LANGUAGE, CRITICISM AND CULTURE:

"ORGANIC COMMUNITY" IN

F.R. LEAVIS

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This is to certify that I, M. Sridhar have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under Ph. D. ordinances of the University.

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Preface

There has of late been a lot of interest in what is known as culture studies. With the Increasing importance accorded to the insights from history, sociology, anthropology and related fields in literary studies, the very character of language departments is undergoing a major transformation. Simultaneous with this development is the significant revision of our concept of language in the poststructural1st phase. Language now practically subsumes all fields of study. F.R. Leavls's critical output continues to engage our attention when we examine it in the light of these later developments. His firm commitment to the cause of English and his belief in its capacity to encompass culture, community and life as a whole need to be emphasized in this context. Along with it la his own particular version of history with its emphasis on the erosion of certain values consequent on the loss of the organic community brought about by the evil effects of technology. What he attempts,among other things, is a reconstruction of literary history from this point of view. Leavls's concept of the organic community thus seems, paradoxically, to bring together the two conflicting trends--of a community historically grounded in an imagined past as well as of a real community obtainable through a living language. Though Leavls introduces and discusses the concept of organic community very early in his career, it undergoes a continuous change from its being a mere historical phenomenon of the past externally

invoked to study literary developments towards its being rooted firmly in the present with the language and literature, in a sense, encompassing life in its entirety.

Leavis's contribution to the development of English studies in England assumes special importance, especially when we consider the formative role of his response to literature in the shaping of his notion of language. His ideas of the role of the English teacher and critic, of minority culture and of the responsibility of the elite in society in training intelligence and sensibility among students take concrete shape in the context of the introduction of English as a compulsory university and school subject following the recommendations of the official report on the teaching of English in England (Newbolt Report). We can see a perceptible evolution in Leavis's conception of language through the decades. It is no longer Just one of the many aspects of culture as he once believed. It now subsumes all traces of culture like individuals and their relationship with others, their beliefs, customs and traditions. Leavis sees in the nature of langauge a unique capacity to preserve shared values. Language and literature thus become for him an effective means to restore the values of the lost order of the organic community. Leavis assesses various writers in terms of their ability to represent in their work the lives of individuals and their relationship to the community at large. It will be interesting to see how this sense of collaboration Leavis would like to find in literary works compares with his own relationship with other practising critics. This dissertation attempts to discuss some of these issues.

Chapter 1

Introduction

F.R. Leavis (1895-1978), son of a shop-keeper in Cambridge, rose from his middle class background to a probationary Lectureship in 1927 and battled through the institutional politics in Cambridge all through his teaching career till the termination of his Readership in 1962. A stretcher-bearer during the first World War, who chose to be a medical orderly because his "conscience" did not permit him to engage in direct fight, had to continue his indirect method against the Cambridge establishment, Marxist ideology, official channels of policy statement like the British Council, the Open University, and media such as the B.B.C. and The Times Literary Supplement. He found in Scrutiny, a Journal he brought out for twenty years, an ideal medium to express his views and rally round influential opinion against his enemies. His own proposals for educational reform, his idea of the "English School" as the centre of the University teaching gained currency through the pages of Scrutiny. As a powerful classroom teacher Leavis had been able to bring under his influence many of his students who carried on his mission. According to M.C. Bradbrook, by the time Scrutiny was closed, Leavis's methods "had gone into schools, and into the remoter parts of the Commonwealth--India, South Africa, Sydney and even West Africa became centres of what began to be

termed Leavisite teaching. In the United States he had long enjoyed a high esteem, strengthened by the New Criticism that arrived in the late forties."[1] He did not fight a battle, though as a clever strategist he did draw "lines" of development in a major reorganization of literary forces from the seventeenth century onwards. He had been heavily influenced by Eliot and Richards through their ideas of the "common pursuit" of true judgement and "practical criticism" (in that order), yet had serious differences with both (in the same order). Though a student of history, he opposed F.W. Bateson's attempt to impose history over literature. Yet, he recommended a study of the seventeenth century as a key passage in the history of civilization and liked to assess the value of literature and culture in terms of the organic community-relations prior to this phase of modern culture. He developed his own ideas of culture, community, language and literature through the whole body of his criticism. His emphasis on the actual experience of life as well as literature prevented him from making any theoretical formulations of his ideas. In his quarrel with Rene Wellek, after Wellek attempted to explicitly state the principles underlying his criticism, Leavis refused to accept such reduction of his critical practice. As a literary critic, he declared himself as an anti-philosopher. However, he did recognize the need by the 70s to justify his theoretical position by drawing heavily on philosophers of science such as Michael Polanyi and Marjorie Grene. Though he had been opposed to the effects of science in terms of the technologico-Benthamite civilization, his direct confrontation with science occurred in his response to C.P. Snow in the Two Cultures debate

and in his attack of Snow's preference for scienotific culture. This perhapg instigated Leavis to cone down heavily on the basic philosophical assumptions underlying scientific thinking. He went on to attack the whole of Western philosophy founded on Descartlan principles in his later books like Nor Shall My Sword and The Living Principle. He took this opportunity to attack the scientific basis of linguistic studies too. His "incompatible" relations with Wittgenstein come to mind here. He came out with his own philosophy of language in its relation to culture, community and life. Together, his quarrels with many of his contemporaries helped him to defend, reflect and reformulate his own theoretical position and even strengthen it. As an English critic, his attempt has been to establish English at the centre of all intellectual activity. His intellectual battles with people in other disciplines reflect this enthusiasm. Even as he undermines the importance of various fields of study, he is anxious to emphasize the unique capacity of English language and literature to bring them all under its umbrella. As a critic, Leavis has consistently criticized coterie culture and manipulation of literary taste by the Bloomsbury group. Yet, he himself promotes and insists on the inevitability of minority culture to arrest corruption of standards. His idea of the Engish School and the training of the elite through critical activity contributes precisely to the domination of a small group. These various controversies surrounding Leavis's life and certain inherent contradictions in him help us understand the complexities of his critical vision. The present dissertation attempts to examine the complexities through a study of the concept of the organic community.

In spite of a large corpus of criticism including some book-length studies on his work, not much attention has been paid to the idea of organic community and its role in Leavis's cultural thought and criticism. There has been a tendency even among the few who have studied this aspect to dub the organic community as a nostalgic, pastoral dream and condemn it as a myth. An attempt has been made in the following chapters to deal with the centrality of this concept which not only informs Leavis's views on language, literature, community and culture, but functions as a tacit criterion throughout his practical criticism. The idea of the loss of an organic community culture and values as a consequence of industrialization and the felt urgency to meet this particular challenge inform Leavis's thought and criticism. Leavis is also very much a part of that socio-cultural-critical tradition of writers like Coleridge, Arnold, Carlyle and Eliot (to mention just a few) who have addressed this problem. There has been some criticism on the impact of Arnold and Eliot on Leavis, influences Leavis himself has openly acknowledged. Factors such as Leavis's own immediate compulsions, his personal involvement in World War 1, the anti-German stance which arose as a result of the War, the nationalist fervour culminating in the importance given to the study of English, combined with the growing resistance of the middle and lower classes to the study of the Classics traditionally reserved for the rich, have also been given some attention. However, the very obvious connection in this context between Leavis and the official report on the teaching of English in England (known as the Newbolt Report, 1921) has curiously been almost ignored. A discussion in this regard is

therefore felt necessary, particularly in view of the fact that even Leavis chooses not to openly discus* the report, but mentions it only in passing. Leavis finds the atmosphere in which emphasis was being given to the study of English quite congenial to promote his idea of the organic community and the values associated with it. Through a study of a great tradition of writers, he hopes to inculcate these values. His own contribution to the tradition of the idea of the organic community, with his emphasis on the study of English and the training of men's sensibility and intelligence, discrimination, perception and judgement, has been underlined in the first chapter.

Another theme worth studying in Leavis is his recurrent and consistent refusal to theorize on the principles underlying his criticism. The Leavis-Wellek controversy on this matter, with Wellek's attempt to list Leavis's critical criteria and Leavis's denial of such easy reduction is all too familiar. Critics like Perry Anderson have attempted to see Leavis's anti-theoretical stance as a reflection of his adherence to a certain empiricism.[2] Terry Eagleton tries to relate Leavis's practice to a narrow mimeticism which looks upon words as things.[3] There has also been a tendency among some critics to reduce Leavis to a mere New Critic who gives importance to the words on the page. Few critics have tried to understand the interrelation of the various recurrent critical terms Leavis employs such as tradition, culture, community, concreteness, selfhood, identity, nisus and ahnung, or to view them in relation to his concern for preserving certain values. The individual-social coalescence in Leavis wherein he sees an individual's experience as being

necessarily social and the values ae inevitably shared ones has largely been sidelined. The second chapter therefore undertakes an indepth study of the various undercurrents beneath his critical terminology. It explains how the idea of collaborative1y-creative critical practice becomes an alternative to the loss of organic community. The interconnections of Leavis's ideas on language, literature, culture, community and life, and the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of the organic community behind these ideas are discussed at length. An attempt has been made to tease out a loosely formulated theory, notwithstanding Leavis's assertion of being anti-philosophical. The chapter discusses Leavis's explicit use, especially in his later work, of philosophers like Michael Polanyi and Marjorie Grene, to give a concrete shape to his thinking. It also suggests how Leavis's theory of language compares with other contemporary theories of language.

Leavis also insists that a great novelist knows that a serious and developed study of the individual cannot but be a study of lives in relation and of the social conditions. This inter-animating emphasis of the individual and the social is rooted in his concept of the organic community, where the lives of men in relation to one another as well as to their culture and environment are strongly emphasized. Leavis's theory is tested against his practical criticism of the poets and novelists in the third chapter. The chapter shows how the life-principle operates as an all-pervasive criterion in his critical practice. How Leavis employs "life" and other related terms with subtle distictions in his criticism of poetry and the novel and how these distinct ways could be connected to the

historical development of Leavis's concept of language come up for discussion. The chapter also raises the question of the theory-practice mismatch.

The last chapter studies some critical responses to Leavis on issues connected with the aspect of the organic community (in the context of paucity of criticism specifically on this aspect) with the intent of arriving at some tentative judgements on Leavis's work. Questions such as Leavis's programme of education, his practical criticism, his training of the elite, the collaborative critical endeavour in theory and practice, the historicity of the organic community as well as its literary manifestation in the "living speech" of the writers are reexamined in the light of various critical responses. This chapter also takes into consideration the analysis of the complexity and the multi-dimensionality of Leavis's critical thought and practice (undertaken during the course of the chapters) to indicate how he defies any existing theoretical categorizations.

Notes

[1] Bradbrook, M.C., "'Nor Shall My Sword': The Leavises' Mythology," The Leavises: Recollections and Impressions, ed. Denys Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 27.

[2] Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture," English Questions (London: Verso, 1992) particularly 96-103.

[3] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) 57.

Chapter 2

Leavis and the Beginnings of English Studies

> What was at stake in English Studies was less English literature than English literature: our great 'national poets' Shakespeare and Hilton, the sense of an 'organic' national tradition and identity to which new recruits could be admitted by the study of humane letters.
>
> (Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory, 1983, 28.)

Leavis's ideas on liberal education and on the centrality of English studies as a University (and School) discipline supplying a national need in the context of industrialization and its effect on culture, and his convictions regarding the role of the intelligentsia in fighting forces of disintegration can be seen to have an eminently traceable relationship to the Newbolt Report (1921) and to the various developments of about half a century preceding it. The Newbolt-Leavis connection has surprisingly received little attention from critics on English studies. Among critics writing on Leavis, Geoffrey Strickland does see a connection between Arnold, the Newbolt Report and Leavis and hints at their differences in terms of their emphasis on the study of English.[1] However, he does not accord much attention to certain similarities between the Newbolt Report and

Leavis in their commitment to the cause of English. It is also interesting to note that Leavis himself makes only passing remarks on an important document like this.* This is understandable, considering Leavis's prejudice against anything governmental, official or institutional, all of which the Report was. This also goes with Leavis's distaste for the Establishment in Cambridge, the B.B.C., the British Council, etc. However, this chapter attempts to look at, among other influences, the Report in terms of Leavis's ideas on education and culture, and see how together they eventually lead to his views on criticism.

The beginnings of the interest in the formal study of English can be traced to the middle of the nineteenth century starting with the middle class resistance to the study of the Classics. The middle class opposition to the dominance of the aristocracy takes on two forms: (i) emphasising the need to study science and (ii) the study of English as a humanizing force.[1] Matthew Arnold in his Culture and Anarchy advocates the introduction of English literature at every level in the schools, while retaining a reformed teaching of the Classics in the public schools.[4] Brian Doyle, in his "Invention of English" identifies the period between 1880 and 1920 when various strategies were employed "to combine the traditions of aristocratic cultural mystique with utilitarian programmes" for "educating, governing, and mobilising a majority population to serve Imperial mission at home and abroad."[5] A coherent pattern of an overall, organized attempt at a promotion of a nationalistic fervour may be seen to govern such developments as the Settlement movement of the 1880s and the 1890s, the growth

of a "provincial" college sector outside the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge after 1880, the foundation of the English Association in 1907, the delivery of education at the door steps through the National Home Reading Union, preservation of the rural landscape (under the National Trust in 1895) and art (with the starting of the National Gallery of Modern Art in 1897), the establishment of the National Portrait Gallery (1896), and the publication of Dictionary of National Biography (1895-1900), Cambridge History of English Literature (1907-1916), and New English Dictionary (1884-1928). Such a view has been taken by Brian Doyle among others. In the sphere of English education, whatever was taught in the departments of either English Language and Literature or English and History prior to the 1880s had mainly been "Rhetoric" with emphasis on historical and philological studies. English in its new form, on the other hand, was to emphasise the study of the works of great writers and in the drawing up of a list of such works as prescribed by a circular of the Board of Education in 1910.* The English Association established firm contacts with the Board and convinced it of the need for constituting a Departmental Committee to investigate into the status of English and to propose plans for future development. Eight of the fourteen members of the Committee when it was set up were to be the members of the Association. Commenting on the constitution and the interests of the association, Doyle says that it was

> ...not so much as a pressure-group founded to further the professional interests of teachers of English, but rather a class-based mobilisation which drew in not

> only most professors of English language and literature, but also like-minded politicians, administrators and 'men-of-letters'.'

The members, according to Doyle, devised strategies to check the potential dangers arising from "the loss of aristocratic leadership, and the rise of a cultural market place."• While the object in the case of the elementary level pupils was that of instilling "a feeling for the grandeur of the national language and literature," for the higher classes it was "to provide indirect moral inculcation through pleasurable and even joyous responses to literary values."* English was felt to bring the disparate interests within the nation into a single organic unity because of its "apparent potential to reach directly to the roots of subjective human response through modes of 'appreciation'."[10] Efforts of this kind on the part of the Board as well as the English Association culminated in the writing of a Report by the Departmental Committee, known as the Newbolt Report.

The Report, also known as The Teaching of English in England, was published in 1921. Despite the victory, the war seems to have provided England with an opportunity to look back on its educational system. Voicing the superiority of the Germans on this front, Lloyd George says:

> The most formidable institution we had to fight in Germany was not the arsenals of Krupps or the yards in which they turned out submarines, but the schools in Germany.

> They were our most formidable competitors in business and our terrible opponents in war. An educated nan is a better worker, a more formidable warrior, and a better citizen. That was only half comprehended before the war.'[11]

A year before Lloyd George voiced this view, at Cambridge members of the Senate net to debate on the formation of an English Tripos even as "`Russia was tottering into revolution and America preparing for war...'."[12] By May 1919, when the Departmental Committee was appointed by the President of the Board of Education, to inquire into the position of English in the educational system of England,[13] the necessity to promote a sense of national cultural coherence was already deeply felt. The terms of reference of the Committee, therefore, underline the duty to advise how its study may best be promoted in schools of all types including Continuation schools, and in Universities and other Institutions of Higher Education.'*

The authors of the Newbolt Report define education as guidance in the acquiring of experience. They underline the importance of human relations in gaining this experience. In this context, English literature is seen as a study of a record of human experience. They also emphasize the importance of the study of English language vis-a-vis other subjects:

> If progress is not made at one time in the region of arithmetic or history or geography, the child merely remains backward in that respect, and the

> deficiency can be made up later. But a lack of language is a lack of the means of communication and of thought itself. Moreover, among the vast mass of the population, it is certain that if a child is not learning good English he is learning bad English, and probably bad habits of thought; and some of the mischief done may never afterwards be undone."

Similarly, the primacy of English for a national education is most clearly spelt out:

> ...we state what appears to us to be an incontrovertible primary fact, that for English children no form of knowledge oan take precedence of a knowledge of English, no form of literature can take precedence of English literature; and that the two are so inextricably connected as to form the only basis possible for a national education.'*

The authors of the Report deplore the fact that the "[i]dea of liberal education is either altogether ignored or struggles feebly for the right of existence..."'7 because of the predominant emphasis in public schools on the study of Latin and Greek. But not everybody has access to the the public school and hardly any body has access to Latin and Greek. It is here that the authors recognise the importance of English in its ability to provide "a channel of supply" of "experience to be found in

great art" which is "within the reach of all without distinction."[19] Developing the metaphor of the "channel" they go on:

> Moreover, if we explore the course of English literature, if we consider from what sources its stream has sprung, by what tributaries it has been fed, and with how rich and full a current it has come down to us, we shall see that it has other advantages not to be found elsewhere. There are mingled in it, as only in the greatest of rivers there could be mingled, the fertilizing influences flowing down from many countries and from many ages of history. Yet all these have been subdued to form a stream native to our own soil. The flood of diverse human experience which it brings down to our own life and tiae is in no sense or degree foreign to us, but has become the native experience of wen of our own race and culture.[20]
>
> (Emphasis added)

They are convinced that for "a full measure of culture and humane training," English must form "the essential basis of a liberal education for all English people."[21]

Doyle sees the efforts of the Report and the Association as essentially the same:

> While the Report itself added little that was new to the strategies developed by the Association over the previous couple of decades, it systematised and concretised those strategies into a single developed statement and, in so doing, provided a discursive seal between the Board of Education as a formal state institution and the 'anti-institutional' English Association. Once this had been achieved, little was left for the Association to do.[21]

It is precisely the idea of liberal-humane education which is a point of departure for Leavis's sketch for an English school at the University in his Education and the University (1943). Like the authors of the Report he too argues that literary studies are ideally suited to serve the cause of liberal education in "bringing the various kinds of specialist knowledge and training into effective relation with informed general intelligence, humane culture, social conscience and political will."[13] Leavie wants to make the "English School" the centre for "a real humane focus" because he believes that a study of the literature and language of one's own country is the most intimate kind of study of tradition. Leavis also points to the unique status of literary studies in their ability to "lead constantly outside themselves." As an English teacher and a literary critic Leavis wished to inculcate in his students "a discipline of scrupulous sensitiveness of response to delicate organization of feeling, sensation and imagery"[23] in their study of literature to enable them to reflect on the developments in

the world outside. This reminds us of the following words from the Newbolt Report:

> ... so poets, philosophers, and historians have the power of revealing new values, relations of thought, feeling, and act, by which the dull and superficial sight of the multitude is illuminated and helped to penetrate in the direction of reality.[24]

It may be relevant to point out here that Leavis's attitude towards the "multitutde" is sympathetic beoause of hia own middle class background and is therefore significantly different from that of the authors of the Report.

It is in place here to remind ourselves of Leavis's views on the scientific study of language. Linguisticians, he says, postpone dealing at all with meaning. Thought about language on the other hand, he says, "should entail the full and firm recognition that words 'mean' because individual human beings have meant the meaning, and that there is no meaning unless individual beings can meet in it."[25] Advocating that the scientific study of formal grammar and philology be kept apart from the study of literature, the writers of the Newbolt Report opine that "in dealing with literature, the voyage of the mind should be broken as little as possible by the examination of obstacles and the analysis of the element on which the explorer is floating"[26] (emphasis added). Literature is thus seen as "the voyage of the mind" and the role of the teacher is to introduce the student "to the intimacy of a greater intellect."*[7] Leavis's own ideas of literature come very close

to this notion as can be gathered from the following lines from a much later lecture (1969):

> It's [the poem] "there" only when it's realized in separate minds, and it's not merely private. It's something in which minds can meet, and our business is to establish the poem and meet in it.[28]

What Leavis says here about the poem is equally applicable to his idea of literature as a whole. Leavis also recognizes literature, not only as a place where minds meet, but goes further to find a place for the teacher-critic. Thus teaching or the act of criticism helps individual student-readers to "realize" the work of art in their "separate minds."

In this light we may look more closely at the conception of the teacher in the Newbolt Report. As we have seen, the Report looks at education as providing guidance to the students in the acquiring of experience. "The intercourse of the classroom" is seen in this context as the most valuable for the student because in it "he will come under the influence of not one but two personal forces, namely, the creative power of the author whose record he is studying, and the appreciative judgment of the teacher who is introducing him to the intimacy of a greater intellect."[29] Hence the Report lays great emphasis on the training of the teacher who "must himself have received an education of the kind towards which he is to lead his class."[30] For this purpose it proposes "the enrolment of a fraternity of itinerant preachers of English literature" to "reinforce the regular army of teachers" to counteract "the influenoes which

tend to bitterness and disintegration"[31] (emphasis added). The missionary zeal and the rigorousness of the programme are at once emphasized. What the authors of the Report envisage in training the teachers by "a fraternity of itinerant preachers" who would in turn train the young minds of the students is very similar to what Leavis expects from the "cultivated minority"[32] who work towards the creation of a broad readership through literary criticism.

In his early pamphlet, "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture" (1930), Leavis asserts that culture has always been in the possession of a minority who exercise intellectual control over the society. He explains the reasons for this exclusivity:

> In any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is (apart from cases of the simple and familiar) only a few who are capable of unprompted, first-hand judgment. They are still a small minority, though a larger one who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgment by genuine personal response.[33]

Leavis's "tiny minority" includes both creative writers and critics. The business of the literary critic is to recreate the experience of the artist as it is realized or grasped in the words on the printed page. When the critic offers his judgement, he invites the readers to agree or disagree with him. This is how the work of art enters the "collaborative process" and helps the "tiny minority" to come into contact with the broader

readership, which may include other critics as well as ordinary readers.

In a letter to The Times Literary Supplement, Leavis himself makes it clear that his own published criticism "bears a close relation to *my* this] work with the undergraduates."[34] For Leavis, therefore, critical practice or classroom interaction becomes a means to establish an "organic" relationship between the culturally creative elite and the educated mass.

Leavis's own idea of minority culture takes off from Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy which Leavis quotes at the beginning of his 1930 pamphlet. Interestingly enough, for the authors of the Newbolt Report too Arnold provides the starting point. They quote Arnold's claim that culture unites classes. They wish Arnold had added that "a system of education which disunites classes cannot be held worthy of the name of a national culture."" They look forward to an educational system which would help to "soften," if not "obliterate" the lines of separation between different classes. It is here that they actually recognize the importance of the study of English right from the school to the University. For the authors of the Report English education is clearly a means to bring about a sense of "national culture." Leavis, on the other hand, wishes to protect a minority culture which in turn helps in the creation of a broader readership.

The authors of the Report feel that a marked difference in the modes of speech of different classes and an unduly narrow ground on which they meet for purposes of social life are the causes for their division. To avoid this they suggest the

following:

> If the teaching of the language were properly and universally provided for, the difference between educated and uneducated speech, which at present causes so much prejudice and difficulty of intercourse on both sides, would gradually disappear. ... The old education was not similar for all, but diverse. It went far to make of us not one nation, but two, neither of which shared the associations or tastes of the other. An education fundamentally English would, we believe, at any rate bridge, if not close, this chasm of separation.[34]

Arnold himself had advocated the introduction of English to the lower and middle-class student at the elementary school level through a diffusion of culture to be brought about by "apostles of equality." The authors of the Newbolt Report quote Arnold himself:

> 'The great men of culture,' he wrote, 'are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time____'[35]

For the authors of the Report, the "great men of culture" are agents of the promotion through education of a semblance of

unity. Arnold himself and Leavis later on emphasize instead the importance of the seminal role of these "great men of culture." The difference between the Report on the one hand and Arnold and Leavis on the other is one of emphasis, which comes out quite effectively in Arnold's words quoted above and Leavis's own regarding "minority culture" mentioned earlier on.

Margaret Mathieson, in her The Preachers of Culture, draws our attention to a few lines prior to the ones quoted above from Arnold where he expresses his belief that culture seeks "to do away with classes" and that "the men of culture are the true apostles of equality."[38] She has rightly pointed out the ambivalence between Arnold's egalitarianism and his contemptuous attitude towards the masses. She argues that Arnold's support for the retention of traditional curriculum for the public schools, Latin for older secondary pupils, and English for lower-middle-class and elementary school pupils, can only perpetuate the class differences he professes to eliminate.[39] The Newbolt Report too, as we have just seen, seems to offer an easy alternative to the sinking of class differences. Is there any evidence in the Report to suggest its real intentions as regards the question of class differences? Towards the end of their "General Introduction" to the Report, the authors have this to offer:

> Many of the differences between the lot of one class and another are of little importance; but the present advantage of rich over poor in our schools—the difficulty of the attempt to pass up the intellectual ladder and to attain the

> spiritual freedom conferred by a real education--is keenly and rightly felt as an unnecessary and unjust inequality. Nothing would, in our belief, conduce more to the unity and harmony of the nation than a public policy directed to the provision of equal intellectual opportunities for all, and service to this end would be doubly effective if it came voluntarily as from those who have already received their inheritance, and desire to share with the rest of their countrymen that in which their life and freedom most truly consist.*•
>
> (Emphasis added)

The national need of the time, as is evident from the lines above, is not so much the elimination of the differences between classes, as "the unity and harmony of the nation." To achieve this end, they would not mind attempting to provide "equal intellectual opportunities for all." If Leavis's own ideas spring from the same spirit of nationalism, where would his own contribution to the cause of English studies and criticism place him? The difference between Leavis and the Newbolt Report is clearly one of emphasis. For the authors of the Newbolt Report the national concerns are of prime importance. English is just a means to provide the cementing bond among people of different classes. For Leavis, English itself is the essence, study of English literature in and through literary-critical practice. English and criticism also become synonymous with culture. When

preservation of culture amounts to a study of tradition through literature, it is bound to perpetuate a minority culture. Raymond Williams sees in Leavis the culmination of this process of what he terms as equating culture with criticism, a process which Arnold had begun.[41] Williams exposes the narrowness of Leavis's concept of culture even as he agrees with Leavis to the extent that literature does have the capacity to record the "subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition":

> To put upon literature, or more accurately upon criticism, the responsibility of controlling the quality of the whole range of personal and social experience, is to expose a vital case to damaging understanding. English is properly a central matter of all education, but it is not, clearly, a whole education. Similarly, formal education, however humane, is not the whole of our gaining of the social experience of the past and present. In his proposals on education (in Education and the University) Leavis makes, very clearly, the former point, and few men have done more to extend the depth and range of literary studies, and to relate them to other interests and disciplines. But the damaging formulation of the nature of the minority remains.[42]

It is true that Leavis never conceals his ideas of

"minority culture" and the dominance of the cultural elite in society in the garb of egalitarianism. In fact, his own critical practice, with its emphasis on consensus in natters of value judgement of works of art, serves to perpetuate an oligarchy of the cultivated minority, even as it tries to strengthen the national bond with its constant emphasis on the "Englishness" of the writers it deals with. Viewed from this angle, Leavis could be seen as being well entrenched in the Arnold-Newbolt tradition and in fact even strengthening it.

Notes

[1] See Geoffrey Strickland, "The Criticism of F.R. Leavis" in Structuralism or Criticism: Thoughts on How We Read (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 147-75.

[2] A reference to The Newbolt Report and George Sampson's English for the English, for instance, occurs in Leavis's "Mr. Eliot and Education," a rev. of Essays Ancient and Modern by T.S. Eliot in Scrutiny 5.1 (1936):84-89. Leavis says here that conclusions "opposite to his [Eliot's] own have been come to by persons ostensibly better qualified to conclude and to pronounce," and "that he [Eliot] ought now, in common decency to read" these two books and "tell us why he disagrees" (87; emphasis added). This can be taken as Leavis's indirect acceptance of the recommendations of the Newbolt Report. It is possible that Leavis did not want to make a more direct statement than this in view of his anti-institutional stance all through his career.

[3] Margaret Mathieson in her Preachers of Culture: A Study of English and its Teachers (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1975) 122-42 sees how both these sought to combat the force of the Classicists by emphasizing the moral values of science and English, the same reasons for which the Classics themselves were recommended.

* This of course inevitably creates at least a two-tier

structure and goes against the ostensible purpose of the inculcation of culture which "seeks to do away with classes."

[5] Brian Doyle, "Invention of English," Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920, ed. Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (London: Groom Helm, 1986) 90.

[6] Doyle quotes the circular of the Board 97.

[7] Doyle 103.

[8] Doyle 104.

[9] Doyle 104.

[10] Doyle 104-05.

[11] Margaret Mathieson, The Preachers of Culture, 70 quotes from G. Greenbaum, Social Change and the Schools (London: Routledge, 1967).

[12] F.L. Lucas quotes from Terence Hawkes, "The Institutionalization of Literature: The University," in Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism, ed. Martin Coyle et al. (London: Routledge, 1990) 930.

[13] The Teaching of English in England (London: HMSO, 1921) 1.

[14] Teaching 1.

[15] Teaching 10.

[16] Teaching 14.

[17] Teaching 12.

[18] Teaching 13.

[19] Teaching 13-14.

[20] Teaching 18-19.

[21] Doyle 110.

[22] F.R. Leavis, Education and the University: A Sketch for an 'English School' (1943; London: Chatto & Windus, 1972) 24.

[23] Leavis Education 38.

[24] Teaching 17.

[25] Leavis, The Living Principle: 'English' As a Discipline of Thought (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977) 58.

[26] Teaching 11.

[27] Teaching 8.

[28] Leavis, English Literature in Our Time and the University: Clark Lectures 1967 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969) 48.

[29] Teaching 8.

[30] Teaching 24.

[31] Teaching 25.

[32] The "itinerant preachers" of the Report and Leavis's cultural minority remind one of Arnold's "apostles of culture."

[33] Leavis, Education 143.

[34] Leavis, Letters in Criticism, ed. John Tasker (London: Chatto & Windus, 1974) 148.

[35] Teaching 6.

[36] Teaching 22.

[37] Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy quoted in Teaching 259.

[38] Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy quoted in Mathieson, Preachers 41-42.

[39] Mathieson, Preachers 42-43.

[40] Teaching 25-26.

[41] Williams, Raymond, Culture and Society 1780-1950 (1961; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982) 249.

[42] Williams 249.

Chapter 3

Creativity and Community: Towards a Theory of Language

> **Ideally, I ought perhaps (though, I repeat, I should not put *my* position in quite the** terms **Dr. Wellek ascribes to me) to be able to complete the work with a theoretical statement.**
>
> (F.R. Leavis, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy," Scrutiny, 6.1, 1937, 62.)

> **No one put *me* on to Marjorie Grene's book [The Knower and the Known]. and when I found it in Heiffer's philosophy corner, and, reading in it here and there, realized that it was what 1 had long been seeking (without much hope), I wasn't supposing that the author had `initiated a successful philosophical revolution', and 1 knew nothing of any group to which she belonged. Simply, I saw** she **had a good mind, was a cultivated person and had written the rare book that bore helpfully on my problem--a book that could be used by me and the kind of student I was proposing to work with.**
>
> (F.R. Leavis, The Living Principle, 1975, 61.)

The early **Leavis's** emphatic assertion that he is an anti-philosopher and his arguments with Rene Wellek are quite **well-**known. At the same time, one cannot ignore the later **Leavis's** open **admiration** for and **recommendation** of the **philosophical** ideas of **Marjorie** Grene and Michael Polanyi. An attempt is made here to explore **Leavis's** ideas of **mind** and matter, "selfhood" and "identity," nisus and ahnung, in their relation to his ideas

on thought and language, life and literature, and to bring into focus a loosely structured theory behind his statements. These ideas can be seen as the informing factors behind Leavis's views on culture, community, language and creativity. We also find here a complex set of ideas bound to one another in an "organic," i.e., in a mutual and collectivistic, relationship.

Leavis is fundamentally opposed to the ideas represented by Locke and Newton, and in fact the whole of Western philosophy founded on the Descartian worldview with its emphasis on the dualism of mind and matter. Leavis says that Descartes's strict separation of mind and matter sets up other polarities like the internal and the external, the subjective and the objective, the private and the public. As against the two realms of the spiritual and the material, Leavis posits a "Third Realm"[1] which is neither completely this nor that, but belongs to and accommodates both. Leavis argues that the dualism of the subjective and the objective, when extended to the world of language, brings forth a distinction between statements of fact and statements of value. He invokes Marjorie Grene[2] who refers to Richards and Ogden who in turn differentiate the objective statements of science from the "impassioned utterances of art." Richards and Ogden view the statements of art as "pseudo-statements," a view which is unpalatable to Leavis. Leavis also opposes the dichotomy between pure statements of fact and statements of value. His contention is that this sort of division is artificial. In this context he borrows Grene's response to Russell where she argues that judgements of value are implicit even in a statement of fact. Any act of fresh knowing, according to her, involves a comparison with what is

already known. This inevitably brings in a set of standards and personal responses. However, the personal response itself is not entirely personal, but "a product of immemorially collaborative creativity."[3]

Fundamental to Descartian thinking is the assumption that, by reflection, one could know oneself just as one could know any external phenomenon.[4] As against this, Grene says that one does not know oneself in the way one knows the not-self. Knowing oneself is difficult because one is inside time. This also implies that one is also shaped by the past. Polanyi says that the past experience acts as tacit and subsidiary knowledge which one brings to bear on the present. Therefore, one cannot be a passive observer of reality, but is implicated in its shaping. As knowing is a temporal activity, which is always in the process of making, it can never be absolute. There is always in the act of knowing, what Polanyi calls, a "protensive pull from the future."

Equally basic to Leavis's thinking is his view of the role of language in the creation of the world, a view he shares with Polanyi and Grene. The external world becomes meaningful only in so far as we have language. It is language which helps us notice our environment and the noticing takes place within a framework of values which we share with others. The creation of reality therefore is a cooperative venture which is value-dominated.

This idea of collaboration is implicit in the creation of what Grene calls the "human world." She says that when a child is born, it instantly enters into a "world shaped by all kinds of human value-judgments."[5] The child thus belongs to the total

community, which includes the actually enumerable community around it as well as a wider community which is a result of its participation in a living culture of centuries of human experience.

Language too is a result of collaborative human creativity. Grene says: "It [language] is concretely 'there' only as I utter the words and phrases chosen by the meaning (in me, but outward bound) which they convey and you take them."[6] Language then exists because individuals have meant certain meanings and have been able to exchange them. In this sense language becomes at the same time both subjective and objective.

The objective way of understanding language helps us reflect on the Wittgensteinian conception of language. Leavis observes that Wittgenstein himself was pretty "naive" about language, even as he was aware of the inadequacy of the linguisticians' study of language divorcing it from its meaning. The naivety represented by his conception, Leavis says, is "inimical to thought."[7] Therefore, Leavis is opposed to the idea of English students being made to study Wittgenstein. He recommends instead Polanyi, particularly his essay "Sense-Giving and Sense-Reading," an essay that concerns itself with meaning. Leavis says that while the other linguistic philosophers "slight" meaning, considering it too basic, Wittgensteinians feel that such "unconsciousness" about language "produces gratuitous logic, linguistic fatuity, unprofitable conclusion and intellectual frustration."[8] As a "remarkable linguist" (Leavis's own description), Wittgenstein is interested in the "analogical structure" of a poem, whereas Leavis is concerned with the fullest use of language and its potential to capture

"original exploratory thought."[9] For Leavis, this potential is related to the force of the intention of the speaker.[10] Here Leavis also elaborates on the collaborative nature of language. The speaker's intention, he says, is completed only by the presence of another person responding to it. He asserts that there is no meaning unless individual beings can meet in a language.[11] Hence his opposition to the Wittgensteinian idea of analogies and the use of such terms as "logical space" and "areas of discourse" which to him ultimately demonstrate the limits of language. Language, in this sense of "insulating boundaries between various modes of thought" is antithetical to the collaborative and creative use of language.[12]

The same principle of mutual collaborative creation informs literature. For Leavis, a poem is "a product, and in any experienced actual existence, a phenomenon, of human creativity, the essentially collaborative nature of which it exemplifies in diverse distinguishable modes."[13] He says that it is neither private nor public, but belongs to the "Third Realm." Speaking on the importance of Grene to Leavis, Anne Samson says:

> ... that they [Grene's ideas] carry the implication that the thought proper to the creative writer and therefore, in Leavis's acceptation, to English Studies itself, is not a specialized mode of apprehension; rather, there is but one mode, and what distinguishes the great writer is the capacity to use that mode to the full. The collaborative interchange that establishes the poem, that establishes it as a value,

> is typical of all exchanges, for as Grene describes it, in the human world values are constitutive of facts, and values are instituted by the community. Our world, all our world is the product of creative collaboration. It is a world constituted by language, into which we are born, and it is only within the prior agreement of our language that we are able to disagree. This language which stretches back in time is a macrocosm of that tacit knowledge which each of us possesses (and part of our tacit knowledge is our language), the condition of our potentiality, Polanyi's 'protensive pull'. We are all, then, participators in creativity, and the role of the great writers is to make us conscious of this, to make us conscious of our humanity, which is our language.[1*]

If a poem is a product of collaboration, then an analysis of the poem too is simply a recreation of that experience by critics with their individual responses to the marks on the page. Analysis, in other words, is in a sense an acceptance that the poem stands between those who respond to it. The poem actually takes shape when Binds meet in either agreement or disagreement of what it means. Leavis sayst

> My critical judgment is mine, in the sense that 1 can't take over anyone else's (if

> I did, it would cease to be a judgment). But it is not merely and possessively 'mine'; my implicit assumption being that it is right, 'I know that it is not mine'--and that my responsibility is to mean it as universally valid.'[8]

Blake's pronouncement "1 know it is not mine," which describes his creative work is employed here by Leavis to indicate his own critical process. It is in this sense that the critical process becomes almost synonymous with the creative activity. Leavis's view of literature and criticism, of the interaction between the artist or critic with the community of artists or critics of the past and the present, echoes Grene's idea of the child and its environment. It may be recalled here how Oscar Wilde brings the creative and the critical faculties together in his critically creative dialogue "The Critic as Artist." He asserts: "All fine imaginative work is self-conscious.... Believe me, Ernest, there is no fine art without self-consciousness, and self-consciousness and the critical are one."" However, Wilde proceeds to argue for an independent status for criticism, even as he attempts simultaneously to exemplify the artificiality of a division between the two activities. The independent status Wilde accords to art (which would include both the creative and critical faculties) goes well with his claim that it is life which imitates art. In Leavis, on the other hand, criticism does not attain an independent status. Rather, the creative and the critical come into existence for him in a similar fashion with the individual artist and the critic having to depend on the wider community for their existence.

It is in place at this point to consider how the idea of this akinness of the creative and critical activities is revised by the poststructuralist critics like Harold Bloom and J. Hillis Miller. True, both Leavis and the poststructuralist critics accord the faculty of creativity to the critic. But Bloom and Miller differ from Leavis in the way they perceive the nature of creativity. For the critic in the Leavisian scheme, the poem or the novel (the words on the printed page, to be more precise) is the starting point and he/she would at best be reading the author's mind giving free vent to his/her individual creativity. Bloom and Miller, on the other hand, invest critics with a degree of freedom that helps them to read texts, which in turn lead them to other texts in an endless web of interlacing relationships, with the result that interpretation of the author's mind or even ultimate judgement of the work becomes minimal. Wendell V. Harris'' explains how the earlier drive to establish "mastery" of texts (he is primarily thinking of the New Critics here) is replaced by the poststructuralist "indeterminacy." He refers to Geoffrey Hartman's term, "Revisionist Reversal" to describe their kind of creativity. Hartman in his Criticism in the Wilderness makes an interesting connection between the New Critics's "anti-self consciousness" and Leavis's own refusal to theorize. This makes us wonder if the difference between Leavis and the poststructuralists could be traced to their opposing views on language and its referentiality. While in Leavis a word would refer to something other than itself, for the poststructuralists it seems only to be self-referential. Miller considers the notion of a referential use of language an illusion. He prefers to see the human

condition instead in a complicated web of metaphorical analogies going back to centuries. Also, he and the other post-structuralists do not seem to offer any method of criticism. In fact, Bloom does not even bother whether any other critic would share his own "vocabulary or revisionary ratios, of crossings, of whatever."[16] Leavis's attempt, on the other hand, has been to arrive at a consensus arising out of a group of practising critics.

This brings us to a consideration of Leavis's idea of the self as a real, intersubjective subject, an idea he shares with Grene and Polanyi, in contrast to the Foucauldian idea of the self or subject as a mere discourse traversed by other discourses. Foucault sees the author function, for instance, as the manifestation of "the appearance of a certain discursive set" amidst the circulation, and functioning of certain other discourses.[17] The emergence of the real self or the subject in a sense is thus overshadowed by the overpowering and constricting quality of language in any discourse. As against this, Leavis's idea of the self, being simultaneously conditioned by language (which is already constituted by an intersubjective circulation of selves) as well as contributing to it, is definitely more progressive, at least in theory.

Now to go back to a consideration of Leavis's ideas on the individual and the society. In this context Leavis brings in Polanyi who says that "mind" is there only in individual human beings and that an individual mind belongs to a person who has a body and a history. The individual's response is therefore to a certain extent influenced by them. He says: "His mind is the mind of his body, and his body is the body of his mind. The

dualism that has defeated so many epistemologies is eliminated here."[30] The importance Polanyi accords to history is very similar to Leavis's insistence on tradition and cultural continuity.

It is the presence of the individual human being in the whole act of knowing that takes us to the significance in the Leavisian critical terminology of "life." He says:

> When. . . I wrote 'Life is a necessary word', I also wrote that life is 'there' only in individual beings, meaning that the only way in which one can point to life as concretely 'there' is to point to an individual being and say, 'There you have an actual manifestation of life'.[31]

Leavis's opposition to the "technologico-Benthamite" civilization of his day springs from its negation of this "living principle." The Descartian world-view and the technological civilization, in Leavis's view, represent this negation of life. The only way to counter them, Leavis feels, is to assert the principle of life. Here lies the responsibility of literary criticism, the English School and the University. Leavis lays down clearly the task before him. He wants to create a centre of the educated public where there

> ...must be practised thinking that brings in consciously, pertinacious and delicate resource, the un-Cartesian reality underlying language and implicit in it; what is inexpressible in terms of logic and

> clarity, the unstatable, must not be excluded from thought....[22]

What the assertion of life means to Leavis can be understood from hit appreciation of Blake, Dickens and Lawrence. Blake represents for him an anti-Newtonian-Lockean view of life. In his discussion of Blake he formulates a distinction between the terns selfhood and identity:

> 'Identity' is Blake's word. He uses it in relation to`selfhood', its antithesis. The individual as `selfhood' wills egotistically, from his own enclosed centre, and is implicitly intent on asserting possession. As creative identity the individual is the agent of life, and `knows he does not belong to himself.' He serves something that is quite other than his selfhood, which is blind and blank to it.[23]

He finds Dickens too making the same kind of distinction. Leavis goes on:

> The selfhood asserts its rights, and possesses, from within its egocentric self-enclosure; the identity is the individual being as the focus of life--life as heuristic energy, creativity, and, from the human person's point of view, disinterestedness. It is impossible to doubt that Dickens, like Blake, saw the

> creativity of the artist as continuous with the general human creativity that, having created the human world we live in, keeps it renewed and real. This day-to-day work of collaborative creation includes the creating of language, without which there couldn't have been a human world.[24]

What Leavis means by selfhood may be similar to the subjective realm in the Cartesian framework. Leavis may have also been reacting against the Romantic exaltation of the self and self-expression. As against this, Blake posits identity, which offsets the subjective point of view by relating itself to the "general human creativity." In this context it is pertinent to talk about the theories of impersonality of Leavis and Eliot.[25] Leavis himself contrasts Eliot's work with that of Blake. For Eliot, a work of art springs from the writer's ability to transcend the limitations of the self by a recognition of the man who suffers and the mind that creates. Leavis, on the other hand, sees an artistic creation as springing from "the pressure of living." That Eliot has substantially modified his idea of impersonality by 1940 in his Yeats Lecture needs to be stressed at this point. Eliot describes his earlier notion as expressing only an "adolescent grasp of that idea" and that "[t]here are two forms of impersonality; one that which is natural to the mere skilful craftsman, and that which is more and more achieved by the maturing artist."[26] While the first kind of impersonality results at best only in an "anthology piece," devoid of the "particularity" needed for the expression of a general truth,

the second kind, arising out of an "intense and personal experience" succeeds in expressing it. He finds a "visible development" in Yeats's poems after 1904 towards this mature impersonality. Leavis's refusal to take cognizance of Eliot's modification is related to his admiration of Lawrence (which in turn is linked with the exchange of words between Eliot and Lawrence) and Leavis's own Non-Conformist views which clash with Eliot's proclaimed Anglo Catholicism. Bernard Bergonzi[27] details Leavis's "long road to rejection" culminating in his dismissal of Eliot's doctrine of impersonality in 1958--years after Eliot's modification of his own views--even as he continues to cling on to Eliot's view of tradition and the poet's relation to the past. Bergonzi too sees this as arising from Leavis's allegiance to Lawrence and the value Leavis attaches to individual creativity. Bergonzi, and Bilan before him, have rightly pointed out that Leavis continues to use the criteria of impersonality to Judge the greatness of George Eliot and that he even quotes Eliot's "Tradition and Individual Talent," the very essay he finds fault with in 1958. Bergonzi also refers to Leavia's disapproval of the Christian orthodoxy of Eliot's <u>After Strange Gods</u>. According to Leavis it is this orthodoxy which had a debilitating effect on Eliot's criticism. At the same time, Leavis approves of Eliot's belief in tradition and continuity. For Leavis then, the artist's intense personal experience has a definite role in the creative process. However, it is not like the Romantic notion of "spontaneous creation" either. This la made clear in a statement like "[a]s individuals, we are life, which transcends us."[28] Leavia thus emphasizes the individual's own contribution to life which

transcends him/her. The interaction between the individual and the community he/she lives in is suggested here. Leavis says that what is true of Blake is also true of all great writers:

> The thinking of all great writers, the representatively human quality of genius being inseparable from its intense individuality, is distinctive, involving in each case a marked distinctiveness in the report on reality that is conveyed.[29]

The "distinctive" response postulated in the above lines is to be one informed by "the intuited `living principle'--the principle implicit in the interplay between the living language and the creativity of individual genius."[30] The inseparability of selfhood and identity in their relationship to "life" is best brought out by Leavis in the following words:

> The 'identity' and the 'selfhood' are not separable, but present in the organic wholeness of every human life a varying relation-- or perhaps it would be better to say a shifting emphasis on one or the other.[31]

Related to the notion of selfhood and identity in Leavis are the terms nisus and ahnung, though he is rather vague in his explanation of these terms. However, it oan be gathered that nisus refers to an artist's individual creative effort while ahnung may refer to an "inkling" (Lawrence's term), "anticipatory apprehension," "foreboding," or "a pull from the

future necessary for knowing" (Grene's terms). Polanyi, according to Leavis, feels that the drive to even a scientific discovery comes from a "'faculty for integrating signs of potentialities, a faculty that we may call the power of anticipatory intuition.'"[31] Leavis shows how Polanyi, in the following lines from Knowing and Being, relates this power to imagination:

> Poincare emphasizes that illumination does not come without the previous work of the imagination. This applies also to what I call intuition. A problem for inquiry comes to the scientist in response to his roaming vision of yet undisoovered possibilities. Having chosen a problem, he thrusts his imagination forward in search of clues and the material he thus digs up--whether by speculation or experiment—is integrated by intuition into new surmises, and so the inquiry goes on to the end.[32]

Explaining the notion of creativity in science as well as the imaginative arts later in The Living Principle, Leavis says:

> The scientific discoverer, Polanyi points out, adducing the evidence, has an apprehension of a pattern asking to be verified (and that is, discovered) in the field of his special interest and frequentation. That gives a direction to a

> sustained activity of experimental research. In the course of this the intuition, if at all near the mark, will be confirmed, and confirmation will involve refinement and development. Polanyi associates 'intuition' with 'imagination'. I myself... use the word ahnung by way of emphasizing... that imagination, like intuition, is concerned with the real and that the establishing of the given reality by the seeker on the frontiers of the known lies now (he hopes) in the not too remote future.[34]

Leavis draws on Lawrence to give a definite shape to this notion and he quotes him from his "Introduction to These Paintings":

> Any creative act occupies the whole consciousness of a man. This is true of the great discoveries of science as well as of art. The truly great disooveries of science and real works of art are made by the whole consciousness of man working together in unison and oneness: instinct, intuition, mind, intellect all fused into one complete consciousness, and grasping what we may call a complete truth, or a complete vision, a complete revelation in sound.[35]

Leavis also says that ahnung, this "clumsy phrase," involves a

belief in human creativity and our conception of time. Reflecting on a passage about the act of knowing and understanding from Grene's The Knower and the Known. Leavis says that it is:

> ... concerned explicitly with the mode of life's asserting itself, developing into humanity, and creating--as it continually recreates--the `human world*. The `pull from the future', as the brief passage recognizes, is at the same time `anticipatory apprehension', for knowing itself is achievement; ahnung goes with `nisus'--terms for whioh the 'laws of inanimate nature' have no use.[36]

Leavis emphasizes here Grene's contention that in the act of knowing, the end in sight, even when only guessed at, draws us towards a solution. Therefore, for understanding to result, the individual's "anticipatory apprehension" along with "the pull from the future" has to be combined with individual effort. Language itself, for Leavis, is a result of this process. Talking about language he says:

> It takes the individual being, the particularizing actuality of life, back to the dawn of human consciousness, and beyond, and does this in fostering the ahnung in him of what is not yet--the as yet unrealized, the achieved discovery of which demands creative effort.[37]

It is clear now that Marjorie Grene's conception of knowledge represents a synthesis of the dichotomy of the mind and body, a dichotomy Descartes would like to emphasize. Her synthesis in terms of literature would mean unification of sensibility. Leavis also contends that the whole technological mode of thought of modern society springs from the Descartian world-view. The criteria of absolute logic, clarity and distinctness devoid of the personal element also result from this mechanistic view. Leavis locates the beginnings of this kind of thinking in English Literature in the founding of the Royal Society.

Now for a brief consideration of this dissociation. In his essay "The Metaphysical Poets" Eliot finds "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling" among poets prior to the seventeenth century.[38] The dissociation between thought and feeling that sets in around the late seventeenth century widens by the time of Tennyson and Browning, and thereafter the writers are unable to "feel their thought". He identifies here the beginnings of this change:

> In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.[39]

He says that while it is true that the language has become more "refined" under the influence of Milton and Dryden, the feeling has increasingly become "crude." Leavis discusses the

dissociation in his essay "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century." To him, "dissociation of sensibility" covers the development of a verse which appeals only to the public or social ear. He, in fact, refers to Eliot and concurs with his ascribing the dissociation largely to the influence of Dryden and Milton. He goes on to say:

> A serious attempt to account for the 'dissociation of sensibility' would turn into a discussion of the great change that came over English civilization in the seventeenth century--the change notably manifested in the decisive appearance of modern English prose during the early years of the Restoration. Social, economic and political history, the Royal Society, Hobbes, intellectual and cultural history in general--a great and complex variety of considerations would be involved.[40]

Now we can see how Leavis relates the virtues of prose and reason divorced from feeling, that arise in the seventeenth century, to the Descartian world-view. We can also gather that Eliot's theory of the dissociation of sensibility, with its emphasis on the divorce of thought and emotion, becomes a formative influence on Leavis's idea of the loss of organic community. His discussion of the romantic poets, in which he makes extensive use of terms like "thought" and "emotion" and the arguments presented to judge the authors are very similar to those in Eliot. What are the ultimate effects of the loss of the

organic community?

In his first book written in collaboration with Denys Thompson, Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness, Leavis emphasises the loss of the "Organic Community" of rural, agricultural England and its slow replacement by an urban, industrial and organized modern state.[41] What characterized the organic community was a community awareness and a certain sharing of common interests, goals and beliefs. It represented a "positive culture" in which there was as yet no separation between the sophisticated and the popular levels of culture. The great agent of change was, of course, the machine, which implied mass-production, standardization and the consequent levelling-down of standards. This had its own consequenes for literature. It was no longer possible for great works of art to appeal at different levels of response, due to the increasing gap between various levels of culture and due to the failure of language as a common mode of communication. As an alternative to the organic community which is irretrievably lost, Leavis and Thompson propose building up a "civilized community" through a conscious and concerted effort. Leavis devises a programme of education (outlined in Education and the University) to make the citizens aware of the forces changing their environment and to develop in them an ability to "discriminate and resist." He proposes to train them to resist both the evil effects of and the sense of alienation from the environment. He believes that the only way to counteract the effects of the machine is to profit by the experience of the past.

Leavis and Thompson invoke I.A. Richards[42] who maintained

that the other vehicles of tradition like the family and community having dissolved, one has to rely more on language. But, since language itself is debased by contemporary use, the burden of the upkeep of the tradition falls on literature where, they believe, "the finest and subtlest use" of language is preserved. Leavis says elsewhere that "[i]t is literature that gives access to the inherited wisdom of the race, cultural continuity depending, for the most part, on literature and the literary tradition."[43] He says that we have to depend on the minority "to keep alive the subtlest and finest parts of tradition" because

> [i]n any period it is upon a very small minority that the discerning appreciation of art and literature depends: it is (apart from cases of the simple and familiar) only a few who are capable of unprompted, first-hand judgment. They are still a small minority, though a larger one, who are capable of endorsing such first-hand judgment by genuine personal response.[44]
>
> (Emphasis added)

Leavis also tells us how in the minority's possession "is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends...."[45] Language and literature thus become synonymous with culture. Therefore, Leavis proposes a programme of a study of literature through "practical criticism"[46] which develops among the students the ability to discriminate the good from the bad. This "training of critical awareness" forms the essentials

of the "English School," as outlined in the following words:

> The essential discipline of an English school is the literary-critical; it is a true discipline_____It trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence--intelligence that integrates as well as analyses and must have pertinacity and staying power as well as delicacy.[47]

His aim is to produce the educated man--the man of humane culture--who will be equipped to be intelligent and responsible about the problems of contemporary civilization. Leavis believes that it is only by such a determined effort that the tradition of taste can be kept up. This will form the basis on which his "civilized community" can be built. Leavis wants the process of reconstruction to start from universities because he believes that universities are "recongnized symbols of cultural tradition." He wants to make the "English School" the centre of "a real humane focus" because he believes that a study of literature and language of one's own country is the most intimate kind of study of tradition. He also points to the unique function of literature in bringing together a diversity of fields of knowledge and thought. Leavis intends to inculcate in his students "a discipline in scrupulous sensitiveness of response to delicate organizations of feeling, sensation and imagery"[48] through practical criticism. Leavis indicates how

local analysis of the nuances of the language leads them to reflect on developments in the world outside.

Leavis also makes it very clear that it is the business of the English School to stress that every great writer belongs to "the one collaboratively creative continuity" and how language makes "a continued and advancing collaborative thought possible."" Leavis's own endeavour as a critic is to construct a canon of literary works (his "great tradition"). His attempt is to show how each of these writers contributes to the restoration of the values of the organic community.

At the same time Leavis emphasizes the individual response of the readers or critics in their analysis of works of art. It is "a genuine personal response" of the readers that takes him a step forward from "practical criticism" to "analysis" and "judgement." Distinguishing his own terms--"training of perception, judgment and analytic skill"--from what is commonly referred to as "practical criticism" popularised by Richards, Leavis says:

> There is about it nothing in the nature of 'murdering to dissect,' and suggestions that it can be anything in the nature of laboratory-method misrepresent it entirely. We can have the poem only by an inner kind of possession; it is 'there' for analysis only in so far as we are responding appropriately to the words on the page.... Analysis is not a dissection of something that is already and passively there. What we call analysis is, of course, a

constructive or creative process....

> As addressed to other readers it is an appeal for corroboration: 'the poem builds up in this way, doesn't it? this bears such-and-such a relation to that, don't you agree?' In the work of an English School this aspect of mutual check--positively, of collaboration *in the common pursuit of true judgment'--would assert itself as a matter of course.[90]
>
> (Emphasis added)

For Leavis, analysis is the process of re-creation in response to the words of a writer. Leavis captures the fora of judgement in "This is so, isn't it?"--which is an attempt on his part to ask for confirmation of his judgement by other critics/readers. He is also prepared for an answer in the form of "Yes, but-" the "but" standing for "qualifications, corrections, shifts of emphasis, additions and refinements." Leavis says that it is not possible to have a final word on any work of art and that a sense of relative value emerges out of agreements and disagreements of judgements of various critics. Leavis insists that the "concurrence appealed for" in the critical exchange "must be real or it serves no critical purpose" and that there should be no "insincerity or mere politeness" on the part of participating critics.[91] The work of art, according to him, belongs therefore to the "Third Realm" which is neither public nor merely private. The existence of a work of art itself becomes a reality only insofar as those

critics disseoting it have each recreated it. Displacing the poem from the words on the printed page Leavis says:

> It's 'there' only when it's realized in separate minds, and yet it's not merely private. It's something in which minds can meet, and our business is to establish the poem and meet in it. Merely private, on the one hand, and, on the other, public in the sense that it can be produced in a laboratory, or tripped over--the poem is neither: the alternatives are not exhaustive. There is a third realm, and the poem belongs to that.[32]
>
> (Emphasis added)

Uhat Leavis says here of the poem is not very different from what he says of the nature of language in general. He makes this very clear in the following words in Valuation in Criticism:

> Language, which is nothing apart from meaning, is the product of human creativity, and therefore meaning is equally the product of human creativity. Unless someone means and someone else takes the meaning, there is no meaning. It follows that 'objectivity' in an immediately recognizable sense is a product of human creativity. In creating language human beings create the world they live in.[33]

In a chapter entitled "Verbal Interaction" in his Marxism and the Philosophy of Language Volosinov discusses the creation of meaning in similar terms:

> ...the printed verbal performance engages, as it were, in ideological colloquy of large scale: it responds to something, objects to something, affirms something, anticipates possible responses and objections, seeks support, and so on.[34]

The "responses," "objections," and "affirmations" do not seem to be very different from "qualifications, corrections, shifts of emphasis, additions and refinements," which are terms used in Leavis's critical process. Volosinov also grapples with the question of where meaning resides in a verbal performance:

> ...meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding. Meaning does not reside in the word or in the soul of the speaker or in the soul of the listener. Meaning is the effect of interaction between speaker and listener produced via the material or a particular sound complex.[35]

Volosinov's location of meaning in the actual interaction of the speaker and the listener also looks very similar to Leavis's concept of the third realm. While Leavis and Volosinov agree on the interaction of the individual and society in the creation of language, we should keep in mind that they differ on the

question of the primacy of the one over the other, as is to be expected between a humanist and a Marxist.

Leavis is also opposed to the idea of bringing a set of norms or criteria to judge a work of art. He says that there are no "fixed standards" and that no one who understands the nature of a judgement could talk of "imposing accepted values." (In this context, it will be in place to remember Leavis's well-known quarrel with Rene Wellek in his "Literary Criticism and Philosophy," Scrutiny, 6.1 1937, 59-70.) Viewed from these angles, Leavis's idea of criticism seems to offer infinite possibilities of interpretation of a work of art. At the same time, we know Leavis's own intolerance towards other critics. How do we account for this hostility? John Lucas sees a gradual narrowing of Leavis's spirit of collaboration.

> ...during Scrutiny's formative years in the thirties, Leavis undoubtedly gathered about him a prodigiously talented group of critics and collaborators--including Harding, L.C. Knights and James Smith--who helped him to make it a literary journal of quite outstanding importance. Again, this seems to me so obviously true that the proposition does not need to be defended. But it is equally obvious that by the time Scrutiny came to an end, in 1953, the sense of collaboration had quite gone.... In the thirties the collaborative spirit had allowed for creative disagreement. (An obvious example is the sharp exchange of

> views between Leavis and Knights over Measure for Measure.) But the later `collaborators' were in fact hard-liners. The result was that Leavis's famous critical touchstone 'this is so, isn't it', became shortened to 'this is so'.[56]

Bilan has already identified certain places where Leavis departs clearly from his own theory:

> 1 realize that one could try to argue ('Yes, but') that is what Leavis says in theory but it is not what he does in practice; that with his judgments on the later James or Auden's poetry he really does think that there can be no qualifications of his view.[57]

Bilan's discussion of the nature of Leavis's criticism helps us to see how the tendency to "enforce" his judgements has been with Leavis even in his Education and the University days. Here is Bilan quoting from Leavis:

> In criticism, of course (one would emphasize), nothing can be proved; there can, in the nature of the case, be no laboratory-demonstration or anything like it. Nevertheless, it is nearly always possible to go further than merely asserting a judgment or inviting agreement with a general account. Commonly one can

> call attention to this, that or th© other detail by way of making the nature and force of one's judgment plain.••
>
> (Emphasis added)

This Bilan rightly believes is Leavis's attempt towards "enforcing judgment." Yes, a closer look at Leavis's practice of criticism makes UE wonder whether his professed openness and possibilities of agreements and disagreements of judgements of value operate only within a closed community of critics who share a common code of beliefs and interests. What, precisely, then is this common code? Also, we often get confused in the Leavisian critical terminology. Is it, to take an instance, "collaboration" or "corroboration" that Leavis expects the critics to engage in, in their critical endeavour?

It may be worthwhile to compare at this point Leavis's idea of "common pursuit" with Stanley Fish's idea of an "interpretive community."[3] For Fish, alternative ways of understanding a sentence are possible among speakers who share a common repertoire of contexts. An institutional community of speakers who share such a common repertoire of contexts and a set of beliefs can be said to form an interpretive community. In the context of such interpretive communities, meaning becomes neither wholly determined nor entirely unmarked. However, meaning does become, in a sense, community-specific or context-specific. Though Fish's idea of the community and the possibility of a common share of meanings remind us of Leavis's notion of language and the creative and critical activities, we should be wary of equating Fish with Leavis, because for Leavis language is the common preserve of the entire community, a

community which includes all the speakers of the language. Leavis's community, therefore is much more broad-based. Also, we need to keep in mind here that for Leavis the individual's own response to words (the private response) is negotiated by him/her in the language which is in the community's keeping (the public reals), which in turn makes him/her enter a "Third Realm." However, it should be noted that Leavis's own efforts as an English teacher and critic are geared towards a building of this third realm which makes it possible only for those who have this unique ability to negotiate between the private and the public spheres. Also, his attempts to promote a group of critics at the centre of the entire educational and social activity would definitely lead towards the creation of a privileged power-group.

David Holbrook identifies a possible reason for the conflict of interests in Leavis, between his fight against the Cartesian dualism and the training of individuals. Emphasizing the need for developing a philosophical debate against Cartesian thinking, Holbrook says:

> But there is another task, and that is of promoting understanding--the understanding of meaning. And this is not a task which involves the training of an elite: it is a struggle in the realm of ideas, `out there' in the public world. While the world resents an elite, it would welcome the pushing forward of the boundaries of ideas.[40]

Whether we agree with Holbrook about the emphasis he wants Leavis to lay on philosophical questions or not, he does help us understand the theory-practice mismatch in Leavis's work. Holbrook rightly states (quite unconsciously perhaps) one of the reasons for the mismatch, i.e., Leavis's enthusiasm for "the training of the elite." Holbrook's reference to "the training of the elite" offers us a clue as to how the ostensible act of "collaboration" in criticism turns out to be after all a "corroboration."

It is relevant in this context to cite the argument Ranajay Karlekar puts forward to explain the contradiction between Leavis's concept of the third realm and his attempts to create an autonomous centre to promote humane values. Karlekar argues that the insights Leavis obtained from Marjorie Grene about all knowledge existing "`...only within the fundamental evaluation, first of the total community..., and second. within this totality, of the special community whose consensus makes possible the existence of the special discipline,'" should have led Leavis to relate language to its social basis more concretely.[4] Karlekar says that Leavis only uses these insights to endorse the validity of his third realm. He clinches the issue in the following words:

> If the Third Realm is constituted by this activity, a collaborative activity that mediates between the private and public and resolves its separation, then why should it constitute a special centre; no, the centre of human and in essence social creativity?... Again, in his passionate concern

> for totality, a great critic pressured by the historical demands of his vocation reacts against the loss of human wholeness he sees in society and seals off and guards the notion of wholeness within a special and autonomous preserve.[42]

When the third realm is thus reduced to "a special and autonomous preserve" what happens to Leavis's plan to build a civilized community in place of the lost organic community? If the cultivated minority comprise only those few who are capable of arriving at a consensus regarding Judgements of value in literary works, how would they stand for the whole community? Even if we were to accept the capacity of literary education to train intelligence and sensibility among people, wouldn't Leavis's idea of a consensus in Judgements heavily restrict a free play of personal responses even when there are genuine disagreements? How are we to understand Leavis's claim on behalf of the English School and the University to restore and reconstitute the culture of the community at large? Leavis does accept that the civilized community obtained through a study of literature and literary criticism is at best a substitute to the lost organic community. However, Leavis's prejudice against any large scale democratization of education and nass literacy prevents him from envisaging a more broad-based third realm. His elitist view of culture evidenced in his assertion that oulture has always been in the minority keeping does not allow him to extend the rich possibilities of a free intersubjective circulation of opinions in the community.

Notes

[1] The term third realm was also used by the German logician G. Frege (1848-1925) in his "Thought: A Logical Inquiry." Frege divides things into the material, the spiritual and the "third realm." His "third realm" contains things which are timeless as well as non-spatial. Though for Frege all the three realms are on the same level, he says that for Plato, to whom one can trace its origin, the "third realm" was the first realm containing his forms and ideas. These ideas are obtained from L.R. Lacey in G.H.R. Parkinson, ed. An Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1988) 381-401.

[2] The discussion of Marjorie Grene is based on her book The Knower and the Known and that of Polanyi on his Knowing and Being, as also on my own reading of both of them through The Living Principle.

[3] F.R. Leavis, The Living Principle: English as a Discipline of Thought (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977) 33.

[4] The ideas expressed here on Descartes, Grene and Polanyi are from Anne Samson's F.R. Leavis (New York: Harvester Uheatsheaf, 1992) 71-74.

[5] F.R. Leavis, The Living Principle 37.

* Leavis, Living 37.

' Leavis, Living 13.

• Leavis, Living 58.

[9] Leavis, "Memories of Wittgenstein," The Human World 10 (1973): 77-78.

[10] Leavis, Living 58.

[11] Leavis, Living 58.

[12] Leavis, Living 105.

[13] Leavis, Living 36.

[14] Samson 98.

[15] Leavis, Living 46-A7.

[16] Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," The Works of Oscar Wilde (New York: P.F. Collier & Son Corporation, 1927) 556-57.

[17] Wendell V. Harris, Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory (New York: Greenwood Press,1992) 52.

[18] Miller's and Bloom's views referred to here are obtained from Elmer Borklund, Contemporary Literary Critics (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1982) 416 and 80 respectively.

[19] See Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984) 107 and 108.

[20] Leavis, Living 39.

[21] Leavis, Living 42.

[22] Leavis, Living 43.

[23] Leavis, Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion and Social Hope (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972) 172.

[24] Leavis, Living 43-44.

[25] I have also discussed Leavis's views on impersonality (with Eliot in the background) in an article entitled "Leavis's Romantic Connection: A Response," Journal of Contemporary Thought (1991), particularly, 101-02.

[26] T.S. Eliot, "Yeats," Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) 251.

[27] Bernard Bergonzi's views expressed here are obtained from his "Leavis and Eliot: The Long Road to Rejection," Critical Quarterly 26.1 & 2 (1984): 21-43.

[28] Leavis, Valuation in Criticism and Other Essays, ed. G. Singh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 289.

[29] Leavis, Living 49.

[30] Leavis, Living 49.

[31] Leavis, Living 185.

[32] Leavis, Nor Shall 22.

[33] Leavis quotes from Polanyi's Knowing and Being in his Nor Shall 22.

[34] Leavis, Living 224-25.

[35] Leavis, Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) 47.

[36] Leavis, Living 66.

[37] Leavis, Living 44.

[38] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays (1934; London: Faber and Faber, 1966) 286.

[39] Eliot, "Metaphysical Poets" 288.

[40] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," Scrutiny 4.3 (1935): 252.

[41] The following discussion of Leavis's idea of the organic community and the promotion of its values through literary criticism was first broached in my unpublished M. Litt., dissertation "The Concept of Organic Community as a Criterion in F.R. Leavis's Criticism," M. Litt., Diss., C.I.E.F.L., 1988, 1-21.

[42] Leavis and Danys Thompson, Cultura and Environment (London:Chatto & Windus, 1933) 81.

[43] Leavis, "Why Universities?" Scrutiny 3.2 (1934): 126.

[44] Leavis, Education 143.

[45] Leavis Education 145.

[46] Leavis uses here a tarn popularised by Richards. How he extends tha scope of "practical crriticisn" is dealt with later on in tha chapter.

[47] Leavis, Education 34.

[48] Leavis, Education 38.

[49] Leavis, Living 49.

[50] Leavis, Education 70-71.

[51] Leavis, English Literature in Our Time and the University; Clark Lectures 1967 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969) 47.

[52] Leavis, English Literature 46.

[53] Leavis, Valuation 285.

[54] V.N. Volosinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, tr. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973) 95. By comparing Leavis with Volosinov 1 don't mean to suggest that Leavis knew him. But Volosinov was working around the same tine as Leavis. It is more the comparison of ideas circulating around the same time that interests me. Volosinov's categorization of tha two Major trends in the philosophy of language as "abstract objectivism" and "individual subjectivism" is also useful in placing Leavis's conception of language. It has now been more or less established that Bakhtin sometimes wrote in the guise of Volosinov.

•• Volosinov 102-03.

•• John Lucas, "Yes, But Hang on a Minute," Moderns fc^ Contemporaries: Novelists, Poets. Critics (Sussex s The Harvester Press, 1985) 154.

•? R.P. Bilan, The Literary Criticism of_ F.R. Leavis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 66.

"• Bilan, 71.

•• Stanley Fish, "Is There a Text in This Class?" Contemporary Criticism: An Anthology, ed. V.S. Seturaman (Madras: Macmillan, 1989) 276-92.

•• David Holbrook, "F.R. Leavis and the Sources of Hope," The Leavises: Recollections and Impressions, ed. Denys Thompson (Cambridge! Cambridge University Press, 1964) 166.

•' Ranajay Karlekar, "F.R. Leavis: Specialist of Wholeness," Jadavpur University Essays and Studies 6 (1987): 188.

»• Karlekar 188.

Chapter 4

Cultural Theory in Critical Practice

> Has any reader of *my* book [Revaluations] been less aware of the essential criteria that emerge than he would have been if 1 had laid down such general propositions as: 'Poetry must be in serious relation to actuality, it Must have a firm grasp of the actual, of the object, it aust be in relation to life, it must not be cut off from direct vulgar living, it should be normally human...'? If, as 1 did, I avoided such generalities, it was not out of timidity: it was because they seemed too clumsy to be of any use. 1 thought I had provided something better. My whole effort was to work in terms of concrete Judgments and particular analyses....
>
> (F.R.Leavis, "Literary Criticism and Philosophy," Scrutiny, 6.1, 1937, 63.)

The question of language has been one of Leavis's preoccupations since his Education and the University (1943). He looks upon language in this book primarily as a useful conveyor of tradition and culture. He emphasizes its key role particularly at a time when other vehicles of tradition like the family and the community have disintegrated due to the evil effects of science. Language thus becomes for him almost synonymous with culture. However, he finds that ordinary language has also become debased by contemporary use. (He cites as an instance the language of the advertisements.) In such a

situation he recognizes the need to rely on literature where the subtlest use of language is preserved. He says that it is "literature that gives access to the inherited wisdom of the race, cultural continuity depending, for the most part on literature and literary tradition."[1] In this sense, language, for Leavis, gets produced and reproduced (i.e., maintained) in and through a major expression of culture in the form of the best literary works. As a literary critic, his own task has been to identify, among other things, a canon of literary texts which promotes a tradition of values and cultural continuity. By the time Leavis writes The Living Principle his preoccupation with language becomes so overbearing that it receives a comment from Anne Samson that culture becomes for Leavis a mere trace of language, instead of his early notion of language as a trace of culture.[2]

We have seen in the previous chapter the importance Leavis accords to language in the creation of the human world, to its role in making a process of continuous and collaborative thought possible and to the role of great writers in belonging to this "collaboratively creative continuity." We have also dealt with Leavis's idea of the nature of language which is simultaneously objective and subjective and with his notion of the way in which the personal and the social merge in the creative use of language. What follows in this chapter is a consideration of some representative samples of Leavis's practical criticism of poetry and the novel from the point of view of how his ideas like that of the personal and the social merge in the creative use of language of the writers. That certain general principles are indeed involved in Leavis's criticism of various writers

becomes very clear from Leavis's response to Grierson:

> That 1 myself believe there may be more than one kind of good poetry might, I think, have been gathered from that paragraph of mine which Professor Grierson then quotes, and 1 cannot see what excuse he has for supposing me to make Donne the model and criterion: 'The seventeenth century of Shakespeare, Donne, Middleton and Tourneur,' and, I might have added, of Ben Jonson, the Court poets and Marvell. These poets seem to me to exhibit between them a wide range of differences and to have written good poetry in a variety of manners. But all these manners have, in their different ways, a vital relation to speech, to the living language of the time.[3]

Leavis considers the seventeenth century as a key phase in the history of civilization. His revaluation of poetry thus starts with an account of English poetry in the seventeenth century. In his Education and the University he gives his reasons for choosing this period for a special study for all students of the English Tripos:

> It is at one end in direct and substantial continuity with the world of Dante, and it shows us at the other a world that has broken irretrievably with the mediaeval

> order and committed itself completely to the process leading directly and rapidly to what we live in now. In the course of it capitalism 'arrives,' finally overcoming the traditional resistances, so that its ethos becomes accepted as law, morality and controlling spirit in the economic realm; the age of parliamentary rule begins, as does that of economic nationalism; crucial issues in the relations between Church and State, the spiritual and the secular, religion and the individual, are decided in a spirit going against the tradition of centuries--the principle of toleration is established along with that of 'business is business'; the notion of society as organism gives way to that of society as a joint-stock company; science launches decisively on its triumphant accelerating advance.[4]
>
> (Emphasis added)

The values Leavis associates with the seventeenth century life and those reflected in its literature and the literature that has gone before become for him the criteria for judging the literature of the succeeding centuries. Some of these criteria are: emphasis on the talking voice, liveliness of enactment and use of the dramatic medium to exploit the strength of spoken English. These are the very qualities Leavis admires in Metaphysical poetry, especially the poetry of Donne. Leavis

comments in the following lines on Donne's use of the "talking voice":

> In an age when music is for all classes an important part of daily life, when poets, along with so large a proportion of their fellow countrymen, are musicians and write their lyrics to be sung, Donne uses in complete dissociation from music a stanza-form that proclaims the union of poetry and music.[3]

With the institution of the Royal Society (1662) the emphasis in language moved from the personal to the social. The polite and the "manners" in the realm of the social gave rise in language to certain prose virtues with their emphasis on rules of grammar and logic. Leavis details the developments in the eighteenth century as follows:

> The concept of correctness (a correctness that is 'easy' and 'natural') associated with Mr. Waller's reform of our numbers is inseparable from a concept of 'Good Form'. What the turn registers is a change in civilization--a change by which, in the view of the age itself, civilization was virtually inaugurated. As a result of the social and economic changes shaped by the Civil War, a metropolitan fashionable Society, compact and politically in the ascendant, found itself in charge of

> standards, and extremely convinced that, in the things it cared about, there were standards, to be observed, models to be followed: it was anxious to be oivilized on the best models. It differed from any conceivable modern fashionable society in being seriously interested in intellectual and literary fashions. Its leaders patronised the Royal Society as well as polite letters and the theatre. If we say that the age was one in which the code of Good Form was in intimate touch with the most serious cultural code we indicate limitations and strength at the same time. The development of sensibility represented by the new ideal of poetic refinement illustrates the point: the ease, elegance and regularity favoured belong, we feel, to the realm of manners; the diction, gesture, and deportment of the verse observe a polite social code; and the address is, as has been said already, to the 'outer ear'--to an attention that expects to dwell upon the social surface.'

We also understand how for Leavis the establishment of the Augustan tradition coincides with a separation between sophisticated and popular levels of culture at the end of the seventeenth century.[7] As against this, he finds "a real culture of the people" in the seventeenth century, a culture that

produced masterpieces such as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. He opines that when Augustan convention and idiom, with their social suggestion dominate, sophisticated culture cuts itself off from the traditional culture of the people. The effect of these developments has consequences for Augustan literature. In his discussion of the poets of the eighteenth century Leavis says that good poetry could be produced under such circumstances only if the "correctness" of Augustan poetry is tempered by the "complexity" and "profundity" of Metaphysical poetry. He cites Pope as a poet who possessed this rare ability:

> But all the same, working in the fashionable idiom and conventions, a poet, to achieve the profound in poetry, would have to be great indeed; and Pope's greatness, we remind ourselves, is of such a kind as to enable him to transoend his age: his profound poetry has in it an essential element of the Metaphysical (and no other poet of Pope's century so communicates with the seventeenth).... In Pope alone, in his time, the tradition he represents may be said to bring into poetry the full vitality of the age.[8]

Leavis also comments on the variety of tone Pope achieves from passage to passage in his Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady:

> After various tones of declamation, we pass through the passage anticipating (or

> furnishing) an Eighteenth Century mode, associated with Collins and Gray, of conventional elegiac sentiment to the deeply moving final paragraph, in which the strong personal emotion, so firmly subdued throughout to the 'artificial' form and manner, insists more and more on its immediately personal intensity.*

By Blake's time the deterioration (of which Leavis has given adequate expression in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter) had its effect on literature. What caused this deterioration? Leavis would be quick to say--loss of organic community. The influence of Descartes and the division of the mind and body, the human being and his environment, the individual and society which sprang from the scientific thinking that proceeded from him are the immediate causes for the loss. The split had its consequences for literature and culture which created two distinct levels—the popular and the sophisticated. Leavis locates the origins of this widening rift in the seventeenth century. Leavis's consideration of this split has obvious references to Eliot's idea of the "dissociation of sensibility" as we have already discussed in the previous chapter. When Leavis admires Pope's ability to achieve a strength closely related to Marvell and Donne, while being Augustan, and discusses him in relation to the "now familiar topic, the 'dissociation of sensibility'," it is clear that Leavis more or less assumes the validity of Eliot's idea. Leavis also refers to Eliot's having ascribed "the dissooiation very largely to the influence of Dryden and Milton."[10] In the

absence of the ideal conditions in which a work of art could simultaneously appeal at different levels of response, Leavis places a greater onus on the part of artists to consciously appeal to them. Pope is important for Leavis precisely because he is able to do this. The notion of the common reader is therefore seen to linger on in some writers like Pope and Johnson though not beyond them. Blake's own poetry is seen as a fight against the insulation established at the end of the seventeenth century between the recognized "polite" culture and the cultural tradition at the popular level. His is also a reaction against the virtues of good prose and the Augustan emphasis on grammar and logic. Leavis says that when excessive attention is paid to the social, as it happened in the Augustan period, it is bound to result in a movement of protest in minds that are creative. Blake's reaction comes through in some "technical achievement." It will be in place to remember that for Leavis "technical achievement" is antithetical to the creative or poetic use of language. The reversal Blake has brought about becomes counter-productive with too much stress being given to individual expression. Leavis sees the effect of this in Blake's later prophetic works which betray an absence of adequate social collaboration:

> In the absence, we may put it, of adequate social collaboration...his powers of attaining in achieved oreation to that peculiar impersonal realm to which the work of art belongs and in which minds can meet... failed to develop....[11]

From this critical "placing" of Blake Leavis moves to a complete admiration later on in his work. Blake then represents an assertion of individuality in his fight against Locke and Newton and a reaction against an over insistence in the eighteenth century on the social. Here is Leavis on Blake:

> But for Blake the conventional order had no interest, and conventional expression falsified or ignored what individual experience told him was the real, the true and the significant: his genius was that he saw no choice but to work out a completely and uncompromisingly individual idiom and technique.'[2]

Commenting on the kind of disinterestedness Blake represents, Leavis says:

> The essential objects in its preoccupation with which his poetry exhibits such purity of interest--such disinterestedness--are not susceptible of visualization; they belong to inner experience, emotional and instinctive life, the inner life of the psyche. It is Blake's genius that, dealing with material that could be present to him only as the most intimate personal experience—the very substance of his appetites, desires, inner urgencies, fears and temptations--he can write poetry that

> has virtues analogous to those of the 'wiry bounding line'.[13]

Leavis's adoration for Blake reaches such heights that Blake becomes for him a representative of the life principle, whereas Eliot, his antithesis, symbolises a negation of life. An extreme assertion of individuality in the nineteenth century ends up in the cult of art for art's sake in some romantic writers. As against this, Keats develops his art in relation to life, with his emphasis on reality, direct vulgar living and grasp on actualities. Comparing Keats's "Ode to the Nightingale" with Shelley's "To a Skylark" Leavis says:

> The rich local concreteness [of Keats] is the local manifestation of an inclusive sureness of grasp in the whole. What the detail exhibits is not merely an extra-ordinary intensity of realization, but also an extraordinary Tightness and delicacy of touch; a sureness of touch that is the working of a fine organization. The Ode, that is, has the structure of a fine and complex organism: whereas To a Sky lark is a mere poetical outpouring, its ecstatic 'intensity' being a substitute for realization in the parts and for a realized whole to which the parts might be related.[14]

It can be gathered from Leavis's comment that "concreteness" evidenced in parts of a work of art is an

indication of a greater "inclusiveness" of the whole "complex organism." The part-whole relation indicated here is developed into Leavis's favourite netaphor of an organism. A reference to Coleridge's idea of organicity is not out of place here. Goodson in his book Verbal Imagination discusses how Richards draws on Coleridge's concept of "imagination" which promotes an active participation of the reader, and which in turn helps him/her realize the significance of the work of art which is more than the sum of its individual parts. He says that it is "imagination" which joins the separable meanings of words which are left dangling by "fancy." [15] We can see how a similar idea of organism operates in Leavis, a connection Goodson does not wish to make.[16] For Leavis the finished product of a poem is a "realized whole" with interrelated parts, and so is language itself, which comes into being in the meeting of minds. Also the poem, for Leavis, is not just words on the page. The metaphor of organism invests the words with "life". The humane or the personal element that infuses "life" into words is a major consideration for him.

Leavis also shows how the personal urgency of a poet ends up in producing great poetry as in The Fall of Hyperion; A Vision:

> What the strength of the influence [Dante's], the intensity of the effect, shows is how much the study was part of the discipline and self-searching with which Keats met the disasters, the blows of fate, that were making life for him overwhelmingly a matter of "the agonies, the

> strife of human hearts.' The immediately personal urgency of the preoccupation with suffering and death comes out plainly in the passage describing his nightmare race against the burning of the 'gummed leaves' (11, 106-134). But this personal urgency is completely impersonalized; it has become the life, the informing spirit, of the profoundest kind of impersonality.'[17]

There is a return to good poetry only in Hardy and Hopkins in the late Victorian period. For Leavis, Hopkins represents a poetry close to living speech. There is an emphasis in his poetry on current spoken idiom. Of Hopkins Leavis says:

> That he was consciously bent on bringing back into poetry the life and strength of the living, the spoken, language is explicit--the confirmation was pleasant to have, though hardly necessary--in the Letters (to Bridges, LXII): 'it seems to me that the poetical language of the age shd.[sic] be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike it, but not (1 mean normally: passing freaks and graces are another thing) an obsolete one'.[18]

Leavis also distinguishes Hopkins's grasp of the real from that of the "Victorian-romantic" in the following words:

> The Victorian-romantic addicts of beauty and transience cherish the pang as a kind of religiose-poetic sanction for defeatism in the face of an alien actual world--a defeatism offering itself as a spiritual superiority. Hopkins embraces transience as a necessary condition of any grasp of the real. The concern for such a grasp is there in the concrete qualities that give his poetry its vitality--which, we have seen, involves an energy of intelligence.'[29]

When we examine Leavis's adverse criticism of various poets across the centuries, some of the same criteria we have seen above seem to operate. For instance, Milton is dislodged from his high position on the grounds of an "extreme and consistent remoteness of Milton's medium from any English that was ever spoken."[30] After analyzing a passage from Book VI of Paradise Lost Leavis says:

> It needs no unusual sensitiveness to language to perceive that, in this Grand Style, the medium calls pervasively for a kind of attention, compels an attitude towards itself, that it is incompatible with sharp, concrete realization; Just as it would seem to be, in the mind of the poet, incompatible with an interest in sensuous particularity. He exhibits a feeling for words rather than a capacity

> for feeling <u>through</u> words; we are often, in reading him, moved to comment that he is 'external' or that he 'works from the outside'.[21]

Leavis also says that Milton uses "a medium so cut off from speech--speech that belongs to the emotional and sensory texture of actual living and is in resonance with the nervous system...."[22] His Grand Style and his use of Latinate expressions seem to have barred Milton from the "essential expressive resources of English" he had once commanded. Leavis says that Milton shows evidence of these in the Mulciber passage of <u>Paradise Lost</u> and in <u>Comus</u>. He speaks of Milton as being in the Spenserian line in contrast to that of Shakespeare and Donne.

Dryden too is said to be a great "representative poet" and not a great poet. He is not found to have the kind of strength Pope had in being simultaneously in his time and with the Metaphysical poets. Leavis says:

> The community to which Dryden belongs as a poet is that in which he actually lives, moves and talks; and he belongs to it so completely and, with its assurance of being sophisticated and civilized (it on the point of considering itself truly Augustan--that is, as attaining and realizing afresh a kind of absolute of civilization), it is so completely engrossing that he has no ear, no spiritual

> antennae, for the other community. One has more conviction in calling him a great representative poet than in calling him a great poet, for he is certainly a great representative.[23]

When we see the terms "sophisticated and civilized" it is not difficult to guess what Leavis would have meant by "the other community"--the popular society or culture. Leavis concludes that the "dissociation of sensibility" has set in with the verse being written thereafter that "appeals only to the public--or, it might be better to say, social--ear."[24] Leavis also points to Dryden's admiration of Milton's magniloquence and how the eighteenth century "derive[s] its exalted public decorum of poetry from Milton (who in Gray's Pindaric odes is inseparable from Dryden)."[25] Dryden's dramatic verse too is found to be mere "descriptive eloquence." Comparing Dryden's All for Love with Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra Leavis says: "It is an immediately felt superiority in the life of the verse—superiority in concreteness, variety and sensitiveness—that leaves us with `eloquence' instead of 'life' as the right word for Dryden's verse."[26] Note how Leavis distinguishes "life" in Shakespeare from "eloquence" in Dryden. "Life," in fact, becomes the most predominant criterion and a recurrent term in the whole essay. Leavis says that Shakespeare's personae "have a life corresponding to the life of the verse; the life in them, is in fact, the life of the verse."[27] Analyzing another passage from All for Love Leavis comments that Dryden's "emotion doesn't emerge from any given situation realized in its concrete particularity; it is stated, not

presented or enacted. The explicitness is of the kind that betrays an absence of realization."[28]

The Romantic conceptions of genius and inspiration have developed, according to Leavis, as a reaction against the Augustan insistence on the social and the rational.[29] Shelley's weakness is diagnosed as his "weak grasp upon the actual,"[30] the weakness being attributed to his idealism and Platonism. He is said to offer feeling divorced from thought, even opposed to thought.*[1] He is also said to offer emotion "in itself, unattached, in the void." Leavis comments: "'In itself,' 'for itself'--it is an easy shift to the pejorative implications of 'for its own sake'...."[32] Leavis describes thus Shelley's inability to grasp anything, to present anything as existing in its own right. The notable exception to these qualities is his Mask of Anarchy where the "emotion seems to inhere in the vision communicated, the situation grasped...."[33] "His handling of the medium," Leavis says, "assimilates him readily, as influence, to the Spenserian-Miltonic line running through Hyperion to Tennyson."[34]

Among the poets of the twentieth century, Eliot becomes the target both of admiration and of attack. Leavis seems to be quite happy with Eliot's early poetry. In "Prufrock," he sees a "poetry that expresses freely a modern sensibility, the ways of feeling, the modes of experience, of one fully alive in his own age."[35] Similarly, the utterance* of the lady in his "Portrait of a Lady" are found to be "in the idiom and cadence of modern speech."[1]* While he finds both these poems arising from "directly personal embarrassments, disillusions and distresses," he sees in "Gerontion" "the impersonality of great

poetry." [37] Four Quartets, however, meets with a somewhat mixed response. Discussing the opening lines of the poem Leavis says that there is something "immediate, concrete and personal" about them. He says:

> The poet sinks back in his chair, withdrawing for a moment from what has become for us his total immersion in a personal problem, but it is not a withdrawal that lessens the immediacy. On the contrary, it intensifies the immediacy in a way that makes us feel it as an informing life that makes the paragraph organic from the beginning.[38]

The thinking quality of the poem is simultaneously impelled by a personal need and directed by an imperative personal concern.[39]

In his critical engagement with Harding's criticism of "Little Gidding" Leavis shows his disapproval of Eliot. Harding feels that in "Little Gidding" there is "the clearest expression ... of a motive force other than repulsion;" Leavis, on the other hand, finds "the large part played in his [Eliot's] poetry in general by the motive force of repulsion."[40] Leavis goes on to discuss the aspect of time as dealt with by Eliot. While Leavis's emphasis is on "life," Eliot seems to insist on "the unreality, the unlivingness, of life in time."[41] Leavis concludes his discussion on "Burnt Norton" in the following words:

> A poet, who offering to achieve and confirm his reassuring apprehension of a really and supremely real by creative means, dismisses all but the non-temporal 'now' as 'the waste sad time stretching before and after' stultifies himself. He is committed to discrediting the creative process he undertakes to demonstrate and vindicate; positing a kind of living that is not process (for process involves change and death), he offers us, dazed himself and deceived by the astonishing inner duplicity or dividedness that is one aspect of his genius, an impressive effect that considered, resolves itself into a play of distractions, evasiveness and equivocation.[42]

Leavis also tells us how "form" or "pattern"--words Eliot uses in the poem, which suggest that the whole may be more than the sum of the parts--reminds us of an organism which implies life. But these words in Eliot's use of them are related to stillness, the stillness of the "still point of the turning world," that reinforce "the suggestion of an apprehended supreme reality out of time on which the world of science and common sense depends."[43]

The emphasis in Leavis's criticism of poetry, as has been seen above, is on the use of language, its concreteness, its liveliness, its personal intensity and the strength of its spoken idiom. We have also discussed how these qualities are

invariably connected with "life," a term which we see pervading all through Leavis's criticism of the novel. Leavis locates "life" in the individual. Its concrete manifestation is reflected in "the spontaneous, the disinterested, the egofree and the reality-creating"[44] nature of the individual. Leavis also connects the terms "disinterestedness" and "ego-free love" to the distinction Blake makes between identity and selfhood. The individual who represents life has conquered his selfhood and attained an identity with the other. Leavis is quite emphatic in asserting that for Blake "...the individual is a centre of responsibility towards something that is not him-(or her-)self."[45] He also extends this principle to human creativity in general:

> To insist that the psyche, the individual life, is both of its nature creative and in its individuality inherently social is to insist that all human creativity is, in one way or another, collaborative, and that a cultural tradition, is a collaboratively sustained reality in the way exemplified by a living language--by the langauage of Shakespeare, of Blake and of Dickens (to adduce three highly individual and potently creative writers).[46]

It may be noted how in the above lines the collaborative-creative nature of individuals is reflected in the "living language" of great writers. We have already pointed out (in our discussion of Leavis's idea of the loss of organic community)

that Leavis disapproves of any separation between the individual and society, and a living organism and its enviornment. For Leavis, there can be no consideration of "life" without an emphasis on individuality. At the same itme, "life" with its individuality ought to be a part of and outcome of collaborated community culture. We may reiterate Leavis's words referred to in the previous chapter in this context: "As individuals, we are life, which transcends us"[47] (emphasis added). Merle Brown's study of the idea of communal creativity in Leavis is useful in this context. He describes the process of the development in Leavis's idea of the individual in relation to the community, in the following words:

> Life, as Leavis never tires of saying can be lived only by individuals. But to believe as an individual human being is to be developing as a person, to be struggling constantly to attain integrity, a continuousness between one's inward thoughts and feelings, one's outward acts and speech, and the natural and social situations in which one feels, thinks, acts and speaks. Even more important, human creativity depends upon one's developing as a self-world, a person, in such a way that he is openly expectant that he will be impinged upon by other persons.*•

However, it is difficult to agree with Brown who says later on in the essay that Leavis's idea of the collaboration of the self

and the other implicit in the above description is actually practised by Leavis in his engagement with others, considering hi* penchant for sticking to his own position in his arguments with many critics. Leavls feels that insofar as great art reflects life, it ought to emphasize the actual relationship of men to their environment. He emphasizes this necessity of the individual in relation to others in his criticism of the novelists in D.H. Lawrence: Novelist (1955):

> The insistence on the individual, or 'fulfilment' in the individual, as the essenial manifestation of life carries with it a corollary.... it is only by way of the most delicate and complex responsive relations with others that the individual can achieve fulfilment.[9]

Leavis explains how his own ideas on "life" and the individual are related to Lawrence's own in his Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious. He quotes from Lawrence:

> 'Where the individual begins, life begins. The two are inseparable, life and individuality. And also, where the individual begins, the unconscious, which is the specific life-motive, also begins.'*[0]

Leavis goes on to say how these words help him connect Lawrence's ideas of "life" and "individuality" to his own questions of language:

> The emphasis falls for my own purpose on what 1 call the Third Realm (neither private nor, for science, public), which both my purpose and my firm certitude represent by language, in which, having created it, individuals meet, and in meeting (they meet in meaning) carry on the creative collaboration that maintains and renews what we think of as a life--i.e. the language. But this `life' (inverted commas now--though it's a reality and a key one) couldn't exist but for the life that's 'there' only in individuals (and human individuals couldn't live without that non-computerable reality).[31]

Leavie's criticism of the novelists makes extensive use of "life" and its related terms. He elaborates Jane Austen's preoccupation with "life" in the following words:

> ... her interest in `composition' is not something to be put over against her interest in life; nor does she offer an `aesthetic' value that is separable from moral significance. The principle of organization, and the principle of development, in her work is an intense moral interest of her own in life that is in the first place a preoccupation with certain problems that life compels on her

> as personal ones. She is intelligent and serious enough to be able to impersonalize her moral tensions as she strives, in her art, to become more fully conscious of them, and to learn what, in the interests of life, she ought to do with them. Without her intense moral preoccupation she wouldn't have been a great novelist.[52]

The above lines no doubt emphasize how Jane Austen transforms the personal into something impersonal; they underline the significance of "life" no less.

It is the aspect of impersonality again that predominates Leavis's appraisal of George Eliot. He says that the success of Silas Marner is conditioned by "the absence of personal immediacy...."[53] He also says that it is

> ... in the part of Felix Holt dealing with Mrs Transome that George Eliot becomes one of the great creative artists. She has not here, it will be noted, a heroine with whom she can be tempted to identify herself.[9*]

Leavis's drawing upon the theory of impersonlity and the "absence of personal immediacy" he finds in Silas Marner makes us wonder whether Leavis at this stage subscribes at all to T.S. Eliot's theory of impersonality. His moving away from Eliot's idea of a complete extinction of personality to one of an "identity" of the "self" with the society may be attributed to his subscribing to the ideas of Blake and Lawrence. In Henry James Leavis finds a different kind of impersonality. He sees

James moving away from presenting either American life (as in Roderick Hudson and The American) or English manners (as in The Awkward Age and What Maisie Knew) to something international in the Portrait of a Lady. He says:

> We have further an intimation that, in the depths of his mind, in the interplay between the diverse actualities of his experience, there is forming an imagined ideal positive that is not to be identified with any one of them. And this brings us to The Portrait of a Lady."

Leavis also recognizes how James's inability to find an approximation to his ideal anywhere turns him into a recluse. He offers a diagnosis of this inability in James:

> James had no such immediate sense of human solidarity [like Lawrence], no such nourishing intuition of the unity of life, as could make up to him for the deficiencies of civilized intercourse: life for him must be humane or it was nothing. There was nowhere in his work that preoccupation with ultimate sanctions which we may call religious.[54]

What Leavis is indicating by "human solidarity" or "unity of life" may be a positive attitude on the part of an artist to come to terms with the society. Leavis's disapproval of the later Janes could be related to his ideas on the necessity of

the artist to be rooted in his own culture. The rootedness in an American or English culture evidenced in James's early works disappears for Leavis in his later works where James deals with the international theme. We may recall here Leavis's emphasis on Englishness which we discussed in chapter 2 of this dissertation. Though Conrad is not English, for Leavis he becomes very much English by his nurturing:

> Conrad's English, as we read his supreme things, compels us to recognize it as that of a highly individual master, who has done his creative thinking and feeling--explored most inwardly the experience moving him to creation--in that language.... The point 1 am making is that, as a writer, he had to English the relation we think of as that of the distinguished poet. He used it to bring to definition an intensely personal sense of life, and did this with a responsiveness to the finer potentialities of language so vital and delicate that he stands among those writers whom (if we do them justice) we see as pre-eminently its maintainers.[5]*

Francis Mulhern too points out Leavis's emphasis on the English tradition, especially in <u>The Great Tradition:</u>

> The story of the book [<u>The Great Tradition</u>] is the victory of an English tradition over the circumstances of origin and, crucially,

> over the latterday Renaissance, French realism. Thus, James may be located in 'a distinctively American' line, but this is as it were a ruse of tradition: Hawthorne emancipated James from the influence of Thackeray and from Flaubert, making possible an authentic, enabling connection with Eliot. Conrad did learn from 'the French masters': the stylism and exoticism of his weaker writing is derived from Chateaubriand, and Nostromo recalls Flaubert. Yet Conrad's work, with its 'robust vigour of melodrama', is also 'Dickensian', 'Elizabethan' even. And if he evinces that "racy strength' it is because, his origins notwithstanding, his "themes and interests' actually called for the English language rather than any other. He is 'unquestionably a constitutive part of the tradition, belonging in the full sense'.••

It is paradoxical that Leavis uses a variation of Eliot's idea of impersonality in identifying Conrad's ability to transcend his origins in becoming English. This gives us a clue to the ulterior motives of Leavis in emphasizing the questions of Englishness which are actually related to the national need of the moment as well as his own felt need to establish English as a discipline in the university. This also explains how it is not so much the Englishness of the writers that makes them

belong to the great tradition, but it is their exemplification in some way or the other of the living principle. What strikes Leavis in Conrad too is the "life-like convincingness" of his characters. But he warns us that this does not mean that they exist for us outside the book. Here too Leavis goes to Eliot for support:

> A `living' character is not necessarily `true to life'. It is a person whom we can see and hear, whether he be true or false to human nature as we know it. What the creator of character needs is not so much knowledge of motives as keen sensibility; the dramatist need not understand people, but he must be exceptionally aware of them.[9]

One wonders how a "keen sensibility" and an "exceptional awareness" of an artist is in consonance with his/her not "understand[ing]" people. But Leavis sees these qualities nevertheless as strengths that had informed Elizabethan drama. This is the very strength that Leavis sees in Nostromo also. What Leavis intends to say by this distinction between truthfulness to life and life-like convincingness could perhaps be understood by the distinction he subscribes to between selfhood and identity. With identity the separation between the personal and the social breaks down. Therefore, real life as presented by an artist becomes the less real when it is mediated by his/her personal view. The personal-social coalescence thus becomes an operative tool in Leavis to measure the greatness of

novelists. Though the organic community is lost historically, Leavis has always felt that values such as community relations could be consciously built by an intelligentsia (which includes the artists, critics and intelligent readers) in an effort to construct a civilized community in its place. The emphasis in such an endeavour inevitably falls on an intersubjective circulation of values. A major part of Leavis's discussion of writers therefore addresses itself to such collaborated community lives, imagined communities of writers at times perhaps, if not real ones. It needs to be pointed out here that it is this very intersubjective circulation of opinions that Leavis attempts to construct in his imagined critical community of the third realm.

It is interesting to see how Leavis exempts Hard Times from his general censure of Dickens as an entertainer in his The Great Tradition. (It is pertinent to note that the Leavises term the chapter on Hard Times as "something in the nature of an appendix" to The Great Tradition in their Preface to Dickens, The Novelist, 11.) The clue to the inconsistency of his censure here, and of later appreciation resulting in his writing a full length study of Dickens with Q.D. Leavis (which has rightly bothered some critics) seems to lie in the nature of his appreciation of Hard Times itself. It is the "self-forgetfulness" of Sissy which is an antithesis of the "calculating self-interest" of the Gradgrind-like characters that appeals to Leavis in Hard Times:

> What may, perhaps, be emphasized is that Sissy stands for vitality as well as goodness--they are seen, in fact, as one;

> she is generous, impulsive life, finding self-fulfilment in self forgetfulness--all that is the antithesis of calculating self-interest. There is an essentially Laurentian suggestion about the way in which 'the dark-eyed and dark-haired' girl, contrasting with Bitzer, seemed to receive a 'deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun', so opposing the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs to the thin-blooded, quasi-mechanical product of Gradgrindery.[40]

Leavis's preoccupation with "life" and the self-effacing qualities of the characters in The Great Tradition as a whole must have influenced him in the exception he makes at this point to Dickens's Hard Times.

The sense of the individual in relation to the community is the starting point of the Leavises's judgement of Dickens. In their chapter "Dickens and Blake: Little Dorrit" the Leavises say:

> ...he [Dickens] knows that the serious and developed study of the individual life can't but be a study of lives in relation, and of social conditions, conventions, pressures as they affect essential life. The really great novelist can't but find himself making an evaluative inquiry into the civilization in which he finds

himself--which he more and more finds himself in and of."

In their analysis of Little Dorrit they discuss the question of the individual and his/her responsibility in relation to others as is manifest in the following:

> Doyce'i indefeasible 'responsibility towards something other than himself entails, to be effective, his being strongly conscious of it. Such a consciousness can hardly not entail a sense of one's identity's being important; one's identity is oneself, and, as the habit of this last word in free use intimates, the shift to a dominating sense of one's unique and unshared selfhood as the important thing is insidiously easy.[42]

The characters' adequate social collaboration becomes an important criterion to Judge the work as it happens in the case of Little Dorrit. In a significant passage in which "life" is brought in relation to several other criteria that are important to Leavis, the Leavises emphasize the necessity of collaboration:

> Reality, courage, disinterestedness, truth, spontaneity, creativeness--and, summing them, life: these words, further charged with definitive value, make the appropriate marginal comment. Little Dorrit, whose

> desolate sense of the unreality is what we have been sharing, is the focal presence of what they stand for. But she is beaten. For her--a profound irony--the real is what, at her father's liberation, she left behind in Marshalsea. The point implicitly made (the book makes it in many ways) is that reality is a collaborative creation: Little Dorrit, in 'chartered', mean and gloomy London, had found collaboration in the responsive human needs of her father and his other children, and in the human good-nature of the turnkeys, the Collegians and Flora--even of Mrs Clennam. But in Italy she is wholly denied it; her love for her father is reduced to expressing itself in docility to Mrs General, the arch-unreality.[63]

The Leavises opine that it is the individuals' responsibility towards life outside of themselves that constitutes true identity. They remark that this "distinctive sense of responsibility towards life" is a positive contribututlon of the Romantic movement. In this context they also record their departure from Eliot's idea of impersonality:

> The kind of vital strength that makes Dickens a romantic novelist and relates him to Blake is what Eliot rules out from the creative process and the 'mind of the

> artist' in his account of 'impersonality', which has for essential purpose to deny that art expresses, or in any way involves, a responsibility towards life.**

Now it may be clear how Leavis who used to draw upon Eliot's ideas in his early writings (as explained above in the discussion of poetry and of The Great Tradition) hae moved away from him later on. As has been pointed out already, his admiration for Lawrence and Blake and his extensive use of their ideas to strengthen his own criteria of criticism is a development which can be seen as running parallel to his rejection of Eliot later on in his work.

Leavis undertakes a discussion of Lawrence in his D. H. Lawrence: Novelist (1955) and Thought, Words and Creativity (1976). He admires Lawrence's The Rainbow for he finds it a "study of related individual lives.[1"3] He says that the "immemorial life" in the first chapter and "... the England represented by the canal, the colliery-town, and the advancing railway met one another and consort in a challenging paradigm."** In the context of his notion of the "fulfilment" of the individuals only by way of "the most delicate and responsive relations with others" (the words from Lawrence's Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious have been quoted earlier in the chapter) Leavis says:

> There, in the novels, the treatment of the theme, has for a major part of its implicit moral this further insistence: except between 'fulfilled' individuals--

> individuals, that is, who are really themselves, recognizing their separateness or otherness, and accepting the responsibility of that--there can be no personal relations that are lasting and satisfactory.[4]

It is with his adherence to Lawrence that Leavis reaches the final stage of his patricidal instinct. In his Thought, Words and Creativity he rejects Eliot's theory of impersonality outright as is evident from the following lines:

> In the art the felt separation between the creatively used words arrd the piece of living they have the function of evoking is at a minimum. One is not kept conscious of Lawrence--not kept actively aware of him as a personal voice expounding or aiming to evoke. And he, when he feels that he has got his art right, is hardly conscious of any gap. He is realizing in imagination a completely (or purely) 'significant' piece of living: yet he is himself, in his integrity as an individual being, present in the work. This is the true impersonality; it is of supreme importance to any conception of what the essential, fully imagined, spiritual status or stance or human reality (perhaps all three nouns are needed) might achieve. The impersonality

> that Eliot credits Landor or Valery with is idea and emptiness in the one case, and mere French brilliance and aplomb on the other.[9]

Leavis says that for Lawrence, the thought demanded by life which involves "mental consciousness," is not apart from the individual human being, but springs from "the spontaneous life-motive in every organism" (Lawrence's terms in Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious). To separate, therefore, the man who lives and the mind which creates, as Eliot does, is to misrepresent the process of creativity. Leavis finds the emphasis on the mind a legacy of science. He refers to Lawrence's reaction to this development here:

> What he [Lawrence} warns us against are the insidious dangers that attend on being mentally conscious; what he inveighs against is the misuse of the mind that makes it an enemy of life. He exposes and inveighs a great deal, because that misuse is the distinctive mark of our scientifico-industrial civilization. To the malady that results he applies diagnostically the triad, 'will, ego and idea'. The will is that of the closed ego--Blake's `selfhood' as distinguished from the "identity", and the triad of terms together means the mind, the mental consciousness, offering to work life according to its ideas, which, with

> the mental consciousness they belong to, have been cut off from the well-head and from the centres of living power.**

An interesting feature of Leavis's criticism of the novel is his deliberate exclusion of some writers from his great tradition. However, in the discussion of the few novelists he excludes, we can see the same questions of the personal in operation. Whereas Joyce's Ulysses seems to issue from his "personal history and the pressure [of] immediately personal urgency," his Work in Progress does not seem to have anything in it to control the author's interest in technique and a pre-occupation with the means of expression.[70] We are reminded of Leavis's early assessment of Blake's work which reduces it to some technical accomplishment. Therefore, the personal element and the impersonating technique Leavis seems to suggest, should assist as well as control each other to produce good literature. While Leavis finds Forster's Where Angels Fear to Tread and A Room With a View "detached" and "distanced," he sees in The Longest Journey and Howards End, the possibility of their being "detached" "precluded by the author's essential interest."[71] At the same time, he faults Passage to India for its personal style. He is so overpowered by Eliot's impersonal theory here that his awareness of the novel's strength in the treatment of personal relations and of the liberal tradition comes into conflict with it. The fact that Leavis disapproves of Forster's uncritical acceptance of the inferior socio-cultural milieu dominated by the Bloomsbury[72] also needs to be kept in mind.

Leavis's criticism of Virginia Woolf interestingly turns to the question of "life," though he questions her very definition

of life which stresses what goes on in the mind of the writers (their "private consciousness"), rather than in the world outside. Leavis says that this could lead only to a "sophisticated aestheticism."[73] He finds the same Bloomsbury milieu responsible for Woolf's failure to develop."

Leavis's essay, "the Irony of Swift" written as early as 1934 calls for special treatment in our discussion of Leavis's criticism of the novelists in that in this essay the negation of the life principle becomes the chief criterion to judge Swift. In an elaborate close analysis of Swift's writings and while commenting on specific passages Leavis concludes: "We have, then, in his writings probably the most remarkable expression of negative feelings and attitudes that literature can offer--the spectacle of creative powers (the paradoxical description seems right) exhibited consistently in negation and rejection."[74] A little earlier he says:

> Hypertrophy of the sense of uncleanness, of the instinct of repulsion, is not uncommon; nor is its association with what accompanies it in Swift. What is uncommon is Swift's genius, and the paradoxical vitality with which this self-defeat of life--life turned against itself--is manifested. In the Tale of a Tub the defeat is also a triumph; the genius delights in its mastery, in its power to destroy, and negation is felt as self-assertion. It is only when time has confirmed Swift in disappointment and

> brought him to more intimate contemplation of physical decay that we get the Yahoos and Struldbrugs.'[6]

The presence of Swift's personal problems in a statement as this cannot be missed. Also the quality of detachment is used earlier in the essay by Leavis to praise Tale of a Tub. Leavis "places" him finally as a great writer with "a sense of a great force" in his work, but one whose "channels of life have been blocked and perverted."[7]

Critics have paid attention to the shift in Leavis from his criticism of poetry to that of the novel. Bilan and Eagleton see the emphasis on the formal considerations in poetry giving way to questions of life in his study of the novelists. Bilan says that Leavis concentrates more on a study of the novelists as he goes on because "the novel is better suited to his social and moral concerns."[7*] However, Leavis does not completely move away from the formal considerations (words on the page) in the study of the novelists. It may be relevant in this context to cite Bilan's quotation of David Lodge:

> Dr Leavis has two distinct 'images' as a critic; he is the critic of close analysis, of "the words on the page'; and he is the 'moral' critic par excellence, insisting on the responsibility of literature to be `on the side of life'. These two images are not irreconcilable--and both can be traced to some extent in everything Leavis has written. But is it not true that we think

> principally of hie work on poetry in connection with the first image, and of his work on the novel in connection with the second? Poets (Milton, for instance) are assessed according to their awareness of the possibilites of language; novelists according to their awareness of "the possibilities of life'.''

Bilan goes on to quote Leavis himself to prove how the formal and moral concerns are indistinguishable: "ls there any great novelist whose preoccupation with `form' is not a matter of his responsibility towards a rich human interest, or complexity of interests profoundly realized?"[8] What Leavis says here of the novelists is equally applicable to the poets. Of particular interest is Bilan's perception of how Leavis's very definition of poetry undergoes a change from a concern with the handling of language in his study of poetry to an interest in life when he discusses the poet-novelists. Eagleton settles the issue by referring to the gap between theory and practice in Leavis:

> Only Leavis escapes this formalism, with his view that the complex formal unity of a work, and its `reverent openness before life', are facets of a single process. In practice, however, his work tends to divide between `formal' criticism of poetry and `moral' criticism of fiction."[1]

While what Eagleton and others say is largely true regarding Leavis's emphasis on formal consideration in hi» criticism of poetry and on moral considerations in his criticism of the novel, we must remember that there are occasions in his study of poetry (such as his criticism of his seventeenth century poetry or Romantic poetry or Victorian verse) when Leavis does not overlook the moral concerns. John Gross too makes a pertinent remark on the shift from Leavis's criticism of poetry to that of the novel:

> This is not just a shift from one genre to another, in my view: it involves the replacement of Eliot by Lawrence at the centre of Leavis's critical universe, which in turn, implies less emphasis on close reading.... This shift of emphasis led to the concentration on moral and social criticism which Leavis had already voiced early on in books like Culture and Environment, but which had not run in tandem with his early writing on poetry, as 1 see it.*[1]

An examination of the samples of Leavis's practical criticism makes it clear that there is a development of his ideas on language from his emphasis on concreteness and the spoken medium (in his poetry criticism) to its almost becoming synonymous with "life" (in his novel criticism) and leading finally to some concrete theoretical formulations (in his last books). That Leavis's criticism of poetry was mostly written in

the thirties, that of his novel in the forties and the theoretical formulations at the end of his career would perhaps suffice to explain the nature of the development of his ideas. It is true that despite Leavis's early attempts to consider the novel as "a dramatic poem," his criticism of the novel does move more towards considerations of "life" as he goes on. This may be seen as a development in Leavis from being a formalist (under the influence of Richards) to becoming a cultural critic (in his attempts to wrestle with Marxism, while denying the economic basis of society). However, it is not true that Leavis was not concerned with the questions of life early on in his career. His Culture and Environment and "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture" are sufficient examples to prove this. Our discussion of his 1934 essay on Swift also makes this abundantly clear. His involvement with criticism of poetry at this time does leave traces of its impact in the close reading of the passages from Swift.

It is also clear from our discussion of Leavis's criticism of poetry and the novel that his theory and practical criticism reinforce each other, though concrete theoretical formulations occur only towards the end of his career. Leavis'B refusal to theorize explicitly when pressed by Wellek to do so, coming along with the statement that ideally he ought to be able to complete his work with a theoretical statement (quoted at the beginning of chapter 3) sounds prophetic, considering the philosophical underpinnings of The Living Principle. But there is a definite deliberateness about Leavis's refusal to theorize. This emphatic denial of theory and an assertion of practice can be understood in the context of Leavis's felt need to tease out

the values of the organic community from his great tradition of literary works at a time when he found the absence of those very values in society. The emphasis on practical criticism also helps him to establish the discipline of English and criticism at the university which will in turn ensure the domination of the cultivated minority. Yes, Leavis does put his theory into practice in his practical criticism. Whether he puts his ideas into practice in real life, particularly in his dealing with other critics in a collaborative endeavour, is a different question altogether.

An examination of Leavis's practical criticism over the years will have to take into account the shift in emphasis in his concerns. While in his criticism of poetry the effort is to cull out the embeddedness of the "living principle" in the concreteness of words, in his novel criticism the preoccupation is with the "amount of life... gone into the making" of the novel (to use Henry James's phrase). The shift in emphasis here runs parallel to Leavis's theory of language, from viewing language as a trace of culture in his early work to its becoming one with life. The movement further from this position to his concept of an all-encompassing language is indeed a natural transition (as we have seen in chapter 3). Language now becomes truly "organic" with its capacity to maintain tradition while simultaneously continuing to change and grow. No wonder then that the writers' contribution is also assessed by Leavis in terms of their ability to adhere to this principle of tradition and continuity. Leavis's idea of a collective participation in the making of language in turn informs his study of men in relation to one another, especially in his

criticism of the novel. The theoretical undergirding is an assumed commitment to the organic, community life (whether implicit as in his criticism of poetry or explicit as in his discussion of the novel). A consideration of Leavis's oeuvre makes us see the developing perception of an interdependence and interweaving of language, culture, literature and life.

Notes

[1] F.R. Leavis, "Why Universities?" Scrutiny 3.2 (1934): 126.

[2] Anne Samson, F.R. Leavis (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 99.

[3] Leavis, "In Defence of Milton," Rev. of Milton and Wordsworth, by H.J.C. Grierson and The Miltonic Setting, by E.M.W. Tillyard, Scrutiny 7.1 (1938): 113-14.

[4] Leavis, Education and the University (1943; London: Chatto & Windus, 1972) 48-49.

[5] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," Scrutiny 4.3 (1935): 237.

[6] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Eighteenth Century," Scrutiny 5.1 (1936): 21-22.

[7] Leavis, "Justifying One's Valuation of Blake," The Critic as Anti-Philosopher, ed. G.S. Singh (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982) 11.

[8] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Eighteenth Century," 23.

[9] Leavis, "Revaluations (11): The Poetry of Pope," Scrutiny 2.3 (1933): 277.

[10] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," 262.

[11] Leavis, "Literature and Society," Scrutiny 12.1 (1943): 6.

[12] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Eighteenth Century," 29.

[13] Leavis, "'Thought' and Emotional Quality: Notes in the Analysis of Poetry," Scrutiny 13.1 (1945): 68.

[14] Leavis, "Revaluations (IX): Keats," Scrutiny 4.4 (1936): 379.

[15] A.C. Goodson, Verbal Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 15.

[16] Goodson's displeasure with Leavis springs from Leavis's denunciation of Shelley based on what Goodson terms as Leavis's literalist conception of metaphor, which is inconsistent with his justification of Hopkins's use of metaphor; Leavis defends Hopkins on the ground that metaphor need not mean a "point-for-point" parallel. However, it is not fair to conclude that Leavis's attack on Shelley represents a growing attachment in Leavis's criticism to words as names or things. To reduce the complexity of Leavis's metaphor of organism for language to a narrow mimetic view as Goodson does (drawing support from Eagleton) is to Misrepresent Leavis. Goodson's displeasure is understandable, however, considering Leavis's refusal to acknowledge the idea of organicity in Coleridge.

[17] Leavis, "Revaluations (IX): Keats," 398.

[18] Leavis, "Revaluations (IV): Gerard Manley Hopkins," Scrutiny 12.2 (1944): 84.

[19] Leavis, "Revaluations (IV): Gerard Manley Hopkins," 86.

[20] Leavis, "Milton's Verse," Scrutiny, 2.2 (1933): 129.

[21] Leavis, "Milton's Verse," 129.

[22] Leavis, "Milton's Verse," 130.

[23] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," Scrutiny 4.3 (1935): 251.

[24] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," 252.

[25] Leavis, "English Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," 252.

[26] Leavis, "'Antony and Cleopatra' and 'All for Love' « A Critical Exercise," Scrutiny 5.2 (1936)s 158.

[27] Leavis, "'Antony and Cleopatra'," 165.

[28] Leavis, "'Antony and Cleopatra'," 167.

[29] Leavis, "Revaluations (VIII): Shelley," Scrutiny 4.2 (1935): 161-62.

[30] Leavis, "Revaluations (VIII): Shelley," 160.

[31] Leavis, "'Thought' and Emotional Quality," 60.

[32] Leavis, "Revaluations (VIII): Shelley," 166.

[33] Leavis, "Revaluations (VIII): Shelley," 178.

[34] Leavis, "Revaluations (VIII)" Shelley," 180.

[35] Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation (1932; London: Chatto fc Windus, 1961) 76.

[36] Leavis, New Bearings 78.

[37] Leavis, New Bearings 83.

[38] Leavis, The Living Principle: English as a Discipline of Thought (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977) 156.

[39] Leavis, Living Principle 156.

[40] Leavis, Living Principle 171.

[41] Leavis, Living Principle 179.

[42] Leavis, Living Principle 191-92.

[43] Leavis, Living Principle 226.

[44] F.R. Leavis and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens the Novelist (1970; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980) 312.

[45] F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens 302.

*• F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens 355.

*7 Leavis, Valuation in Criticism and Other Essays. ed. G. Singh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 289.

«• Merle E. Brown, "The Idea of Communal Creativity in F.R. Leavis's Recent Criticism," Double Lyric: Divisiveness and Communal Creativity in Recent English Poetry (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 212-13.

*9 Leavis, D.H. Lawrence: Novelist (1955; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981) 122.

50 D.H. Lawrence, Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious as quoted by Leavis in Thought, Words and Creativity: Art and Thought in Lawrence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) 24.

51 Leavis, Thought 24.

52 Leavis, The Great Tradition (1948; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980) 16.

53 Leavis, Great Tradition 60.

54 Leavis, Great Tradition 70.

55 Leavis, Great Tradition 169.

56 Leavis, Great Tradition 189.

57 Leavis, Anna Karenina and Other Essays quoted from R.P. Bilan, The Literary Criticism of F.R. Leavis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 110-11.

•• Mulhern, Francis, "English Reading" in Nation and Narration, ed. Homi Bhabha K. (London: Routledge, 1990) 254-55.

59 Leavis, Great Tradition 224.

60 Leavis, Great Tradition 262-63.

61 F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens 286.

62 F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens 304-05.

[63] F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens 334.

[64] F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Dickens 359.

[65] Leavis, D.H. Lawrence 120.

[66] Leavis, D.H Lawrence 120.

[67] Leavis, D.H Lawrence 122.

[68] Leavis, Thought 22.

[69] Leavis, Thought 26.

[70] Leavis, "Joyce and 'The Revolution of the Word'," Scrutiny 2.2 (1933)8 196.

[71] Leavis, "E.M. Forster," Scrutiny 7.2 (1939): 188.

[72] Leavis, "E.M. Forster," 200.

[73] Leavis, "After 'To the Lighthouse'," Scrutiny 10.3 (1942): 296-97.

[74] Leavis, "After 'To the Lighthouse'," 298.

[75] Leavis, "The Irony of Swift," Scrutiny 2.4 (1934): 377.

[76] Leavis, "The Irony of Swift," 377.

[77] Leavis, "The Irony of Swift," 378.

[78] R.P. Bilan, The Literary Criticism of F.R. Leavis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 105.

[79] David Lodge, Language of Fiction quoted in R.P. Bilan, The Literary Criticism of F.R.Leavis 108.

[80] Leavis, The Great Tradition quoted in R.P. Bilan, The Literary Criticism of F.R. Leavis 113.

[81] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory (Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1983) 51.

[82] John Gross, in an interview with Philip French in "Dr Leavie and the Drift of Civilization," Three Honest Men: A Critical Mosaic, by Philip French (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1980) 62.

Chapter 5

"In-concluslon"

> **The critic, one would suppose, if he is to Justify his existence, should endeavour to discipline his personal prejudices and cranks-- t**races **to which we are all subject--and compose his differences with as many of his fellows as possible, in the common pursuit of true** judgment.
>
> (T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," 1923, rpt. in Selected Essays [1932], 1976, 25.)

> **Out of agreement and disagreement with particular judgments of value a sense of relative value in the concrete will define itself, and, without this, no amount of talk about 'values' in the abstract is worth anything.**
>
> (F.R. Leavis, "Restatement for Critics," Scrutiny, 1.4, 1933, 319.)

The consideration we have made in the foregoing chapters is that of Leavis's views on language, literature, community and culture, his felt need to reconstitute the values of the historically lost organic community to fight forces of disintegration in the "technologico-Benthamite" civilization of the modern world, the possibility of reconstruction of a civilized community in its place through literature and literary criticism in the University, the importance of the training of intelligence and sensibility through a study of one's own language (and hence the questions of English and Englishness)

and how far all these ideas inform Leavis's critical practice. Despite its pervading presence in various ramifications, the question of the organic community and ideas related to it have received insufficient attention in the large corpus of criticism on Leavis. Critics who have addressed this question have invariably talked about its historical aspect and viewed it as a romantic escape into an unobtainable past. An attempt has been made in the preceding chapters to demonstrate how the concept becomes a living presence in Leavis's critical theory and practice.

This chapter attempts to examine the more or less incidental ideas of various critics bearing on the theme of organic community and to see them in relation to the questions raised so far. It hopes to arrive at some tentative judgements on these issues in the spirit of a collaborative critical pursuit, a spirit Leavis had endeavoured to promote.

The question of the individual and society comes up very often in an evaluation of Leavis's criticism. Marc De la Ruelle in his "The Ideological Roots of Cultural Studies in England[11] traces the beginnings of the movement of cultural studies to the liberal humanist tradition starting from Matthew Arnold. He, however, sees a difference, and rightly so, in the relative emphasis the present movement of cultural studies and the liberal humanist tradition lay on the individual and society. He points out that

> [f]or Williams, it was basically social, representing the collective idea, while so-called bourgeois culture stressed individual, intellectual and imaginative

> work. In political terms, this was the opposition between socialism and liberalism, although Williams did not use these terms.[1]

This emphasis on the difference between the "socialist" and liberal-humanist ways is necessary because their discourse seems at times to be almost indistinguishable. This reminds us of our discussion of the collaborative nature of Volosinov's and Leavis's critical theory. Ruelle's identification of the difference between the "socialist" and the liberal-humanist emphasis on the individual and society helps us to reiterate the point that Leavis and Volosinov (as with Leavis and Williams here) depart from each other on the question of the primacy they give to the individual and society.

How does Leavis's emphasis on the individual stand in relation to his programme of Education? In their study of "Academic English and the Common Reader," Kaplan and Rose point to a contradiction in New Criticism and Leavis between the use of close reading as a pedagogical tool, a specialized activity capable of being practised by a limited few and the "populist" or "democratic" impulse.[3] We may recall here our discussion in chapter 3 regarding David Holbrook's remark that Leavis's enthusiasm for training an elite gets the better of his commitment to philosophical or essential questions. The logical outcome of a stress on the democratic impulse ought to have helped Leavis to engage in a true dialogue with his adversaries in the spirit of the mutual collaboration he had himself propagated. In a reading of the Scrutiny movement which ironically goes a little overboard because of its inattention to

the contribution of the Leavises, Iain Wright demonstrates, among other things, how a real possibility of a common programme with the Left is thwarted by Leavis's refusal to critically communicate with his opponents.[1]

If a genuine dialogue was indeed absent in Leavis's engagement with his critics, how do we re-view his concept of the organic community? Lesley Johnson is quite perceptive in relating the issue of the training of the elite to the concept of the organic community in Leavis. He says:

> The idea of the organic community in Leavis's work needs to be examined in relationship to his argument for a system of elites. The idea of a past form of society in which everyone had an accepted function dictated by a 'natural order' establishes a mythical version of the desirable (but lost) form of society. The only way to restore some semblance of this society, he could then go on to say, is through a system of elites or oligarchic structures, on the basis of which the social function of at least certain groups will be restored. The organic society couched in terms of a golden age legitimates this hierarchical vision of society in which the literary intellectuals have a specific and powerful function to fulfil.[2]

Leavis's problem, as diagnosed by Johnson, was to reconcile democracy with the maintenance of high standards. Johnson refers to Leavis's statement that if democracy was equated with the lowering of standards he would not mind opposing it. He also offers his opinion on the idea of collaboration in Leavis. While he feels that a collaborative exchange of Judgement failed to take place in Leavis's own engagement with other writers, Scrutiny could have provided it:

> Scrutiny provided a place in which that collaborative exchange, which Leavis held to be so important to literary criticism, could be carried out (within certain limits). It also provided a means by which the ideas of Leavis and others on educational and social issues could be disseminated. The fact that it was a journal which catered explicitly for a minority led inevitably to its failure. It could only disseminate its ideas amongst those already converted.[3]

Yes, genuine exchange seems to have been possible only among people who have already accepted a set of values. Colin Evans in his English People refers to Walsh's comments on the "Leavisite" consensus: "The canon could change (unlike in classics) but the criteria for inclusion were fixed. They had to do with complexity and seriousness as against gentility."[4] It is interesting to see how Evans is able to turn even the adulatory Walsh to his own advantage. He goes on to say that

"[t]he belief was that studying English would make people more moral and would enable them to lead better lives amid the pressures of the modern world. English was redemptive."[7]

Raymond Williams in his Culture and Society exposes the narrowness of Leavis's understanding of the role of English. He says that English can be redemptive only if it is able to encompass the whole culture. He goes on: "For experience that is formally recorded we go, not only to the rich source of literarure, but also to history, building, painting, music, philosophy, theology, political and social theory, the physical and natural sciences, anthropology, and indeed the whole body of learning." As against this ever-widening scope of culture, Leavis concentrates on the minority culture and its promotion through the study of English and criticism. Williams argues that Leavis's "concept of a cultivated minority, set over against a 'decreated' mass, tends in its assertion, to a damaging arrogance and scepticism. The concept of a wholly organic and satisfying past, to be set over against a disintegrated and dissatisfying present, tends in its neglect of history to a denial of real and social experience."[9] He considers it "...foolish and dangerous to exclude from the so called organic society the penury, the petty tyranny, the disease and mortality, the ignorance and frustrated intelligence which were also among its ingredients."[10]

That brings us to the question of the historicity of the organic community as a recurrent one in a study of Leavis. The homogeneousnese and organicity of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century culture as postulated by Leavis do come in for some severe criticism based on the fact that these societies

represented a clear demarcation of people on economic terms. Leavis's statement that a Shakespeare play appealed at different "levels" of response itself could testify to the existenoe of a heterogeneous society. Jf so, how do we interpret Leavis's continuous harping on the question of organic community? Leavis's emphasis is not so much on whether the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were organic communities, as on whether it was not possiible for writers at that time to produce works which appealed simultaneously to the sophisticated and the popular because they both shared one and the same language. The ungrudging acceptance of those in the lower rungs of the unequal system might have given a semblance of homogeneity to these societies. Uhat appeals to Leavis is not so much the idea of homogeneity, but the idea of the organism, with its interrelated parts, which to him stands for individuals' assigned role in the total community. This explains Leavis's emphasis on men in relation to one another in his study of the novel, though in reality he was not thinking of the whole society as is evident from his statements against mass literacy.

In this context, Eugene Goodheart's essay on the organic society in Leavis too raises some interesting questions. He says that what Leavis says about the living speech in the work of Shakespeare and Donne is also true of Jane Austen, George Eliot and D.H. Lawrence. He goes on to observe that "[t]he living speech of great poets and novelists is the revelation of the inter-connectedness of people within a living community or what Burke, Coleridge, Carlyle indeed, virtually every significant writer since the eighteenth century understood as the organic society."[1] Goodheart's agreeing with what Leavis is

said to have implied about the work of the writers since the eighteenth century is somewhat intriguing on two counts. Leavis does not imply that the living speech of the great poets and novelists since the eighteenth century reveals the interconnectedness of people within the communities which the writers represent, for Leavis is aware and has declared openly that organic communities are no longer found after 1700. His statement could only mean that the communities the writers represent in their work (which may be different from their own) reveal the interconnectedness of people, which is reflected in the living speech of the characters. Leavis's programme to reconstruct the values of the organic community involves a constant restatement of those values to provide a chief incitement towards the new. Goodheart's statement is also surprising because he realises the difference between an unrecoverable past and a living present. This ought to have led him to understand that what Leavis is talking about is simultaneously an unrecoverable past (in the form of loss of organic community historically) and an assertion of its living presence in the form of the best literature. It is his inability to understand this distinction that makes him find Leavis's view of the organic society ambiguous. He says: "On the one hand, he [Leavis] suggests that what is real for literature may be an unrealized ideal for society. On the other hand, the organic society is conceived as an ideal for literature itself, which in Leavis's view is threatened by the same corruption one discovers in society."[111] It is an unrealized ideal for society because Leavis is sure that we cannot historically recover the organic society. It is a

recoverable ideal for literature (as has been achieved in the works of hie "great" writers), though literature too continues to be threatened by corruptive forces of advertising, journalism, film etc. The strength of Goodheart's essay, however, lies in pointing out Leavis's unwillingness to accept any negation of the life principle in writers like Eliot, Joyce and Beckett, even though such negation is tore realistic than the romantic pictures of life Leavis appreciates in the writers of his great tradition. Goodheart is also able to pin point Leavis's strengths as well as weaknesses, as in the following statements:

> Leavis's conception of literature as a community with the attributes of organic life implies a symbiosis between art and life that modern literary theory and practical criticism often deny in an exclusive attention to the internal history of literature.
>
> ... Leavis's failure as a critic on his own terms is his unwillingness or inability to engage the adversary or the other (whoever or whatever it may be) in a dialectical--or should I say communal--exchange.[13]

The issue of the organic society Goodheart takes up raises nevertheless some important questions. If we agree that works of art are produced under certain historical conditions, and that they are also studied and interpreted under possibly

different historical conditions, we have to accept the notion of inevitable change. If so, we wonder how Leavis expects the writers after the loss of organic community to reproduce (i.e., maintain) the values of the organic community. How does the maintenance of the values reconcile itself with the principle of inevitable change? In fact, Leavis's emphasis on the metaphor of the organism and his insistence on the living principle implying growth and change conflict with his assertion of the continuance of certain values of the organic community. Even if some writers consciously strive to revive the values, is it possible for the readers who are not just the writers' own contemporaries to accept them, situated as they may be under different historical conditions? Leavis's grand design is possilble of achievement only if great writers he has in mind and the readership which reads them share certain common interests. What Leavis is looking forward to is a reconstruction of a homogeneous community that includes the writers, the literary critics and a broad readership. His programme of education through the English School at the university is geared towards the establishment of this cultivated minority.

Glenn Most cautions us against harping on the question of this seemingly obvious contradiction in Leavis's organicist model. What he values most in Leavis is the supreme principle of life that characterizes literature itself--"... a principle of continuity and creativity, most obviously present in natural language, which transcends and grounds the individuality of the artist, who by subordinating himself to it alone can truly realize himself."[14] We can agree with Most that language does

have this unique capacity to maintain a level of continuity while it simultaneously changes. The significance of the metaphor of the organism for language and literature begins to make more sense now. The language also inplies a collective effort even as individual speakers keep adapting it to their own tastes and contributing to it. Most also sees the value of "life" in Leavis in relation to the dichotomy he draws from Blake between "selfhood" and "identity". (We have discussed the importance of these terms in chapter 3.) This also reminds us of Anne Samson's statement regarding the development in Leavis's thought from his considering language as a reflection of culture in his early days to his being convinced by the end of his career, of culture being but a trace of language. Michael Bell's study in which he tries to see the affinity of Leavis's conception of language with that of Heidegger is useful here. He says: "Language is the historical creation of its community and conditions prereflectively the nature of its particular world."[13] He also says that this historical nature of language lends the impersonal dimension to even the personal act of speech. Language in this sense, for Leavis, encompasses history. It is the inability of some critics to understand this conception of language that makes them see Leavis as being inattentive to history.[14] Bell is right in pointing out the lacuna in Raymond Williams's reading of Leavis's organic community, which also results from a similar lack of understanding:

> When Williams suggests that Leavis should include more cultural elements than the literary in his analysis, he is selling

> Leavis's position short. He exemplifies once again the persistent misunderstanding of what the `literary' would encompass for Leavis. Leavis's proposed study of the seventeenth century, for example, would have encompassed all fields of enquiry and achievement. The difference is that he would have considered them as forms of language.''

The strength of Bell's and Host's study lies in their recognition of the resemblance between Leavis's invitation to readers to participate in the text's unfolding itself and the hermeneutic circle. The part-whole analogy they allude to and its relationship to Leavis's organicist model cannot be missed. Leavis's movement towards a language which subsumes culture also seems close to the poststructural ist emphasis on the self-referential ity of language. But, for Leavis, as has been made clear in our discussion of him in relation to Bloom and Miller, language is not self-referential. It is Just that language includes culture in all its manifestations. For the Marxist, on the other hand, language is perhaps but one form of culture. However, when the very Marxism (which Leavis has opposed throughout his career) is reviewing the role of superstructural elements (even as it continues to emphasize the ultimate economic determinants), Leavis's own conception of language and his attempts to recover the values of the organic community through its traces in a still existing positive tradition in literature may have to be taken more seriously.

A word in the end about the nature of Leavis's criticism.

To the extent he questions the whole Western tradition starting from Descartes, he anticipates the deconstructionists in that both Leavis and the deconstructionists question the rational basis of the self's understanding of the world. While for Leavis the understanding takes place in the continuous collaborative exchanges between the self and the other, for the deconetructionists it is intersubjective giving rise to endless deferral of meaning. Nevertheless, Leavis is a very staunch liberal humanist, who argues for a stable order, the order of the like in the organic communities. To the extent he disturbs the authority of the author and shifts the emphasis to a community of critics and readers, he is a precursor to the reader response critics. But in cultivating a privileged power group of the elite through his critical endeavour he is criti-thoritative (if we may coin a term to describe him) in his ability to manufacture a consensus. To the extent he emphasizes the socio-cultural-historical contexts in his criticism, he is a Marxist or cultural theorist. But to the extent he denounces the economic base of society, he is anti-Marxist. To the extent he makes explicit use of the philosophers he is a theorist. To the extent he relies heavily on the words on the page and refuses to make theoretical formulations, he is a professed anti-philosopher. To the extent he opposes every establishment he is anti-authority. To the extent he nurtures and rears a whole critical establishment he wields authority and controls literary taste. To critically "place" this complex and conflicting nature of Leavis's contribution has been and continues to be a stupendous task.

Notes

[1] Marc De la Ruelle, "The Ideological Roots of Cultural Studies in England," English Studies in Transition; Papers from the ESSE Inaugural Conference, eds. Robert Clark and Piero Boitani (London: Routledge, 1993) 102.

[2] Carey Kaplan and Ellen Cronan Rose, "Academic English and the Common Reader," The Canon and the Common Reader (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1990) 52.

[3] lain Wright, "F.R. Leavis, the Scrutiny Movement and the Crisis," Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979) 37-65.

* Lesley Johnson, The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Willams (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 97.

[5] Lesley Johnson, 115.

[6] Colin Evans, English People: The Experience of Teaching and Learning English in British Universities (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993) 131.

[7] Colin Evans, 131.

. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society. 1780-1950 (1958; London: Chatto & Windus, 1967) 248.

[9] Raymond Williams 256.

[10] Raymond Williams 253.

[11] Eugene Goodheart, "The Organic Society of F.R. Leavis," The Failure of Criticism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) 70.

[12] Eugene Goodheart, "The Organic Society," 75.

[13] Eugene Goodheart, "The Organic Society," 82-83.

[14] Glenn Most, "Principled Reading," Diacritics June 1979: 60.

[15] Michael Bell, F.R. Leavis (London: Routledge, 1988) 43.

[16] I have tried to argue out a case for the historical nature of Leavis's criticism in my response to Hiren Gohain in "Leavis's Romantic Connection: A Response," Journal of Contemporary Thought (1991): 97-98.

[17] Michael Bell, F.R. Leavis 117.

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