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 I had long been seeking (without much hope), I wasn't supposing that the author had 'initiated a successful philosophical revolution', and I 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" 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 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."

Fundamental to Descartian thinking is the assumption that, by reflection, one could know oneself just as one could know any external phenomenon. 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." 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."* 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 linguists' study of language divorcing it from its meaning. The naivety represented by his conception, Leavis says, is "inimical to thought." 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." 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." For Leavis, this potential is related to the force of the intention of the speaker. 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. 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.

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." 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 I 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."

Blake's pronouncement "I 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." 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. 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.*" 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'.

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 unstateable, must not be excluded from thought...".

What the assertion of life means to Leavis can be understood from his 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 terms 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."

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.

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. 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." 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 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 Leavis's disapproval of the Christian orthodoxy of Eliot's After Strange Gods. 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 is made clear in a statement like "[as individuals, we are life, which transcends us." Leavis 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.¹

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."¹⁰ 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 nīsus and ahnung, though he is rather vague in his explanation of these terms. However, it can be gathered that nīsus 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." 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 undiscovered 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.

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.\textsuperscript{14}

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 discoveries 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.\textsuperscript{15}

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 which the 'laws of inanimate nature' have no use.¹⁴

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.'³
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. 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. 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. 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 consequences 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 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 "it 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." He says that we have to depend on the minority "to keep alive the subtlest and finest parts of tradition" because

[!]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. 

(Emphasis added)

Leavis also tells us how in the minority's possession "is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends...." Language and literature thus become synonymous with culture. Therefore, Leavis proposes a programme of a study of literature through "practical criticism" 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."

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 "recognized 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" 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 --would assert itself as a matter of course.\(^9\)

(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.\(^1\) 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 dissecting 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.*

(Emphasis added)

What 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.*
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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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'.

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

I 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.

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 the 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." 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.
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. 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.

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 mass literacy prevents him from envisaging a more broad-based third realm. His elitist view of culture evidenced in his assertion that culture 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.


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

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

* Leavis, Living 37.

' Leavis, Living 13.

* Leavis, Living 58.

Leavis, Living 58.

Leavis, Living 58.

Leavis, Living 105.

Leavis, Living 36.

Samson 98.

Leavis, Living 46-A7.


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.


Leavis, Living 39.

Leavis, Living 42.

Leavis, Living 43.

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

Leavis, Living 43-44.

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.


28 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.


36 Leavis, *Living* 66.

37 Leavis, *Living* 44.


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

Leavis, "Why Universities?" *Scrutiny* 3.2 (1934): 126.

Leavis, *Education* 143.

Leavis *Education* 145.

Leavis uses here a term popularised by Richards. How he extends the scope of "practical criticism" is dealt with later on in the chapter.

Leavis, *Education* 34.

Leavis, *Education* 38.

Leavis, *Living* 49.

Leavis, *Education* 70-71.

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

Leavis, *English Literature* 46.

Leavis, *Valuation* 285.

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 I don't mean to suggest that Leavis knew him. But Volosinov was working around the same time as Leavis. It is more the comparison of ideas circulating around the same time that interests me. Volosinov's *categorization* of the 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.**


"Bilan, 71.

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


" Karlekar 188.