is to "penetrate" others and not to accept "outward impressions" (p. 259). Ironically, the conflicts caused by man's inability to penetrate others is the very point of this chapter. For instance, Jones's comments to Heyst completely escape the latter's perception. How can he know that Jones is judging him on Schomberg's distortions when Jones tells him that they both "pursue the same ends" (p. 262) and that they both are equal in moral reprehensibility? Also, he can see it only

as an error in "diplomacy" when Ricardo and Jones are disturbed over his news that Wang has left armed.

In Heyst's relationship with Lena, there is a similar distance since his view of acting as her protector conflicts with her objective and method, both of which Conrad reveals further in this chapter. Ironically, Heyst sees her as "too good for such contacts, and not sufficiently equipped" (p. 260). But having become "Mistress of herself from love, from necessity, and also because of a woman's vanity in self sacrifice" (p. 256), Lena focuses all her energy on their crisis, especially the more she learns of Heyst's frustrations and self-doubts. She naturally continues to conceal her encounter with Ricardo and the knowledge it brought her. Paradoxically, though, Lena sees in the conflicts that torment Heyst something noble that fortifies her commitment to him, something she cannot hope to understand, "some exalted and delicate desire of his superior soul" (p. 270). With this revelation, Conrad has conveyed a total sense of her mode of involvement-detachment.

While Conrad describes Ricardo and Jones's growing apart and uses their conflicts and characters to imply the tragic consequences of limited, distorted, and superficial points of view on experience, it is Heyst's deepening frustration and despair, counteracted by Lena's increasing

determination to act for them, that bring the novel closer to both its climactic action and ultimate meanings. Heyst reaches this negative state when Wang denies his plea of sanctuary for Lena, which would have given him "a freer hand" (p. 286). He also despairs over the "unreality" of what is happening to them, seeing himself as "a Shadow inhabited by Shades" (p. 288), powerless to protect Lena, unable to endure his lack of power. His metaphors imply, of course, the dehumanizing qualities inherent in himself and in those around him. But Lena is becoming a fuller human being here by harnessing her "fund of devoted, concentrated passion" (p. 282) against these shades in hope of emerging "triumphant and humble" from "the very threshold of infamy" (p. 290). With Heyst at his weakest, Lena willingly absorbs total responsibility for his dilemma: "Woman is the tempter. You took me up from pity. I threw myself at you" (p. 291). Despite the ominous clouds gathering around the volcano that seem to dismiss Heyst's hope for mercy, Lena asserts her determination to succeed and her confidence of winning Heyst's forgiveness and love.

Still other aspects of Heyst's and Lena's outlooks on their crisis emerge in chapter nine, at the end of which Ricardo takes Heyst to Jones for a more profound confrontation than their first. The ominous solitude of the island makes Heyst think of what the evil pair is plotting now,

but he dismisses these thoughts because any clash "would find him disarmed and shrinking from the ugliness and degradation of it all" (p. 294). Conrad thus reiterates the melodramatic idealism that has led Heyst to a hypersensitive compulsion to escape life's harsh realities. His sensitivity to being a victim of circumstances becomes more valid. For instance, he is justifiably sarcastic when he speculates that if he succeeded against these scoundrels the gossip would be that he "murdered these unoffending, shipwrecked strangers for sheer funk" (p. 298). Therefore, when Ricardo in Lena's presence invites him to visit Jones again, Heyst's "state of doubt and disdain and almost despair" (p. 301) regarding himself moves him to cooperate almost indifferently. Lena, meanwhile, asserts a faith in a divine providence that makes Heyst wonder whether she is merely innocent or a primitive spirit free from the influences that can take one away from such a simplistic philosophy. But Conrad implies that her innocence is simply secretiveness and that her primitive spirit is "a blinding, hot glow of passionate purpose" (p. 302) that no external force seemingly can thwart, especially when she plots to steal Ricardo's knife to bolster their defensive situation.

Conrad effectively presents in chapter ten an ironic juxtaposition to Lena's resolve and Heyst's state of mind in the previous chapter. While preparing to go with

Ricardo to meet Jones, Heyst tells Lena of his plan to save her and perhaps himself--a plan that she seems to agree to without question. She is to put her black dress and purple veil on and hide in the forest. He will signal her with candles when it is safe to return; if she sees no signal, she is to steal away at dawn, assuming that he is dead, and stay with Wang if she can until she can sight and signal Davidson's steamer. Midway in Heyst's relation of this plan, Conrad implies the irony of it through an incident in which Lena touches Heyst's hand as if to make sure of his reality and remain inspired. But Heyst's reaction to her touch is the opposite of inspiration; he feels "almost unmanned" by the emotion evoked by "a strange, intimate sense of all her person" (p. 307). In other words, their relationship seems to prompt action in Lena, who is to hide, and disorientation in Heyst, who is to act in their behalf. But as Ricardo leaves Heyst with Jones and goes "on the track" (p. 309), Conrad implies that it is Lena who is going to act, not Heyst.

In chapter eleven Conrad brings into the open the disparities in point of view and character conflicts between Heyst and Jones. As he did earlier with Lena and Ricardo, Conrad dramatizes these disparities and conflicts by accentuating similarities between Heyst and Jones and then by showing the irony of the value differences that

transcend those similarities. Of course, Conrad has already exhibited in part two the basic parallel between Heyst and Jones--that Jones is as extreme and as ambivalent in his mode of involvement-detachment as Heyst. Jones jumps from fits of laziness into intense adventures, while Heyst moves from extreme personal isolation to intimate humanitarian action. But their motivations and resultant actions contrast. Jones acts out of boredom to flatter his sense of power and cleverness; but Heyst is spurred by an irrepressible humanitarian temperament to help certain pitiable people out of difficult situations.

Heyst's humanitarianism, though, is only one part of his dual nature. It is, in truth, in his detachment that Heyst parallels Jones most distinctly. As Karl asserts, "Jones's physical weakness is a counterpart to Heyst's incapacity to act, and his sickness of mind a complement of Heyst's undeveloped social sense."²⁸ The most significant parallel, though, is the philosophical one--how Heyst Senior's ideas explain both Heyst's partial detachment and Jones's total amorality. Karl has done well in pointing out the three comparisons in this regard. First, both Heyst and Jones expect "a certain given world . . . a society which will leave them to their courses of action." Second, both exhibit an individualism based on personal

²⁸Karl, p. 260.

wishes. Third, "Both view the world . . . as a shabby affair which is best left alone on its own terms."²⁹

In chapter eleven Conrad puts these parallels to work. Although the philosophical similarities are demonstrated in their mutual dislike of "violence and ferocity" (p. 312) and in their acknowledgement of life's precariousness and absurdity, they react much differently when their identities are threatened. Jones is prone to direct action; he does not merely see that people are "crude" and that they "gorge and disgorge" (p. 316) but acts this way himself when necessary. Also Jones's homosexual psychosis that compels him toward perverse actions is similar in its dehumanizing effects to the philosophical conditioning that increases Heyst's detachment as he is confronted with Jones's revelations and value judgments.

Heyst does find enough courage to confront Jones with the ridiculousness of Schomberg's lies and distortions and the reasons behind them, but Jones's faith in Ricardo and his commitment to the project make him deny Heyst's points until Heyst reveals Lena to him. By this time, however, Heyst is too "bewildered" (p. 321) and "dead of weariness" (p. 322) to feel anything but both physical and spiritual stagnation. The absurdity and precariousness are too much to overcome or even confront; they add up to "an incomprehensible dream, or perhaps an elaborate other-world joke"

²⁹Karl, pp. 258-259.

(p. 321). The ironies culminate when Jones points out Lena in the house toward which he and Heyst are heading to find Ricardo. Paradoxically, she is "seemingly without strength, yet without fear, tenderly stooping" (p. 322). Heyst seems to realize that she has no faith in his ability to act for her and seems to see that lack of faith as justified, especially when he feels "the shame of guilt--absurd and maddening" (p. 323).

The focus shifts in chapter twelve to Lena, to her second encounter with Ricardo, and to Jones's intervention. Conrad first gives an important summary of Lena's rationale in disobeying Heyst to steal Ricardo's knife. Pervaded by a vague sense of purpose and means, Lena nevertheless feels a powerful motivation to act in Heyst's behalf, not mainly because it has to be done and Heyst cannot do it but also because of "a force that was outside her and more worthy" (p. 324) that one might recognize as her love of Heyst, as the spiritual quality he has brought to her life. She has no desire to use the knife herself, merely to possess it so that it cannot be used on Heyst. Guilt is also reiterated as a factor in her acting for Heyst; she feels "sin" in having thrown herself into Heyst's arms. She senses herself a burden upon Heyst and wants to redeem herself through this action. Ultimately, though, she hopes her actions in Heyst's behalf will get him to stop caring for

her merely out of "curiosity and pity" (p. 326); she wants him to value her as herself, as a genuine person in her own right.

After making these points, Conrad uses them ironically to dramatize the ultimate absurdity of judging others on the same basis as one judges himself. He does so by having Ricardo misjudge Lena again. Ricardo thinks that she is as "sick" of Heyst as he is of Jones. He also feels that she wants to live for herself, just as he now wants to live for himself with Lena. Lena, in fact, uses Ricardo's increasing confidence in himself and in her to get closer to her objective. She gets the knife in her hands, but then recognizes the limitations to her involvement; she could not use it against anyone even if her life depended upon it. Her quick success also shakes her to the point of weakness; she can only hope "to keep murder quiet and disarmed" until she regains her "fortitude" (p. 330). At this point Conrad uses dramatic suspense and partial revelation very well. A shot from the door in which Heyst is standing grazes Ricardo. Running, he asks Lena to stab Heyst. The chapter ends with the reader wondering whether Heyst has disarmed Jones and done the shooting.

But in chapter thirteen he quickly learns that Jones actually fired over Heyst's shoulder and then ran off. But the circumstances are much more distressing than intimated

in the previous chapter. The bullet that grazed Ricardo also fatally wounded Lena in the chest. Before Lena's actual death at the end of the chapter, Conrad provides an integrated fulfillment of her relationship to Heyst and implies how the title, Victory, is the key to the authorial point of view on these events. Not knowing she has been wounded, Heyst has nevertheless been affected by his failure to act. He now perceives that it is not the world that has plotted against him but his father's philosophical conditioning of him. All his father's possessions "seemed shadowy, unsubstantial, the dumb accomplices of an amazing dream-plot ending in an illusory effect of awakening and the impossibility of ever closing his eyes again" (p. 333). Perhaps Heyst's character has not been altered by the events, but his recognition of its fundamental absurdity in relation to his experiences is a significant one. For instance, he can now judge Lena's actions well and admire her for her "resourcefulness" and her profound self-knowledge.

Lena's paradoxical mode of involvement-detachment is just as important as Heyst's new self-knowledge in this chapter, especially as Conrad blends it with her paradoxical "victory" in which she has captured "the very sting of death in the service of love" (p. 335). Conrad beautifully pictures her mode when she asks the newly arrived

Davidson to give her "the symbol of her victory" (p. 335), the knife. She gives it to Heyst, saying "Kill nobody" (p. 335). Conrad thus implies that man can act through love against evil and not become evil himself. But there is even more to the affirmation he makes through Lena. She has achieved not so much a spiritual communion with Heyst as a sense of God, a sense of meaning and worth that Conrad suggests is the ultimate value in the face of all the negation life's precariousness and limitations bring. Conrad qualifies this suggestion with another irony in her victory--Heyst is still incapable of genuine love because "his fastidious soul" keeps "the true cry of love from his lips in its infernal mistrust of life" (p. 336). Conrad here reveals how difficult, perhaps impossible, significant character growth is once one has been conditioned a certain way and has followed that way without question for a long time.

Lena, however, is not a mere authorial spokesman for Conrad's views. Her actions and views are not all positive. She has acted in this situation, as Karl points out, to achieve "dignity through love,"³⁰ but her ultimate goal is to use that love as a refuge from reality, as an escape into a secure illusion. Like Heyst, Lena senses that the world's realities are too harsh and uncertain to confront

³⁰Karl, p. 260.

well for very long. Conrad thus has her die feeling "surrender" and relief, "at peace," taken "into the sanctuary of Heyst's innermost heart" (p. 336). In this respect, Thomas Moses is accurate in claiming that "the terms of Lena's victory are against life."³¹ But in all it is a dual and paradoxical triumph. While her victory is "triumphant" in giving her life meaning and worth, it is also "triumphant" as an escape from life. Conrad may be implying that such spiritual quality can be sustained only in some refuge, lest it be destroyed by new encounters with evil and fate.

Such a paradoxical deduction was perhaps so distressing to Conrad that he felt it necessary to provide the final chapter as an expedient "working out of surface action."³² As Moses puts it, this ending is "evidence of Conrad's desperation over an insoluble problem."³³ Conrad may also have sought to blunt the impact of an overwhelmingly painful literary experience. While there is an incongruence between the intensity of the rest of the novel and this last chapter that is offensive to many critics' aesthetic tastes, I find this chapter an integral part of the process of blending the various modes of involvement-detachment. Conrad effectively employs it to balance his vision.

³¹Moses, p. 142.

³²Karl, p. 267.

³³Moses, p. 108.

The chapter focuses on Davidson's report at a meeting with a high official of what he knows of the final events on Samburan. Conrad accents not only Davidson's humanitarian concern throughout but also Mrs. Schomberg's report to Davidson of "her suspicions" that Ricardo and Jones were going to Samburan to cause trouble. She was afraid Lena might be brought back near her husband. Heyst's queerness has prompted Davidson to keep an eye on him, and Davidson's vague understanding of it serves to spur the reader's deeper understandings. For instance, when Heyst tells Davidson, ". . . woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love--and to put its trust in life" (p. 339), I see again that Heyst has gained much self-knowledge but has undergone little character growth; it is too late for him; now he can only lament his condition. Wright concludes that Heyst logically burns himself with Lena's body because "He is unprepared to start afresh" and because the reality Lena brought him died with her.³⁴ Conrad, of course, uses the fire to connote Heyst's purifying communion with Lena, his spiritual transformation and regeneration, conditions which Heyst can achieve only in a symbolic sense. After this point, Conrad has Davidson add how Wang killed Pedro, how Jones shot Ricardo, and how Jones died mysteriously in the water. Davidson concludes

³⁴Wright, p. 106.

that "nothing" further can be done. With these final revelations, Conrad has obviously emphasized the destructiveness of the experience in order to balance the symbolic fire purification motif.

I have found this balancing of apparent opposites in ironic and paradoxical juxtaposition Conrad's best and most pervasive method for making Victory a profoundly realistic and provocative experiential encounter with life. Although achieved only superficially in this final chapter, this balancing is what has turned my thoughts and emotions back to the meanings implicit in the relationships between the various modes of involvement-detachment. In neglecting this last chapter, some critics have failed to see this balancing effect and have thereby sometimes oversimplified Conrad's vision, extracting philosophical generalizations without proper qualification or explanation. Hopefully, this study's close scrutiny of Victory invalidates the incomplete comments of such critics.

Through such close scrutiny, I conclude that I have come full circle in my encounter criticism of Victory. First, I have given a general description of my approach to the work that stresses Conrad's use of focal shifts and related techniques that guide the reader to blend the various modes of involvement-detachment and thereby discover the authorial vision of Victory. Finally, I have brought my technical and thematic generalizations together in an

extended analysis of how Conrad has made Victory an effective and meaningful imaginative experience for me, how he has provoked my responses and applications. I have been particularly impressed by Conrad's realistic dramatization of the often ambiguous, ironic, and paradoxical complexity of human character and human experience. Philosophically, I have been moved most by Conrad's vision of how noble and meaningful it can be to yield to the necessity of action, involvement, commitment, and moral courage despite the incomplete and imperfect fulfillment such yielding often provides. Through Victory I can see more clearly how and why I have sometimes been reluctant to meet these necessities and how I may be better able to do so in the future.

CHAPTER V

TEACHING FICTION VIA ENCOUNTER CRITICISM

If contemporary students are going to read fiction effectively and find meaning in responding to and applying it personally to bring about self-discovery and self-creation, most of them will need to encounter a student-centered teaching situation. It is not enough for a teacher of fiction to explain the concept of identity, to demonstrate its contemporary significance, to relate it to the fictional experience, to teach specific works according to its emphases, and to offer students the opportunity to write about fiction according to its methodology. While these activities are important, perhaps essential, they may have little effect unless the teacher fosters a classroom and interpersonal atmosphere of freedom and openness.

Four distinctive features characterize this free and open classroom and interpersonal atmosphere. First, student goals, values, interests, and abilities are integrated into the course structure. Second, the teacher is foremost a resource for the students and a counselor to them. Third, passivity and boredom are minimized by student-centered discussions and group involvement. Finally, evaluation is a mutual activity of both the student and

the teacher. The teacher, in other words, works to use only when necessary the traditional authoritarian classroom situation in which he is the transmitter of culture and knowledge through the lecture method and the sole evaluator of how well the students have absorbed that knowledge and culture.

Because student-centered teaching is so integral to effective and meaningful use of encounter criticism in prose fiction courses, its four facets and the rationale behind them merit specific explanation. There is a need, for instance, to be conscious of the learning perspective on which these four features are based, of the most relevant and significant intellectual and emotional skills and abilities we are trying to cultivate, and of the objectives that incorporate but transcend through encounter criticism and student-centered teaching those of traditional prose fiction courses. We should also give special attention to the six roles that make a complete teacher, to the means by which these roles may be hierarchically integrated to promote certain skills and objectives, and to the personal characteristics a teacher should be developing to fulfill this role integration well. We also need to explore the reasons why student-centered discussions and group involvement are integral to teaching via encounter criticism. Strategies for generating discussions and for making them

effective and meaningful also merit careful explanation. Finally, since a student's evaluation is also germane to student-centered teaching, we must consider how it can best be related to overall evaluation in a fiction course.

Learning is our first concern because in a student-centered classroom learning, rather than teaching, is our focal point. The learning emphasized by encounter criticism is the learning we are concerned with here. It is learning approached "as a living involvement with life, as a commitment to values, as self-searching, as listening to life," as seeking "authentic relatedness" to others.¹ When approached in these ways, learning becomes "significant, meaningful, experiential" because it entails "feelings and personal meanings." Such learning is characterized by varying degrees of personal involvement and self-initiation. It is learning that pervades the whole person and makes a difference in his behavior.² It is learning how to learn, expanding our "ways of perceiving so that new experiences are seen for what they are and incorporated into the perceptual field" through "the individual's own

¹Clark Moustakas, Personal Growth (Cambridge, Mass.: Howard A. Doyle, 1969), p. ix.

²Carl R. Rogers, Freedom to Learn (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1969), pp. 4-5.

striving for understanding."³ In relation to fiction, as two critics note, learning of this nature can best occur when the student becomes deeply involved with the work and recognizes that reading fiction demands "the highest alertness and the finest sensibility."⁴

This study maintains that such engagement and recognition are generated most effectively when we approach learning about fiction in these personal and subjective ways through student-centered teaching. Carl R. Rogers demonstrates how students "invest more of themselves in their effort, work harder, and retain and use more of what they have learned" in courses that engage their feelings and stimulate their search for personal meanings.⁵ Two excellent studies of educational objectives, one in relation to intellectual growth, the other in relation to emotional development, suggest that a hierarchical approach to learning skills and abilities in both areas is essential if we are to reach a point at which feelings and personal meanings are integral to learning. In the first of these works Benjamin S. Bloom implies that we must cultivate the

³Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, ASCD 1962 Yearbook Committee (Washington, D.C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, NEA, 1962), pp. 183, 195. See also Rogers, p. 163.

⁴Reuben A. Brower and Richard Poirier, In Defense of Reading (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962), p. 4.

⁵Rogers, p. 95. See also Perceiving, p. 154.

"cognitive domain" first because of its "high degree of consciousness" as opposed to the "affective domain" and its "low level of awareness."⁶ Encounter criticism's objective of promoting self-conscious self-discovery and self-creation through fiction parallels this view in that for such discovery and creation to be possible students must first know the facts of the work itself and then understand their meanings and implications. Self-consciousness itself calls for an intellectual, verbalized ordering of our responses to and applications of a work.

Bloom's hierarchical organization of intellectual activity parallels rather well the intellectual skills and abilities we can utilize in reading, writing about, and discussing fiction. We are first required to remember or recall the elements of a work as they occur. This activity fits the "knowledge" category of Bloom's taxonomy. Our next objective is to comprehend the work, to arrive at a basic understanding of it and the ability to use it without further explanation. Several activities are necessary, however, for us to reach this level. We may need to make faithful and accurate paraphrases of the work, to "translate." We must do more, though; we must "interpret," which entails "reordering," rearranging, or giving "a new view of

⁶Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., Taxonomy of Educational Objectives--Handbook I: Cognitive Domain (New York: David McKay, 1956), p. 19.

the material." But fiction has subtle dimensions that require "extrapolation," discerning "implications, consequences, corollaries, effects." In encounter criticism, as well as in Bloom's hierarchy, the next dimension is "application," relating the meanings derived from the work to "concrete and particular situations" outside it. If we wish, however, to maximize our intellectual encounter with the story, we need to utilize both "analysis" and "synthesis." We should first break down the work "into its constituent elements or parts so that the relative hierarchy of ideas is made clear." We can then arrange and combine the work's elements and parts "in such a way as to constitute a pattern or structure not clearly there before." Finally, we reach a point at which we are capable of judging the value of the work as an aesthetic experience, judging how well it has done what it seeks to do. We may also judge the work by "external criteria," seeking to determine how truthful it is, how valid or relevant its ideas are, how much personal worth they contain.⁷

Bloom goes on to point out which intellectual skills are most significant in relation to emotional processes, since learning that integrates the two domains is the most lasting and meaningful. The self is active in application because the ideas are not just consumed or criticized but

⁷Bloom, pp. 32, 204-207.

used. The creative engagement of self predominates, though, in synthesis, which motivates the thinker to "project" his personality into his learning. Such projection can furnish much intrinsic motivation. But emotional activity, "where values, liking and enjoying (and their absence or contraries) are the central processes involved," is perhaps best stimulated by evaluation. In fact, it is in evaluation that we sometimes begin to acquire new knowledge, to make "a new attempt at comprehension or application, or a new analysis or synthesis."⁸ Although aesthetic judgments can promote these ends in fictional study at times, they are not nearly as powerful and pervasive as judgments of truthfulness, validity, relevancy, and personal worth in relation to a work's observations and meanings. In fact, aesthetic judgments can inhibit and are often intended to block other kinds of judgment.

But it is the conviction implicit in this study that these personal and subjective perspectives can best bring the affective hierarchy into full and deep play in literary study. The three educationists who outline this domain imply that such play is important because each phase of intellectual activity has an emotional counterpart of equal import. Thus, as with the intellectual hierarchy, we can see how each area of the affective domain works in relation

⁸Bloom, pp. 167-184.

to fictional study and discussion. At first we must be willing to receive or pay attention to the work. In doing so, our degree of receptivity can range from mere superficial awareness to "controlled or selected attention." Second, we must respond to the work. Our first response may be mere "acquiescence," but we should move to voluntary response and then find "self-reinforcing qualities" in the work that make our responses satisfying or meaningful. Nevertheless, we should be just as responsive to the disturbing dimensions we see in the work.

As we respond to the characters and action and to the meanings they generate, we begin to bring our values to bear upon the work and have those values tested by the literary experience. We begin to see if what we value ourselves or find valuable in the work embodies simple acceptance, mere preference, or some degree of personal conviction or commitment. We can judge which dimension is present by the amount of time, energy, strong feelings, or action we invest in what we encounter in the story. Once we experience the work as a whole, we begin to organize our value feelings. We sense interrelationships and focus our emotions on the dominant or pervasive ones. We finally come to integrate this valuing with the intellectual domain when we conceptualize our feelings in verbal or symbolic terms. It is at this point that encounter

criticism is most important. The reader and the person become unified as one who can express in writing or discussion his personal responses and judgments and then organize them into something of a value hierarchy.

What this affective process and its use in fictional study promote is our development of an identity characterized by values, "the basic threads or sets of orientations which account for a great deal of disparate behavior" and ultimately by a value complex, "the principles and ideals, the personal credo, which provide an integration and consistency for the various aspects of our lives." This value complex emerges only from a life in which "time and experience interact with affective and cognitive learnings."⁹ Both types of learning can be employed in fiction courses that stress encounter criticism, to achieve Jean Piaget's three fundamental educational objectives: the development of creative thinking, not just memory; the encouragement of critical analysis; and the stimulation of active participation in learning.¹⁰

Because of social and educational imbalances and incongruencies, we can best achieve these ends in teaching

⁹David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives--Handbook II: Affective Domain (New York: David McKay, 1964), pp. 98-165.

¹⁰As described in Arthur A. Carin and Robert B. Sund, Developing Questioning Techniques (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1971), p. 24.

fiction by cultivating in ourselves and in our students the aspects of self-growth that Rogers stresses: "creativity, initiative, imagination, self-discipline, self-acceptance, and understanding." These qualities can emerge well if we integrate self-exploratory objectives into student writing about and discussion of fiction. We must provide a course structure and classroom situation that stimulate the student "to examine himself, his humanity, the forces that are shaping him." At the same time we should promote "understanding of the factors that shape human behavior in general" as they emerge from the fiction and get the student to use them to develop skill in analyzing the "personal concerns" generated by the fiction. We must not, however, get him so absorbed in this skill that he neglects an empathetic "awareness of the ego-concerns of those about him" and of those he encounters in the fiction. In combination, these activities should help bring about "confidence in his dignity and worth" and "belief in the dignity and worth of others."¹¹

If we are to promote these ends effectively and achieve maximal cognitive and affective learnings, we must work to know our students as persons as much as we can within given circumstances and to integrate what we

¹¹Rogers, pp. 20-32. See also Perceiving, pp. 81-90; Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil, Models of Teaching (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 324.

discover about their goals, values, interests, and abilities into our teaching of fiction. Since the impact and significance of teaching is reflected in our students, we should respect them as individuals in these ways and recognize how they interpenetrate our professional and personal identity. We can begin by seeking to know them and by utilizing that knowledge in our teaching. Because we must do so early in a course and can only achieve such knowledge on a person-to-person basis over a period of time, if at all, we may do best to employ various surveys, inventories, or writing assignments to get a group diagnosis of student goals, values, interests, and abilities. But because we are living in an era pervaded by anxieties stemming from man's search for meaning, we first need to determine how much our particular students suffer from these anxieties. We can then begin to see how much emphasis we must give to the identity concept and to encounter criticism, and to see how much the learning process can enable students, as Rogers puts it, "to grapple directly and personally with the problem of the meaning of their lives."¹² Two psychologists have devised an "Existential Anxiety Scale" and established its reliability as an effective measure of student perspective on personal meaning and related concerns of purpose, direction, involvement, goals, interests,

¹²Rogers, p. 314.

and values.¹³ I have found it the most useful measure available relevant to the considerations that in this study inform points of view on contemporary society, education, and the study and teaching of fiction.

In using this scale we may discover that many students have few, if any, consciously articulated goals or value objectives above and beyond a superficial level. Because of this very limitation in their outlook, it seems more valuable than it might otherwise be to have them examine goal and value possibilities and order them according to their current preferences. Since we are dealing through fiction with experiential encounters with life--with people's relationships, values, goals, and motivations--we need to know these preferences, however weak they may be, if we are to stimulate meaningful student involvement, response, and application by relating them to the particular work under discussion. In this way we are better able to make the learning that occurs authentic and relevant for our students, because their experience of a work is brought closer "to the situations in which what has been learned will be used."¹⁴ Harold B. Dunkel provides a

¹³Lawrence R. Good and Katherine C. Good, "A Preliminary Measure of Existential Anxiety," Psychological Reports, 34 (1974), 72-74.

¹⁴Stephen M. Corey, "Psychological Foundations of General Education," in General Education, ed. Nelson B. Henry (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 67.

useful inventory which students can use to rank goals,¹⁵ and C. W. Morris has formulated an excellent survey for the ordering of value preferences.¹⁶ Although there is some overlapping in the two instruments, both have enough distinguishing features to merit use. Morris's survey provides a paragraph of explanation on each value, but Dunkel's inventory consists only of one sentence goals. For this reason, students might find the Morris approach far more provocative than Dunkel's.

As teachers of fiction, we may also find useful knowledge about the interests and experiences of our students. We could, of course, ask them to list their basic interests and to write about their most significant experiences in a general way. But the extent of these interests and experiences may be implicit enough in the other surveys for us to generate their revelation in class discussions. We should, however, want to know at the beginning of a course what our students' interests and experiences are in relation to fiction itself. Dunkel has created a fiction inventory that accomplishes this task very well if modified in part to apply to contemporary life. Its nine categories cover just about all possible perspectives from which

¹⁵Harold B. Dunkel, General Education in the Humanities (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Education, 1947), pp. 20-30.

¹⁶Varieties of Human Value (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 15-19.

students can view fiction: (1) Relaxation and Pastime, (2) Escape, (3) Associational Values, (4) Information--Intimate Personal Relations, (5) Information--Socio-Civic Matters, (6) Information--Philosophy of Life, (7) Information--Additional Items, (8) Technical-Critical, and (9) Self-development.¹⁷ Categories (3) through (7) and category (9) are especially important to the domain of encounter criticism, in determining how students have already been using fiction for self-discovery and self-creation. We can further know our students in relation to their fictional interests and experiences by having them write an essay on a story of their choosing in which they approach the work in whatever way they wish.

This assignment may also serve another important purpose; it may reveal how well the students perceive, think, and express themselves in general as well as in relation to fiction. This knowledge is important because the effective teacher must "create ideational linkages between the student's own cognitive structure and that of the discipline to be taught." Although the teacher can use a student's motivational, value, and sensory orientations in such creation, he needs to concentrate on matching "the appropriate instructional strategy with learners of different characteristics." The student's level of "cognitive complexity"

¹⁷Dunkel, pp. 297-301.

is most significant to such matching. The teacher should adjust the amount of structure in a course to the complexity of the personality development of his students.¹⁸

Several educationists describe the four stages of complexity and the structure best suited to each. Students in the lowest stage have fixed patterns of response, an authoritarian view of relationships which stresses right and wrong, and their thoughts and feelings pervaded by stereotypes. They require a reasonably well-structured learning environment, but with "a stress on self-delineation and negotiation." Those at the second stage tend actively to resist authority and control and to "dichotomize" their environment. For these reasons, the course structure needs to accentuate "negotiation in interpersonal relations and divergence in development of rules and concepts." Although third-stage students have "some difficulty maintaining a task orientation because of their concern with the development of interpersonal relations," they are starting "to balance alternatives and to build concepts which balance differing points of view and ideas." Such students should have a fairly open course structure within which they can work toward educational goals and at the same time build relationships with others through gradually increased interaction with their teacher and fellow

¹⁸Joyce and Weil, pp. 168, 298-299.

students. Because they have "a balanced perspective with respect to task orientation and the maintenance of interpersonal relations," students at the final stage are adaptable to any structure. Such students profit most, however, from student-centered teaching environments characterized by interdependence and complex cognitive and affective discussions and involvements that provide ideas and related information which deepen and broaden their identities.¹⁹

The cardinal principle in matching students and structures is that those at a low conceptual level profit most from high structure and those at a high level gain the most from low structure. We, however, must take care not to straight-jacket our students at a low level. We must always be working to induce them "to progress toward complexity and flexibility."²⁰ In other words, we gradually move from an authoritarian course structure to a student-centered teaching situation as open and free as the students can profit from. Although we may prefer the open-ended essay on a work to learn about our students' conceptual levels, we may also find a broader method more

¹⁹Joyce and Weil, pp. 303-304. See also David E. Hunt, "A Conceptual Level Matching Model for Coordinating Learner Characteristics with Educational Approaches," Interchange: A Journal of Educational Studies, 1 (1970), 68-70.

²⁰Joyce and Weil, pp. 303, 306. See also Bloom, p. 37; Hunt, p. 76.

reliable. David E. Hunt suggests six brief essay assignments we can use to determine conceptual levels: (1) "What I think about rules . . ."; (2) "When I am criticized . . ."; (3) "What I think about parents . . ."; (4) "When someone disagrees with me . . ."; (5) "When I am not sure . . ."; (6) "When I am told what to do" ²¹

All of our efforts to know our students in these general ways at the beginning of a fiction course and to use that knowledge in that course can facilitate learning by helping them achieve what J. Samuel Bois calls "semantic balance." It is "the healthy state of a person who functions within the optimum range for his age, his education, his past experiences, his anticipated future, and the possibilities of the environment in which he happens to be." ²² Because what we think about the nature of students often determines how we teach, we should be aware that to want genuinely to discover and use knowledge of students to achieve this healthy state we must rid ourselves of any strong tendency we might have to distrust students. We cannot continue to believe that students have too little wisdom to know what is best for them; that students tend to seek the easy way out; or that if not compelled to be industrious, students will waste time in

²¹Hunt, p. 71.

²²The Art of Awareness, 2nd ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1970), p. 41.

triviality and frivolity. Furthermore, we should not stress as our primary task the direction of students toward virtue, coercing them to pursue it. If we continually approach students in these ways, we may well continue in our cynicism because we may further cultivate in students the very qualities such approaches seek to eliminate.

Instead, as several educationists point out, we as teachers need to proceed "on the assumption that we can help students live wisely, usefully, and happily by identifying, supporting, and using their own drives and expectations, their talents and emotional concerns, their feelings about themselves, about other people, and about life, all in the service of education."²³ If we concur on this assumption, then we should see that encounter criticism is just as integral to teaching fiction as it is to writing about fiction. One suggestion applicable to this effort is to approach student critical efforts developmentally.²⁴ Another is to build a fiction course around works "which are on students' level of sensibility and concerned with their deepest interests and problems."²⁵

²³Malcolm S. MacLean and Esther Raushen, "General Education for Students," in General Education, pp. 173-184.

²⁴Brower and Poirer, p. 17.

²⁵Simon O. Lesser, Fiction and the Unconscious (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 301.

If we structure our fiction courses in these ways, we show students that we prize them as persons by knowing and using their concerns about meaning, their values, goals, interests, and abilities. We also enable them to begin sensing and feeling what is going on within themselves, what they are feeling, what they are experiencing, and how they are responding when they study, analyze, and discuss fiction.²⁶

In seeking to teach fiction so that the most significant intellectual skills, the processes of responding and valuing, self-exploratory objectives, and student goals, values, interests, and cognitive levels are effectively and meaningfully integrated, we must describe and establish the relative importance of and relationships between the teacher's six possible roles: expert, formal authority, socializing agent, ego ideal, person, and facilitator. Wilbert J. McKeachie contributes to this end by describing the "major goals" of each role, the "characteristic skills" necessary to perform each role, and the "major sources of student motivation (and fear)" inherent in each role.²⁷ Just as we related the cognitive and affective hierarchies to fictional study, we can relate McKeachie's descriptions

²⁶Carl R. Rogers and Barry Stevens, Person to Person (New York: Pocket Books, 1967), p. 12.

²⁷Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1969), pp. 37-52.

to the student-centered teaching of fiction via encounter criticism, as well as bring in pertinent ideas of others. As expert, the fiction teacher's task is often to transmit knowledge about writers and their works and perhaps about literary history, but in this case he must also explain "the concepts and perspectives" germane to encounter criticism, including the concept of identity development and its rationale. Depending upon the students' experience with critical analysis, he will have to explain and demonstrate the processes involved. All of these activities should be as limited as possible, going only so far as necessary to clarify the "structure of concepts which form the information-processing system"²⁸ of literary study. Although scholarly preparation, the organization and presentation of material, and answering questions relevant to fulfilling the course objectives are the characteristic skills of the expert role, some teachers may wish to draw the points out of their students to whatever extent time and student backgrounds make possible. However he implements his expertise, the teacher in this role should be aware that he is appealing to a student's "curiosity; need for achievement; intrinsic interest in content; (fear of being/appearing stupid; fear of being snowed)." With this awareness, the teacher might do best to assume a posture of

²⁸Joyce and Weil, p. 165.

sharing rather than one of imposition; his expertise is primarily a resource for his students, not something he uses to manipulate their minds.

Some aspects of the teacher as formal authority are as essential to student-centered teaching via encounter criticism as are those of his role as expert, but he should share them with the students as much as possible. He should make clear at the outset the objectives of the course and how they are to be achieved. He must also determine how much structure the course is to have according to what he knows about his students, the nature and number of assignments, and the criteria for evaluating those assignments. If he establishes these criteria immediately, he can prepare the students early for the self-evaluation that is to accompany teacher evaluation. He should also make the students aware of their responsibilities for careful study of the works, for involvement in class discussions, and the roles that such study and involvement play in mutual evaluation. It is granted here that many college students feel dependent upon their instructor to provide these perspectives and that many college students are very concerned with grades. They fear being lost or engaged in irrelevancies; they fear failure. At the same time, however, this study's premise is that the student-centered teacher should work toward interdependence and de-emphasize grades in favor of what those

grades reflect in the way of student self-creation and self-discovery about his ability to think and feel and to express his thoughts and feelings orally and in writing. As two teacher-critics assert, we should use our expertise and formal authority only insofar as they help us work with students, not for them or over them.²⁹

The student-centered teacher of fiction who utilizes encounter criticism can also work well with students as a socializing agent, but only if he maintains his posture of sharing and restrains any tendency to impose. As he guides literary study, he can make students aware of its value in and for itself. Even though he may not wish to go so far as to convert students to a literature major, he can promote literary study as a meaningful pastime or avocation, especially through encounter criticism's dimensions. Whatever direction his efforts to demonstrate the demands and rewards of studying fiction take, he will be prompting the student's need to clarify his interests and calling.

By conveying the excitement and value of the intellectual and emotional growth that literary study facilitates, the fiction teacher can also function as something of an ego ideal to his students. He can appeal to their desires for involved interest, for a model, and for "a personification of ideals" by demonstrating the ultimate

²⁹Brower and Poirer, p. 8.

value of and his commitment to literature, to encounter criticism, and to identity development. Being the ego ideal of one's students should not, however, be central to one's teaching, nor should it be an end in itself. Rather, one should do things that may make some students admire him as part of his total effort to achieve maximal student learning through student-centered teaching that implements the approach and methodology of encounter criticism.

Although many college teachers function well as experts and formal authorities, and even as socializing agents and ego ideals, many fail to function equally well in what this study assumes to be the two most significant roles, the teacher as person and the teacher as facilitator. Being a person to our students, as McKeachie points out, not only validates our humanity; it also validates that of our students. When we reveal ourselves in ways which clarify our identities beyond our roles as teachers and are "trustworthy and warm enough to encourage students to be open as well," we let our students know that we value them as people, not as "products."³⁰

As Rogers shows, a teacher's relating to students as a person is essential to effective and meaningful promotion

³⁰McKeachie, p. 51. See also George F. Kneller, Existentialism and Education (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), p. 115.

of learning. If we are "open" with our students, it means that our main tasks are "clarifying, stimulating, accepting, facilitating." These activities tend to create a "productive" orientation in which our students are "discovering, exploring, experimenting, synthesizing, deriving implications." On the other hand, if we are "closed" to our students as persons our energies are often directed only to "judging, directing, reproofing, ignoring, probing, or priming." Such procedures tend to generate only the "reproductive" activities of "parroting, guessing, acquiescing, reproducing facts, and reasoning from given or remembered data."³¹ Even when we are dealing with students at low conceptual levels who can handle well only such reproductive tasks, we can best promote their growth to more productive activities by relating to them as persons. In doing so, we can lessen their fear of failure and their anxieties about learning.

The teacher who would relate to his students as a person must value people first and his subject second. He must be interested in "the whole life experiences of his students"; he must be a student of psychology, no matter what his speciality, for to relate to students as a person means to be prepared to act as a counselor to them in case

³¹Rogers, p. 118. See also Perceiving, pp. 145, 168-169; Leda Saulnier and Teresa Simard, Personal Growth and Interpersonal Relations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 112-113.

one is called upon in this capacity.³² Such a teacher should be growth-motivated in his own right. Then he can be relatively non-defensive about himself, real and genuine in his student relationships, close to his feelings, and willing to share them honestly. He can demonstrate a non-possessive caring for his students, can value his students' feelings, opinions, and identities, can trust his students, and is capable of a sensitive empathy with his students' feelings and problems.³³

Although cultivating all of these qualities in ourselves is important to effecting personal relatedness to our students and facilitating learning through them--not to mention their value to all our relationships--we must be aware in the final analysis that to relate well to students as persons we must have a positive view of humanity in general. In short, we need to "perceive human beings as basically cooperative, constructive, trustworthy, forward-looking, and responsible" despite our encounter with numerous maladjusted and inadequate individuals.³⁴ To promote these qualities in our students when we find them lacking is, in fact, an important part of relating to them as persons. Thus, we must possess first and foremost "a

³²MacLean and Raushen, p. 178.

³³Rogers, pp. 106-114. See also Perceiving, p. 242.

³⁴Perceiving, p. 165.

sensitivity to and concern for human values, attitudes, beliefs, convictions, and unique ways of perceiving."³⁵ Of course, since literature deals in all of these dimensions, those who teach it should be developing these sensitivities and concerns, or at least have the impetus toward developing them.

If we are consciously growing to achieve the qualities, sensitivities, and concerns that help us relate to students as persons at the same time we are fulfilling our other four roles as teachers of fiction, we will then be able to implement our ultimate role, the one most integral to student-centered teaching via encounter criticism, that of facilitator. McKeachie points out that in this role we are seeking "to promote creativity and growth in students' own terms; to help overcome obstacles to learning."³⁶ To achieve these ends, we must be able to open students to literary experiences, to sharpen their awareness of their interests and skills that can be developed through these experiences, and to use techniques of discussion and a problem-solving approach to help students overcome the pitfalls of literary analysis, response, and application and thereby gain the insights that can promote personal growth through self-discovery and self-creation. There

³⁵Perceiving, p. 114.

³⁶McKeachie, p. 51. See also Rogers, pp. 164-165; Moustakas, pp. 62-64.

are, as George F. Kneller asserts, three fundamental concerns of the facilitator: (1) to treat "subject matter in such a way as to discover its truth in free association"; (2) to create in his students the "autonomous functioning of mind" that develops a "free, charitable, self-moving" personality; and (3) to find "evidence that his students hold something to be true because they have convinced themselves that it is true." Above and beyond these concerns, the facilitator always keeps in mind that "the highest educational goal is man's search for himself."³⁷

Although the objectives, methods, and concerns of the facilitator are central to the student-centered teaching of fiction via encounter criticism, this study does not maintain that our roles as facilitator and as person can or necessarily must be our only preoccupations as teachers of fiction. Instead, it suggests that the other four roles as described should be integrated with these two main roles in such a way that each teacher as an individual works to make learning as effective and meaningful as he is capable of. His ultimate objective should be, however, to emphasize the roles of person and facilitator to a point at which the other roles are not detrimental to or restrictive of the important effects these two central roles can have.

³⁷Kneller, p. 116. See also Rogers, pp. 164-165; Moustakas, pp. 62-64; Joyce and Weil, pp. 207-209.

Since the thrust of encounter criticism is to get students to discover and communicate the personal meanings that emerge from the characters, events, observations, and ideas inherent in a work of fiction, we need to consider further how this ultimate objective promotes such discovery and communication. Lionel Trilling points out that far too many teachers of fiction tend to distrust responses that stem from the student's "sense of himself as a person," which in turn causes the student to develop a "grave, dense, and resistant" personal character in relation to ideas.³⁸ Another result of such distrust is that the student avoids the exploration and revelation of personal meanings, not only because of the hurt such distrust brings, but also because teachers have ignored or discouraged such exploration and revelation. Instead, they have stressed the objective and impersonal nature of ideas and events.³⁹

But the teacher who accentuates the person-facilitator roles can rectify the damage done by such teachers if, as Rogers notes, he "relies upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes which have meaning for him as

³⁸Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p. 5.

³⁹Arthur W. Combs and Donald Snygg, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 385. See also Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 61.

the motivational force behind significant learning" and if he creates an "acceptant classroom climate" for student ideas and emotions.⁴⁰ To create this climate, the person-facilitator must challenge his students without threatening them and must treat each student "as an individual of dignity and integrity." He must also be warm, friendly, and accepting of the student as he is and must generate class discussions in which the student himself arrives at an understanding of the subject matter and relates it to himself.⁴¹ In these ways the person-facilitator not only promotes student motivation but also stimulates the student to broaden and deepen his perceptions and to become conscious of needs, interests, attitudes, and values he did not know he had.

The person-facilitator in a fiction course based on encounter criticism can best create the atmosphere necessary to provide such motivation and stimulation if he works toward a classroom situation dominated by student-centered discussions and other forms of group involvement such as role-playing and psychodrama. This situation is essential, as Rogers demonstrates, because the more the student participates responsibly in the learning process, the more

⁴⁰Rogers, pp. 164-165.

⁴¹Combs and Snygg, pp. 388-393. See also Perceiving, p. 105.

lasting and meaningful the learning is.⁴² The more we encourage him to participate in guided discussions, the more he can develop the very qualities essential to meaningful literary encounters--"the habit of imagining and an attitude of readiness toward the novel, the unknown, and the original."⁴³ When a student's need for involvement is meaningfully fulfilled in an effective class discussion, not only does he become more open to experience but he also senses his individuality, his identity. He senses that he is prized as a separate person, especially if the person-facilitator gives him the freedom to experience his own feelings and those of others without feeling threatened in doing so and if he empathetically understands and values them.⁴⁴

As Earl C. Kelley points out, the inadequate or limited self-concept that many students have derived from a culture pervaded by an authoritarian education and a conformist society has led too many of them to be mere recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in learning. This condition necessitates an educational emphasis on student-centered discussions and group involvements. Unless we promote growth through such activities, we will continue to be alienated from our students and our

⁴²Rogers, p. 162.

⁴³Perceiving, p. 143.

⁴⁴Rogers and Stevens, p. 3. See also Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 81.

students from us. Only when students are involved and feel themselves an integral part of their educational experiences will they become as responsible and learn as well as we wish them to do.⁴⁵ On the college level, where both the cognitive and affective objectives are often quite complex, this need for cooperative learning through student-teacher integration is even greater than on other levels because "Much more motivation is required, much more activity and participation on the part of the learner is necessary, and more opportunity must be available to help the individual gain insight into the processes he uses as well as misuses."⁴⁶

Let us now consider the person-facilitator's strategies for generating motivation and participation in fiction courses that employ encounter criticism. McKeachie points out the three problems connected with discussion: (1) getting participation, (2) making progress (or making the student aware of progress) toward course objectives, and (3) handling the emotional reactions of students.⁴⁷ In dealing with all of these problems we must be most conscious of our questioning techniques; we must first be certain that our questions build "student self-esteem

⁴⁵Earl C. Kelley, "The Fully Functioning Self," in Perceiving, pp. 11-17.

⁴⁶Krathwhol, Bloom, and Masia, p. 77.

⁴⁷McKeachie, p. 38.

and creativity," as well as promote student understanding of the material and intellectual and emotional growth.⁴⁸

We must remain aware that our primary task as teachers of fiction is to enable students to experience fiction as fully and deeply as possible by keeping the value complex they discover and experience in fiction in context and perspective, and not allowing that rich and unique experience to degenerate into a discussion of morality, human nature, history, philosophy, or psychology.⁴⁹ We can at the same time, however, do what many educationists feel is essential to effective and meaningful discussion-- namely, use appropriate comments and questions so that students approach the work as a real problem in understanding and communication that needs solution and then, as time permits, involve them in a discussion of what they have understood by allowing them to debate social, ethical, and philosophical issues that emerge from the work, as well as the personal issues they discover in them.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Carin and Sund, p. 111.

⁴⁹Brower and Poirer, pp. 18-20; Norman Holland, The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 328.

⁵⁰For fuller explanation, see Rogers, pp. 130-131, 162; Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, p. 55; William Glasser, The Identity Society (New York: Harper & Row), p. 113; Moustakas, p. 55; Carin and Sund, p. 102; Perceiving, pp. 146-148.

Our foremost problem in generating discussion is to overcome the mental set of passive recipient characteristic of many students. The first meeting is very important in this regard. The person-facilitator should create the expectation of discussion, define the various aspects of the course open to discussion, explain the value of discussion and reiterate it throughout the course. Seating in a circle is helpful. It is also important to overcome the students' fear of being wrong early in the course. One way is to begin with questions that have no right or wrong answers, such as "How do you react to this work?" or "What impressed you most about it?" as the first step in analyzing it.⁵¹ While the generation of these non-directive emotional and intellectual responses and the concern we demonstrate for our students as persons by the surveys we take do much to promote student involvement, we need to go beyond these preliminary "shows" if we are to be authentic persons-facilitators. Several educationists assert that the best way to do this early in a course is to exercise restraint by listening well to our students' responses and impressions to our open-ended questions. Such listening should be "creative, active, sensitive, accurate, empathic, and non-judgmental."⁵² Preferable to analyzing or

⁵¹McKeachie, pp. 55-56.

⁵²Rogers, p. 227. See also Joyce and Weil, p. 266; Combs and Snygg, p. 395; Carin and Sund, p. 14.

evaluating each response is engendering different responses by other students as a means of provoking their thinking and moving them toward a personal synthesis of ideas. Such guided student interaction seems to make their learning more meaningful than if it stems from a teacher's assertion of "truth" as an expert or authority.

Another aspect of facilitating student participation is handling with care student failure to answer a question or answers that require feedback. Two things can be done when a student fails to answer a question. First, the teacher can explain, clarify, or rephrase the question. Second, the teacher can add information that might elicit an answer and then ask the question again.⁵³ If the student cannot answer because he has forgotten the facts necessary to such an answer, the teacher can refer him to the work itself or fill in the void himself. When the student's contribution is unclear or ambiguous, the teacher should restate it for the student's confirmation or rejection. The teacher as person-facilitator must be patient and not expect the answer to come as quickly as he might formulate it.⁵⁴

If we understand the nature of positive and negative feedback dictated by questions which are divergent but not open-ended or non-directive, we can handle this phase of

⁵³Carin and Sund, p. 37.

⁵⁴McKeachie, p. 58.

facilitation well. Positive feedback reinforces and supports the respondent's answer, and gives recognition by underscoring the good points advanced by that answer. In giving negative feedback, we must be careful to distinguish "between the person and his behavior." The person-facilitator giving negative feedback must also be "constructive"; he should not be disrespectful, controlling, or domineering but should use this feedback to help the student.⁵⁵ Other than facilitating student growth in these ways, feedback can be used to guide the discussion by clarifying the problem, interposing guiding questions or comments, emphasizing a significant contribution, or summarizing where the discussion has arrived.⁵⁶

For several reasons, such guidance or structuring is essential to most effective and meaningful discussions. In teaching fictional understanding as a prelude to personal response and application, we must guide the discussion so that students don't get into the latter realm until they have dwelled sufficiently in the former to have experienced the work well. We must steer the personal responses and applications that are generated early in this discussion to the work itself to keep them relevant. We should also try to make those responses and applications

⁵⁵Saulnier and Simard, p. 93. See also Carin and Sund, p. 34.

⁵⁶McKeachie, pp. 57-58.

spring from the work itself and not be an accidental by-product of it. Nor should we allow the responses and applications to overwhelm and distort the work or to supplant its centrality in the discussion. In these ways we may also be able to get students to transcend their "stock responses" and have them respond appropriately to the work as a whole. In short, the discussion must be guided or structured so that it does not get disoriented from the course objectives. Another practical consideration that necessitates such guidance or structuring is that most college students today do not have sufficient experience in group interaction or enough self-discipline to participate effectively and meaningfully in extremely open-ended or non-directive discussions.⁵⁷

We as student-centered teachers of fiction via encounter criticism must thus be conscious of general methods and techniques that we can use to guide or structure discussions of fiction in which our beginning questions are fairly open-ended. The three phases of Hilda Taba's model for teaching thinking establish an effective hierarchy for generating student understanding of a fictional work. We must first concern our students with identifying key points in the work, using such questions as "What did you see? notice? find?" We should next get them to explain the

⁵⁷McKeachie, p. 66.

identified information: "Why did so-and-so happen?" The final phase is to provoke students to make inferences about the meaning of the piece of fiction by asking "What does this mean?"; "What picture does it create in your mind?"; "What would you conclude?"⁵⁸ Briefly stated, when we regard fictional discussion as a problem in understanding, we should guide students as we would in any other problem-solving situation to integrate facts, formulate hypotheses, amass relevant evidence, and draw and evaluate conclusions. Discussion regarding the facts of a work is necessary only when they meet intellectual or emotional resistance. We can best use discussion to parallel and exemplify the thinking skills essential to written critical analysis, response, and application.⁵⁹

Several other factors are equally important to guiding a discussion. Some educationists point out that when questions are not open-ended, they should be "group-oriented" rather than directed to one person. However, they should not encourage mass response. A wide range of students should be allowed or called upon to answer. The teacher should adjust the questions to the language and conceptual level of his students. The questions should also be posed as problems which the instructor knows or

⁵⁸As described in Joyce and Weil, pp. 123-127.

⁵⁹McKeachie, p. 63.

senses will be meaningful to his students based on his knowledge of their goals, values, attitudes, interests, and experiences in general and in relation to fiction. Since the focus in the discussion of a piece of fiction is on understanding the relationships between its various elements and their meaning as a whole, our questions should be "divergent," should have no cut-and-dried answers, and should provoke varied responses of a complex nature.⁶⁰

The more extensive and complex the work is, the more structure and guidance we need to give to the discussion. McKeachie's "developmental" approach is useful for discussing complex short stories, as well as most novellas and novels. We break down the work into parts, get the crucial facts of each part clarified, and then interrelate them. Some of these facts and interrelationships may be made clear to students from their reading and others may have to be explained by the teacher, but most of them should emerge from the students' answers to the teacher's questions. Although these questions direct the students toward fullest possible comprehension of the work, they should only guide the students along certain lines and should not be designed to "manipulate" them to accept the instructor's ideas on the work, even though they may eventually do so in part or on the whole. Instead, the teacher

⁶⁰Carin and Sund, pp. 31-33, 115; McKeachie, p. 54.

should capitalize on points of disagreement or controversy so that they may contribute to the students' understanding of the work and promote meaningful responses and applications. The person-facilitator may wish to act as "devil's advocate" or merely be one who points up different perspectives. He could also refer students to specifics in the work, clarify the issues involved, and compare the evidence supporting various arguments--all in an effort to make the discussion a cooperative one rather than a competitive one.⁶¹

In sum, unless we as teachers of fiction encounter a rare group of students who can handle open-ended discussions with self-discipline and sophistication regarding group interaction, we must qualify our emphasis on ourselves as persons-facilitators and bring to bear our other roles to a certain extent, especially those of expert and formal authority. We must do such things as set the agenda, call the meeting to order, introduce the work for discussion, and provide information that facilitates discussion and understanding. We should also hold up crucial aspects of the work for student analysis, response, and application; clarify and reiterate the objectives of the discussion, especially when students stray from them; summarize, mediate, and clarify differences.⁶²

⁶¹McKeachie, pp. 55-62.

⁶²McKeachie, pp. 52-53; Combs and Snygg, p. 395.

Despite these essential activities that interrelate with our roles as person and facilitator in student-centered fiction courses that use encounter criticism as their basis, these two roles should be as integral to student evaluation as they have been to all other aspects of teaching in this study. The lecture-oriented fiction instructor usually bases final grades solely on his evaluation of students' critical writings, although he may give short quizzes on critical terminology or specific works and employ essay examinations. Although the student-centered teacher of fiction via encounter criticism evaluates student writings as a major part of determining final grades, he also involves the students in these evaluations. He sets standards for evaluation early in the course, makes comments on the papers based on those standards, gives a grade, and explains the rationale behind it. He also does two things Rogers deems necessary to evaluations that promote learning and personal growth. He first makes it clear that his evaluations reflect as accurately as possible his honest opinions but do not necessarily "indicate the absolute worth of the student's work." Second, he follows the criteria for feedback described in our earlier explanation of discussion techniques. In doing so, he emphasizes that he is evaluating the effectiveness of the

student's thinking and writing, "not the student as a person."⁶³

But the student-centered teacher of fiction via encounter criticism also gets the student involved in evaluating his own thinking and writing. He does so by having the student write a response to each of the teacher's evaluations in which the student judges how well the teacher has applied the standards to his paper. He may also be required to list the merits and demerits of his writing as an impetus toward improvement. The teacher should reply to his response before the student writes again. To get student participation in this evaluative process, we must do more than explain and reiterate to the student how self-evaluation can promote learning and personal growth, do more than get him to perceive how his mistakes create opportunities for new learning experiences. Because we also want the student in his writing to relate his attitudes, values, beliefs, convictions, and experiences to the fiction, we have to demonstrate that we accept and respect him as a person and thus gain his acceptance and respect. In brief, all the other dimensions of student-centered teaching emphasized in this study are essential to getting the student meaningfully involved in evaluation.

⁶³Rogers, p. 43.

We must move the student away from his conditioned mental set of being stimulated and led in his learning almost completely by his teachers. Only when we do this can we get him away from viewing grades as the be-all and end-all of education. The anxieties connected with evaluation will then be minimized because the student's primary motivation to learn will, as Rogers points out, stem from the sense that he is working "for the best realization of himself" as a person.⁶⁴ In guiding him to this end, we as student-centered teachers of fiction via encounter criticism can also get him to participate meaningfully in evaluating himself as a discussion participant and his teacher as a discussion leader. The teacher, though, must establish criteria for both evaluations early in the course so that the student is conscious of both his responsibilities and those of the teacher. The student should write the evaluative essay at mid-semester and one near the end of the course, but the teacher may wish to devise and use a checklist for both evaluations. One emphasis should be on how carefully the student has read the works in preparation for the discussion as well as on how effectively he has learned to read fiction through teacher guidance. The student should also be encouraged to suggest ways in which the student can improve his participation and ways the

⁶⁴Rogers, p. 43.

teacher can better guide the discussion. The teacher must work as well as he can to record the quality and progress of student participation so that he can evaluate that participation as a part of his overall evaluation of each student for the course.

In conclusion, this study acknowledges that its proposals for the student-centered teaching of fiction via encounter criticism are not easily implemented. It is often difficult, for instance, to change the mental sets of many students from passive recipient to highly involved participant, from dependency to interdependency, and from extrinsic motivations to intrinsic ones. Some faculty members' personalities and temperaments, especially their lack of substantial self-knowledge, growth-motivation, or their limited experience in group interaction, restrict their ability to be effective and meaningful student-centered teachers of fiction. There are, of course, the practical limitations of time and energy. How many of the requirements of student-centered teaching can we and our students meet and still accomplish the course objectives without overtaxing our mental and emotional systems? It is also admitted that the suggestions in this study do what several educationists caution us against to a certain extent; they give "greater prominence to particular kinds of learning goals and specific aspects of the learner's

environment, while neglecting other goals and potentially useful aspects of situations."⁶⁵

This study suggests, however, that the overwhelming necessity of rectifying the imbalances and incongruencies inherent in contemporary education and society demands the extensive use of student-centered teaching objectives and techniques and our best efforts to overcome the problems relevant to them. We as teachers of fiction thus need to integrate encounter criticism and the four facets of student-centered teaching into our courses to promote, to whatever extent is possible and practical, student self-conscious identity development. The classroom can then become a place where the student is actively involved with both the teacher and the fiction and where the teacher is equally involved with both the student and the fiction. In these ways we can, as several educationists suggest, promote "active, cooperative, mutually stimulating relations" among faculty and students.⁶⁶ Perhaps we and our students can then combine all three of Soren Kierkegaard's modes of existence. We and they can be "aesthetic" through deep involvement in the immediate world, observing and theorizing. Our and their "ethical" mode can come to life when we become less spectator and theorizer and more maker

⁶⁵Joyce and Weil, p. 5.

⁶⁶MacLean and Raushen, p. 183.

of choices and commitments. Finally, these modes can culminate in the "religious" experience in which all of us gain an active sense of wholeness and unity with ourselves, society, and God.⁶⁷

⁶⁷Ernst Breisach, Introduction to Existentialism (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 21.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined some of the imbalances and incongruencies of contemporary American life. It has attempted a synthesis of those principles of existentialism and existential psychology that define individual identity development and relate it to learning and teaching. This study has also explored encounter criticism as a means of using fiction to promote self-discovery and self-creation. It has emphasized student-centered teaching to promote effective and meaningful student use of encounter criticism. Now, the following conclusions seem justified.

A substantial body of the writings of existential and humanistic psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, social commentators, and educationists reveals the importance of individual identity development to contemporary American life and the significance of this concept's application to college and university general education programs. These writings point out several key reasons why the self-conscious discovery and creation of one's identity is a necessary but difficult task in modern American society. Foremost of these reasons is the pervasiveness of an intense conformity and outer-direction in which

the inner self is often dispersed in the deluge of rapid change, a vast range of choices, and too much identification with others.

The major consequence of this intense conformity and outer-direction is that a significant number of people live in a value vacuum, accompanied by varying degrees of passivity, indifference, and apathy. Instead of individual value-based identities, they possess only individually arbitrary "life-styles" because they have reacted to the value vacuum with varying degrees of conformism, superficiality, externalization, and escapism. Modern society's overwhelming emphasis on scientific, technological, political, and consumer materialism accompanies this value vacuum in limiting man's point of view on himself, on his identity, on his values, and on his release and use of his inner energies. In education, this emphasis has led to too much stress on vocationalism, applied arts, professionalism, and other types of training. There has also been too much stress on information, facts, and knowledge and too little on employing these basics to develop personal meanings and values that benefit students' lives and affect their behavior.

This dissertation also concludes that because of these social and educational imbalances the insights into the need for and nature of individual identity development

merit the close study of teachers in general. The dissertation also concludes that teachers of fiction in particular should be aware of the centrality of the personal and subjective dimensions of experience to the best achievement of a meaningful and fulfilling life. They should understand the existential concept that each individual is given an existence of freedom and possibility and that each is responsible for knowing and creating his essence, his identity, his authentic self, through his inner nature's experiential encounters and interpersonal relationships. They should also recognize the view of humanistic psychologists that only through genuine self-knowledge and growth-motivation can anyone go on to gain knowledge of others and thus relate to them well.

In fact, educators should know that while individual identity is an integration of inner being, personal experience, and interpersonal relationships, they should emphasize in their teaching the weakest and most threatened aspect--inner being. Many existential philosophers and humanistic psychologists show that inner being is authentic only insofar as its integrated segments emerge from one's own self as such, from one's experiences and relationships, from one's conscious choice and affirmation of his values and actions. Many of these thinkers also suggest that the life-long process of self-discovery and self-creation can

occur to a significant extent under contemporary conditions only if one is self-conscious, if he is able to conduct a Socratic dialectic of self in which he verbalizes and communicates as many facets of himself as possible. In other words, the individual must cultivate a concentrated meditation that brings together introspection, keen observation, and intuition.

Another significant conclusion about identity development is that those most actively engaged in it are often the ones who contribute a great deal to the world and who are the most psychologically healthy. To achieve these ends they must satisfy rather than suppress their fundamental human needs and thereby gain control of themselves. They can then become growth-motivated, free to benefit from empathy with others, free to plan through their encounters, to discover themselves, to select potentialities to develop, and to construct a life outlook. They have a flexible process of valuing and great openness to experience. Growth-motivated people are capable of numerous intense peak experiences in which they become so totally immersed in some activity that they experience its essence more profoundly than is normally the case.

These points regarding the need for and nature of identity lead to the conclusion that educators should emphasize the exploration, discovery, and creation of

personal meanings in what students learn. Existential and humanistic educationists demonstrate that the more personally significant an educational experience is, the more likely it is to affect behavior; the more pertinent and applicable an experience is, the more likely that what one learns will stick with him. Educators thus need to be highly concerned with student motivation and to accentuate skills and abilities that promote problem-solving, synthesizing, and the application of knowledge to personal experience and new situations. To achieve these objectives, college general education programs should be rich and varied, should put the learner as human being above content, should promote the development of the individual on a broad scale--intellectual, emotional, and personal--and ultimately should be pragmatic on the personal level.

Another conclusion of this dissertation is that teachers of fiction should be especially conscious of the process of identity development and of the educational objectives that are a logical consequence of it. This special consciousness should stem from an awareness that prose fiction's unique qualities--the varied, complex, and rich mental and emotional states it stimulates; the imaginative experiences that raise profound philosophical, psychological, social, and ethical questions--enable it to prompt the discovery and creation of one's individual identity. To

employ these qualities to achieve this end, however, teachers of fiction should emphasize them in their courses, should stress the psychological processes and factors central to reading fiction well and meaningfully, should accentuate what makes fiction an integrative-disruptive complex, and should focus on the interpenetrations between life and fiction. Technically, teachers of fiction should emphasize the unity of form and meaning, the implied author, narration and point of view, and the relationship between the author, his work, and the reader.

In calling for these emphases, this dissertation points out that fiction can best be used to promote identity development if it is studied and taught as a unique experiential encounter with life to be read, written about, and discussed from a subjective and personal point of view. This method, called encounter criticism, in its most extensive mode studies particular works so as to integrate relevant historical factors, close and careful internal analyses, personal responses, and personal and social applications. By doing so and thereby integrating the hitherto dichotomized aspects of fictional study, encounter criticism brings literary criticism closer to creating for literature a unique and irreplaceable function, an indispensable role in human experience.

Students and teachers of fiction can also benefit from encounter criticism if they become aware of the parallels

between the fictional experience and the experience of self-consciously discovering and creating one's identity. The major parallel emerges from seeing that when we read fiction we find ourselves in the paradoxical condition of being at once a participant in the action and a detached spectator of it. We are self-conscious in reading fiction because we are not merely viewing an experience but are feeling the act of observing it. The reading process thus parallels the blend of self-involvement and distance from self characteristic of the self-consciousness so necessary for identity development in contemporary society.

Just as self-consciousness gives us some sense of mastery or control of ourselves, fiction provides a similar sense because our desires, fears, and inner conflicts are often objectified and externalized in it. Fiction also parallels self-consciousness in that it transforms the chaotic and slow-moving nature of actual life to enable us to see patterns and significance with a satisfying degree of clarity. The process of critical analysis, personal response, and personal and social application that brings about these perceptions also exemplifies self-consciousness. It transforms the complex mental and emotional states generated by the reading experience into social, ethical, and intellectual terms.

For this process of critical encounter to be used effectively and meaningfully, we must also know that a

central aspect of our responses to literature is the consciousness that we are encountering another human being, the author, who is trying to communicate with us. The author merges himself and his work to provide an experiential encounter with both himself as a person and life; he yields himself without seeming to do so. With this awareness, we as readers should involve ourselves in accepting or rejecting what the author presents, the experience itself, and the author's values and attitudes as conveyed through the events, characters, and actions.

We must acknowledge, however, that these aspects of the critical encounter should not consciously occur until we have closely studied the work itself, lest we distort or misuse the totality of the experience. After such close study, we should analogize--make connections, allusions, parallels, echoes, associations, and juxtapositions between the work's ideas and characters and ourselves. In doing so, we need to be careful to utilize only personal knowledge, experiences, and analogies which are genuine and relevant and which respect the liberty and autonomy of the work. Our responses and applications should therefore be as appropriate as possible by stemming only from the scope and depth of the work as a whole or from the context in which each part is integral to the whole. If we observe these cautions, we will find that we are only as limited

in employing literary response and application as we are in being self-conscious and growth-motivated enough to discover and create our identities.

My encounter criticism of Joseph Conrad's Victory exemplifies that this method can be used effectively and meaningfully by a practiced student of fiction as an extension of analytic critical methods or as an alternative to them. He can demonstrate that he has a substantial understanding of the work's ideas and techniques, as well as personally respond to and apply what he has experienced and thereby know himself and his world better. Perhaps his responses and applications will be strong enough to motivate a significant change in his behavior or at least provide an impetus toward such a change. I conclude that encounter criticism can promote personal growth better than traditional critical methods because the student of fiction systematically rather than incidentally verbalizes, organizes, and communicates his responses and applications.

But for encounter criticism to have optimum impact, it must have student-centered, as opposed to teacher-centered, teaching as its basis, so that everyone will feel free and open enough to be himself in writing about and discussing the fiction as personal experience. In student-centered teaching, learning and the learner rather than teaching and the teacher are the focal points. Learning should be approached as a living involvement with life,

as a commitment to values, as self-searching, as listening to life, as seeking authentic relationships with others. Characterized by varying degrees of personal involvement and self-initiation, such learning should engage the learner's feelings, yield personal meanings, and affect behavior. Ultimately, learning that stems from student-centered teaching is learning how to learn, expanding the student's modes of perception so that his experiences can broaden and deepen his identity. For this reason, such learning must entail both intellectual growth and emotional development and must follow hierarchical patterns. Both the cognitive and affective patterns outlined in two separate studies parallel rather well the intellectual and emotional processes involved in reading, discussing, and writing about fiction according to the methodology of encounter criticism.

If we are to achieve maximum development of both cognitive and affective skills and abilities and cultivate the kinds of learning that stimulate the self-conscious discovery and creation of self, we must work to know students as persons as much as possible within given circumstances and to integrate what we discover about their goals, values, interests, and abilities into fiction courses. Because we can achieve such knowledge on a person-to-person basis only over a period of time, if at all,

early in the course we may do best to employ various surveys and preliminary writing assignments to get a diagnosis of the students as a group. One factor that we need to be particularly conscious of is a student's level of cognitive complexity, because we can match it with the degree of structure we give to his learning experiences. Generally, the lower the conceptual level the higher the structure and vice-versa. The overall objective should be to induce the student to progress toward complexity and flexibility by employing less authoritarian structure and more student-centered teaching.

A major conviction here is that if we approach student critical efforts developmentally and build fiction courses around works which are on students' levels of sensibility and concerned with their deepest interests and problems, we show them that we prize them as persons and enable them to begin to sense and feel what is going on within themselves when they study, discuss, write about, respond to, and apply fiction. We can also promote this understanding in students when we use our expertise primarily as a resource for students by assuming a posture of sharing rather than one of imposition and when we discourage student dependency on us as formal authorities who make them learn.

However, we should function primarily as persons and facilitators in student-centered teaching. We must be open

with our students, to reveal ourselves in ways which clarify our identities beyond our roles as teachers, and to be accepting, trusting, warm, and friendly enough to encourage students to be open as well. As facilitators, we must use techniques of discussion and a problem-solving approach to fiction to help students overcome the pitfalls of literary analysis and to discover fiction's growth-promoting insights in free association. We should therefore guide our students to a classroom situation dominated by student-centered discussions and other forms of group involvement, such as role playing and psychodrama. This situation is essential because the more the student participates in the learning process, the more lasting and meaningful the learning is. The ideal of the facilitator is to maximize challenge at the same time he minimizes threat.

A further conclusion of this dissertation is that the inadequate, limited, or empty self-concept that many students have derived from a culture pervaded by authoritarian education and conformism has made far too many of them passive recipients and far too few active participants. This condition necessitates an emphasis on student-centered discussions and group involvement. It demands that we as teachers of fiction be highly conscious of our questioning techniques. Because most students have insufficient experience in group interaction and not enough

self-discipline to participate effectively and meaningfully in extremely open-ended and non-directive discussions, we need to use questioning techniques to guide and structure the discussions. We also need to exercise such guidance so that our students base their responses and applications on a sufficient understanding of the work to keep them appropriate. For this reason, the more extensive and complex the work is, the more guidance and structure we need to give to the discussion.

In drawing these conclusions about student-centered teaching, I acknowledge the difficulty of changing the mental sets of many students from passive recipient to involved participant, from dependency to interdependency, and from extrinsic to intrinsic motivations. But I believe we can move students toward these new perspectives if we also involve them in the process of evaluation. They need to apply course standards to themselves as writers and discussion participants. Even if we get them involved in these evaluations and carry out all other aspects of student-centered teaching satisfactorily, some problems may persist. Nevertheless, our best efforts at student-centered teaching are demanded by the imbalances and incongruencies of contemporary education and society.

In sum, this dissertation has described the importance and nature of individual identity development, has linked

it to the study of fiction to create encounter criticism as a means of promoting self-discovery and self-creation, and exemplified how it can be used by an experienced student of fiction. Finally, this study suggests how the student-centered teaching of fiction can promote the effective and meaningful use of encounter criticism by a variety of students and how it can in itself stimulate self-discovery and self-creation.

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