Humanism, in its strict sense, is a study in the Renaissance of ideas of the ancient Greeks and Romans, not concerned with religious principles. As the highest expression of human values meant to develop free, and responsible individual, it emerged as a philosophy of mankind. The term 'humanism' derived from the Italian 'humanista' or 'studia humanitatis' i.e., the study of humanities, came into use in the early sixteenth century to refer to the most enduring values of European Renaissance humanism. The humanist movement started in Italy by Picodella Mirandola who championed the humanistic ideal in his oration and upheld the dignity of Man. According to Cheyney, American historian, 'humanism' means many things: "It may be the reasonable balance of life that the early humanists observed in the Greeks; it may be merely the study of humanities or polite letters;... it may be the responsiveness to all human passions of a Shakespeare or Goethe; or it may be a philosophy of which man is the center and sanction".1 Corliss Lamont has defined the twentieth century humanism as "a joyous service for the

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greater good of all humanity in this natural world and according to the methods of reason and democracy".2

But 'Humanism' in general is not merely a philosophy. It is, for the average men and women a way of thinking and doing for a happy and useful life, concerned with the dignity and worth of individual, and his capacity for truth and virtue. It believes in the goodness of man subscribing to the welfare of the whole community. It is not a new dogma, but has developed as a system of beliefs and human standards subjected to testing in the light of newly discovered facts and more rigorous reasoning.

Renaissance Humanism: Renaissance, the revival of learning and art in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy and France and in the sixteenth century in England, is characterized as a glorious period of individualism when creative energy flourished and religious tyranny faded loosing much good of medievalism and creating nothing very significant. Etienne Gilson has observed that "The Renaissance ... was not the Middle Ages plus man, but the Middle Ages minus God, and the tragedy was that in loosing God the Renaissance was loosing man himself".3 The Renaissance humanists

2. Ibid., p.9.

enthusiastically promoting ancient pagan writing and ideals of liberty had sometimes stressed secular activity but had neglected spiritual subservience to Christ or to the church, as John Lyly, Elizabethan novelist and playwright put it: "Is Aristotle more dear to thee with his books than Christ with his blood?". (ADLDCT, p.93) But humanism, in the Renaissance period was usually fused with Christianity, a 'Christian humanism' as with Erasmus and Milton. When Erasmus said, "Holy Socrates, pray for us", (ADLDCT, p.93) he sought to unite the reasonableness of the ancients with the Revelation of Christianity. Milton too avoided the excesses of godless humanism. His treatise "Of Education" did not simply define complete education as "that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war", (ADLDCT, p.93) but also said that the aim of learning was "to refrain the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection" (ADLDCT, p.93)

The basic ideals of Renaissance humanism, summed up in the dictum of Protagoras, a Greek philosopher as "Man
is the measure of all things"4 formed a part of the rich legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity. That heritage was transmitted to the Western world partly through Byzantium and by Arabs in Spain but chiefly by the medieval church. Literary humanism took firm root in the early Middle Ages and was given a new vigor in the twelfth century.

Renaissance humanism concerned with the dignity and position of man in the universe, and becoming part of the study of classical imaginative and philosophical literature, as against natural science, emphasised moral and practical rather than purely aesthetic values. It insisted on the primacy of reason (considered the distinctively human faculty), as opposed to the instinctual appetites and the animal passions, in ordering human life. Many humanists also stressed the full need for development of man's diverse powers - physical and mental, artistic and moral, as opposed to merely technical or specialized training. And the contemporary humanist has often based the truths on human experiences and human nature rather than on the truths and sanctions of supernatural creed. With few exceptions, however, the Renaissance humanists were pious Christians, but had also inherited the concepts and ideas from pagan antiquity that

went into the making of Christian creed. Their emphasis on the values that could be achieved in this world, and scant regard for Christian belief in innate corruption of man and the ideals of extreme asceticism and withdrawal from this world obsessed with the world hereafter, gave rise to 'Christian humanism' of Sir Philip Sidney, Spenser and Milton. Further, the material, scientific and technological advancement after the Renaissance stressed the need to study humanities resisting the influence of natural philosophy and practical arts. Dr. Johnson, the eighteenth century humanist, observed: "We are perpetually moralists, but we are geometers only by chance .... Socrates was rather of opinion that what we had to learn was, how to do good and avoid evil".5

Matthew Arnold, the great exponent of humanism in the Victorian period, strongly defended the significance of human studies in general education. Many of Arnold's prominent ideas are adaptations of the tenets of the older humanism - his view, for instance, that culture is a perfection "of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality" (TGLT, p. 74) and that it consists of "a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human

nature", (TGLT, p.74) his emphasis on knowing "the best that is known and thought in the world, (TGLT, p.745) and his assumption that much of what is best is in the classical writers and the conception of poetry as essentially a criticism of life.

Robert Frost's poem 'The Tuft of Flowers' that speaks of the spirit of human participation, reflects some sort of Renaissance humanism.

"Men work together", I told him from the heart, "Whether they work together or apart".6

And Robert Penn Warren, like Renaissance humanist, too speaks of the reality of evil in human nature; and presents in his narratives the 'original sin' through some of his most memorable characters and episodes, for example, in the two hatchet-wielders, Lilburn Lewis and Big Billie Potts. He has dramatized self-discovery and makes his character realize his deeper self enclosed like a beast in a cage. In the poem "Billie Potts" he says: "Our innocence needs, perhaps, new definition",7 which must embrace the guilt that "always and forever (will) rise and coil like miasma / From the fat sump

and cess of common consciousness", as R.P.W. says in Brother to Dragons, his poetic drama. In all his major volumes of poetry Warren refers to this guilt in the common consciousness by means of animal imagery. Eleven Poems on the Same Theme shows the conscious ego, sanctimonious and sure of an innocent identity, but unsuccessfully trying to repudiate the animal self variously described as 'old horse' and 'old hound', octopus and toad.

"The cold heart heaves like a toad, and lifts its brow/
With that bright jewel you have no use for now".9

In Promises, too, man's natural revulsion towards the shadow of self is implicit in the slaying of a snake by some men carrying hay in 'The Snake'.

"Snagged high on a pitchfork time, he will make
Slow arabesques till the bullbats wake".10

In You, Emperors, and Others, the beast in the psyche assumes various faces. The emperors Warren writes of are Domitian and Tiberius, whom Suetonius, the Roman historian considered as monstrous criminals for their abuse of imperial power. In Audubon the woman who butchers her guests for their

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10. Ibid., p.266.

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belongings evokes a comparison with Big Billie Potts, who is evil and ignorant and old, as a female version of that beastly figure. In Warren's work the evil within self, is represented through a series of vile characters, violent episodes, and beast images. The acceptance of that reality is the first step toward psychic wholeness in Warren. This self-knowledge of one's ultimate identity which comes through a vision or experiences of interrelationship, Warren calls 'osmosis of being'. He observes: "(Man is) in the world with continual and intimate interpenetration, an inevitable osmosis of being which in the end does not deny, but affirms, his identity". The osmosis of being concept includes all animate creation, much in the spirit of the Romantic vision. As Blake said, 'everything that lives is holy', and Coleridge, "He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast", Warren too has asserted, "we're all one Flesh, at last". Warren's 'one Flesh' encompasses more than human flesh and is presented convincingly in the two grisly episodes in Promises. In one instance, 'Court-Martial', the victims are human; in the other. 'Boy's Will, Joyful Labor Without Pay, and Harvest Home', the victim is a black snake.


The behaviour of the self while confronting extinction is so similar in both the instances (Human or reptile) as to suggest that ultimately the distinctions are secondary.

"They took shape, enormous in air
.... enormous, they hung there :

... And the spite not yet dry
That was uttered with the last cry" (SP, p.232)
('Court-Martial')

And

"But a black snake rears in his ruined room.
Defiant, tall in that blast of day,
Now eye for eye, he swaps his stare.
His outrage gutters on the air.
Men shout, ring around. He can't get away"
(SP, p.266) (Boy's Will...')

Their 'outrage' is intense because the victims themselves are killers and predators. The dying men and dying snake alike represent a principle of self, momentarily externalized and gruesomely offer an image of his own mortal condition. So the oneness of Flesh, making an interrelationship of all creatures throughout the entirety of the time continuum is perceived by Warren with much the same mystic intensity as Robert Frost who has described evolution in his memorable couplet in 'Sitting by a Bush in Broad Daylight':

"And from that one intake of fire
All creatures still warmly suspire".13

Warren's 'human fabric' as which forms the network of personal relationship binding humanity and conferring peculiar human identity is a metaphor to evoke the social relevance of theme of osmosis of being as in 'Fall comes to Back-Country Vermont', a poem about death due to cancer affecting the entire town sparing just fifteen voters. Here the osmosis or human fabric motif mitigates losses:

"(He) had died, but for now let us take some comfort In the fact that the fifteen surviving voters, . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Of rendering irreparably the human fabric, Death affirms the fact of that fabric".14

In Incarnations the 'one flesh' concept is all-pervasive. Working out from his biblical headnote, "yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren" (Nehemiah 5.5), Warren gathers a wide assortment of creatures under scrutiny, from a fish under sea ("The Red Mullet") to a hawk in the air ("The Leaf") to human beings on the verge of extinction.

Robert Lowell's poetry has been a long struggle to remove the mask, to make his speaker unequivocally himself. Unlike Dylan Thomas, to Lowell mask is but a mask of moral guilt, Eliot uses mask to show the present decadence of values and the collapse of a great tradition. Lowell's first book of poems Land of Unlikeness (1944) presents his

panoramic look at a world which reminds of the spiritual dignity of man now sacrificed to mere secularism and craving for mechanical order. In these poems Lowell devotes himself mainly to the two themes reflecting the history of his time – one being the un-Christian character of the Allies' role in the Second World War and the other the casual connection between the doctrines of America's founders and the desolate condition – spiritual and material, of the country in the thirties. The poem 'The Bomber' outlines the ugliness of war, which abuses its God-like method of destruction. Science and War pose great threats to man's salvation by depriving him of his religious imagination and his likeness to God. His poem 'Leviathan' describes the commonwealth as man's atoning for Abel by learning to live peacefully with his fellowmen. Lowell time and again uses snake and serpent images to suggest sly and furtive guilt, the evil that will assert itself, and very often guilt or evil of a sexual character, as illustrated in "Children of Light":

"Pilgrims unhoused by Geneva's night,
They planted here the serpent's seeds of light..."15

These implications are fully worked out also in other poems. In "Between the Porch and the Altar", the two guilty lovers, an unfaithful husband and his mistress, (in the husband's

eyes) become snakes whenever they gratify themselves in the way that means 'light' for them.

".............When we try to kiss,
Our eyes are slits and cringing, and we hiss,
Scales glitter on our bodies as we fall...."16

"Between the Porch and the Altar" prepares the way for the maskless confessions of his most recent poems. Its adulterous, mother-dominated hero is first described in the third person, and its serpent imagery helps us in understanding his pathological state:

"Meeting his mother makes him lose ten years,
Or is it twenty? Time, no doubt, has ears
That listen to the swallowed serpent, wound
Into its bowels, but he thinks no sound
Is possible before her, he thinks the past
Is settled ..........

Nothing shames
Him more than this uncoiling, counterfeit
Body presented as an idol".17

Throughout the poem the sense of sin, rather than sin itself is the protagonist's main problem. He is sick of his mother and of the crushing family traditions and 'New England Conscience' associated with her, and he must throw the burden off even if it means, as his equally guilt-ridden sweet heart puts it, to 'ruin' his two children and his wife. 'The Exile's Return' implies that nothing could be settled by the war. The Exile is Lowell himself, released from jail after

17. Ibid., p.42.
five months. To suggest heaven and hell, he makes seasonal references to an infernal winter, a spring of rebirth, the 'fall' of autumn and the entrance to Dante's hell. The most impressive of these poems is 'The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket', an elegy in the great tradition. The deaths by water of Edward King and John Keats are echoed in Lowell's recording of the drowning of his cousin Warren Winslow. The opening five sections are typical of Lowell in their harsh descriptions of man's capacity, violence, and greed, personified in the figure of Nantucket Whaleman.

In Ethical humanism human interest is preponderant. It has emerged as a movement for survival and social justice of minorities. Frost is a humanist par excellence and has centred his world-view on man himself. His is the ethical humanism. Like Wordsworth he is affected by 'the still sad music of humanity'. His poem 'Mending Wall' expresses his philosophy of brotherhood and tolerance, the twin virtues of honest living, against the neighbour's dogmatic assertion that "good fences make good neighbours". The poem is a symbolic interpretation of the modern situation where national boundaries are fast disintegrating facilitating international understanding, though at the same time in

certain quarters, militant nationalism is also showing up its head, and thus damaging the spirit of internationalism. We do not like to be taught that we must not be islands unto ourselves, though we prefer understanding and universal brotherhood to tension and misery. This seeming paradox is at the root of human existence, which is the theme of 'Mending Wall'. Frost's analysis of the theme is realistic and based on sound judgment. He does not take sides, either to recommend militant nationalism (or individualism) or universal brotherhood, nor does he strike a compromise between the two extremes. In either case, it must have been unpractical. He only poses the problem, and leaves it to the reader to work out for himself whatever course he may prefer to choose.

Warren's osmosis postulates an ethic of community that includes and transcends self and family and also tribe. It transcends the separations worked by time or sin or ignorance. And in the end, the Warren protagonist must accept osmosis even as Jack Burden finally accepts the 'Great Cobweb' concept of Cass Mastern in All the King's Men: "he learned that the world is all of one piece ... that the world is like an enormous spider web and if you touch it, however lightly, at any point, the vibration ripples to the remotest perimeter".19

Philosophical humanism is sometimes used for pragmatism, as opined by Charles S. Pierce and William James. William James has contended that since pragmatism is concerned with man and his action and since all philosophical endeavours are connected with man and mankind, that the term philosophical humanism could be termed as pragmatism, even though some of its ideas are opposed to humanism. In "Mowing", Frost identifies himself as a labourer with his scythe. As the man and his tool perform their function, their 'earnest love' experiences the simple and profound lesson: "The fact is the sweetest dream that labor knows".20

Sociological humanism tries to define close human relations between families, common members of small community, etc., and their relation to larger impersonal groups. The ideals of sociological humanism are achieved when loyalty, pity, mutual service, and love outline the relationship between members of a small group. In this respect sociological humanism becomes almost identical with what is more generally called humanitarianism.

Regarding man's relations with his fellow beings, Frost said that these relations should be imbued with the spirit of service and dedication. Since human life on this

planet is not perfect, human relations should be guided by the principles of "love and need".

'Mending Wall' presents a rural situation where the speaker in the poem, the poet himself, meets his neighbour every spring to repair the stone wall demarcating their property. The neighbour, an old New England farmer seems to believe in the value of walls and fences. But he refuses to explain his belief. He only reiterates his father's saying, "good fences make good neighbours" (CPRF, p.47) in contrast to this the speaker holds a different opinion. He says:

"There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard" (CPRF, p.47)

Frost writes about common people - an ordinary boy in 'Out, Out' and the tramps in 'Two Tramps in Mud Time' for he thinks that the lives of these officially unimportant people also demand attention. In 'Two Tramps in Mud Time' the wood-chopper at first thinks of the tramps as sun-human creatures and then as persons without any regulated principle in life.

'The House-keeper' offers a domestic drama where the housekeeper tells the story of her daughter Estelle's elopement. The chief interest of the story is the Estelle's
motives. From her mother's speech we realise that the real reason for her elopement is neither shame nor harsh treatment that a woman in her position must suffer, but simply resentment. She has been hurt by the careless insensitivity of the man who could never quite make up his mind to marry her.

There is a peculiar character, the common law wife in 'The Fear', who unconsciously disguises her desires as obsessions. Most abject of all is the ghastly lunatic in 'A Servant to Servants', who makes life a garbed mockery for himself and his relations. In this poem Frost has depicted the malady of certain sections of the New England society and the challenges faced by the people and their heroic response in overcoming them. In "Home Burial" he presents the misery of a lady who has lost her child. His poem 'The Death of the Hired Man' describes the most touching of human episodes. It is the dramatization of man's justice and woman's mercy.

Most of Eliot's poems are set in some metropolis, the hub of modern individual life. His poems 'The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock' and 'The Rhapsody on a Windy Night' speak of sordid city streets, and "the muttering retreats" of lonely men. 'The Waste Land', besides other urban features, presents 'unreal city with dissipated London crowds. Gerontion resides in a decayed city tenament and the scene of 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' is a city underworld.
Several kinds of unhappiness are audible in the poetry of Wallace Stevens. There is the only partly acknowledged unhappiness of the poet as an individual troubled by loss of love and loss of youth, and there is the extensively thematized unhappiness of humanity in the modern world, the humanity adrift in a universe that lacks transcendent meaning and confers upon us no purpose. He writes about his own life's pain in 'Red Loves Kit', 'Farewell to Florida', 'Bouquet of Belle Seavoir' and 'World Without Peculiarity'. His oeuvre is underpopulated with distinct individuals. He speaks for the entire species, using the pronouns 'we' or 'one', or when the protagonist of a poem is a blatantly symbolic distillation of some aspect of the self or the Mind - Peter Quince, the floribund ascetic; the well Dressed Man with a Beard, the Canon Aspirin, and Professor Eucalyptus.

Socialist humanism is consistently materialistic and historical. It is based on the working class of society resisting the influence of upper classes and pining hopes for the progress of humanity, the development of consciousness, organization and power of that social force and on the success of working class struggles.

Socialist humanism believes firmly in the power of intelligence and the cultivation of consciousness and believes no less strongly than any other creed in human
decency, dignity and fellowship. But just as it is rational without being rationalistic, so it is moral without falling into empty moralizing. A genuinely practical and progressive morality cannot be separated from the actual conditions, contending forces and basic issues of class society. The ultimate aim of the new socialist order is to bring about conditions that will make both individual and the entire class become conscious of the new milieu.

Frost asserts the right of man to rebel against social and economic injustice of any sort, as in 'West-Running Brook'. But he does not lash out his voice severely. He does not protest for protest's sake, rather challenges the worth of society, religion and institution which would be like 'lover's quarrel with the world'. The following lines vividly speak of the rebellious spirit of Frost:

"And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cowwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open".
(CPRF, p.153)

The poet describes man's struggle with desire, environment and society. 'Directive' is characterized by an overwhelming sense of loss.

Liberal Humanism: Liberal humanism is essentially liberal, expressing the ethical attitude of middle-class individuals
violating religious practice and evincing interest to some degree in social reform and political progressivism. Like Marxism it is humanistic in approach, and deals with the middle class workers' common interests and also defending science and modern education. But liberal humanism strictly speaking is not a philosophy of the working class, either in origin or in intent. Infact, it explicitly repudiates any specific class basis or affiliation. Its teachings are not founded upon the facts of economic life but upon allegedly universal ethical standards, which are binding upon all people because of their common human nature. This viewpoint confirms to the abstract individualism that is an axiom of the ideology of bourgeois democracy.

Frost is regional and at the same time a universal poet. His memorable and humble characters fully represent the aspect and situation to which they belong. In 'After-Apple Picking' he picturesquely describing the apple-picking and the human condition, philosophises the situation.

"For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired".
(CPRF, p.88)

On its social and political side, humanism not only preaches peace and settlement of disputes between sections through negotiations but also reconciliation of classes as the general interests and aims of all members of human race or inhabitants of a given country, transcend their particular social
divisions. The liberal humanists contend that it is sectarian, divisive, and self-defeating to expect one special class to emancipate human kind from this predicament. They insist that the task of eradicating social evils be entrusted to all 'men of good will'. But they are not totally consistent in their argument, as the humanists expect only a section of humanity to lead the rest to a better life. But they select even these pioneers, not on the basis of their economic function or material interests, but because of their superior quality of intelligence, good will, loving nature, kindness, etc.

Religious Humanism: Religious humanism is a movement developed from unitarianism and is best defined in Humanist Manifesto (1933): "Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious..." 21

There is no metaphysical motivation for ethical behaviour. Any way of life, as Christian humanists think, is based on human values; even future is not held out as a reward or a punishment for ethical behaviour.

T.S. Eliot pleads for a revival and restoration of religious faith relating contemporary living to the universal

experiences of man. His poetry is not a mere rendering of contemporary disillusionment. "It has a relevance not merely to the modern, peculiar, human situation, but also to the universal human predicament" (A.G.George).22

Eliot's view of life is first, existential, and secondly, religious. To him the word 'religion' signifies a particular kind of attitude towards life which is opposed to the secular. He uses the word to denote an attitude of passionate concern for man's spiritual destiny. The religious man need not be a Christian, he may even be an atheist. He becomes religious even if he gives earnest and sincere thought to religious matters. It is this concern with matters spiritual, as contrasted with the worldly and the secular, and not the adherence to any dogma, that makes a man truly religious. Secondly, religion for Eliot implies a faith in, 'the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life'. In this lies the essence of his religious attitude. This religious strain appears even in his earliest poems. He takes themes of a secular nature and satirizes man's materialism and his lack of concern for spiritual problems. In the volume entitled "Prufrock and Other Observations" (1917) the mode is that of a satirist. The evils of pre-occupation with

the material and the worldly, and the exclusion of the spiritual, are exposed and ridiculed. The satire and scorn of Eliot in his early poems indicates his contempt for the secular life and a leaning towards the religious one. The second volume entitled Poems 1920 contains decidedly Christian poems. 'The Hippopotamus' and 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' present satirical pictures of the degeneration of the Church and Christian theology.

"God works in a mysterious way -
The Church can sleep and feed at once".23

"Under the penitential gates
Sustained by staring Seraphim
Where the souls of the devout
Burn invisible and dim". (CP, p.58)

'Gerontion' is unmistakably a Christian poem. Its theme is the refusal of mankind, represented by Gerontion, to accept faith. This religious vision of life marks the poetry of Eliot. It grows more and more profound, direct and comprehensive, from the time of his confirmation into the Anglo-Catholic Church. Poems like 'Ash-Wednesday' and 'The Four Quartets' written after 1927 are Christian and religious in character. According to Eliot, the salvation of human soul means an approach to immortality, a progress toward God, the supernatural. And true religion implies not only dogma or

creed but a reorientation of life in relation to the supernatural. Man must make a choice, and that choice determines the quality of his life. In his poems, Eliot frequently exhorts us to 'choose' to decide and act, rather than waver and speculate as in 'Choruses' from 'The Rock': "I have given you power of choice, and you only alternate/ Between futile speculation and unconsidered action". (CP, p.446)

Frost's poetry is a blend of 'Christian humanism' and 'naturalism'. Naturalism maintained a moral and aesthetic code of conduct where Reason is replaced by Passion or Impulse. In Christian humanism, on the other hand, order, harmony, love and work are the guiding principles. But, in naturalism, man is limited to workaday and holiday values. In the humanistic world, all the excesses of passion and sentimentality disappear and reason controls passion and leads man ultimately to virtue. In Frostian corpus there is no clear demarcation between the two perceptions. In the concluding lines of 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' and 'Come In' the speakers are reminded of their promises and they act goaded by reason.

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep".24

Frost's poems of nature reflect his humanism. The poet time and again seems to suggest that basic human reality is not in Reason but in Passion or Impulse. As man is ensnared by the tempting scenes of nature he forgets his pledge. But he soon realizes his position as in 'Come In':

"But no, I was out for stars;
I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked,
And I hadn't been". (CPRF, p.446)

But in his early poem, 'The Vantage Point' Frost considers nature and mankind side by side. But the human aspect of nature makes him speak:

"If tired of trees I seek again mankind".
(CPRF, p.24)

Eliot accepts the purposive universe of traditional Christianity, and in that acceptance finds his themes - salvation and damnation, purgatorial and infernal suffering, perfection of the will, and acceptance of the meaningful past. Frost's conclusions are sometimes similar to those of Eliot. Like Prufrock, the woman in 'The Discovery of the Madeiras' cannot really bring herself to act, or to commit herself to her own insight. Like the speaker in 'Burnt Norton' the speaker in 'Directive' knows that the past, though real, is past; and so on.

"There is a house that is no more a house
Upon a farm that is no more a farm
And in a town that is no more a town".
(CPRF, p.520)
For Lowell, as for Eliot, the individual is imprisoned behind the walls of his own ego. Ugolino's famous speech in 'The Waste Land':

"I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison".25

is echoed by Lowell's recurrent prison images, although Lowell does not, like Eliot, blame modern man's isolation, restriction, and sense of confinement. He rather stresses man's loss of ethical values as well as the failure of society as a whole organism. 'In the Cage' describes Lowell's own prison term as a conscientious objector in "World War II":

"The lifers file into the hall.
. . . . . . . . . On the wall
A colored fairy tinkles blues
And titters by the balustrade;
Canaries beat their bars and scream".26

Traditionally humanists have affirmed the anthropocentric nature of truth, values, and religion. Their major focus has been on life in this world, the only life and only world of which they can be certain. So they must create a place fit for people. In contrast, the traditional Christians are

ambivalent toward this world, for having been admonished to have just been in it but not of this world. They are not certain whether suffering is a part of the divine plan, whether heaven or humans should attempt to alleviate it, or whether in the scheme of things the promise of a future in a spiritual realm is not more significant than life in the natural world. On these issues, the humanist does not experience such ambiguity and reluctance. A world with less suffering is better than the one with more. Suffering is evil and it should be reduced or eliminated if possible. The means to accomplish this are human intelligence and skill. Unless they are effective, suffering will continue.

Humanists take this life seriously, for they have great doubts about future. They believe that evil and suffering must be fought by humans in the absence of anything else to fight. Traditional Christians have an ambiguous view of this life. And hence, they tend to neglect it by preparing for the next. The liberation theologians appear to take a position between these two poles. They tend to take the present seriously without denying a future. They also believe that the dice of the universe are loaded in favour of support for the promotion of morality. Mason Olds has observed that: "Liberation either will or will not be brought about by human effort, for the evidence suggests the universe is indifferent to the existence of oppression. The application of human
intelligence and skill will determine whether the human enterprise will be saved or lost. Humans are their own messiahs; it is indeed time that they grew up and accepted this simple fact".27

Warren's metaphysical dimension of osmosis manifests itself in 'The Ballad of Billie Potts' reflecting the 'sacramental conception of the universe'. In his earlier 'Kentucky Mountain Farm' sequence Warren has identified the larger being as 'the spirit that moves and never sleeps 'in the tall, profound shadow of absolute deeps'. 'Perfect Adjustment', being 'at one with God' and knowing at last 'who you are' - such are the final rewards of Warren's osmosis, though its final price is the death of the conscious ego. "And the death of the self is the beginning of selfhood",28 R.P.W. has stated in Brother to Dragons. In 'The Ballad of Billie Potts' Warren has indicated this supremacy of the unconscious over the conscious self in a pair of memorable passages. The unconscious shapes the direction and meaning of life through its secret, intuitive knowledge:

"The bee knows, and the eel's cold ganglia burn, And the sad head lifting to the long return,


Through brumal deeps, in the great unsolsticed coil, 
Carries its knowledge, navigator without star...."29

Like these creatures, Billie crosses from the realm of conscious to unconscious direction in coming home to his father and thus to death and eternity ("homeland of no-Time") in the poem's closing synthesis.

Walt Whitman, the master of osmosis, prefaced his grand osmotic vision with the mystic experience that unified body and soul, like passionate lovers, in section 5 of Song of Myself, which might correlate with Warren's fusion of the bifurcated self in his 'undiscovered self' poetry. Whitman's osmosis, like Warren's, embraces creatures long dead as well as those of the present time: "In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones".30 And more strikingly, Whitman's metaphysics is at once with Warren's in seeing one's cobweb connections to the entirety of past and future time and in accepting the gift of death gracefully, as a welcome fulfilment or release into ultimate identity:

For it (my embryo) the nebula cohered to an orb, 
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul".31
(Song of Myself, stanza, 44)


31. Ibid., p.83-84.
Osmosis of being in various manifestations, is not a new idea. It obviously motivated Emerson's conception of Oversoul. An idea of osmosis underlines the biblical ethic of brotherhood, as preached by Jesus and Isaiah who foresee God embracing Israel and its worst enemies alike at one point, saying - Isaiah 19:25 - "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance".32 And it inspired as well the Hindu metaphysics of Atman (the soul), as seen in The Bhagavad Gita:

"I preside in the hearts of all: I am
The beginning, middle and end of all, that is".33

"Lastly, I am the ultimate seed of all
Creatures in cosmos: naught that is immobile
Or mobile, friend, can never exist without me".
(TBG, p.143)

"Suffice it that this universe
Is upheld by but a fraction of my self".
(TBG, p.144)

Through osmosis of being Warren fulfils Coleride's dictum that "Art is ... the mediatress between, and reconciler of, nature and man".34 Through it also Warren becomes a prime


33. Dilip Kumar Roy (ed.), The Bhagavad Gita, Hind Pocket Books, Delhi, 1976, p.143. In subsequent pages the title of the book is abbreviated as TBG.

exemplar of Wordsworth's definition of the poet, 'carrying everywhere with him relationship and love' where with to oppose the world's loss and fragmentation: "Inspite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs; and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time".35

Literary Humanism: Literary humanism, an intellectual movement started in 1910 in America, popularly known as 'New Humanism' was pronounced and propagated by Irving Babbit and Paul Elmer More. Stuart Sherman, Norman Foerster and the rest of their group later became known as 'The New Humanists'. They contended that man's free will is guided by intuition and he might strive for his own progress, and his community unhampered either by theological or scientific determinism. Thus, he has to fight against inhibitions of theological systems of the past as well as against the so-called modern mechanistic materialism. It is logical to say that these ideas of classical art and the philosophy of antiquity as human expressions of their convictions also constitute the cultural value system. Further, the New Humanists had also objected to the romanticism and

35. Ibid., p.233.
materialistic naturalism of the enlightenment, since both made men become irresponsible.

The 'New Humanism' sprang from the discontent of modern age. The New Humanists tried to remedy the social malady of the society through adequate perception and conception of the nature of man and man's relation to the universe. The 'New Humanism' created a kind of intellectual conservatism in the twentieth century in America. The 'New Humanists' were not popular in their own time. But their effort to restore the Western classical tradition in America provided a noteworthy voice of dissent to reconstruct modern life.

Humanism, as Babbit and More conceived it, was opposed to romanticism and naturalism. These two tendencies were viewed as potential threats to a sense of the social order. Romanticism placed the individual above society, without responsibility, while naturalism has debased the individual to the position of animals. Humanism offered instead, a broad spectrum of traditional values. As a former student of Babbit has recorded, "... it drew from sources as widely separated as the Aristotelian ethic and the Oriental religions, finding authority and sustenance wherever doctrines of moderation, the dignity of the human will, the sense of permanent values, a perception of dualistic order of existence were upheld, and maintaining steady opposition no
intemperance, materialistic determinism, relativism or nihilism, mystical monism, or any other ism that failed to see that man and things are forever twain".36

Foerster opined that: "In its broadest signification, it denotes a belief that the proper study of mankind is man, and that this study should enable mankind to perceive and realise its humanity ... Since man may be conceived as being on three planes, the natural, the human and the religious, the content of the middle term will frequently tend to be invaded by that of the extremes ... the word humanism should be confirmed to a working philosophy seeking to make a resolute distinction between man and nature and between man and the divine".37

T.S.Eliot in 'The Humanism of Irving Babbitt' (1928) and 'Second Thoughts about Humanism' (1929) attempts to refute the views of Babbitt and Foerster on this vital doctrine, 'humanism', pronouncing his own formulations about its nature and functions.


The first essay 'The Humanism of Irving Babbitt' (1928) states that at the centre of Babbitt's philosophy is the doctrine of humanism, and that Babbitt has put religion in conflict with humanitarianism and naturalism. However Eliot has contrary views about and contrasts humanism with religion. Eliot admits that all humanists have been individualists and intellectuals applying their critical reason to the problems of human life. He points out that Babbitt frequently mentions of the importance of 'the doctrine of self-control' and 'higher will', which render life into an act of faith. Babbitt also questions the existence of 'civilization', which can hardly endure without religion, and without church i.e., with Catholic Church. At the end of the essay, Eliot suggests that all the hopes of humanity cannot be placed on one institution, i.e., the Catholic Church, and that 'Humanism' is neither an alternative to religion nor is ancillary to it.

In the second essay, 'Second Thoughts About Humanism' (1929), Eliot concedes that in the past 'humanism' has been allied with religion, but asserts that in the future it can afford to ignore positive religion. Eliot apparently thinks that Foerster is right in recognizing the fact that humanism cannot accept 'a formal theology' or 'a romantic idealism' in defiance of reason and that unlike religion it 'assigns an important place to the instruments of both
science and art' but like religion, it holds 'the ethical will as a power above the ordinary self'. Foerster's humanism like religion, enjoins 'the virtue of humility' and Eliot comes down heavily upon him for this. Eliot remarks that "Mr. Foerster's humanism, in fact, is too ethical to be true", and defines 'Humanism' thus: "Humanism depends very heavily ... upon, the tergiversations of the word 'human' and in general, upon implying clear and distinct philosophic ideas which are not there". His main objection to the theory of Foerster springs from the humanist's use of the 'supernatural' he objected to. Eliot observes: "My objection is not to Humanism; but to Mr. Foerster for not being humanistic enough; and for playing the games of philosophy and theology without knowing the rules".

To Eliot, 'Humanism' does not provide dogmas or philosophical theories and is concerned less with 'reason' than with common sense, and operates against fanaticism. He has also observed that it does not refute anything, but only persuades according to its unformulable axioms of culture and good sense, and that 'humanism' is critical rather than constructive in socio-political terms of the existence of man. Though 'humanism' is concerned with the nature of

39. Ibid., p.485.
civilization, philosophy or religion, it is no substitute for either, and it has become popular with the so called "intellectural aristocrats" following a common culture. T.S. Eliot agrees with T.E. Hulme who believes in the perfection of man and nature and in his arguing that both Babbit and Foerster are nearer to the romantic view of Rousseau than the religious views.

While Babbitt maintained that 'humanism' was an idealistic belief in the goodness of human nature towards creating a sound society by means of rational discipline, Eliot is of the view that there would be no pure 'humanism' without religious discipline. Eliot is a highly sensitive person whose primary concern as a poet to shun 'the mores' of modern man and awaken him to that of certain human values to merge out of the engulfing morass of self-centredness and deep cultural, even moral and spiritual crises in which he is rolling today. He knew well that the old world order was changing past, and that the old European Renaissance had become a spent-up force. The mushroom growth of industries had ushered in an era of commercialism, colonialism and imperialism, eating into the vitals of simple human values like - love, justice, humility, tolerance, equilibrium, sanity, truth and beauty. Eliot was convinced that the present-day universal chaos could be got rid of only when we would evolve a fresh code of conduct for ourselves, based on tolerance, mutual trust and understanding.
The epoch-making poem 'The Waste Land' (1922) has denounced the atmosphere of destabilization and dehumanization. At its background is the horrible First World War and before it hoped for the reconstruction of a devastated human society:

"I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?"40

But social or even personal reconstruction is not possible until modern man earnestly receives the triple message of the thunder i.e., 'Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata' meaning 'Give, sympathize and control' and practises faithfully in his life. The term 'Datta' does not mean giving alms to the poor. It rather suggests giving oneself away at a time of emotional crisis when blood is shaking one's heart. In a man's life there are occasions when he has to throw away arguments and hesitations and yield to the dictates of his clamoring heart. This is the summmum bonum of human existence.

"The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed".41

In his essay on Baudelaire, Eliot has observed that: "So far as we are human what we do must be either evil or good; so


far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in
a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing; at least we
exist".42

This kind of 'giving' is essential to perpetrate
the human race, as passion or sex is the source of life.
Even the primitive communities understand the importance of
"the intercourse of the sexes as a means to ensure the fruit-
fulness of the earth".43 But since the sexual relationship
is considered to be fraught with "many a serious peril", some
primitive tribes have resorted to "abstinence" and "asctes-ti-
cism". In fact, Eliot has allowed only a very restricted use
of physical love and sex. That is why most of his protago-
nists - Prufrock, Gerontion, Tiresias, and the aged women in
"Portrait of a Lady" - do not indulge in fornication and
lustful acts, as they are afraid of disturbing the social
rhythm of the universe. The fourth movement of 'Little
Gidding' also confirms this. Here the poet cites the example
of Dame Julian of Norwich, the fourteenth century English
mystic, who after fifteen years of hard spiritual practice
came to realize that Love could redeem and elevate man.
Evidently man cannot help loving, but he has been granted a

43. Fraser, James George, The Golden Bough, Macmillan, Lon-
don, 1970, p.179.
choice between the two types of love - Self Love and Divine Love.

"The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre -
To be redeemed from fire by fire".44

And again:

"We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire".45

Man lives or dies through his own choice. The first 'fire' stands for human passion, while the second 'fire' for the Eternal Passion. Eliot means that the transcendent love of God is possible only by renouncing the love of the self. According to Helen Gardner the fires which "have flamed and glowed throughout the poem here break out and declare their nature".46

The second command of the Thunder - "Dayadhvam" hints at commendable virtues to be practiced by man, that is compassion and understanding. The modern man has everything - power, pelf, prosperity - but he awfully lacks compassion for his fellow-beings. The poet has actually given a clue to this when he cites the Count Ugolino from Dante's 'Inferno',

45. Ibid., p.221.
the Count who was thrown into the tower and locked up there, having no contact with the external world. The modern man has also become selfish and egotistic:

"... each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison".47

What Eliot suggests here is the fact that 'sympathy' with one's brethren enables one break the devilish barriers of self-exile and self-isolation.

The thunder, then, peals for the third time, instructing the gods directly, and modern men indirectly, to 'control' themselves - 'Damyatha'. This time the message of the Thunder underlines the necessity of regulating the heart so far given to 'blood' i.e., impulsive living and 'compassionlessness' both being linked up with the waterlessness of the Fisher King's land. The well-disciplined heart makes the human life go easy in the same way as the boat on the troubled sea, gliding smoothly and safely under the control of expert hands. A heart without discipline meets its calamitous end, but to the controlled heart even the natural elements yield place.

"The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

Self-control is unquestionably a trusted anchor in the otherwise raging sea of life. The sagacious counsel of the great Aryan myth is applicable to the entire humanity, for its range is universal. There are no demons and no Gods, despite the fact that the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad mentioned how gods, men and demons (devah, manusyah, and asurah) once approached their father-preceptor, Prajapati, for instructions to them after their formal education. Prajapati uttered the word "Da" to them thrice separately, exactly as the Thunder roars thrice in 'The Waste Land'. No doubt the message of the thunder has been given an excellent human touch, since it is the man who combines in himself all the three properties angelic, human and demonic. In short, the practice of the three commendable virtues by man will, according to Prof. S.Radhakrishnan, "preserve, promote and enhance the values of life". Commenting on the Upanishadic message, the great philosopher Sankara says, "... there are no gods or demons other than men". Thus, in telescoping the three-fold path of deliverance from the tortures of earthly existence into the message of the 'THUNDER', Eliot

48. Ibid., p.79.
50. Ibid., p.290.
has wonderfully utilized the Upanishadic setting for the welfare of mankind and rendered it thoroughly human and humane.

The ultimate goal of a man's life is the attainment of peace of mind. The poet has remarkably suggested it by ending 'The Waste Land' with "Shantih Shantih Shantih". The triple "Amen" of the Christian word is comparable to it, and Eliot notes that it is 'a formal ending to an Upanishad', and that is equivalent to 'The Peace which passeth understanding'. The term suggests a state of mind attained after a complete resolution of all anxieties, disturbances and sorrows. The repetition is deliberate in order to indicate the three-dimensional peace - internal (daihik), divine (daivik) and physical (bhautik) - which has been the vision of the poets through the age for the all-round progress and prosperity of man.

Existential Humanism: "Existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine, also which affirms that every truth and every action imply both an environment and a human subjectivity".51

Existentialism preaches that the glory of the free individual lies in rebelling against the tragic human

condition, even though defeat is inevitable. A major voice in existentialism that has deeply affected the recent critical theory is, that of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), whose monumental but seemingly contrary writings on 'Dasein' (existence), time, death, and poetic language profoundly influenced structuralistic and deconstructive criticism in France and later in the United States. "Dasein exists as an entity for which", says Heidegger, "in its Being, that Being is itself an issue".52 Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) echoed Heidegger: "I am the being which is in such a way that in its being its being in question".53

William Barrett, a philosopher associated with the Partisan Review, played a leading role in importing existentialism into American culture, especially into the ranks of the closely connected group called the New York Intellectuals, of which he was a member. Another member of this group, Lionel Trilling, was a major theorist of modernism who found it to be an existential crisis of tragic self-knowledge. The existentialist contends that one has existence before one becomes an 'existent' or individual. Self-realization means resisting the assumptions of ready-made essences and constantly forcing one's self beyond lassitude and into a

53. Ibid., p.290.
'project' of action that makes one's time his own. Identity is not a thing to be seized; it is the process of becoming, and does not arrive so much as it keeps sending itself into the future. The existentialist lives for the future in the instants of the present, taking charge of every instant to keep becoming.

Humanism places humanity, rather than God or nature, in the center of consideration and makes the lot and destiny of our species on earth its prime concern. The materialist Feuerbach expressed the priorities saying: "My doctrine or view can therefore be summed up in two words: 'nature' and 'man'. The being which, in my thinking, man presupposes, the being which is the 'cause' or 'ground' of man, to which he owes his origin and existence, is 'not God' - a mystical, indeterminate, ambiguous word - but 'nature', a clear, sensuous, unambiguous word and thing. And the being in whom nature has become personal, conscious and rational is man. To my mind, unconscious nature is the eternal, uncreated being - first, that is, in time but not in rank, 'physically' but not morally; man with his consciousness second in time but in rank the first".54

The twentieth century existentialists have made the senselessness of human life the cornerstone of their creed. They proceed from the premise that there is no objective basis for discerning any meaningful direction to human development. They distrust both natural and social science and disparage their findings as guide to life. G.E. Moore, the parochial Cambridge philosopher, asserted in *Principia Ethica* that the most valuable experiences of a human being are the pleasures of friendship and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. A conception of the highest good that does not go beyond personal affection and aesthetic delights, does not equip humanity for the more pressing tasks of changing the world. The central meaning of life at the present stage is to remove all the fetters imposed by class society upon the free and fair development of humanity and thereby to rationalize human relations so that all people can be friends and create as well as enjoy things of beauty.

T.S. Eliot is one of those great figures of the age who have realised the seriousness of the inner or spiritual crisis, and whose works offer a view of life, a philosophical or religious synthesis to the agonized soul of tortured humanity. Eliot's view of life is, frankly existential. "Existentialism is a philosophy of crises", and its most

powerful modern advocate is Soren Kierkegaard. Existentialism considers human life in relation to its unavoidable destiny, sickness, suffering, misfortune, and death; the crises resulting not from some peculiar vicious economical or social environment, but from the very nature of human life. Eliot's poetry abounds in the imagery of sickness, disease and death, as he strongly believes that human life is basically diseased and disorganized. In 'East Coker' he says:

"Our only health is the disease
If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse".56

'The Waste Land' is imbued through and through with the fear of death. According to Cleanth Brooks, its theme is life-in-death, the living death of modern wastelanders. Man has lost his passion, i.e., his faith in God and religion resulting in the loss of vitality - both spiritual and emotional. According to Eliot's philosophy, in so far as we are human beings we must act and do either evil or good, and it is better to do evil than to do nothing. Modern man has lost his sense of good and evil, and this keeps him from being alive, from acting. In the modern desolate land the people are dead; they merely exist like dead things. As Stephen

Spender has pointed out, they are to be compared to such dead things as a stick, a gutter, a pipe etc. At the most, theirs, is a life-in-death, a life of complete inactivity, listlessness and apathy. That is why winter is welcome to them, and April is the cruelest of months, for it reminds them of the stirrings of life and, they dislike to be roused from their death-in-life.

'The Waste Land' reflects the contemporary spirit in its totality. Its anxiety, its despair, its neurosis, its boredom and mental vacuity have all been brought out. In the contemporary waste land there is corruption and sexual degeneration at all levels. The title 'A game of Chess' suggests that sex has become a matter of intrigue, a matter of moves and counter-moves, a source of momentary pleasure, a sordid game of seduction and exploitation of the innocent. There is the fashionable society woman, who despite all her pomp and show, despite all the luxury with which she is surrounded, is bored and fed up with the meaningless routine of her life and consequently becomes a neurotic and hysterical. Her love, too, suffers from mental vacuity and is unable to keep up even small conversation. To her repeated and imperative,

What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? I never know what you are thinking. Think",
(CP, p.67)

he replies,
"I think we are in rat's alley
Where the dead men lost their bones", (CP p.67)

thus expressing the utter anarchy, futility and chaos of values in the modern world. Life is like a dead alley, leading nowhere, and it is full of dead things—dead spiritually and emotionally. An Cleanth Brooks points out, even death in the desolate land of today does not lead to regeneration. Life has become a meaningless routine,

"The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four"(CP p.67)

Their sex-relation, too, is a meaningless routine, a mere mechanical relationship bringing them no satisfaction.

The theme of death pervades in the poetry of Lowell and Plath. Lowell describes the death of his parents in detail in '91 Revere Street'. In Plath, love and death form part of the same reality. In 'Two Views of a Cadaver Room', Plath describes the decayed dead bodies. In 'The Colossus' the gigantic statue in ruins is her own fathers' dead body. In the later poems shecourts death, narrates her attempts at committing suicide and she returns again to the theme of death, in her attempt to make sense of her disintegrating world. Further, the theme of guilt adds to the existential vision that they try to project. Plath felt responsible for her father's death as he died at a time when her mind was psychologically most involved with her
father-figure and the consequent feeling of guilt resulting from the fear of incest. Lowell's sense of inadequacy derives from his father's failure to cope with the demands of the material reality.

In one of the poems that Mrs. Plath has reproduced in her Introduction to the volume of letters Sylvia Plath wrote:

"I write only because
There is a voice within me
That will not be still".57

The lines are not merely a romantic assertion but a candid declaration of her own credo.

In her first volume of poems death is both near and remote. Its presence can be sensed in every pulsating beat of her poems but keeping through the dark stillness of her sombre thought there is a rapturous innocence. There is exquisite wonderment in the sights, sounds, and a sense of joy life offers though tragic sometime hemmed in by the more sinister aspects of the mind's landscape. In 'Faun' for instance or in 'Lorelei' there is a certain wistfulness that gives to the poems their freshness and vitality. There is urgency and eagerness in the lines:

"I would get from these dry-papped stones
The milk your love instilled in them.
The black ducks dive.
And though your graciousness might stream,
And I contrive,
Grandmother, stones are nothing of home
To that pumiest dove.
Against both bar and tower the black sea runs". 58

Existentialism is a form of Humanism. Plath's vision is existential and nihilistic. Her poetry addresses itself to a basic schism in the nature of experience. In her poetry reality and imagination, love and hate, autonomy and dependence, nature and self interact with each other to produce a poetry of continuous becoming. Her poetry becomes intelligible in terms of existential vocabulary underlying the psychological and existential components in the dialectics of confession that makes such a dual approach possible. Plath's use of her own life in her poetry is an effort to bring together the divergent aspects of her experiences. Confession for her takes the form of a unifying principle that carries a personal validity. In the poems of The Colossus it is latent in the psychological images.

"Scaling little ladders with gluepots
and pails of Lysol
I crawl like an ant in mourning
Over the weedy acres of your brow
To mend the immense skull-plates and clear
The bald, white tu-muli of your eyes. (CP, p.129)

This is not to deny that death somehow is a closer reality in Sylvia Plath's poetry than love, although death itself has two faces as described in 'Death & Co'. (Ariel) : fearful and loving. The fearful aspect of death is described in such poems as 'All the Dead Dears' (The Colossus), 'Poems for a Birthday' (The Colossus) and 'Elm' (Ariel). But while death is fearful it also has the power to unite the dying with the dead and in 'Daddy' (Ariel) the poet hopes to be united with her father in death:

"I was ten when they buried you. 
At twenty I tried to die 
And get back, back, back to you,
I thought even the bones would do". (CP, p.224)

American humanism as envisaged by Howard Mumford Jones conveys that people in America became more self-conscious and aware of human dignity, rights, liberty and fraternity, pursuing real happiness. In the words of Howard Mumford Jones the new republic of the United States became "the best single gateway... to the manifold hopes than stirring the minds of men and reason and justice could be substituted for authority and superstition in guiding human affairs".59

There is a great deal in the American tradition that is fundamentally humanistic in character. America's belief in democracy and progress, its buoyant optimism and

idealism, its relevance on science and invention, all fit into the Humanistic pattern. Current humanism reaffirms the spirit of cosmopolitanism, of international friendship and essential brotherhood of man. The cosmopolitan outlook of this profoundly democratic and militant humanism was best exemplified in the life and work of Tom Paine, Franklin's protege, who proudly proclaimed: "The world is my country and to do good is my religion".

Robert Frost, a New Englander, a typical American poet as 'the essential voice and spirit of the area', is greatly concerned with the common American and American life. Most of his poems have a direct bearing on the New England situation, its people and beliefs, its failures and successes also as revealed in 'The Gift Outright'. As observed by W.G. O'Donnell, Frost "decided to give his writing a local habitation and a New England name, to root his art in the soil that he had worked with his own hands for a decade before his sojourn in England".60

Like Whitman, Frost is also a poet of democracy and is profoundly interested in brotherhood and fellowship. But the approach is different. Whitman felt that mere affirmation of universal fellowship was not enough. Frost had

also taken up the theme of alienation, man's isolation from his fellow-man. In 'Mending Wall' the old fashioned farmer refuses to deviate from the assertion: "Good fences make good neighbours".61

Like Whitman, Frost was also patriotic though he had expressed his patriotism in more subdued tones than Whitman's loud trumpeting of national sentiments. 'The Gift Outright' expresses ideas of love of one's country and the surrender of the self for the country.

"Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living.
And forthwith found salvation in surrender".
(CPRF, p.467)

In politics Frost was for unrestrained laissez faire system as pronounced in 'Build Soil':

"I'd let things take their course
And then I'd claim the credit for the outcome".
(CPRF, p.425)

Frost truly said of himself, "I am not a regionalist. I am a realmist. I write about realms of democracy and realms of spirit".62


G.R. Elliott observes:

"His work is the poetry of true neighbourliness emergent from Romantic humanitarianism".63

In 'Anatomy of Monotony' Wallace Stevens speaks of how we are comforted on our mortal earth by the presence of other human bodies.

"Other bodies come,
Twinning over phantasy and our device
And apt in versatile motion, touch and sound
To make the body covetous in desire
Of the still finer, more implacable chords".64

Humanism has finally emerged as a profound philosophy of mankind. Corliss Lamont says: "Humanism believes in the beauty of love and the love of beauty. It exults in the pure magnificence of external Nature. All the manysided possibilities for good in human living the Humanist would weave into a sustained pattern of happiness under the guidance of reason".65