

THE CONCEPT OF THE ABSOLUTE IN THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

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I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared
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PREFACE

In this thesis a study will be made of the development of Thomas Hardy's concept of the Absolute from the beginning of his career as poet and novelist to the end of it. The course of scientific and religious thought of the last half of the nineteenth century will be traced, and the question of the probable connection between the world view implicit in the fiction and poetry of Hardy and the intellectual environment in which his life was passed will be considered. Analyses will be made of the poet's first concepts which he termed Time, Chance, and Nature. The concepts entertained by three feminine characters will be treated philosophically from the standpoint of nineteenth century determinism, and psychologically from the standpoint of twentieth century psychiatry. Hardy's ultimate interpretation of the Absolute will be discussed from the standpoint of its similarity to Schopenhauer's concept. In conclusion, Hardy's claim to the title of evolutionary meliorist will be examined, along with some of the intellectual and emotional qualities which gave rise to his concept of the Absolute.

It is to Miss Mamie Walker's inspirational teaching that I owe my choice of Thomas Hardy as the writer whose philosophy forms the basis of my thesis. It was in her course in contemporary literature that I first became acquainted with Hardy's work as a poet. In general, the

work done in Dr. Bertha Duncan's class in Mental Hygiene has served as the incentive for my subsequent reading in the field of psychology; and in this particular thesis it has been responsible for the method of approach used in the third chapter. It is to Dr. Ellison's enthusiasm for philosophy that I owe my inspiration for recent readings in that field, as well as the philosophical method of development used in this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AS A BACKGROUND FOR HARDY'S CONCEPT OF THE ABSOLUTE

1. Scientific Background of the Nineteenth Century

To the future historian, the nineteenth century will always stand out as an age of transformation, of radical scientific experiment and discovery, of social and industrial revolution, of scepticism and unbelief. During its latter half alone man conquered and subdued the earth and air, and annihilated distance through the mastery of the forces of steam and electricity. The earth's products from beneath the surface and upon the surface were transformed by means of newly invented machinery into materials and conveniences to add to the already complex character of man's existence. It was an age in which advancing knowledge so weakened the hold of traditional religious beliefs upon men's minds that very many of them knew not what to believe, and so floundered hopelessly in a sea of scientific scepticism and agnosticism.

The last fifty years of the nineteenth century saw more progress, particularly along scientific and mechanical lines, than had all the previous centuries since the time of Abraham. Man's first step in the rapid mastery of his physical environment was his discovery of vastly improved

processes of supplying himself with tools and structural materials. The mechanical revolution was essential to the full development of the industrial revolution. No steam engines or primitive pumping engines were possible before sheet iron was available. The discovery of the Bessemer process in 1856, and the open-hearth process in 1864 made it possible to purify, harden and cast iron and steel in a manner and upon a scale hitherto unheard of. It was with this increasing power over structural materials, iron, steel, glass, rocks, and plasters, that the main triumphs of the mechanical revolution were achieved. This mastery of materials led to the construction of large vessels, thousands of miles of railroads, huge steel-framed buildings, and vast bridges. The early engine and the locomotive railway were to the popular imagination of the mid-nineteenth century the most striking and revolutionary of inventions, but they have since come to seem only the most clumsy and conspicuous first examples of a far more extensive process.

The revolution in the manufacture of iron and steel was accompanied by a revolution in the textile industries which was started by a series of inventions by Englishmen in the eighteenth century, for example, the spinning jenny, the roller spinning frame, and the spinning mule. The revolution in the textile industry was largely due to the discoveries of Watt which made steam the servant of man's will. A method was devised by which steam could be applied to

rotary movements. From that time on there was scarcely any limit to the range of invention which revolutionized one industry after another. In textiles the new power was first applied to spinning, and later, to weaving. The effect was to give new freedom to the industry now independent of water-power, just as the iron industry was independent of the use of wood. Through these new inventions the expansion in the cotton industry must be considered one of the most sensational achievements of the early revolution.

Along with this extension of mechanical possibilities, the new powers and possibilities of electricity began to be explored. In the eighties of the nineteenth century this body of inquiry began to yield results sufficient to impress the public mind. With the advent of electric lights the average person became fully aware of the remarkable power which could be sent along a copper wire and changed into mechanical motion, light, or heat.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century a third phase of the mechanical revolution followed the first and second phases. This was the expansion in the use of steam and electricity in lighting, transmission, and traction, the ultimate result of which was a new type of engine using the expansive force of an explosive mixture instead of the expansive force of steam. The light, highly efficient engines that were thus made possible were applied to the automobile, and development at last reached such a pitch of lightness

and efficiency as to render flight a practical achievement. A successful flying machine, but not one large enough to take up a human body, was made in 1897.

While these visible and dramatic means of transportation and communication forced themselves upon the average mind and seemed to be synonymous with progress, too much stress must not be laid upon these striking reductions in time and space. They were merely one aspect of a much more profound and more momentous enlargement of human possibility. The science of agriculture and agricultural chemistry, for instance, made parallel advances during the nineteenth century. Men learned so to fertilize the soil as to produce quadruple and quintuple the crops that had been taken from the same area in the seventeenth century.

In medical science there was a still more extraordinary advance; the average duration of life rose, the daily efficiency of man was increased, and the waste of life through disease was diminished.

2. The Religious Thought of the Nineteenth Century

In the history of religious and philosophical thought in England during the nineteenth century, key-words may be said to be 'evangelicism' for the first part of the century and 'evolution' for the last part.

Evangelicism, that moral cement of English society, was decidedly a reaction against the eighteenth century

religion of rationalism, in which the emotions were held in scorn. This disdain of all supernaturalism, intuition, and religious fervor, and the glorification of cool common sense and reason began to fail to satisfy the religious cravings of many, so that the last part of the eighteenth century found numbers of people ready for just the type of religious leader that John Wesley was. He was markedly gifted with the power of kindling in his hearers the vision of a personal God who punished sinners with a certainty of divine judgment so awful that the contrite listeners exhibited all sorts of physical manifestations of hysteria.

When the nineteenth century opened the grosser transports of religious ecstasy which signalized the early triumphs of the new preachers were over. The new movement had firmly established itself in the Church of England where these followers were known as Evangelicals. Among the poor the sects of the Methodists gave idealism and romance to the lives of thousands of the victims of the power loom and the steam engine in the new industrial slums. Evangelicism, a movement which was peculiarly English, reached its height of influence in 1832, the same year as the passage of the Great Reform Bill.

This new type of preaching emphasized man's fallen condition, the atonement of Christ, the necessity of a new spiritual birth, and redemption through faith. The New Testament teachings were interpreted literally and strictly.

In fact, among the Methodists there was a great deal of hatred of Catholics and Latitudinarians, those who distrusted strict interpretation of the dogmas of the Christian creed.

Although disliked for their narrow Puritanism and their intellectual feebleness, the Evangelicals were a strong influence for good in public life, and have to their credit the organization of the first Temperance Societies. Headmasters of a majority of the public schools were Evangelicals. The credit for one of the greatest humanitarian measures passed by the new parliament, the betterment of conditions for child laborers in the factories, belonged even more to the Evangelicals than to the political party then in power. They did not hesitate to challenge on religious grounds the whole organization of industrial society, and denied, in the name of the Gospels, the principles of orthodox economics and laissez-faire .

It would be impossible to form a right understanding of the English people of the mid-nineteenth century without some appreciation of the power of evangelical teachings over human emotions and imagination. Moreover, it certainly is necessary to understand the state of religious thought in Victorian England in order fully to appreciate the significance of that epoch-making book by the English naturalist Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, which was published in 1859.

The theory it propounds, that of evolution, the assertion that the world and man have evolved from grosser, simpler forms of life over the course of millions of years, was not an entirely new one. Several scientific investigators in the eighteenth century had propounded a theory of evolution, but they had not, like Darwin, collected the mass of evidence, the countless minute examples of inductive reasoning, which left no phase of the matter to be doubted. A nineteenth century geologist, Charles Lyell, did more than any other to further the doctrine of evolution. His book, Principles of Geology, brought out in 1830, supported the evolutionary theory by showing that the main features of the earth were formed ages ago in such a way as to make the construction of the earth in six days an impossibility.

This new idea of the beginnings of human life did not come about suddenly overnight; it does not date from the justly epoch-making The Origin of Species. Rather that event symbolized the new attitude that had in many ways been making its progress in men's thinking since the middle of the preceding century. This book stands as a confident representation of a view that had already been for some time gaining acceptance by the best intellects.

However, the Evangelicals, who comprised the greater part of the middle and lower classes in mid-Victorian England, were completely dismayed by this new theory and consequently fought it irrationally. It not only seemed to, but did go

against the literal interpretations of the Biblical teachings which they had confirmed so enthusiastically. To their literal minds the evolutionist was proclaiming that they had descended from monkeys, and not from Adam and Eve.

The Evangelicals, as well as other Christians of the day, had been following the teachings of Saint Paul and his successors who expounded a subtle and complex theory of salvation. Jesus was not thought of so much as a teacher of wonderful new things, as he was a divine blood sacrifice made in atonement of a particular historical act of disobedience to the Creator committed by our first parents Adam and Eve in response to the temptation of a serpent in the Garden of Eden.

The average literal mind of the day - and the average did not fail to include the minds of the majority of preachers and university heads - did not consider the different conditions under which the Old and New Testaments had been written, by whom they had been written, and for whom they had been written. In their initial horror it did not occur to them that the Old Testament with its myths had been intended for the childhood of man, and that the author of Genesis had simply used a familiar law of pedagogy, that a thought to be impressed upon the mind of the learner must be couched in familiar terms; in language suited to his understanding. They did not stop to think that such an interpretation would not in any way convict Moses of deceit

or ignorance. The Hebrew of that time could not have understood, and probably would not have accepted, the conclusions of a piece of abstract philosophy, but in an imagery so delightful to the oriental mind the lesson of the choice of evil in the tale of the Garden of Eden was made effective.

The sudden shock upon minds which were totally unprepared to make a sudden adjustment in their method of thinking caused the majority of these staunch believers to denounce Darwin and his theories. The impact of this shock could not be overcome in a few years. During the seventies and eighties a stormy controversy raged throughout the civilized world. Though the discovery of man's descent from sub-human forms did not even remotely touch the teachings of Jesus, yet priests and bishops everywhere raged at Darwin and foolish attempts were made to suppress Darwinian literature and to insult and discredit the exponents of the new views. There was much talk of the antagonism between science and religion. This new controversy touched everybody who read a book or heard intelligent conversation. Scepticism became more the rule than the exception, especially among the younger generation. The new biological science was bringing nothing of a constructive nature to replace the old moral supports. Nevertheless, the second generation coming to maturity in the eighties and nineties preferred the new evolutionary faiths to the old dogmas.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century a crude misunderstanding of Darwinism had become prevalent among great masses of the educated everywhere. The popular idea was that people prevailed by virtue of the struggle for existence, in which the strong and cunning get the better of the weak and confiding and that every man is for himself alone. Some carried it so far that it coincided with the Imperialistic doctrine that it was necessary for stronger peoples and nations to subdue the weaker ones for the general good.

It would be hard to underestimate the vast and far-reaching effect which the evolutionary theory has had on thought in general from its beginnings in the middle of the century through to the present day. All fields of thought were affected, philosophy, history, science, sociology, religion.

Perhaps the first field of thought to be affected was the philosophical. The eminent English philosopher Herbert Spencer had been moving toward a doctrine of evolution even before Darwin had published The Origin of Species. This theory he made the basis and guide in all human affairs in the world of nature, and in his preparation and treatment of material he has been unsurpassed in the accuracy of his analytical and deductive method. He was widely studied by the general public, and is perhaps the most convincing evidence that can be adduced, of the intellectual energy of the Victorian Age.

In all studies, as well as the sciences, the analytical method of tracing back to beginnings and recounting an evolutionary development, became evidenced as the correct approach to a complete understanding. Any belief, any custom, any institution, was examined to discern its gradual growth from primitive beginnings to its final form. All the fields of human interest underwent this general socializing and psychologizing tendency. Evolution introduced a whole new scale of values. In view of this new theory the worst possible state was to remain static or unprogressive. What was desirable for any institution or individual was to be considered progressive.

The advent of the scientific biological theory of evolution into a century dominated by the religious view of intuitive emotional contact with a personal God who answered prayers, punished and rewarded in an after life, and had brought forth a world at His command, was indeed an astounding contrast to the conventionally accepted view. However, since the theory of evolution had been proved to the satisfaction of most minds, and since man was acquiring the scientific method of reasoning, there was nothing left for man to do with this astounding theory but to adjust and integrate it with religious belief. Religious leaders and laymen, overwhelmed by the increasing prestige of science, came more and more in the last decade of the nineteenth century to seek God, not outside the realm of science,

but in some concept of that science itself. To such men the gospel of Evolution appealed as just the new faith needed to bring religion and science together again.

To the optimists evolution took the place of Providence, and God became the indwelling force in evolution, guiding and directing it through long ages until at last his masterpiece, man, appeared. They reflected that after all man has been the outcome of cosmic forces; so they sought in the very worship and deification of evolution, in the vigorous acceptance of it, and rejoicing in its ends, a worthy ideal for human life, and a guarantee that, if man but made his own the ends of cosmic power, he could still triumph with the course of nature. The most optimistic phase of this new belief was the conception of a purpose in the world, that man's ideals and struggles did matter to Nature, and that some day man's aspirations would be fulfilled.

The pessimists took a deterministic or fatalistic view of evolution. Beneath the immutable laws of Nature which had caused plant and animal life and the world itself to evolve from lower to higher forms they could see no hopeful plan. The idea of mechanical determinism saw the ultimate extinction of human life and led men to see the world as a cosmic despair. To them, the survival of the fittest embodied Huxley's pessimistic view of nature as a "gladiator's show", with every organism red in tooth and claw, ravenous and destructive as a wolf. This constant struggle

was something that had been predetermined and was as much a uniform law of life as Newton's laws of physics. It was distinctly a scientific concept.

3. How Hardy's Concept of the Absolute Grew Out of Nineteenth Century Scientific Thought

Thomas Hardy, like most thoughtful writers of the nineteenth century, could hardly have escaped the influence of the scientific thought of the time. In general, his scepticism, and in particular, his concept of that Ultimate in thought which is sometimes referred to as the Absolute, sometimes as the "God idea", can be attributed in part, at least, to the influence of the dominant intellectual forces of the age in which he lived.

Precisely to set limits and bounds to this influence would be very difficult, if not impossible, and is not to be attempted here. It is a well known fact that people are born with distinctly defined proclivities for certain ways of interpreting experience. The trend of an age only sharpens the quality of the interpretation and colors its expression to fit a certain phase of the times. To Hardy, the more dramatically tragic aspects of life would have been the more obvious aspects regardless of the age in which he lived. The fact that he was born in an age of scientific materialism served only to make his view of the world a little darker than it would otherwise have been.

When we say that the various conceptions which Hardy had of the ultimate activating principle of the universe have arisen out of the scientific thought of the age, we mean, specifically speaking, that they have arisen out of the theory of evolution. A characteristic expression is found in the poem "A Plaint to Man", where he tells us that man emerged out of the den of Time and gained percipience as he grew from shapeless slime into a fleshly form. Again we find him justifying his choice of a title for his Absolute on the ground that it is expressive of a certain aspect of the evolutionary theory. In replying to Mr. Edmund Wright, a critic of The Dynasts, he says:

I quite agree with you in holding that the word 'Will' does not perfectly fit the idea to be conveyed - a vague thrusting or urging internal force in no predetermined direction. But it has become accepted in philosophy for want of a better, and is hardly likely to be supplanted by another, unless a highly appropriate one could be found, which I doubt. The word that you suggest - Impulse - seems to me to imply a driving power behind it; also a spasmodic movement unlike that of, say, the tendency of an ape to become a man and other such processes.¹

The evolutionary theory of course had a transforming effect upon man's concept of God. The tendency toward disbelief in an anthropomorphic God had been developing for some time among western intellectuals, but it was not until after the advent of the evolutionary theory that it became so widespread as to be fully recognized by theologians. This

¹Letter quoted in Florence Emily Hardy, Later Years of Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan Co., 1930), p. 175.

new theory seemed to offer positive proof that all living things, including man, had arisen from the lowest forms of life, and generally, through a system of the survival of the fittest in a struggle for existence, had evolved to present forms. The thinker of the latter part of the nineteenth century could not see how a God who was seemingly so impersonal as to have evolved man from infinitesimal forms over aeons and aeons of time could be an omnipotent, personal, man-like, or anthropomorphic Deity. To hold the old Hebrew concept of God as a stern, irascible old man, the monarchical ruler of the universe, whose emotional reactions were uncertain, was no longer compatible with the new trend of thought evoked by science.

Thomas Hardy has little patience with this anthropomorphic concept of Deity. Such a notion moves him to ridicule and irony. In the poem "A Philosophical Fantasy" we hear the voice of God speaking:

Another such a vanity
 In witless weak humanity
 Is thinking that of those all
 Through space at my disposal
 Man's shape needs resemble
 Mine, that makes zodiacs tremble!¹

A well-known poem of Hardy's entitled "God's Funeral", is one which he describes as "a poem on the gradual decline and extinction in the human race of an anthropomorphic God of the King of Dahomey type."² The first stanzas of this

¹Thomas Hardy, Winter Woods (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928), "A Philosophical Fantasy," p. 120.

²Quoted in Florence Emily Hardy, Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 147.

poem envision a slowly moving procession of people following a mystic form which at first seems man-like and then changes to an amorphous cloud of marvelous size. The masses attending God's funeral are heard to say:

O man-projected Figure, of late
 Imazed as we, thy knell who shall
 survive,
 Whence come it we were tempted to
 create
 One whom we can no longer keep alive?

Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
 We gave him justice as the ages rolled,
 Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
 And long suffering, and mercies manifold.

And, tricked by our own early dream
 And need of solace, we grew self deceived,
 Our making soon our maker did we
 deem,
 And what had imagined we believed.

Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,
 Uncompromising rude reality
 Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,
 Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be.¹

Since the traditional conception of God seemed well on the way to disappearance, some new terminology seemed necessary in which to express a more rational idea, if not of Deity, at least of some sort of ultimate and activating principle. As the century advanced certain words expressive of less distinctly Christian or less supernatural ideas began slowly to acquire capital letters and some connotations of sublimity. Some of the most popular titles in this

¹Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928), "God's Funeral," p. 307.

new vocabulary were: Nature, Cosmic Energy, "a stream of tendency which makes for righteousness," "the Infinite and Eternal Energy from whence all things proceed."

Since Hardy was an outstanding representative of this new group of rationalistic thinkers whose minds conceived of God as an impersonal force rather than a personality, it is not surprising to find in his works a variety of titles for the Absolute. In one of his early novels, Desperate Remedies, he observes that people in their cool moments of rationality address the Supreme Being as Chance or Law. In the poem "Fragment" he observes that men have different titles for God:

"O we are waiting for one called God,"
 said they,
 Though by some the Will, or Force, or Laws;
 And, vaguely, by some, the Ultimate Cause.¹

Thus we see arising out of the evolutionary theory new concepts which substituted for the personal Deity an impersonal Force. So also do we see the influence of these new concepts on Hardy in his choice of such titles as Time, Chance, and Nature.

¹Collected Poems, "Fragment," p. 482.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CONCEPTS OF THE ABSOLUTE AS TIME, CHANCE, AND NATURE

1. The Absolute Conceived as Time and Chance

In metaphysics and philosophy the term 'Absolute' usually means the ultimate principle of explanation of the universe. Thus it may be called a metaphysical definition of God. As such the word has three great connotations in systematic philosophy.

In one sense the Absolute is considered as all-comprehensive, that is, including all possible distinctions. It is considered to be the only reality. Under this concept it follows that there is only one thing in the world, all apparently distinct things being parts or aspects without an independent reality. Thus the Absolute is simply the universe, with the added connotation that its principle of being is necessarily one. This conception of the Absolute has its culmination in Abstract Idealism and Pantheism, the last mentioned being the doctrine that there is no God but the combined forces and laws which are manifested in the existing universe. In this concept the universe conceived of as a whole is God.

In a second sense the Absolute is that which transcends all finiteness or determination, and so becomes the equivalent of the unknowable. This is the concept which in

itself constitutes Agnosticism.

The third concept of the Absolute is that of the unlimited and perfect being, freed from all necessary relations, a First Cause of things. This is the God of Theism, Realism, Materialism, and Spiritualism.

When we speak of Hardy's concept of the Absolute, we mean his concept of a First Cause and guiding principle of the universe. If we are going to accept this meaning as our postulate, we cannot strictly say that the terms Time and Chance have the same meaning as the term Absolute. However, their connotations bear a certain relationship to the term Absolute, and as such, an understanding of them is essential in forming a basis for a study of Hardy's later concepts.

At the beginning of his career as a writer we find Hardy making much use of the terms Time, Chance, and Nature as approximately equivalent to the creative and directive principle. However, we must not presume that there was any particular time at which he ceased to use these terms and adopted new ones. On the contrary, we find references to Time, Chance, and Nature in these senses in some of his later as well as his earliest poems. The majority of Hardy's poems are not dated and some poems written as early as 1866 were first published in volumes coming out from 1898 on through 1922. So it is with reservations that one attempts to trace in the poems a specific development of the poet's

conception of the Absolute. However, one is perfectly safe in making the statement that there is in this respect one marked difference between the poems written before 1893 and those written after this date. These later poems show a decided preference for the term Will as a designation for the Ultimate. The date 1893 is a tentative one; the only reason it is given is that it is the date affixed to the poem, "He Wonders About Himself," the first dated poem which uses the term Will.

Of all the titles under which Hardy addresses his Absolute, the designation Time, is the most difficult of exact definition. This is because it is both abstract and ambiguous. It is to be noted that not in all instances does it connote the Absolute. In some instances it serves as a personification of the passage of the years. In the early poem "She, to Him," dated 1866, the term Time is used in both senses. The first mention of the term, as we see from the second line, implies only the passage of the years and what is brought thereby. The second occurrence is in a reference to a malevolent Absolute:

When you shall see me in the toils of Time
 My landed beauties carried off from me,
 My eyes no longer stars as in their prime,
 My name forgot of Maiden Fair and Free;
 Remembering mine the loss is, not the blame,
 That Sportsman Time but rears his brood to kill....¹

¹Collected Poems, "She, to Him," p. 11.

Again in the poem "The Absolute Explains" the word is definitely used with Absolute signification.

In fine, Time is a mock, - yea such!
 As he might well confess:
 Yet hath he been believed in much,
 Though lately, under stress
 Of science, less.¹

In The Mayor of Casterbridge, published in 1886, we find a characteristic conception of Time as a malevolently deterministic force. As the Mayor's wife is plodding along, she has "the hard, half apathetic expression of one who deems anything possible at the hands of Time and Chance, except, perhaps, fair play. The first phase was the work of Nature, the second probably of civilization."²

Here we see Hardy putting still another interpretation upon the word Time. According to the author, the term is not synonymous with the word Nature; instead, Time is the work 'of' Nature. The only interpretation we can put on the word Nature as used here is that of an agent, force, or principle viewed as creating, controlling, and guiding the universe. In a general sense, when Hardy says that Time is the work of Nature, he means that the world's continuation in time and space from century to century, is the plan of Nature. However, as used here to refer to Time's reactions upon individual human beings, the word carries a more vivid connotation. Its implication is that Nature's intentions

¹Collected Poems, "The Absolute Explains," p. 720.

²Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge (New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d.), p. 3.

are malevolent and the passage of the years serves only to carry these intentions into effect.

In the poem "Amabel," dated 1865, we have the word Time used in its most specific sense, that of carrying out a special law of Nature, that law of sex which assures the preservation of the species. A lover muses over the changes that have taken place in his former sweetheart Amabel. He realizes, with a touch of sadness, that she will replace his love with that of another in order that the race may be prolonged. As he wonders who has taken his place in her heart, he says:

Knowing that, though Love cease,
Love's race shows no decrease;
All find in dorp or dell
 An Amabel.

I felt that I could creep
To some housetop and weep
That Time the tyrant fell
 Ruled Amabel.¹

As we have seen, Time signifies the carrying to completion of certain laws of Nature. Where these laws are concerned, human conduct is predictable. But this conduct which results from carrying out Nature's laws comes at the expense of the individual's higher more spiritual aspirations. Therefore, we arrive at the conclusion that Hardy holds to a pessimistic deterministic conception of Time.

On the other hand, the word Chance, which Hardy

¹Collected Poems, "Amabel," p. 6.

often couples with the word Time, connotes just the opposite of determinism. In a scheme where Chance prevails there are no rules by which conduct may be predicted. Anything may happen, be it evil or fortunate. In spite of the fact that the results of Chance may be happy, the word does not usually convey such an idea to us. It has come to have a singularly negative connotation. In fact, when the term is used to stand for the dominant quality in a world scheme, it corrupts our moral sanity. A world with no motives or plan for good, and no reward for actions is a world of chaos, and as such is the most horrible of all concepts. Nevertheless, this is the concept for which Hardy is widely famous. It is not his ultimate world view, but the one which he pictures the most often. This is the view given us in the well-known poem, "Hap," the title of course being only another word for Chance. Hardy tells us that he could bear with some ease the pain of living if he could only feel that a Being more powerful than himself had willed and meted out to him the tears he shed:

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
 And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
 Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
 And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
 These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
 Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.¹

Here of course "Hap" signifies that to Hardy caprice is God. However, Hardy gives the word still a different con-

¹Collected Poems, "Hap," p. 7.

notation when he says that chance is the result of civilization. Just what the writer means by this is difficult to understand. Does he mean that the increasing complexity of life makes the outcome of human relationships less predictable, less meaningful, and less just? Or, does he mean that this element of Chance stands out more vividly because it is placed against a background of nineteenth century science? To have to admit the unpredictability of men's actions was all the more disheartening when a scientific world was daily scrutinizing life with the hope of reducing all its elements to a few immutable laws. At any rate the Hardy view is that men are the slaves of this Chance element which results as a by-product of civilization. The poem "Ditty" expresses this thought in a phraseology which is typical of the poet:

And Devotion droops her glance
 To recall
 What bond-servants of Chance
 We are all.¹

2. The Absolute Conceived as Nature

Few terms used in philosophy have a wider or looser use, or involve greater ambiguity, than does this term Nature. Historically it is used in three senses. First, it is used to mark off, in a most definite way, the world from God. In this sense Nature is looked on as being the dynamic agent concerned in bringing about the changes in

¹Collected Poems, "Ditty," p. 13.

the world. This conception of Nature as a cause at large is used by Comte in his philosophy of Positivism as a sign of the metaphysical stage of thought as distinguished from the theological, where God is the active cause. In the second sense, the term Nature is used to identify the world with God. Here Nature is conceived as an independent, self-active agent, as in various forms of Pantheism and Mysticism. In the third sense, the term is used to afford a connecting principle between God and the other details of the world. Here, Nature is a subordinate principle, a secondary cause, intervening between God as the efficient principle and the details of existence. This is the general view accepted by theology.

No attempt will be made to place Hardy's interpretation in any of the three categories listed above for several reasons. First of all, the writer often warned his readers that he was not a philosopher propounding any particular system of philosophical thought, but a creative artist whose works were provisional impressions only. Second, such an attempt would be almost impossible because in the medium of poetry, the mode of expression is not sufficiently accurate to warrant the drawing of definite conclusions.

Generally speaking, we may say that Hardy uses the term Nature in two different senses. In one sense he uses it to designate the sum total of physical existence as separate from an Absolute, and in a second sense, he uses it to mean an agent, force, or principle viewed as creating and

controlling the universe.

Although the term Nature is used more often than any other, it is not the one which carries with it the most intellectual thought. This is due to the fact that so often the term is used to mean the sum total of physical existence as separate and distinct from an Absolute. In the following quotation from the early novel Desperate Remedies we have an excellent example of the use of the term. Hardy, in attempting to describe the contradictory nature of one of the characters says: "Like Nature in the tropics, with her hurricanes and the subsequent luxuriant vegetation effacing their ravages, Miss Aldclyffe compensated for her outbursts by an excess of generosity afterwards."¹

For the remainder of this chapter Nature and her laws will be considered from the standpoint of Pantheism. In other words, Nature and her laws will be considered as being identical with the Absolute. Although no attempt is made to classify Hardy as a Pantheist, there is much in his thought which reminds us of this theory. Nature, as in the case of Time, is identified with the laws of preservation and perpetuation of the species in its struggle for existence. The first law to be considered is that of the survival of the fittest. In Hardy's scheme of Nature, as in Darwin's, the strong survive by preying upon the weak. The poem which

¹Thomas Hardy, Desperate Remedies (New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d.), p. 134.

best illustrates this particular law is "In a Wood," published first in an early novel, The Woodlanders.

But, having entered in
Great growths and small
Show them to men akin -
Combatants all!
Sycamore shoulders oak,
Vines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
Elms stout and tall.¹

In the poem "The Mother Mourns" we see the children of Nature in the plant and animal kingdoms copying Mother Nature's ruthlessness. Here we have a Nature so 'red in tooth and claw' that the poet sees the species dwindling under the terrific impact of the struggle.

No more such! . . . My species are dwindling,
My forests grow barren,
My popinjays fall from their toppings,
My larks from their strain.

My leopardine beauties are rarer,
My tusky ones vanish
My children have aped mine own slaughters
To quicken my wane.²

The second great law of Nature in its struggle for the preservation of the species is that of the maintenance of life through laws of sex attraction. Hardy sees love as a lure which tricks individuals in order that the species may be perpetuated. The poem "The Mother Mourns" expresses this thought explicitly. Mother Nature is mourning because nineteenth century man through the influence of science has

¹Collected Poems, "In a Wood," p. 56.

²Ibid., "The Mother Mourns," p. 102.

discovered her tricks. In speaking of this new man of science Mother Nature complains that she

Reckons gross and ignoble my teaching,
Immoral my story,
My love-lights a lure that my species
May gather and gain.¹

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, who pessimistically considers life a burden, has been so hoodwinked by Dame Nature that, in her love for Angel Clare, she quite forgets that she may pass on this gift of life to others. Besides Tess, there are three other girls in love with Angel Clare. Hardy says, "They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law - an emotion which they neither expected nor desired."²

Nature, in her law for the preservation of the species, is not concerned with man's higher aspirations. As long as the species continues on in time and space it matters not to Nature whether any higher types of men are evolved. This thought is especially well brought out in that early poem of 1866, "At a Bridal," sub-titled "Nature's Indifference." The person speaking in the poem is a lover whose former sweetheart has married someone else. He muses over the thought that perhaps there could have been superior offspring from the union of true love, but that now the line established will be a stolid one possessed of no high aims.

¹Collected Poems, "The Mother Mourns," p. 101.

²Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d.), p. 212.

And, grieved that lives so matched should miscompose,
 Each mourn that double waste; and question dare
 To the Great Dame whence incarnation flows
 Why those high-purposed children never were:
 What will she answer? That she does not care
 If the race all such sovereign types unknowns.¹

Such is Hardy's concept of Nature as identified with her laws. It remains to examine his concept of Nature as a First Cause and guiding force of the universe, a point of view which is, at least, allied to the theological. When considered from the standpoint of Pantheism, we found Nature to be deterministic inasmuch as the outcome of certain natural laws could be predicted. However, when considered as a First Cause, Nature is decidedly indeterminate. Hardy pictures her as having no plan for world advancement, which comes as the result of blindness or unconsciousness. One of the most revealing examples of this particular view is to be found in a letter sent to and printed in The Academy and Literature of May 17, 1902, concerning a review of Maeterlinck's Apology for Nature.

In your review of M. Maeterlinck's book you quote with seeming approval his vindication of Nature's ways, which is (as I understand it) to the effect that, though she does not appear to be just from our point of view, she may practice a scheme of morality unknown to us, in which she is just. Now, admit but the bare possibility of such a hidden morality and she would go out of court without the slightest stain on her character, so certain would she feel that indifference to morality was beneath her greatness. . . .

¹Collected Poems, "At a Bridal," p. 8.

In conclusion we may note that the poet attributes two diametrically opposite qualities to Nature, just as he gives one interpretation to Time and another to Chance. Time is deterministic in that she carries out fixed laws with no variations. All of her present and future actions grow out of her past actions, and as such are predictable. Chance, on the other hand, is that indeterminable element in life which makes the outcome of human relationships so unpredictable. Nature when identified with her laws is deterministic. When thought of as the maker of these laws she is an indeterminate, unknown quantity with no plan for the universe, unless it be a blind, haphazard one. Her actions are unpredictable because they are not based on reason, and are not instigated by sympathy for suffering humanity.

CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF THE ABSOLUTE AS THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE LIVES OF THREE HARDY CHARACTERS

In the field of ethics, determinism may be defined as the name given to the theory that all moral choice is the determined or necessary result of previously existing mental, physical, or environmental causes. It may be held that every action is causally connected externally with man's environmental agents, and internally with his motives and impulses. In accordance with this theory a person cannot be held responsible for what he does.

There are two types of determinism, one hard, dogmatic, and mechanistic, and the other, broad and non-mechanistic. Mechanism implies that the laws of the universe are fixed and unvarying in their operation and that all new phenomena can be fitted into a limited set of categories, or completely explained by a limited number of principles. Its dogmatism lies in the assumption that we are in possession of these principles of explanation for all future phenomena of the universe. Thus the world is interpreted as being devoid of genuine novelty.

The broader interpretation of determinism differs from the dogmatic mechanistic interpretation in that its system of cause and effect allows in it a place for novelty. According to the classical mechanistic conception an effect

cannot "contain more" than its cause; nor can it be qualitatively different. In other words, a cause must be equal to its effect. In the broader interpretation of determinism, the effect contains more in it than the cause, which means that it contains something new in it not found in the cause. Since the effect of a cause may involve conditions different in some respect from those which give rise to it, then, in this way, a new total set of conditions is generated, and the conditions under which the original cause will operate next time are not exactly the same. Thus new causal factors may continually arise, and at the same time influence the circumstances under which the old operate. We may state the matter in other terms. Laws of nature are illustrated repeatedly, in certain patterns or kinds of relationships. But the specific conditions under which they are illustrated are never the same. That is, while the laws do not vary, the facts do; for each fact is an individual or unique occurrence. But now among the many new facts a new uniformity or pattern or repeated relationship may be exhibited, so that a law is added to the old. Thus when the earth was first formed, this set of conditions involved geographic laws. Then came physical laws. Along with the physical laws, repeatedly followed under the varying conditions, there were gradually manifested what we call biological laws. As living organisms developed, that set of conditions constituting mind or mental activity arose. And thus together with the phys-

ical and biological laws exemplified under these conditions, psychological laws came into being. Then the development of human organisms resulted in the conditions of society, and social laws came into being. Thus without abandoning the assumption of determinism, the existence of novelty and variety in the universe may be explained. Determinists of this latter kind feel that a man's character is determined by his heredity, his social environment, his circumstances, and his education, and if all the causes are understood, then man's conduct can be predicted.

Both hard and broad determinists of the last decade of the nineteenth century felt that freedom was an illusion, arising from the fact that we are unconscious of the causes which determine our conduct. This line of reasoning seemed very impressive at the time and found general acceptance especially among those who had grown accustomed to hold the physical sciences in a certain veneration.

The believer in freedom of the will considers himself a free creative source of activity. He does not think of his actions as having been determined by any force or principle external to himself. Moreover, he contends that although a person is influenced by his education, traditions, and social customs, he is not determined by them. This believer in free-will weighs and deliberates, but when he chooses, his choice is free, and he is held morally responsible. If his actions are determined by his former choices,

by his appetites and passions, habits and traditions, then these are all parts of himself, and so thus far his determination is self-determination, or freedom. Such a believer in the freedom of the will puts great emphasis upon the individual's assumption of responsibility for his own actions, and recognizes the emotion of regret as an evidence of the will's essential freedom. He reasons that in a scheme of determinism, regret would be senseless because an individual could hardly assume responsibility for an action when its determining factor lies external to himself.

In the following pages an analysis will be made of the deterministic beliefs of three Hardy characters. The author himself tells us the source of these beliefs in a significant quotation from Tess of the D'Urbervilles. In speaking of Angel Clare's life at Talbothay's dairy, he says: "Considering his position he became wonderfully free from the chronic melancholy which is taking hold of the civilized races with the decline of belief in a beneficent Power."¹ Thus Hardy sounds the keynote of his own deterministic beliefs as well as those of many of his characters. He tells us what his characters believe and how the courses of their lives run, but he does not recognize the causal relationship between the two. It remains for twentieth century psychology to do that. So in view of this fact,

¹Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d.), p. 152.

the remainder of this chapter will place emphasis upon the psychological effect of these beliefs upon the inner mental and outer physical lives of certain Hardy characters. In conclusion, the pragmatic values implicit in a philosophy of freedom as opposed to a philosophy of compulsion will be examined.

Eustacia Vye, the heroine of The Return of the Native, is a young girl whose one desire is to be loved to madness. Contrary to her own wishes, she is forced to live with her grandfather on a lonely spot in Egdon Heath. Since coming there she has, like a chameleon, begun to take on the dark tone of her surroundings. Inwardly and eternally unreconciled to living there, she feels an all-absorbing love to be the only thing big enough to drive away the loneliness of her days. She would much rather have lived in the near-by watering place of Budmouth where numerous soldiers paraded the streets and life offered gaiety in the form of dancing and flirting. Thus Eustacia hates Nature because she feels that it is against her in her efforts to find a man in whose love she can find happiness.

She could show a most reproachful look at times, but it was directed less against human beings than against certain creatures of her mind, the chief of these being Destiny, through whose interference she dimly fancied it arose that love alighted only on gliding youth - that any love she might win would sink simultaneously with the sand in the glass. She thought of it with an evergrowing consciousness of cruelty,

which tended to breed actions of reckless unconventionality, framed to snatch a year's, a week's, or even an hour's passion from anywhere while it could be won.¹

Thus we see the self-induced mental state of Eustacia to be one of hopelessness brought on by her belief that Destiny is against her. In her efforts to snatch what she can from life before Destiny takes it away, she becomes reckless and unconventional; this in turn causes her to make impulsive decisions which change the entire course of her life. Here we see working a long chain of causality each link of which fastens on to another link, and all having their starting point in the belief that Destiny was her enemy, not her friend.

Eustacia's destiny, like that of the other feminine characters to be analyzed, takes a decidedly hostile turn at the point in her life where she is called on to make a momentous decision. It is a decision which can make or ruin her life, and this she realizes. But here again the determining factor in her decision arises out of her pessimistic conception of the Absolute. This feeling that Destiny is against her in her efforts to be good gives her a feeling of indifference toward the moral aspects of life. So we find her grasping impulsively at an offer of illicit love

¹Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d.), p. 75.

as a means of escape from her troubles. Through a misunderstanding Eustacia is separated from her husband Clym. Her former lover, Wildeve, has come into a small fortune and wishes to leave his wife. He offers to take Eustacia with him to Paris where she has always longed to live. As Eustacia debates the matter we have these words, at the conclusion of which she departs to meet her lover and her death:

"Can I go, can I go?" she moaned. "He's not great enough for me to give myself to - he does not suffice for my desire! If he had been a Saul or a Bonapart - ah! But to break my marriage vow for him - it is too poor a luxury! And I have no money to go alone! And if I could, what comfort to me? I must drag on next year, as I have dragged on this year, and the year after that as before. How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! I do not deserve my lot!" she cried in a frenzy of bitter revolt. "O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world. I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures of me, who have done no harm to Heaven at all!"¹

To the believer in free-will and the advocate of staunchness of character, Eustacia's statement that she has tried to be a fine character seems rather far-fetched, for in no place, other than the preceding quotation, has Hardy pictured her as struggling with herself. Instead, she is constantly revolting against the life she is forced to live, but she makes no positive effort to free herself

¹The Return of the Native, p. 396.

honorably from the factors which hold her back from achieving her heart's desire. Had Eustacia entertained a positive hopeful outlook on life and considered the Absolute as beneficent, perhaps she would have had the courage to attempt a more honorable means of escape from her marital troubles and the gloom of Egdon Heath.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is also the victim of her own pessimism. By the time she meets Angel Clare, she has suffered so much ill-fortune that she has developed a fatalistic attitude, the adoption of which precludes any freedom of the will which she might otherwise have had, and in its place puts a too great submissiveness. After her engagement to Angel Clare is announced at the dairy we have these significant words:

Tess was now carried along upon the wings of the hours without a sense of a will. The word had been given; the number of the day written down. Her naturally bright intelligence had begun to admit the fatalistic convictions common to field-folk and those who associate more extensively with natural phenomena than with their fellow-creatures; and she accordingly drifted into that passive responsiveness to all things her lover suggested, characteristic of the frame of mind.¹

But after her marriage there is no more happiness for Tess. On the evening after the ceremony she impulsively tells Angel of her previous seduction by Alec D'Urberville. Her husband is so overcome that he leaves her instantly and goes to South America to think things over. After his departure Tess secures a place as a farm hand, and it is

¹Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 259.

while she is employed that her former seducer returns to plague her with his attentions and offers of help. In desperation Tess writes time and again to Angel but never receives any reply. On receiving word that her mother is ill, Tess temporarily gives up her employment and goes home. While there her father dies, and the family is informed that his death has automatically cancelled the lease on their home. As the family prepares to spend a last night in their home, it seems to Tess in her desperation that the moment which calls for a decision has come at last. As she sits down to think she decides to write a last appeal to Angel Clare. Hardy describes her mental state as follows:

Tess remained where she was for a long while, till a sudden rebellious sense of injustice caused the region of her eyes to swell with the rush of hot tears thither. Her husband, Angel Clare himself, had, like others, dealt out hard measure to her, surely he had! She had never before admitted such a thought; but he had surely! Never in her life - she could swear it from the bottom of her soul - had she ever intended to do wrong; yet those hard judgments had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?¹

Then the Durbeyfield children begin to sing:

Here we suffer grief and pain,
Here we meet to part again
In Heaven we part no more.²

Tess turns from them to hide her tears:

If she could only believe what the children were singing; if she were only sure, how different

¹Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 454.

²Ibid., p. 455.

all would now be; how confidently she would leave them to Providence and their future kingdom! But, in default of that, it behoved her to do something; to be their Providence; for to Tess, as to not a few millions of others, there was ghastly satire in the poet's lines -

Not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come.

To her and her like, birth itself was an ordeal of degrading personal compulsion, whose gratuitousness nothing in the result seemed to justify, and at best could only palliate.¹

The next day the family starts for a near-by town where lodgings have been promised them. When they reach there they are notified that the rooms have been taken by some one else. This forces them to spend the night in the court-yard of a church. To the surprise of Tess, Alec D'Urberville appears again to offer help. Once more she refuses, but paradoxically enough, the next time we hear of Tess, she is living at a fashionable watering-place with her former seducer.

Tess's decision to go away with a man she despises is determined just as much by her belief in an indifferent Providence as it is by her family's poverty. The turning point in her life comes that last night in her old home when she makes up her mind that she must be her family's Providence. Thus her pessimistic mental state resulting from her lack of faith in a benevolent Absolute may be said to be the causal factor in her eventual decision to go back to Alec D'Urberville. This one decision determined the

¹Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 455.

downward course of her life which led her to commit murder and to be executed in Winchester jail. Had Tess believed like many that 'the Lord would provide a way' she would have been imbued with the usual optimism, and courage which comes from the possession of an all-abiding faith. With this hopefulness she would have been psychologically equipped to consider herself the free creative source of her life's happenings. As a result she would have had the courage to exert herself enough to find another position whereby she could provide for her own and her family's support. And most important of all, she would have been free to resume her old life with Angel Clare who returns to claim her only a short time after she has taken up her abode with Alec D'Urberville.

Tess and Eustacia are afflicted with a chronic state of pessimism due to their lack of belief in a beneficent Absolute. Sue Bridehead, the heroine of Jude the Obscure, is affected suddenly and drastically by a great sorrow with which her mind is unable to cope. Though more brilliant, she is less well-balanced mentally than Tess or even Eustacia. She entertains advanced and erratic ideas, chief of which is an aversion to legal marriage. After her own legal marriage to a middle-aged school teacher she leaves to live in adultery with one whom she loves, her cousin Jude. A number of years later Jude's small son by Arabella takes the lives of Sue's children and then his own. Before the death of the children

she had pictured the Absolute as an indifferent Power; after their death he takes the form of a vengeful Deity who is trying to punish her for having violated one of man's social laws. At other times the Absolute is a higher Power who demands that she resort to self-abnegation in her attempt to atone for her sin of breaking her legal marriage now. There are moments when Sue realizes that she is resorting to superstition, yet she is unable to rid herself of the obsession that she must make amends to this new-found God of her imagination and her sorrow. In the following quotation we are given her contrasting views of the Absolute, those before the tragedy and those after it:

Vague and quaint imaginings had haunted Sue, in the days when her intellect scintillated like a star, that the world resembled a stanza or melody composed in a dream; it was wonderfully excellent to the half aroused intelligence, but hopelessly absurd at the full waking; that the First Cause worked automatically like a somnambulist, and not reflectively like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity. But affliction makes opposing forces loom anthropomorphous; and those ideas were now exchanged for a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a persecutor.

"We must conform!" she said mournfully. "All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!"

"It is only against man and senseless circumstance," said Jude.

"True!" she murmured. "What have I been thinking of! I am getting as superstitious as a savage! . . ."

But whoever or whatever our foe may be, I am cowed into submission. I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprise. I am beaten, beaten!"¹

Sue goes on to tell Jude that she has begun to feel that she is still the wife of Richard Phillotson. A few weeks later Jude finds her praying alone in a near-by Church, and she tells him she has come there because she feels herself to be such a miserable wretched creature. Then she says:

"I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show me this! Arabella's child killing mine was a judgment - the right slaying the wrong. What, what shall I do! I am such a vile creature - too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings!"²

Jude replies that she makes him hate Christianity or mysticism, or Sacerdotalism because it has caused such a deterioration in her. A few weeks later, in spite of Jude's heart-broken protests, Sue fulfills her sense of duty and self-abnegation by returning to Phillotson.

The person skilled in observing life objectively might say that the determining factor in the downward course of Sue's life was the death of her children. However, it must be remembered that such actions in themselves do not always change lives. Accompanying mental responses are often the real factors in the altering of destinies. In other words, it is not so much what happens to a person as how it is accepted. The subjective thinker, or the psychol-

¹Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York: Harper and Brothers, n. d.), p. 407.

²Ibid., p. 416.

ogist skilled in interpreting people's reactions to phenomena would say that it was entirely Sue's mental response to the tragedy which caused her to leave Jude. Her response is decidedly not a normal one. The average woman would have married Jude legally and have forgotten her grief in tending to the needs of other children. But to a mind tending toward the psychopathic this superstitious concept of the Absolute serves as a causal factor in a decision to return to a legal husband. Thus, by one momentous decision does Sue condemn herself to a miserable life with a man whose physical attentions to her are obnoxious.

Philosophically speaking, what are the relative advantages or disadvantages of the type of determinism practiced by these Hardy characters? The twentieth century psychologist and the spiritual adviser or minister will answer emphatically that there are no advantages whatever in this type of determinism, or in any type of determinism, for that matter. Moreover, they can tell you of the countless disadvantages of this type of thinking. The psychiatrist will tell you that his job consists in reconditioning people's thinking so they can better adjust themselves to their environment, and attain a measure of happiness and success in life. He will tell you that, as a rule, people who are courageous, optimistic, and possessed of a firm belief in the goodness of God, are not patients of his. He never sees enter his door the valiant fighter, the spirit-

ual optimist, or the person who willingly looks himself in the face, acknowledges his weaknesses, and takes full blame for them. Instead, he sees people who are wracked by fears and compulsions of all sorts, and those who have lost faith in God, themselves, and their fellow-man. He sees characters like Eustacia who wreck their lives by impulsive decisions because they fear that the future holds nothing better, or people like Sue who break down mentally when afflicted by sorrows. Although of these three, Tess is the most normal, the psychiatrist occasionally sees people of her type enter his door because they have lost faith in the ability of God and the world to provide a means of living for them. The first thing the psychiatrist would do for these people would be to lead them to see that they can help create their own destinies by considering themselves as free creative sources of their lives' happenings. He will try to makethem realize that they have been excusing their character weaknesses by placing the blame on forces external to themselves. And last, he will try to give them hope and confidence with which to banish the fear which lies at the base of all pessimism.

The minister or spiritual adviser will tell you that the chief disadvantage in a philosophy of determinism is that it has no place in it for a scheme of regeneration. The first step to be taken toward spiritual regeneration is that of genuine regret at wrong-doing. The ability to experience regret of necessity implies that the will is free.

It would be impossible to experience sincere regret in a scheme of determinism, for how could one experience regret at what had been already determined by forces the operation of which the individual is powerless to prevent? The next step to be taken is to lead the individual to realize that he must, as a person whose choices are free, take upon himself the full moral responsibility for all his future actions. With the help of his free will the individual performs only those actions which are instigated by the highest of motives, and in this way he atones in a spiritual way for all past wrong-doings. The last step, sometimes taken, and sometimes omitted, is to show the person in question the relation of past sin to future goodness. If past sin makes one all the more conscious of the value of future goodness, then it has some value spiritually.

CHAPTER III

THE ABSOLUTE CONCEIVED AS THE WILL

1. The Influence of Schopenhauer as Seen in Hardy's Concept of the Abstract Will

Hardy's works show evidence that he had been studying various philosophical systems as far back as 1886, the date of the publication of The Woodlanders. Nevertheless, it is not until we come to the poem "He Wonders About Himself," dated 1893, that we find any mention made of the Will, the term which is so definitely associated with the philosophy of Schopenhauer. It is to be presumed that some time between these two dates the poet became acquainted with The World as Will and Idea, and recognizing in it the closest intellectual affinity between himself and its author, he inculcated much of its terminology into the later expression of his own basic ideas. There are evidences of Schopenhauer's theory of the metaphysics of the sexes in Tess of the D'Urbervilles, published in 1891, but the term Will as used to connote an Absolute is not mentioned. However, on turning to the poems we find several instances of its use in those poems written after "He Wonders About Himself." It is not until the publication of his great masterpiece, the epic drama The Dynasts, the first volume of which came out in 1904, that we have the most complete expression of the

theory of the Will. It is quite safe to say that if Hardy had not come in contact with the work of Schopenhauer, the Over-World scenes in The Dynasts would not have contained their present phraseology, for these are the scenes which give us the characteristics of the Will.

It is impossible to set limits and bounds to the influence of Schopenhauer on Hardy's thought. Even the word 'influence' is almost too strong and definite a word for the result attained; perhaps sympathy comes nearer to it. All of Hardy's thought is basically his own and the result of his peculiarly individual temperament, rather than the result of erudition. Though he read philosophy extensively, it did no more for him than mould his already existent ideas. Such early poems as "Hap" and "Amabel" give expression to deterministic theories held when he first began his writing career. As a young man he saw the world as carrying out Nature's immutable laws in mechanical fashion, but ruled by an unconscious, unfeeling Absolute called Chance, whose plan, if any, was unfathomable. The most definite written statement as to the influence of Schopenhauer's thought on Hardy is given by the writer himself in reply to Helen Garwood. In her thesis, Thomas Hardy, An Illustration of the Philosophy of Schopenhauer, she makes this statement: "In a letter, however, which he courteously sent me in answer to an inquiry, Mr. Hardy speaks of his philosophy being a development from Schopenhauer through later philosophies."¹

¹Helen Garwood, Thomas Hardy, an Illustration of the Philosophy of Schopenhauer (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1911), p. 10.

A short resume of the chief points in Schopenhauer's theory of the Will gives us a general background which is necessary in order to see the similarity between the two writers' concepts of the Will.

Will, according to Schopenhauer, is an unconscious force or life principle which is a primary, timeless, spaceless, uncaused activity. It is the source of all phenomena, the impelling force producing the whole visible world and all life. It expresses itself in man as impulse, instinct, striving, craving. It predominates over intelligence and controls perception, memory, imagination, judgment, and reasoning. In other words it is the will to live. This Will is the essence of life in all its forms, and even of inanimate matter, and, as such, is indestructible. If one minute portion of the Will were to be completely destroyed, then all life would be destroyed because each part of the Will exists in and for the whole Will. In minerals, plants, animals, and people this Will is one and the same immanent force. Although in minerals it is too vague to be formulated, and in insects it may take the form of the Will of the species, nevertheless; it is one and the same Will for all, and is thus indivisible. The Will is absolute, autonomous, and not dependent upon anything outside itself in space or time. It exists wholly in transcendence, never in the empiric world. The individual never sees this essence of things, which is one, but only its manifestations or objec-

tifications. Human beings are objectifications of the Will; so are their actions. The world itself is the objectification of the Will in space and time.

The essence of Schopenhauer's pessimism lies in the fact that he considers this Will as aimless and unconscious. There is no plan to the universe other than the will to live and continue the world and its forms of life on into eternity. Even a greater pessimism arises from the fact that strife is an essential element of the Will. Every grade of the objectification of the Will fights for the matter, the space, and the time of the others. Animals feed on plants, and people on animals, in their efforts to live. Thus we find the will to live everywhere preying upon itself. The basis of all this willing is need, deficiency, and thus pain. Consequently the natures of brutes and men are subject to pain originally and through their very being. The wish is in its nature pain; the attainment of a wish soon results in satiety and thus ennui. As soon as one wish is satisfied another springs up to take its place. Thus happiness itself is really only cessation from pain, and so long as we are subject to willing, we can never have lasting happiness or peace.

Schopenhauer's determinism arises from the fact that he considers all of man's actions to be determined for him by his Will. Though some of man's actions can be predicted through knowledge of his motives, the inner nature of his

volitions cannot be explained from motives. What a person wills at this time, in this place, and under these circumstances can be determined by motives. However, if an individual were asked why he wills in general, or one might say, exists, then he could give no answer. Motives never determine the fact that a person wills in general, or what he wills in general. It is an illusion to believe that the will of man is free. On account of the uncaused nature of the Will itself, the necessity to which its manifestation is everywhere subjected has been overlooked, and actions are treated as free when they are not. Hence, everyone believes himself to be perfectly free, even in his individual actions, and thinks that at every moment he can commence another manner of life, which means that he can become another person. But through experience he finds to his astonishment that he is not free, but subjected to necessity; that in spite of all his resolutions and reflections he does not change his conduct, and that from the beginning of his life to the end of it, he must carry out the very character which he himself condemns. Hence, people are not like puppets pulled from without, but are like puppets which are set in motion by internal clockwork. Each bears in itself the clockwork from which its movements result. This is the will to live, manifesting itself as an untiring machine, or an irrational tendency.

This will to live expresses itself as the egoism of

the individual. Thus every person makes himself the center of the world, and has regard for his own existence and well-being before every thing else; indeed is ready to annihilate the world in order to maintain his own self. We see the terrible side of man's egoism in the lines of great tyrants, and miscreants, and in world desolating wars.

Man is primarily a willing, and not a reasoning being. Blind will is the mighty force determining the course of human life and makes use only to a certain extent of the light of reason as its medium of motives. The average person is an individual whose knowledge is subordinated to the service of constant willing.

The most decided of all the assertions of the will to live is the impulse of generation. The Will objectifies itself in the sexual impulse. Here Will is seen as a blind force which triumphs over reason. Nature impels with all her power both man and brute toward propagation. These laws of sex act without variation and without individuality, and are subject to the most exact predetermination. When Nature has attained its end with the individual, it cares nothing more for that person, animal, or plant. The preservation of the species has been its only aim.

The influence of Schopenhauer on Hardy's concept of the Will is most clearly seen in the Over World scenes of The Dynasts. The purpose of these scenes is to acquaint the reader with the true nature of the Will through the conversa-

tion of a group of spirits who survey the actions of men and nations from their places in the sky. By this ingenious device we are informed of the true nature of the Will without interference with the progress of the human story which is going on below. The Spirit of the Pities represents that element in life that sympathizes with suffering humanity. The Spirit Sinister is the evil element that delights in tormenting man. Other spirits are used to make special kinds of comments and to give information on what is happening at different points in the drama. While the Over World scenes give us the general characteristics of the abstract Will, the human story gives us an account of the dynamic Napoleon's conquest of Europe and threatened invasion of England.

Hardy gives us in the first line of the Over World scene one of the Will's most outstanding characteristics, one which is essential to a thorough understanding of that life principle as Schopenhauer conceived it and as Hardy interpreted it. This characteristic is that which enables philosophers to class Schopenhauer's thought in the category of Pantheism. In other words, it is the metaphysical oneness of the Will as it extends through every visible expression of life. This first line refers to the Will as 'immanent', a word which Hardy uses many times throughout the drama. The poet prefers this term to any other because he wishes to exclude every conception of an exterior force

essentially different from the universe and outside it. Thus we are given to understand that this Will is not a Deistic or Theistic God who stands apart and watches His world, but an indwelling force everywhere present in the most minute form of life as well as life in its highest form of expression. The poet conveys the same idea to us in a more explicit way in his poem "He Wonders About Himself" when he tells us that his Will is part of the general Will. This relation of the individual Will to the general Will is expressed several times in The Dynasts. This idea finds its clearest expression in the following philosophical phraseology:

Thus do mindless minions of the spell
 In mechanized enchantment sway and
 show
 A Will that wills above the will of each,
 Yet but the will of all conjunctively;
 A fabric of excitement, web of rage,
 That permeates as one stuff the weltering
 whole.¹

In addition to telling us of this immanence and oneness of the Will, Hardy also pictures it to us in a prose passage intended as a sort of stage setting. The Will takes the shape of a fantastic figure seen by the Spirits. From above they look down on a Europe which is a prone and emaciated figure having the Alps for its backbone, and branching mountain chains for ribs. The peoples of the various countries appear to be writhing, and vibrating with distress brought on by events which they did not cause:

¹Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1904), Vol. II, Part III, Act I, Sc. 5, p. 28.

A new and penetrating light descends on the spectacle, enduing man and things with a seeming transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity and vitalized matter included in the display.¹

The first line in the Fore Scene tells us that the Will is immanent. The second and third lines tell us that this same Will is indestructible and unconscious. Though we are told over and over that the Will is unconscious, we have only a few references to its indestructibility. This quality, as such, is one that is largely taken for granted by all who believe in God whether He be interpreted as a personal Deity or as an impersonal force. Hardy lets us know that the Will is indestructible by describing its workings with the one adjective 'eternal'. We learn that the Will is not subject to outside control by his use of the word 'automatic'. In the last two lines of the following quotation we are informed of the Will's deterministic nature. Thus, on the first page of the Fore Scene we are given a definite description of the five outstanding characteristics of the Will.

Shade of the Earth

What of the Immanent Will and Its designs?

Spirit of the Years

It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
Whose patterns, wrought by wrapt aesthetic rote,

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part I, Fore Scene, pp. 13-14.

Seem in themselves Its single listless aim,
And not their consequence.

Chorus of the Pities (aerial music)

Still thus? Still thus?
Ever unconscious!
An automatic sense
Unweeting why or whence?
Be, then, the inevitable, as of old,
Although that so it be we dare not hold!

Spirit of the Years

Hold what ye list, fond unbelieving Sprites,
You cannot swerve the pulsion of the Byss,
Which thinking on, yet weighin not Its thought,
Unchecks Its clock-like laws.¹

If only one word were chosen by which to typify Hardy's concept of the Absolute, that word would be 'unconscious'. Like the word immanent, it is used over and over again, especially in The Dynasts. However, it is far more expressive of Hardy's lifelong concept of the Absolute than is the word 'immanent'. We associate this last word with Hardy's concepts which came as a result of his study of Schopenhauer, while the word 'unconscious' represents the outcome of his first reasoning in realm of the metaphysical. A comprehensive example of the Will's unconsciousness, with its resultant aimlessness and unmorality, is given in a conversation between the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit of the Years, and the Ironic Spirits.

Spirit of the Pities

Why prompts the Will so senseless-shaped
a doing?

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part I, Fore Scene, p. 1.

Spirit of the Years

I have told thee that It works unwittingly,
As one possessed, not judging.

Semi Chorus I of Ironic Spirits (aerial music)

Of Its doings if It knew,
What It does It would not do!

Semi Chorus II

Since It knows not, what for sense
Speeds Its spinnings in the Immense?

Semi Chorus I

None; a fixed foresightless dream
Is Its whole philosopheme.

Semi Chorus II

Just so; an unconscious planning,
Like a patter raptly panning!

Chorus

Are then, Love and Light Its aim -
Good Its glory, Bad Its blame?

Nay; to alter evermore
Things from what they were before.¹

Hardy's most consistent view is that the world has no plan because the Will is unconscious. However, in The Dynasts we have several references to a predestined plan of the universe. This obviously seems like a contradiction, for when we think of a plan, we usually presume that it has been instigated by some kind of fore-thought which requires a degree of intelligence. To Hardy, this plan which he calls predestinate is not the result of thought but of instinct.

¹The Dynasts, Vol. II, Part III, Act VII, Sc. 9, pp. 245-246.

It is only the unconscious action of the Will in its effort to carry life on into eternity. The aim behind this predestined plan is the preservation of the species in its struggle for existence. We are told in the Fore Scene that people are mannikins who are wound up for the purpose of carrying out the Will's preadjusted laws. Thus we see that the Will is here identified with its laws, as in the earlier concepts of the Absolute as Time and Nature. At the conclusion of the Over World scenes Hardy gives us an imaginative conception of the laws of nature as comprising the only thought of the Will.

The Prime that willed ere wareness was,
 Whose Brain per chance is Space, whose
 Thought its laws,
 Which we as threads and streams discern,
 We may but muse on, never learn.¹

The last two lines of this quotation tell us that the true nature of the Will is unknowable. This concept coincides with that of Schopenhauer. As objectifications of the Will, or as Hardy poetically puts it, 'threads and streams' of the one immanent Prime, we may discern the workings of the Will, yet never learn its true nature no matter how much musing we do.

By way of conclusion we may note that Hardy's concept of the Will is like that of Schopenhauer's in that it is immanent, indestructable, unconscious, aimless, unmoral, unknowable, and deterministic in its actions.

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part I, Fore Scene, p. 14.

2. The Influence of Schopenhauer as Seen
in Hardy's Concept of the Will as
Revealed in Human Nature

By means of the comment of the Spirits in The Dynasts we are given a complete picture of how the Will objectifies itself in people and as their actions. At times we view the earth and its people from a distance; at other times we are given a view which is a "close-up". A telescopic view of the earth and its peoples is seen by the Pities from their places in the sky. As we see the sights below, the words of the Spirits make us realize the futility of man in his struggles. To them the efforts of vainglorious tyrants appear to be as ineffectual as their bodies appear to be infinitesimal. Even mighty armies seem to be masses of atoms. The Spirits view the world from the standpoint of eternity, and as such they see at all times the same thing going on below. They see history as an unbroken, uniform series of events bound together by the mysterious workings of the Immanent Will. Only the earthlings below think they are changing history and making an undying imprint on the life about them. The Spirit of the Years reflects:

But old Laws operate yet; and phase and phase
Of men's dynastic and imperial moils
Shape on accustomed lines.¹

From the clouds the Spirits see the French army retreating from Moscow. It seems like a caterpillar made up of tiny atoms.

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part I, Fore Scene, p. 10.

The caterpillar shape still creeps laboriously nearer, but instead of increasing in size by the rules of perspective, it gets more attenuated, and there are left upon the ground behind it minute parts of itself, which are speedily flaked over, and remain as white pimples by the wayside.

Spirit of the Years

These atoms that drop off are snuff-out
souls
Who are enghasted by the caressing snow.¹

The might of the conqueror Napoleon is belittled by the Spirit of the Years who sees him against the background of changeless eternity.

Worthless these kneadings of thy narrow
thought,
Napoleon; gane thy opportunity!
Such men as thou who wade across
the world
To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
Are in the elemental ages chart
Like meanest insects on obscurest
leaves
But incidents and grooves on Earth's
unfolding;
Or as the brazen rod that stirs the
fire
Because it must.²

Next, we are given a close-up view and learn that Napoleon views himself in somewhat the same perspective as the Spirit of the Years views him. While discussing diplomatic matters with Josephine, Napoleon remarks:

¹The Dynasts, Vol. II, Part III, Act I, Sc. 9, p. 41.

²Ibid., Act. VII, Sc. 9, p. 250.

I must dictate some letters, This
 new move
 Of England on Madrid may mean
 some trouble.
 Come, dwell not gloomily on this cold
 need
 Of waiving private joy for policy.
 We are but thistle globes on Heaven's
 high gales,
 And whither blown, or when, or how,
 or why,
 Can choose us not at all!¹

The Immanent Will moulds all the actions of men,
 their virtues as well as their crimes and passions. From
 the Spirit of the Years we have these words:

So the Will heaves through Space, and
 moulds the times,
 With mortals for Its fingers! We shall
 see
 Again men's passions, virtues, visions,
 crimes,
 Obey resistlessly
 The purposive, unmotived, dominant
 Thing
 Which sways in brooding dark man's
 wayfaring.²

The greatest crime moulded by the Will is that of war. It
 is treated as an objectification of the Will which is fixed
 like all else immutably.

Semi Chorus II

The Immanent, that urgeth all
 Rules what may or may not befall!

Semi Chorus I

Ere systemed suns were globed and lit
 The slaughters of the race were writ,

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part II, Act II, Sc. 6, p. 256.

²Ibid., Sc. 3, p. 240.

Semi Chorus II

And wasting wars, by land and sea,
Fixed, like all else, immutably.¹

When Hardy declares that the Immanent Will foreordains wars, he means, as does Schopenhauer, that since strife is in the nature of all living things, then war is the inevitable outcome. War is but the objectification of a nation's will to live. With the nation that is the aggressor, war is an egoistic perversion of this will to live, taking the special form of the will to power. In the tyrant who instigates a war we also have an example of the will to live carried to an extreme through egoism. Since Napoleon is a splendid example of the individual whose egoism passes all bounds in its struggle for power, Hardy chooses him as a fitting puppet of the Will.

Schopenhauer mentions that people are like puppets worked from within by the Will. Hardy also is fond of using this simile to inform us that people are mechanized bits of humanity, deprived of any true freedom. Ironically enough, these puppets think themselves free in all their actions while in reality they are only following instinctively the dictates of an unknowable Will. They are conscious of individual motives which cause their day to day actions, but they do not understand what lies at the base of these motives. The Spirit of the Years compares individuals to veins and

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part I, Act II, Sc. 5, p. 71.

On one occasion the Spirit of the Years describes the French and English armies as, "This whirlwind of the Will."¹ This same Spirit on viewing the French army retreating from Russia says:

Even the Army
Which was once called the Grand; now in
retreat
From Moscow's muteness, urged by
That within it;
Together with its train of followers -

The Spirit of Pities wonders why Napoleon continues to go on with this war against Russia which he is losing. As they view the bleached skeletons which comprise the former Grand Army of France, the Spirit of the Years replies that it will show us why.

The unnatural light before seen usurps that
of the sun, bringing into view, like breezes made
visible, the film or brain tissues of the Immanent
Will, that pervade all things, ramifying through the
whole army, Napoleon included, and moving them to Its
inexplicable artistries.²

Schopenhauer contends that people act from instinct and not reason. They act first, and then by a process of rationalization they try to attribute their actions to their use of free will dictated by reason. The most outstanding characteristic of the Will as revealed in human nature is this quality of instinct. It is particularly well illustrated in the following view which unfolds before the eyes of the Spirits:

¹The Dynasts, Vol. II, Part II, Act I, Sc. 9, p. 39.

²Ibid., Sc. 1, p. 10.

A transparency pervades the spectacle and the ubiquitous urging of the Immanent Will becomes visualized. The web connecting all the apparently separate shapes includes Wellington in its tissues with the rest, and shows him, like them, as acting while discovering his intention to act. By the lurid light the faces of every row, squire, group, and column of men, French and English, wear the expression of that of people in a dream.¹

The actions of nations are also determined by this Immanence which works unconsciously from within. The Will objectifies itself in the anger of the German people after their country has been invaded by Napoleon. From the words of the Spirit of the Years we have, in typical Schopenhauer phraseology, an account of how the Will objectifies itself in the anger of a nation's people.

So doth the Will objectify Itself
 In the likeness of a sturdy people's wrath,
 Which takes no count of the new trends
 of time,
 Trusting ebb'd glory in a present need -
 What if their strength should equal
 not their fire,
 And their devotion dull their vigilance?
 Uncertainly, by fits, the Will doth work
 In Brunswick's blood, their chief, as in
 themselves;
 It ramifies in streams that intermit
 And make their movement vague,
 old-fashioned, slow
 To foil the modern methods counterposed!²

Semi Chorus I remarks that the soul of the distressed nation is like the Will:

¹The Dynasts, Vol. II, Part III, Act VII, Sc. 4,
 p. 230.

²Ibid., Vol. I, Part II, Act I, Sc. 3, p. 196.

It boils in a boisterous thrill
 Through the mart,
 Unconscious well-nigh as the Will
 Of its part:
 Would it wholly might be so, and
 feel not the forthcoming smart!¹

As we watch the English Parliament at work we are given an exhibition of the Will expressed as egoism. The ultimate significance of these scenes lies in the fact that in spite of the stupid wrangling, the bickering, and the flattery of professional politicians, the Will proceeds according to its own designs. As this law-making body wrangles on, the Spirit of Pities says:

It irks me that they thus should
 Yea and Nay
 As though a power lay in their
 oraclings,
 If each decision work unconsciously,
 And would be operant though unloosed were
 A single life.²

One of the English ministers, Bathurst, recognizes this egoism in his fellow politicians, and remarks:

With them the question is not how to frame
 A finer trick to trounce intrusive foes,
 But who shall be the future ministers
 To whom such trick against intrusive foes,
 Whatever it may prove, shall be entrusted!³

The egoism of individuals is revealed when Napoleon meets with Alexander of Russia and Francis of Austria to fix the boundaries of conquered territories. The Spirit of Pities observes:

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part II, Act I, Sc. 3, p. 197.

²Ibid., Part I, Act. I, Sc. 3, p. 37.

³Ibid., p. 33.

Each for himself, his family, his heirs;
 For the wan weltering nations, who
 concerns, who cares?¹

Though all the individuals in this drama are treated as puppets of the Will, Napoleon is the only one who fully realizes the mechanical part he plays. He talks a great deal of his 'star' and his 'destiny'. Thus we are shown that no matter to what heights an individual mounts, he is still subject to the unconscious workings of his will. Neither does greatness keep a person from feeling the effects of a guilty conscience. It is interesting to note here that Napoleon, like many characters in Hardy's novels, is all too prone to lay the responsibility for his failures on the Will which urges him on. In replying to Queen Louisa of Prussia, Napoleon says:

Know you, my Fair,
 That I - ay I - in this deserve your pity -
 Some force within me, baffling mine
 intent,
 Harries me onward, whether I will or no.
 My star, my star is what's to
 blame - not I.
 It is unswervable.²

The Spirit of the Years comments:

He spoke thus at the Bridge of Lodi. Strange,
 He's of the few in Europe who discern
 The workings of the Will.³

Toward the end of Napoleon's career his sleep is disturbed by dreams which seem to indicate that his subconscious mind

¹The Dynasts, Vol. I, Part I, Act VI, Sc. 5, p. 158.

²Ibid., Part II, Act I, Sc. 8, p. 224.

³Ibid.

recognizes his guilt. Again, as before, he places the blame upon the predestined workings of the Will. The vision which disturbs him is that of hundreds of thousands of skeletons and corpses in various stages of decay. As they rise from various battlefields and gaze reproachfully at him, Napoleon remarks while still sleeping:

Why, why should this reproach
 be dealt me now?
 Why hold me my own master, if I be
 Ruled by the pitiless Planet of Destiny?¹

In conclusion we may say that Hardy's concept of the Will as reflected in the actions of human beings has several points in common with the Schopenhauer concept. First, people like puppets are mechanically drawn from within by an Immanent Will. Second, they think themselves free, while in reality they are not. Third, the Will expressed as egoism causes people to put their own personal interests above everything else in the world. This egoistic urge when carried to extreme accounts for the rise of tyrants and the occurrence of wars. Fourth, the actions of human beings are based on instinct, not reason.

¹The Dynasts, Vol. II, Part III, Act VI, Sc. 3, p. 183.

CHAPTER V

HARDY'S FINAL PHILOSOPHY

Hardy disliked very much to be called a pessimist, and yet most of his important novels, and by far the greatest number of his poems are distinctly pessimistic in tone. It is on the strength of the thought in a few poems and the After Scene of The Dynasts that Hardy rejects the title of 'pessimist', and assumes the more pleasant name of 'evolutionary meliorist'. Some of these poems will be analyzed later on in this chapter, and Hardy will be placed in the category in which he wished to be placed, that of meliorism. For the present, it is sufficient to say that no discussion of Hardy's ultimate hope is quite complete without an understanding of the mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities that go to make up the man himself.

Although Hardy is intellectually austere in his approach to religion, he does not glory in his austerity. Instead, he regrets it. Hardy had the type of mind which loved order, precision, and logical answers to all questions. Although he was a poet, his mind resembled that of a scientist in many ways. However, he possessed one characteristic that is not usually associated with the scientist, yet is a necessary attribute of the poet, that is, sympathy. A scientific mind coupled with a sensitive spirit and a sympathetic heart is indeed a combination to cause trouble

to its possessor. We may even go so far as to trace all of those bitter concepts of the Absolute to one of these qualities, his extreme sympathy. The one metaphysical problem which occupied Hardy during his entire life-time was this: how could a personal God capable of comprehension and sympathy, look down on an earth so full of suffering, and yet do nothing about it? Because he could arrive at no satisfactory answer to this question, Hardy conceived a blind unconscious Absolute devoid of personality.

In addition to possessing the qualities of mind and heart just mentioned, Hardy was singularly unfortunate in never having possessed that rare quality, intuition. This quality is defined as being the power of knowing without recourse to inference or reasoning. It may further be explained as that particular type of sensitivity which enables one to apprehend things not usually perceived through the use of the five senses. Though Hardy possessed a great sensitivity, it was a sensitivity which kept him keenly in touch with humanity, but beyond these earthly bounds it was never able to go. Thus, no sixth sense ever informed Hardy that life continues on after death, or that there possibly is a plan to the universe that is too vast in construction to be grasped by finite minds in their present stage of evolutionary development. However, in spite of all we may conjecture as to Hardy's lack of intuition, it still remains a subject about which we have no positive proof. The only

real proof that Hardy did, or did not possess intuition would have to come as a direct statement from the poet himself. As it is, we only have one reference to this matter and it is not reliable because necessary explanations and details are lacking. Hardy in replying to a letter from Dr. C. W. Saleeby discusses Bergson and his theories. He says:

You must not think me a hard-headed rationalist for all this. Half my time - particularly when writing verse - I 'believe' (in the modern sense of the word) not only in the things Bergson believes in, but in spectres, mysterious voices, intuitions, omens, dreams, haunted places. But I do not believe in them in the old sense of the word any more for that. . . .¹

A great deal of the significance of this statement depends upon the interpretation given to the phrase 'in the old sense of the word,' and since Hardy does not explain it to us, we cannot accept the statement as proof that he possessed intuition. At any rate it stands to reason that a person possessed of any great degree of intuition could never have written the poem The Impercipient. In it we note the decided touch of sadness in Hardy's recognition that his nature lacked that quality which makes it possible to believe in those things which cannot be shown to the eye or proved by the reason:

That from this bright believing bond
 An outcast I should be
 That faiths by which my comrades
 stand

¹Letter quoted in Florence Emily Hardy, Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 168.

Seem fantasies to me,
 And mirage-mists their Shining Land,
 Is a drear destiny.

Why thus my soul should be consigned
 To infelicity,
 Why always I must feel as blind
 To sights my brethren see,
 With joys they've found I cannot
 find,
 Abides a mystery.

Since heart of mine knows not that
 ease
 Which they know; since it be
 That He who breathes All's Well
 to these
 Breathes no All's Well to me,
 My lack might move their
 sympathies
 And Christian charity!

I am like a gazer who should mark
 An inland company
 Standing upfingered, with, "Hark! hark!
 The glorious distant sea!"
 And feel, "Alas, 'tis but yon dark
 And wind-swept pine to me!"

Yet I would bear my shortcomings
 With meet tranquility,
 But for the charge that blessed things
 I'd liefer have unbe.
 O, doth a bird deprived of wings
 Go earth-bound wilfully!

Enough. As yet disquiet clings
 About us. Rest shall we.¹

Hardy never scoffs at those who possess religious faith, because he realizes that it is a metaphysical necessity of man. The author concedes in his novel Desperate Remedies that people cannot repress "the human instinct to pour out the soul to some Being or Personality."² He also

¹Collected Poems, "The Impercipient," p. 59.

²Desperate Remedies, p. 220.

realizes the solace to be derived from believing. The poem "On a Fine Morning" tells us:

Whence comes Solace? - Not from seeing
 What is doing, suffering, being,
 Not from noting Life's conditions,
 Nor from heeding Time's monitions;
 But in cleaving to the Dream,
 And in gazing at the gleam
 Whereby gray things golden seem.¹

As a thinker Hardy possessed great intellectual honesty. He faced his own dark thoughts bravely because he felt that it was the only sincere thing to do. Out of this intellectual integrity arises his most quoted bit of philosophy, "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst."² It is in the poem "In Tenebris" that we find these lines:

Let him in whose ears the low-voiced
 Best is killed by the clash of the First,
 Who holds that if way to the Better there be,
 it exacts a full look at the Worst,
 Who feels that delight is a delicate growth
 cramped by crookedness, custom,
 and fear,
 Get him up and be gone as one
 shaped awry; he disturbs the
 order here.³

Hardy occasionally advances the hope that he as an individual may be able to change the immutable workings of the Will. In the last stanza of the poem "He Wonders About Himself" we have this thought expressed:

¹Collected Poems, "On a Fine Morning," p. 118.

²Ibid., "In Tenebris," p. 154.

³Ibid.

Part is mine of the general Will,
 Cannot my share in the sum of sources
 Bend a digit the poise of forces,
 And a fair desire fulfill?¹

Hardy further elaborates this hope by advancing the unique idea that if men view things honestly they may be able to help the world toward a higher level of justice. We have this thought expressed in the poem "To Sincerity."

Yet would men look at true things,
 And unilluded view things,
 And count to bear undue things,

The real might mean the seeming,
 Facts better their foredeeming
 And Life its disesteeming.²

Much of the thought upon which Hardy bases his claims to the title of 'evolutionary meliorist' is not definitely espoused or vigorously propounded. Instead it is expressed in the form of questions which give us the impression that he is doing no more than venturing a timid hope. One of these faint hopes is expressed in Tess of the D'Urbervilles:

We may wonder whether at the acme and summit of the human progress these anachronisms will be corrected by a finer intuition, a closer interaction of the social machinery than that which jolts us round and along; but such completeness is not to be prophesied, or even conceived as possible.³

The most definite statement in regard to Hardy's evolutionary meliorism is made by the poet himself in the

¹Collected Poems, "He Wonders About Himself," p. 479.

²Ibid., "To Sincerity," p. 262.

³Tess of the D'Urbervilles, p. 48.

preface to the group of poems called "Late Lyrics and Earlier." First, Hardy defends his so called pessimism as being "questionings in the exploration of reality"¹ for the betterment of the body and soul. Next, he quotes the line from "In Tenebris" which says that a full look at the worst is necessary in attempting to find a way to the better. By way of explanation he says that this line means that reality should be explored and recognized "stage by stage along the survey with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly evolutionary meliorism."² Then he goes on to tell the part humanity can play in this plan for world betterment. He says that whether the human race survives until the exhaustion or destruction of the world or whether its present races perish and are succeeded by others,

pain to all upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by loving-kindness, operating through scientific knowledge, and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces - unconscious or other - that have "the balancings of the clouds," happen to be in equilibrium, which may or may not be often.³

Only three of Hardy's poems carry out this thought that man can aid in the betterment of the world by practicing loving fellowship toward all. The poem "A Plain to Man," dated 1909-10, gives the best example of this role of

¹Collected Poems, Preface to "Late Lyrics and Earlier," p. 526.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

man's in a general scheme of humanitarianism. In fact, the thought in it definitely identifies Hardy with the prevalent religious thought of the twentieth century. Today many people have given up going to church and putting their faith in prayer. Instead, they give generously to charities and practice good fellowship toward all. This poem shows God speaking to man and acknowledging that belief in Him as a personality is dwindling under the eyes of modern science.

And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,
 The truth shall be told, and the fact
 be faced
 That had best been faced in earlier years:

The fact of life with dependence placed
 On the human hearts' resource alone,
 In brotherhood bonded close and graced

With loving kindness fully blown,
 And visioned help unsought, unknown.¹

The other two poems, "The Sick Battle God," and "Departure" give a specific way in which man can aid in the betterment of humanity. Hardy hopes that one of man's new aims will be to outlaw war and to make patriotism world-wide instead of national. In the poem "The Sick Battle God," which was written at close of the Boer War, the poet tells us that in former days a God of Battles urged men on to enjoy wars. In the last stanzas we see Hardy's hope for the future:

¹Collected Poems, "A Plaint to Man," p. 300.

But new light spread. That god's gold
 limb
 And blazon have waned dimmer and
 more dim;
 Even his flushed form begins to fade,
 Till but a shade is left of him.

That modern mediation broke
 His spell, that penmen's pleadings
 dealt a stroke,
 Say some; and some that crimes too
 dire
 Did much to mire his crimson cheek.

Yea, seeds of crescent sympathy
 Were sown by those more excellent than he,
 Long known, though long contemned
 till then -
 The gods of men in amity.

Souls have grown seers, and thought
 outbrings
 The mournful many-sidedness of things
 With foes as friends, enfeebling ires
 And fury-fires by gainsgivings!

He rarely gladdens champions now;
 They do and dare, but tensely-pale of brow;
 And would they fain uplift the arm
 Of that weak form they know not how.

Yet wars arise, though zest grows cold;
 Wherefore, at times, as if in ancient
 mould
 He looms, bespatched with paint and
 lath;
 But never hath he seemed the old!

Let men rejoice, let men deplore,
 The lurid Deity of heretofore
 Succumbs to one of saner nod;
 The Battle-god is god no more.¹

In the poem "Departure," dated 1899, the poet puts in the form of a question the hope that some day patriotism will encircle the earth instead of confining itself to individual nations.

¹Collected Poems, "The Sick Battle God," p. 88.

How long, O striving Teutons, Slavs, and
 Gaels
 Must your wroth reasonings trade on
 lives like these,
 That are as puppets in a playing hand?
 Then shall the saner softer polities
 Whereof we dream, have sway on each
 proud land
 And patriotism, grown Godlike, scorn
 to stand
 Bondslave to realms, but circle
 earth and seas?¹

While Hardy does not devote much space in his poems to the theory of world betterment through the gradual ennoblement of man, he devotes twice as much to his theory of the growth of consciousness in the Immanent Will. In a letter to Mr. Edward Wright, the poet claims to be the originator of this unique theory:

That the Unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of Itself I believe I may claim as my own idea solely - at which I arrived by reflecting that what has already taken place in a fraction of the whole (i.e. so much of the world as has become conscious) is likely to take place in the mass; and there being no Will outside the mass - that is, Universe - the whole Will becomes conscious thereby; and ultimately, it is to be hoped, sympathetic.²

When Hardy says that consciousness has taken place in a fraction of the world, he means, of course, that part of the world which is made up of human beings. The idea is poetically expressed in the last two stanzas of "Fragment."

¹Collected Poems, "Departure," p. 78.

²Letter quoted in Florence Emily Hardy, Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 124.

Since he made us humble pioneers
 Of himself in consciousness of Life's
 tears,
 It needs no mighty prophecy
 To tell that what he could mindlessly
 show
 His creatures, he himself will know.

By some still close-cowled mystery
 We have reached feeling faster than
 he,
 But he will overtake us anon,
 If the world goes on.¹

We have this same thought expressed in the poem bearing a
 Greek title which translated means "To the Unknown God."

Perhaps Thy ancient rote-restricted ways
 Thy ripening rule transcends;
 That listless effort tends
 To grow percipient with advance of days,
 And with percipience mends.²

In the poem "The Sleep-Worker" the poet assumes the question-
 ing attitude. He does not state the theory that the Immanent
 Doer will grow percipient with the years. Instead, he ques-
 tions what this Mother of the world would do if she should
 awake from her state of unconsciousness.

Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of
 shame,
 Thy whole high heaving firmamental
 frame,
 Or patiently adjust, amend, and heal?³

Sometimes the thought that the Will may gain consciousness
 is put in the form of a statement, at other times as a ques-

¹Collected Poems, "Fragment," p. 482.

²Ibid., "To the Unknown God," p. 171.

³Ibid., "The Sleep-Worker," p. 110.

tion, and at still other times as a hope. In the poem "The Blow" we have this thought expressed as a hope. The poet says that no First Cause with an aim in view swept the world into being, but an Immanent Doer that did not know,

Which in some age unguessed of us
 May lift its blinding incubus,
 And see, and own:
 "It grives me I did thus and thus!"¹

Hardy's most hopeful lines, with the exception of those in the After Scene of The Dynasts, are given in the poem "There Seemed a Strangeness."

Men have not heard, men have not seen
 Since the beginning of the world
 What earth and heaven mean;
 But now their curtains shall be furled,

And they shall see what is, ere long,
 Not through a glass, but face to face;
 And Right shall disestablish Wrong:
 The Great Adjustment is taking place.²

In the closing lines of the After Scene of The Dynasts Hardy goes so far as to attribute tender mercy to the Absolute. This is the only place in all of Hardy's works where he makes such a statement. Another unusual thought which is expressed for the first and only time is that most spiritual and profound of all conceptions, the one which tells us that we have been made to suffer in order that we may attain to greater spirituality. The following lines may indeed be called the poet's most hopeful written expressions:

¹Collected Poems, "The Sleep-Worker," p. 449.

²Ibid., "There Seemed a Strangeness," p. 689.

All shall "fulfill their joy" in Thee,
In Thee abide eternally!

Semi Chorus II

Exultant adoration give
The Alone, through Whom all
 living live,
The Alone, in Whom all dying die,
Whose means the End shall justify.
 Amen.¹

However, beautiful as these lines may be, they do not comprise Hardy's final thought, for The Dynasts was completed some fourteen years before his death. In the time between, there occurred an event of major importance, one which was influential in the creating of pessimists and the moulding of pessimistic thought, namely, the first World War. His wife, Florence Emily Hardy states:

It may be added here that the war destroyed all Hardy's belief in the gradual ennoblement of man, a belief he had held for many years, as is shown by poems like "The Sick Battle God", and others. He said he probably would not have ended The Dynasts as he did end it if he could have foreseen what was going to happen within a few years.

Moreover, the war gave the coup de grace to any conception he may have nourished of a fundamental ultimate Wisdom at the back of things. With his views on necessitation, or at most a very limited free will, events seemed to show him that a fancy he had often held and expressed, that the never-ending push of the Universe was an unpurposive and irresponsible groping in the direction of the least resistance, might possibly be the real truth.²

¹The Dynasts, After Scene, pp. 252-253.

²Florence Mily Hardy, Later Years of Thomas Hardy, pp. 165-166.

As Hardy's final thought we may quote the first stanza of the poem "We Are Getting to the End." This bit of verse is fittingly placed on the last page of his last volume of verse Winter Words.

We are getting to the end of visioning
The impossible within this universe,
Such as that better whiles may
 follow worse,
And that our race may mend by reasoning.¹

In conclusion we may note that, though Hardy disliked to be called a pessimist, the number of passages upon which he bases his claim to being an evolutionary meliorist are relatively few and often not stated in a convincing manner. His most typical concept of the Absolute and his most quoted bit of philosophy arise from the peculiar combination of qualities which went to make up his total personality. Hardy's evolutionary meliorism consists of an humanitarian belief in the ennoblement of man through good works, and a conception of the growth of percipience in the Immanent Will. After the World War Hardy renounced his claim to being a meliorist on the grounds that no world could be progressing which indulged in a war of such magnitude and horror.

¹Thomas Hardy, Winter Words (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 183.

CONCLUSION

Thomas Hardy's concept of the Absolute is found to be due to a number of different influences, no one of which can be given precedence over the other in importance. His general inclination to interpret the Absolute as an impersonal force rather than a personal Deity we may attribute to the scientific, particularly the evolutionary, thought of his age. Again, we may attribute this tendency to the peculiar mental and emotional temperament of the man himself. Although a great deal has been written on the subject of Schopenhauer's influence upon Hardy, many of the poet's earliest interpretations of the Absolute contain the same basic characteristics that he gives to his last interpretation of it as the Will.

Hardy's earliest concept of the Absolute was as Time and Chance, two terms connoting opposite qualities and yet often coupled together. We find more frequent mention made of these terms in his early poems than in his novels. In most instances the word Time is used to signify the passage of the years but with an added connotation that certain determinable laws of nature carry their purposes into effect by this passage of time. Thus laws are for the preservation of the species through a survival of the fittest exhibited in struggle and generation. These we find Time to be deterministic in nature. On the other hand the word Chance

is used to mean the unpredictable or free element in life.

Hardy's concept of the Absolute as Nature carries with it a double significance; when identified with its laws, Nature is deterministic, as is Time; when it is thought of as the maker of these laws, in a concept bordering on the Theistic, it is an indeterminate, unconscious factor having no plan for the distribution of justice.

A number of important characters in the Hardy novels entertain a pessimistic conception of the Absolute. To them, this Deity is one who is either indifferent to their sufferings or decidedly vengeful. From the standpoint of twentieth century psychology the concepts these characters hold may be said to be determining factors in shaping the ultimate courses of their lives. Thus we find Eustacia Vye, Tess Durbeyfield, and Sue Bridehead all making fatal decisions which lead to inevitable tragedy.

Thomas Hardy's most famous concept of the Absolute is as the Will, in The Dynasts. Much of the philosophical phraseology used in this drama comes as the result of his study of Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Idea. On making a comparison between Schopenhauer's concept of the Will and Hardy's, many points of similarity may be found. Hardy's concept of the abstract Will may be said to be like Schopenhauer's in several respects; both are immanent and indwelling, indestructible, unconscious, and deterministic.

The Will works in the same way in the characters of The Dynasts as Schopenhauer tells us it does in his work The World as Will and Idea. First, people's actions are like those of puppets because they are drawn from within by the all-immanent Will. Thus their actions are determined for them and they are allowed very little freedom except that of understanding the motives of their everyday actions. Why they will in general is not understood; therefore, in this respect their actions are determined for them. The objectification of the Will as egoism accounts for many selfish actions on the parts of lawmaking bodies, and armies, as well as individuals like Napoleon. It also accounts for the development of wars in general. Napoleon, like the other characters in The Dynasts, is treated as a mechanism unable to control his actions, which are determined by the Will from within.

In conclusion, Hardy is found to base his claims of being an evolutionary meliorist on the rather feebly expressed thought in only a few poems, the only exception being those very hopeful lines in the After Scene of The Dynasts. His two theories for the progression of the world were: first, his original theory that the Will would grow conscious with the passage of time and correct its mistakes, and second, the gradual ennoblement of man through devotion to humanitarian acts. However, at the advent of the World

War, Hardy renounced all claims to meliorism on the ground that no world capable of indulging in a war of such magnitude could be said to be progressing.

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