Chapter V

Conclusion

Stories of Truth

Viewed holistically, David Mamet’s plays are stories of anguished souls yearning for truth in a lie-ridden world. In a metaphysical perspective, they are also stories of Truth which, as an attribute of the Whole, always prevails over lies. Mamet's plays present the inner discord of the fragmented American psyche which, cut off from its metaphysical and spiritual roots, unconsciously strives to reunite with the Whole. Situating his characters in different milieus, Mamet dramatizes the paranoia, the aphasia and the moral illnesses to which Americans have succumbed in the world of lies which they themselves create, drained of faith in God and truth in themselves. Devoid of the ethical principles of integrity and mutual trust that should sustain them, all their relationships—social and interpersonal—collapse. The victims of this world of deceptions or betrayals invariably resort to violence or crime out of frustration. Mamet portrays this pervasive ethical chaos of American society as the outcome of the spiritual chaos caused by their deracination from their cosmic source, God.

Amoral Forces in a Spiritual Wasteland

The interrelationships between God, Nature and Humanity that Mamet envisions are closely related to the Stoic philosophy of living “in accordance with nature”—a philosophy whose value is suggested through its absence in American culture. The characters of Mamet’s plays are urban Americans who, estranged from their own spiritual nature, desperately search for their ontological connections. Mamet’s plays mostly centre on the sordid spaces of urban America—offices, junkshops, singles bars, fast food restaurants,
whorehouses and so on—with a view to bringing home the extent to which they have strayed away from their earlier metaphysical relationships with Nature. They urge the postmodern Americans to take an inward look at the tragedy of their inner spirit—their self-alienation.

At the heart of Mamet’s moral vision is the interrelationship between ethics and metaphysics. Human relationships degenerate and disintegrate when the human soul is denied by an entire culture and when, devoid of spirituality, purely materialistic concerns govern a nation’s psyche. In their essence, Mamet’s plays attribute the loss of human values in American society to three obsessive amoral forces that alienate urbanites from their fundamentally spiritual nature: corporate greed, loveless sex, and oppressive, self-blinding power. These are destructive forces inasmuch as they strike at the root of the spiritual powers that help construct vital relationships—between man and man, between man and woman, and between humans and God—which alone can bring the human soul the happiness and peace it needs. The decadence caused by the loss of compassion, love, truth, unity, etc.—the inner attributes of the human spirit—leads to all forms of delusion, deception and violence that end up either in psychic disorder or in death. In short, the spiritual attrition of a whole society makes sane, healthy interrelationships impossible.

Corporate Greed and Spiritual Alienation

The foremost cause of moral turpitude in American society is corporate greed. Corporate business permits every form of unethical practice and forces the competitors in the rat race to ensure their survival at the expense of interpersonal relationships and social harmony. It is a tyrannical system in which, for pecuniary gain, loyalties and friendships can be broken; the trust
reposed in men and women can be betrayed; rivals can be killed; worthless commodities can be foisted on gullible customers at exorbitant prices; human bodies can be exploited and pornography and voyeurism can be globalized through the television and the Net. On the whole, it is a system that grants everyone the freedom to make a travesty of all the ideals on which the country is “founded”—democracy, liberty, equality, progress, success etc. Corporate greed is the formidable force that permeates through every aspect of American social life,, robs people of their integrity, and dissociates them from their own nature.

**Harmful Consumerism**

Closely related to the soul-killing cupidity is the consumerism—the commodity fetishism—engendered and promoted by the corporate world, which Mamet views as a detrimental force of self-alienation. The great damage caused to the human body and the mind by the artificial sensations of urban consumer commodities—cigarettes, coffee, alcohol, drugs etc.—is one of Mamet’s serious concerns about postmodern civilized life, which is perceptible from his frequent references to them throughout his dramatic work. In *The Woods*, as the lovers discuss the natural appetites and tastes, Nick asks Ruth: “What about cigarettes?” Ruth answers: “They are bad for you,” and supplements it with her reason for thinking so: “Why do we smoke them? [. . .] We fall away from ourselves. We grow fat. We fall away . . .” (10-11). This idea that smoking is a habit cultivated by urbanites to counter their sense of self-alienation and as a relief from stress occurs in *Lakeboat, Reunion, and The Old Neighborhood*. In “Deeny,” the third scene in *The Old Neighborhood*, Bobby’s former lover muses at length on the detrimental effects of coffee and
cigarettes on the natural human “properties.” The tragic aspect of her sensible observations, however, is that she is too weak-willed to break her habits, despite her knowledge of the harms these stimulants cause:

And I had a vision of coffee. [. . .] I thought that the unfortunate thing about it was that it closed us off. And that coffee ... or cigarettes tended to .. paralyze . . . natural functions, you see, in that the one, with the digestion, or the other, with the lungs, cut down our abilities ... to use the world, I think—those things of the world we would take in: food, or air, you know, and use them. Perhaps. So we say “It’s too much.” I had a vision of a frosty morning. Myself with a cigarette. And with a cup of coffee.

Smoking. (ON 60)

The evils of alcoholism and drug addiction are two minor themes that recur in Mamet’s early plays. Lakeboat has an exclusive scene entitled “Drinking” (Scene 3) in which Joe and Stan discuss the physical and psychological havoc the habit wreaks on the addicts. Stan tells Joe how wine dehydrates the body and how water, taken the next morning, activates the alcohol. The hangover lingers, and he cannot even talk or “think straight” till he sobers. Joe says his father was killed by this addiction. The “moral” of the entire dialogue, which comes as a subtext, is that drinking weakens the human will. To conceal the fact that they are slaves to this inextricable habit, the workmen don the mask of manliness on themselves. Stan says: “It’s a man’s thing, drinking. A curse and an elevation. Makes you an angel. A booze ridden angel” (30). In Reunion, Bernie’s addiction to alcoholism costs him both stability in his ever-changing jobs and the emotional intimacies of his family and his brother’s. The play delineates how he was divorced, lost his license, his
jobs, and a meaningful life—all because of the temptation to be lost to himself. He lives a life of dissipation throughout—having been an “Ex-alcoholic, Ex-this, Ex-that” (12)—until he turns a cynic ultimately and until the Alcoholics Anonymous bring him round to himself. Like alcoholism, the havoc of drug addiction on the human mind is depicted through the character of Bob in American Buffalo. The ex-junkie has fallen away from himself. He cannot remember to bring coffee or even his own breakfast from the restaurant; he forgets the name of the hospital where Fletch has been admitted; and with his wavering answers about the buffalo coin he has brought at night he provokes suspicion and anger in Teach and brings injury upon himself. The aphasia and lethargy wrought by drug addiction still lingers on an otherwise naive “kid.”

Self-BHimding American Dream

Entrepreneurial capitalism, with its concomitance of materialism, is a formidable phenomenon that despiritualizes American society. As a politico-economic system that exploits the whole national psyche to conform to the materialistic interests of self-centred capitalists, it corrupts morals profoundly and blinds individuals to their true inner reality. Of course, Mamet’s is not the only voice of the human spirit that cries against the devastating effects of capitalism and materialism. The voices have been heard all over Europe and America since the initial stages of industrialism. Henry David Thoreau, for instance, wrote in the second chapter of his Walden (1854) about the spiritual regression occurring in a nation that was hell-bent on commercial and economic progress:

[America] lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a
telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not. But whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. [. . .] We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly run over them. (143)

It is a picturesque description of the internal death of the American psyche as obsessive commercial and economic concerns overwhelm it. Mamet’s concern for the inner death of Americans is akin to Thoreau’s. In his spiritual vision the one true God of the universe has been substituted in the postmodern age by the several false gods of commercial civilization—security, equal opportunity, success, fame, wealth, progress, globalization, and so on—all of which are bubbles blown large by capitalist magnates until, pricked by the thorns of real life, they burst. If free enterprise is “people taking care of themselves” without any moral or ethical principles to guide them, then what issues out of it is a dangerously disintegrated society in which individuals and communities have their self-interest foremost in their mind and are driven to thrive at the expense of each other. The dichotomy between self-centred individual “enterprise” and social responsibility widens forever, making resolutions impossible. This is the keynote of Mamet’s business plays. As Matthew C. Roudane says in his essay on David Mamet:

Throughout his theater, Mamet presents a dialectic that, on the one hand, recognizes the individual’s right to pursue vigorously entrepreneurial interests, but that, on the other, acknowledges that in an ideal world, such private interests should, but do not, exist
in equipoise with a civic sense and moral duty. This underlying tension produces in Mamet’s protagonists divided loyalties. Such tension also gives his theatre its particular unity of vision and ambivalent intensity. (“David Mamet” 1562)

*The Water Engine* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, two of Mamet’s business plays, strip the entrepreneurial system of its lies by bringing to the stage the threats which the victims are faced with as they attempt to adhere to its principles of hard work and success. In *The Water Engine* the sinister Chainletter Voice symbolically epitomizes the rules that govern the corporate world: protection if one serves its interests, and death if one does not:

CHAINLETTER (voice over): Pass this letter on to three friends. Happiness and health will be yours. One man in Montana received upwards of six thousand dollars. General Burchard in the Philippines received eleven thousand dollars but he lost his life because he broke the chain. (8)

The gods of the corporate world demand “trust” in them (a corruption of “faith”), for “all civilization stands on trust” (WE 61). But they betray the trust reposed in them by refusing to patent the water engine and suppressing it. By murdering the inventor of the engine and his sister, they reveal their true image as “savages” and “animals.” If in *The Water Engine* the business magnates employ their henchmen to murder the non-adherents, in *Glengarry Glen Ross* Mitch and Murray drive four salesmen to engage themselves in a rat-race for success and survival at the expense of their soul. The dishonesty and deceptions the corporate world encourages in their salesmen, the play suggests as a moral, are liable to deteriorate into criminal thought and boomerang against the mentors themselves. Levene and Moss turn their “skills” against
their employers by the same logic applied to the customers. If it is professionally correct to sacrifice all moral values like loyalty and honesty to ensure corporate business, then it is correct to do the same to the system itself to ensure one’s survival. As in *American Buffalo*, the keynote of *Glengarry Glen Ross* is the corruptive influence of the degenerate business ethic that encourages all sorts of betrayals to promote the self-interest of the capitalists. Equality of opportunity, fabulous riches, reward to everyone for hard work—all are lies in the business world which, within its amoral framework, forbids the employees to be honest to themselves in word and deed.

**Sexual Fantasies of Men and Women**

The spiritual alienation that occurs in the wake of commodity fetishism and the cut-throat competitions for success extends into the domain of human sexuality. Feelings of masculinity and femininity are not intuited by American men and women within themselves, but are determined by their paradigms glorified in the media. As men labour under illusions of their sexual potency and power over women, which they never experience in reality, the latter see their own sexual charm—mostly enhanced artificially by shampoos, derivatives and bodycare products—as the means of exercising their own power over men, especially those enjoying positions of power and prosperity.

The tragic outcome of imbibing such false ideas of heterosexual relationships is the mutual alienation of the sexes characterized by paranoiac fear, insecurity and mistrust. The sexes in cosmopolitan cities find themselves in a predator-prey relationship that eternally sets them at odds with each other. Neither men nor women are capable of forming stable relationships with each other since, devoid of emotional intimacy and harmony, they are frustrated by
the lie of passionate carnality that drains off in no time and leaves them in an emotional vacuum. In an essay titled “Men and Women,” Mamet satirically observes how, instead of acknowledging the truth of their incapacity for inner virtues like kindness and courtesy which could help build lasting relationships, both the sexes often find some excuse or other for changing their partners:

[N]othing, not birth or parenthood, neither wisdom nor age, will debar us as participants in the drama of sex. We will claim until death at the very least the honorific right of search for bliss. Why with one rather than another? The figure or the face. Their intellect, or wit, or this-or-that—we fall inevitably back upon “a certain, indisputable something” proclaiming them the one. [. . .]

But through much of it we have no goal, only desire for a state—that state that would amalgamate the thrill of the hunt with the torpor of perfect repletion. What a laugh. (34-35)

The “goal” that transcends “the torpor of perfect repletion” is the lovers’ emotional harmony that brings peace, which in turn extends to the social responsibilities they are entrusted with. Where this higher goal is unfulfilled, or not even contemplated, sexual relationships lie purely on the animal level—Mamet’s phrase “the thrill of the hunt” is significant—and worse than that, they degenerate into fantasies about the physical features of the lovers. In Sexual Perversity in Chicago Bernie is incapable of ever experiencing true sexual relationships with women, and so, takes recourse to grandiose fantasies about his sexual potentialities. Fred in Lakeboat also betrays this tendency to macho posturing when he narrates to Dale his juvenile sexual escapades. Bernie and Fred try to inject into their proteges the myth that there is nothing more to sex than the carnal conquest of women. But it is not long before their
lies are dispelled by the truths about their destinies. Bernie bewails the spiritual sterility that torments him as he, ogling the girls on the beach, broods over his destiny—“the fruition of a pain-laden stay on earth” (63). Fred is married to his second wife and cannot even remember whether he has a kid or “kids” by his first wife whom he has divorced. The failure of his marriage implies the failure of his masculinity myth.

**Sex as a Commodity**

The worst psychic disaster that has struck the denizens of American culture is their conceptual transformation into consumer goods. Prolonged commodity marketing in society has gradually instilled in them a sense of their own exchange value that can be determined by the powers and skills they possess. In a nation where commercial values override all other values, the salability of sexuality—especially female—is immense. In a television review of a report on “American Porn” in *Hustler Magazine* in February 2002, Caryn James brought out the nexus between pornography and the corporate world, and the moral degradation of young women ready for “sale.”

As its title [“Frontline: American Porn”] suggests, the report reveals how widely pornography has crept into American life: it looks at pornography’s capitalist moghuls, its young women dreaming of money and a sleazy kind of fame, the political factions engaged in a tug of war. (James, “Assessing Pornography”)

It is understandable why Mamet, an ethicist keenly aware of the deepening moral degradation in American society, dramatizes a temporary female secretary as willing to sell herself to the new Head of Production in
Hollywood to buy his power to greenlight a film. The ambivalence of Karen’s character in *Speed-the-Plow* has baffled critics, and the portrayal of the moral depravity of women in the commercial world represented by Karen has especially angered feminist critics. They take Mamet to task for his “misogynistic” presentation of women, but what they seem to refuse to acknowledge is that the readiness to be physically exploited by the commercial world for quick money and “fame” is sheer self-degradation. If uncontrollable global “trafficking” leads women into the pornographic world of the Net and Television, the *free* woman becomes a larger contributory factor to this world by allowing herself to be exploited by corporate moghuls for money and a “sleazy kind of fame.” And that, perhaps, in Mamet’s view, is most degrading. He satirizes the pervasive amoral attitude of Hollywood actresses by portraying Claire, in his film *State and Main*, as willing to bare her chest for an additional 800,000 dollars. The same amoral attitude is presented in *Speed-the-Plow* in his depiction of Karen, the temporary secretary in a Hollywood studio.

The ambivalence about Karen’s role in *Speed-the-Plow* does not, if one takes a close look at the dramatic action, concern her moral depravity, which the corporate world has largely taken for granted. It concerns, rather, the problem of filming a serious, philosophical script for people to see at the risk of millions of dollars. As for Karen, it is Charlie Fox, the true and loyal friend of Bobby, who strips her of her philosophical pretences and shows her in her true colours. In extreme frustration and indignation at Karen’s betrayal of their friendship, Fox fulminates against Bobby’s sudden transformation:

*This broad just took you down.* [..] Why does she come to you?

‘Cause you are so good looking? She *wants* something from you.

You’re nothing to her but what you can *do* for her. [..] Can she

To greenlight a film. To greenlight some bizarre idea. (72)

Fox’s casual remark about “Hearth and Home” significantly suggests the true, emotional relationship that ought to exist between men and women—exactly what has been endangered in and eliminated from American society: the relationship that forms a family, with children bom of conjugal love. The truth about the relationship between Bobby Gould and Karen, as Fox sees it, is their mutual exploitation—Bobby willing to yield his power for her sex, and Karen yielding her sex for power over him. It is this social realism—that only exchange value counts in the corruptive business of Hollywood—which Mamet brings to the stage. The debasement of human morals in a world obsessed with pecuniary interests is a moral note that rings throughout Mamet’s drama.

**Pernicious Singles**

The paranoia the sexes develop between themselves, and their distrust and fear of the failed institution of marriage, turn them into homosexuals and lesbians. They spend their heavy, lonely hours in singles bars (the milieu of *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*), looking for sexual connections with the opposite sex but at the same time avoiding stable relationships with them, which they fear would deprive them of their freedom. Some statistics presented in *New York Times* in 2002 revealed the ambivalence that characterized American singles’ attitude to sexual relationships. A Census Bureau Report on the women population in America in 2002 said, according to Phoebe Hoban of *New York Times*, that “single women over the age of 15 now represent 48 percent of the female population” (Hoban). Hoban observed that Ms. Marian
Botsford Frazer, author of the book titled *Solitaire: The Intimate Lives of Single Women*, had captured the single women’s psyche exactly as she said: “I think people want the freedom, the autonomy, the independence and at the same time the greater security of being single, but they also want to be in relationships. No matter how well you put your life together, it’s still nice to have sex now and then” (qtd. in Hoban). “It’s a lot easier to justify the life of a single woman now than it was,” Ms. Fraser wrote, “because people have sexual freedom, they have economic freedom, they can get a mortgage and they have high-powered jobs,” but she added: “it’s still not really cool to be single” (qtd. in Hoban).

Another book written in a similar vein, Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl*, “[told] the unmarried girl how to be irresistibly, irrepressibly, confidently, enviably single” (Hoban). What came out of such writers’ apology for the single women, ultimately, was that they led barren, unhappy lives—the consequence of denying themselves healthy and lasting heterosexual relationships. As Hoban rightly commented: “In an effort to validate the lives of single women, the accomplished women who have written about them perpetuate the image of their situation as a plight rather than a prerogative, the lack of a lifestyle rather than a lifestyle (and, given the compelling statistics, not even an alternative lifestyle)” (Hoban).

The reports on single women generally reveal the bleak reality about the increasing estrangement between men and women in American society. And it is precisely this social catastrophe that Mamet portrays with a moral concern in *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. Mamet outlines the entire gamut of perverse sexual relations—homosexuality, lesbianism, child abuse, voyeurism, sodomy, and so on—not merely as representative of a sexually degenerate culture but
chiefly as a diabolic force that tends to destroy the natural heterosexual relationships of others. Bernie’s homosexuality and Joan’s lesbianism in Sexual Perversity in Chicago are presented as a pair of hostile forces to which Danny and Deborah, after their brief attempt to form a “normal” relationship, fall victims. The final scenes of the play certainly do not celebrate the triumphs of male and female “bonding”; instead, they bring out the distances widening between the sexes as the possibilities of normal, emotionally intimate sex elude them. Denying themselves any “normal” committed relationship for fear of losing their individual security, the estranged sexes cause social insecurity at the widest level—as these “singles” largely generate most of the sex-related diseases and crimes. The “pluralism” granted to sexual relationships in the name of “freedom of the individual,” even as it replicates “male bonding” and “female bonding” and proliferates into gay and lesbian societies, impairs the moral health of the American society as a whole.

Ambiguous Male-Bonding

As a moralist Mamet disapproves of the homosexuality practiced in the name of “male bonding.” He is averse to collocating the modifier “male” with “bonding.” Even though he loves men’s company immensely, it is for other healthy activities than those suggested by the “odious phrase.” He is unambiguously critical of “male bonding” in an essay titled “In the Company of Men”:

What is “bonding”? It means this: it means the tentative and somewhat ludicrous Teachings towards each other of individuals who are neither prepared to stand on their own emotional feet, nor ready, for whatever reasons, to avow their homosexuality.
And if I’m lying, I’m flying. “Male bonding” is an odious phrase meant to describe an odious activity. (*Some Freaks* 19)

The erosion of the distinctions between male and female sexuality perturbs Mamet’s moral sense profoundly. He depicts “faggots” in despicable images as child abusers (SPIC), and cocksuckers (ED). In *The Old Neighborhood* the fact that “Howie turned out to be a fag” causes concern in Joey. Mamet almost considers the same-sex “bondings” as a desecration of God’s or Nature’s precious gift to men and women, for it is through heterosexual relations that human societies can form the nucleus of a progressive social evolution—the family. The plays regretfully suggest that too many “broken homes” and skepticism about marital relationships in American society have fragmented the male and female psyche and driven them to evolve their own bizarre sexual mores and societies.

Mamet’s moral views on homosexuality can be regarded as the cultural voice of the nation if one considers the stout resistance most of Americans have exhibited about this burning national issue. Katharine Q. Seelye and Janet Elder reported in *The New York Times* in 2003 that the majority of Americans strongly supported the ban on gay marriage: “Even in an age when gay couples are routinely portrayed on television and constitute a prosperous demographic that advertisers have been overtly appealing to, the Times/CBS News poll found the country still sharply divided over homosexuality” (Seelye). The sharp division over the ban, significantly, was based on how the respondents viewed the institution of marriage—whether as a religious matter or as a legal one. As the reporters commented:

> Attitudes on the subject seem to be inextricably linked to how people view marriage itself. For a majority of Americans—53
percent—marriage is largely a religious matter. Seventy-one percent of those people oppose gay marriage. Similarly, 33 percent of Americans say marriage is largely a legal matter and a majority of those people—55 percent—say they support gay marriage. (Seelye)

Mamet’s lament over the loss of religious faith gains in import if one understands that the moral degeneration exemplified by the support for gay marriage is in direct proportion to the rejection of the religious value of marriage. It is not for nothing that Mamet characters often stress the need to go to churches or synagogues to strengthen their conjugal and familial bonds.

Need for Familial Relationships Underscored

The need for “natural” family-oriented sexual relationships as the basis for forming healthy, harmonious families is a subtext that pervades Mamet’s oeuvre. But this need is suggested in the plays themselves by the absence of healthy, and stable, heterosexual relationships in the society. Three family-oriented plays—Reunion, The Cryptogram and Jolly in The Old Neighborhood—bring out the domestic disasters caused by fickle sexual relationships between men and women, focusing the attention chiefly on the psychological ruin they bring on their progeny. In the first of these plays Carol, Bernie’s daughter, despairs over being the child of a broken home. “Everyone’s divorced. Every kid on the block’s got three sets of parents” (29), she observes with agony, which suggests the shrieking failure of the American family as a social institution. Mamet’s plays emphasize that sexual and emotional incompatibility, leading to betrayals of spouses who abandon their families in search of their own fulfilment, plays a major role in the domestic
disintegration. Separation from their family raises on either side the question of belonging, and they seek to overcome their loneliness by forming new relationships—mostly transient and unfulfilling.

Mamet’s plays present marital relations in American society as miserably out of joint. In *Reunion* Bernie is twice married with children born of both marriages, and at 51 he is looking for “companionship” and is thinking of remarrying Leslie, his forty-year old coworker in the restaurant who is herself divorced. Carol’s mother is remarried with children, and Carol herself has married a married man with children. Marriages and divorces are such regular occurrences in the society that, as Bernie puts it rather callously, “It’s like a habit” (21). In *Edmond* the protagonist abandons his wife telling her she does not interest him sexually or spiritually. *The Cryptogram* depicts a trio of betrayals—by husband, wife, and their friend—causing chronic insomnia in John the child, but it is chiefly Robert’s sexual betrayal that causes the domestic disorder. Both Bobby and Jolly in *The Old Neighborhood* suffer from the emotional terrorism resulting from their mother’s remarriage to a non-Jew. The psychic disintegration caused by familial disharmony, most powerfully evoked through the corresponding chaos of the language of the victims, is revelatory of the spiritual crisis of an instinct-driven society that refuses to acknowledge the higher, and natural, psycho-social goals of human sexuality and act in accordance with them.

**Need for Temperance**

The rampant violence caused by unbridled sexual passion is another of Mamet’s moral concerns. In *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* Joan, conferring “philosophically” with Deborah, ponders over the human need to keep one’s
passions under control in order to get to know oneself better—her thoughts echoing the stoics’ insistence on the virtue of temperance. “It’s a puzzle,” she muses, and goes on:

Our efforts at coming to grip with ourselves ... in an attempt to become “more human” (which, in itself, is an interesting concept). It has to do with an increased ability to recognize clues ... and the control of energy in the form of lust ... and desire [. . .] But a finite puzzle. Whose true solution lies, perhaps, in transcending the rules themselves... (37).

She herself utters, two scenes later, the disastrous consequences of the denial of human “transcendence” from the instincts or impulsive behaviour. She speaks of the perversity of homosexuality and gloomily reflects on the “physical and mental mutilations we perpetrate on each other, day in, day out. . .” (47) due to the unrestrained outpouring of the animal impulses. The brutal treatment of women trafficked into the United States annually—about 50000, according to the Human Rights Watch World Report 2001—reveals how states are helpless in bringing such violence under control (“Women’s Human Rights: Trafficking”). The conclusion of the Report is a pointer to the sad truth that attempts at legal solutions for violence against women are largely a failure, and perhaps no lasting solutions could be found until men and women form the right human attitudes toward each other characterized by temperance, truthfulness, loyalty, mutual respect and emotional harmony. These are the virtues the American society has lost, and so, are emphasized, as subtext, in Mamet’s oeuvre.
Disastrous Power Relationships

In Mamet’s moral vision, heterosexual battles for domination over each other are contrary to human spiritual nature inasmuch as they are bound to break into violence and disrupt the peace which is the attribute of the human soul. Both Edmond and Oleanna powerfully dramatize how the will to dominate inevitably polarizes men and women and culminates in unintended and uncontrollable violence. In the former play, when the woman in the subway vexes Edmond by walking away from him in fear and mistrust of men—what impresses him as her apathy toward him—the frustrated man vents his fury by hurling obscene words at her. Two scenes later, when he gets the opportunity to form a relationship with Glenna and spends an intimate night with her, his initial desire to merely communicate with a woman turns into a will to dominate. In the uniquely scripted murder scene Mamet presents antithetical human passions—the passion for power and the passion for freedom—draining the combatants of their tolerance and understanding. Each of Edmond’s attempts to possess Glenna in a spirit of masculine domination scares her into a frenetic anxiety for freedom from his grip. Edmond stabs his newly found lover in murderous fury, blaming her for the “insane” behaviour into which, truly, his own sudden lust for power has plunged him.

Oleanna too, though on the surface the play is about the theme of sexual harassment, dramatizes on a broad level the futility of the attempts to resolve the problem of domination by “substituting” another form of domination. From the moral perspective of “living in accordance with nature,” the endless upending of dominations as a dialectic historical process is a part of the universal evolution whose ends or resolutions are unknowable and beyond human control. The only moral truth the audience or the reader may perceive is
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that which lies within the context of the play. The final scene of violence, in
which the antithetical forces of power heave sighs of exhaustion from
emotional outbursts, only indicates how two humans have fallen further apart
morally, and have thwarted the possibilities of academic harmony. The end of
Oleanna carries the message that moral truth, characterized by compassion,
veracity, honesty and proper understanding is the true power that can help build
harmonious relationships, whereas political dogma, with its monomaniacal
obsession with domination—at least the one Carol represents—cannot.

All power relations among humans, in view of their volatile nature and
their constant transference from hand to hand, are lies. No power relation
between humans can ever develop harmony; it can only destroy it. Mamet
holds the view that the “the megalomania brought about by power” is the
ultimate corruption that renders a human self-blind (Some Freaks 92). This is
precisely why the shifting of power relationships between people forms a major
theme in most of Mamet’s plays. The mentor-protege relationship between
Robert and John in A Life in the Theatre undergoes a reversal in the second half
of the play as the elder actor’s histrionic powers decline and his younger
counterpart ascends in the scale of power and reputation among the audience.
In Edmond, the titular hero exults in his assumed masculine power over Glenna
after a night with her, but in his frenetic attempt to control her to serve his self-
interest, he kills her and lands in prison. In Speed-the-Plow Gould, after
sleeping with his temporary secretary, proudly speaks to Fox about his firm
“decision,” as Fox’s “superior,” to film the Apocalypse Novel. But when Karen
is made to confess that she had come to him with the “preconception” to get the
novel filmed, Gould undergoes a “reversal in recognition.” He feels “lost” to
think of the way in which a temporary secretary has swayed over her official
superior with her sex. In Oleanna Professor John supersedes the limits of his institutional authority by offering his failing student an ‘A’ and talking arrogantly about his superior skills as a teacher. Hubris blinds him to his student’s practical academic problems. His failure to redress her problems estranges her from him and urges her to crash him with her language of political correctness.

Mamet’s dramatizations of power relationships in his plays, especially the classically structured “tragedies,” are of utmost relevance to contemporary America in view of their metaphysical implications that go beyond their “social criticism” of American life. In an essay titled “Liberty” Mamet remarks about the way in which America’s love of liberty as a young nation has become a love of power as an “old nation.” His observations, made in the 1980s, are amazingly prophetic of the American political situation in the new millennium, and worth quoting at length:

We see the trappings of our age around us: an economy based on waste, the moral and economic cost of maintaining a standing army, immigration policies used as a political tool. [. ..] We look around and ask why we can no longer win a war, balance a budget, ensure the safety of our citizens at home or abroad. “Are we not,” we ask, “the same good-hearted good-willed,” in effect, “lovable people we have always been? Are we not still beloved of God?” And as we ask we are brought low by humiliation after inevitable humiliation. These blows are inevitable because, as per the laws of tragedy, our story is not yet complete. We are undergoing reversal of our situation, but we are far from recognizing it. We suffer at home and abroad because
we are like the spoiled children of the Rich. We see comfort as our given state and we expect obedience from those we, on no evidence whatever, think of as our beneficiaries.

To ensure the safety of our self-image as Peacemaker, we have become a warmonger nation dedicated to the proliferation of arms: and we would, quite literally, rather die rather than examine, let alone alter, our image of ourselves as just, all-seeing, always right. So we, like the heroes of tragedy, [...] have tried to appropriate to ourselves the attributes of God, and no less than those other misguided heroes, we must and will and do suffer.

(Some Freaks 106-107)

Truer words than these have perhaps never been uttered about the close links between the laws of tragedy and the laws of life. Hubris—overweening pride over one’s own assumed omniscience, omnipotence and justice—is always quelled by Destiny, and the tragic hero is cleansed when he is forced to examine himself and acknowledge his powerlessness before this ultimate reality—as the tragedies of Edmond and Oleanna exemplify.

In truth, however, as Mamet envisions, America is not a nation that would self-examine the possibilities of its being unjust, short-sighted and self-serving. The nation did recognize a “reversal” in its situation for the first time in its history, when the President acknowledged in the US Congress, in the wake of the September 11 catastrophe, that America was not invulnerable: “Our nation has been put on notice: We are not immune from attack” (“President Bush’s Address,” NYT 21 Sep. 2001). However evil and disastrous the fundamentalist forces are that brought it about, the tragedy ought to have been a lesson for America in the need for humility before God. But the lesson,
quite unlike the heroes of tragedy, was lost on the nation. America still thought that it was incumbent on itself as a Superpower—as the World’s Peacemaker—to teach lessons to the subversive forces of terrorism. The nation, as Mamet said, would rather die than examine its own wrongs, acknowledge them, and cleanse itself.

The consequences have been as Mamet foresaw it in his own context. “No less than those other misguided heroes,” Americans still suffer from anxiety at home and calamities abroad after the nation, flouting the UN mandate against a needless, paranoiac war, took military action against Iraq and aggravated the hostilities against its own people all over the world. Film critic William Hughes described this grim situation when he reviewed *Spartan* (2004)—Mamet’s latest film dealing with the kidnapping of the first daughter of the nation due to a lapse in protection:

The reality today is a lot grimmer than Mamet dares to imagine.

[The film is] mildly entertaining, but it is not what is needed now by a nation headed straight for hell. This country requires a mighty, slashing jolt to bring it to its senses and Mamet gives it a hug. Unless America’s dangerous trend towards militarism and imperialism is reversed, it will lead to the demise of our Republic and worse. (Hughes)

In the light of the moral vision projected in Mamet’s plays, the lesson that America needs to learn is that in the world of politics the human gods who dispense justice to others are always confronted with other gods. And one war triggers another on the opposite front and initiates a chain of endless wars and counterwars. The great lesson of tragedy, in drama or in real life, is that man must never arrogate to himself the attributes of God.
Futility of Power Relationships

Power relationships between human individuals always fail in Mamet's plays. Those who wield power or authority at the beginning find themselves suddenly deprived of it. The truly omnipotent reality of the universe, Mamet's plays reveal, is Destiny, which humans cannot control. Man proposes, but it is destiny that disposes. In American Buffalo, after all the inept plans to break into the coin collector's apartment, the proposed robbery fails to come off; in Edmond, the hero's attempt to exercise masculine power over Glenna fails, and he himself becomes a “woman” to his black cellmate; in Glengarry Glen Ross the salesmen execute the robbery, but its consequences hound the criminals and lay all their efforts waste; in Speed-the-Plow, the sexual power that comes disguised as philosophical truth and attempts to disrupt a long friendship fails, because it is finally revealed to be a deal; in Oleanna the conflict is based purely on a power relationship—John attempts and fails to “sell” his iconoclastic views on education as he estranges his student with his lofty but self-centred thought, and the Group, represented by Carol in the second half of the play, fails to force the professor to execute its own private agenda; in The Cryptogram John's father, mother and their friend weave a network of betrayals which disrupts the psychic harmony of the child and drives him to contemplate suicide; all their attempts to send him to sleep by exercising their superior authority fail.

Thus Mamet's plays not only bring out the pathetic discord that prevails in American social and familial relationships but also reveal how their failures in all their plans or intrigues are the outcome of the lies that rule over their psyche.
Moral Vision: a Fusion of Ethics and Metaphysics

David Mamet’s predominant themes, as the foregoing observations reveal, are the false assumptions and pretences of an unethical American society. But it may be perceived that the failures of the human universe alone are not his concern; in the 1980s, as Mamet grows in his religious sensibility, his moral vision widens into a metaphysical one, encompassing both humankind and the ultimate realities that govern it. In *Edmond*, *The Shawl*, and *Speed-the-Plow*, his full-length plays overtly dealing with social realities, Mamet transcends the bounds of human relationships “to each other” and stimulates thoughts about the realities of God, Moral Law and Destiny. His mode of provoking metaphysical thought in the audience is the same as that adopted for his ethical vision. Just as he sets his audience pondering the need for ethics and social order by depicting the chaos created in a morally decentred society, he makes them contemplate the human need for metaphysical connections by presenting the consequences of human actions that totally disregard the universal realities of God and Destiny.

In a metaphysical perspective, these ultimate realities are inextricably linked to the human affairs on the earth. In *American Buffalo*, a play now lauded as a modern American classic, the collapse of all moral values in a “Godforsaken world” is powerfully brought out when a criminal like Teach ironically “deplores” the moral chaos of the world: “The Whole Entire World. There is No Law. There is No Right and Wrong. The World is Lies. There is No Friendship. Every Fucking Thing. (Pause.) Every God-forsaken Thing.” But it is not God who has forsaken the world. It is humans who, in their arrogance of rationality and their implicit faith in the “pleasure principle” and in their own amoral and megalomaniacal individualism, have discarded the
Whole that governs the visible realities of the world. After living lives of dissipation that end up in utter loneliness and despair, Mamet’s characters feel the need to reestablish their spiritual connections to regain their peace.

To begin with, Mamet's family-oriented plays hint, though mildly, the need for religious faith in human lives to strengthen human relationships. In *The Sanctity of Marriage* (1976), a one-act play by Mamet, a pious wife tells her alcoholic husband to go to church so that he may change his ways and find peace. The husband, however, would rather believe in the pubkeeper’s “true” tales of death and disaster—which are nothing but fiction—than gain a true experience through faith. His wife tells him how generations of people, including herself, had attained peace through faith: “You would know it if you had it. If you’d gone back there. I sat inside that church. I thought: eight hundred years ago the women and the men in England prayed for the same things I prayed for then. And I felt peace there” (45).

In *Reunion* Carol suggests to her father that they go to church in order to renew their faith in God and find solace to their spiritually forlorn lives. *Dark Pony*—a short companion piece presented with *Reunion*—allegorically brings out, through the fable of Rain Boy and Dark Pony, the Grace and Protection that descends on the Man of Faith in times of utter helplessness and despair. In *The Old Neighborhood* Jolly’s narration of the cruelties she has endured in life is capped with her faith in atonement—“a Complete and Contrite Apology”—as a means of self-purification. *The Disappearance of the Jews* ends with a note on the renewal of faith in prayer and synagogue worship to reestablish one’s spiritual links with God. These casual references to the importance of faith in the early episodic plays assume philosophical dimensions as the playwright weaves his plots with causal connections, and dramatic actions are presented as
a progression toward a larger vision of life. The protagonists in *Edmond*, *The Shawl* and *Speed-the-Plow* come to believe in metaphysical and spiritual realities as they go through inner illuminations that change their vision of life.

**Visions of Truth**

*Edmond*, while it is a bleak portrayal of the underworld of New York with its money-sex nexus, is predominantly a play that deals with spiritual issues. It is in tune with Mamet's definition that a play is “about rather terrible things happening to people who are as nice or not nice as we ourselves are” (3 *Uses* 68). By dramatizing the chain of terrible events happening in the life of a middleclass businessman, and portraying his final transformation from hubris to humility, the playwright brings out the invincible power of destiny and makes the hero acknowledge the presence of a “destiny that shapes our ends.” Mamet’s chief purpose in this play is not to expose the squalid social reality of New York but rather to unfold, in the manner of the classical Greek dramatists, the metaphysical reality of Destiny governing human lives.

*The Shawl*, another play dealing with spiritual issues, brings out the inadequacy of human reason in understanding and judging supernatural realities. John is a confidence trickster who thinks clairvoyance or divination is nothing but a “craft” with which anyone capable of making “research” and “educated guesses” can play “tricks” on his clients, win over them and make lots of money. His spiritual experience while conning Miss A, a depressed woman in her thirties who has come to him to resolve an issue about her dead mother’s will, transforms his intellectual arrogance to submission to the mystic powers. When, in his greed for his victim’s fortune, he pretends to see the dead mother in a seance, the client discovers it to be a lie and deprecates him for
betraying her for money. This leads John to a heartfelt plea to God to forgive him, following which he is put into a true seance that brings him the vision of Miss A’s mother wrapped in a Red Shawl.

After this mystic experience he can no longer cling to his previous notion that divination is all a “trick.” He refrains from disclosing his spiritual experience to his disciple who stays with him to learn about the trick—for it is beyond the pale of logical reason—and asks him to leave him with the common skepticism people have about any mysteries in the world: “Will you, you’re now equipped to live in a world without mystery. And now you know all that I know. And now you may leave content” (48). The truth John has revealed through his seance wins Miss A’s confidence in him, and the “clairvoyant” himself has been transformed morally. He is cleansed of his greed, and turns quite indifferent to the payment Miss A offers for his revelation. The Shawl thus affirms the reality of the mystic powers and the futility of reason in dealing with the spiritual mysteries of the universe. As Henry I. Schvey has observed, it is “a play which appears to be built on deceit and betrayal, [but] is actually concerned with the mystic’s gradual awakening to a higher ideal” (“Power Plays” 89).

Speed-the-Plow, besides its social realism of Hollywood conceived as a morally depraved world, reinforces the metaphysical vision of destiny that governs Edmond. Whereas in Edmond divinity shapes the hero’s destiny only in his private life, in the Hollywood play predeterminism takes on a cosmic dimension. Destiny is presented as governing and directing both private human lives and the whole world. This is precisely the stoic vision of destiny, which views everything in the universe as causally connected from the beginning to the end of the world. As Seneca tells his disciple Lucius:
The fates guide us and the first hour of our birth determines how much time is allotted to each one of us. One cause depends on another and a long chain of events influences public and private affairs. Therefore anything must be bravely endured, because all things do not, as we think, merely happen, but come according to a fixed law. (Seneca, “On Providence”)

In the Stoic vision, all the events of history have been unfolding as they have been predetermined, and man, who does not and cannot ever possess the power over this unfolding, has no choice but to endure his destiny with courage. This is the “bizarre idea” in Speed-the-Plow presented through the Apocalypse Novel, which becomes the subject of discussion from the beginning of the play and which, after her “courtesy read,” Karen passionately recommends to Gould for screening. The surest way to overcome fear is to embrace it—to accept its inevitability—and thus end it.

When man cannot control the external causes of his fear, he can always control or end them “within” himself by his attitude to them, by facing them with stoic endurance. The Apocalypse Novel presents this metaphysical vision which Karen says has “changed” her. She argues that, by instilling courage, it will “change” millions of people who suffer from a hopeless fear of an impending apocalypse. All fears can be laid to rest, the novel says, when the catastrophic events that shake the world are seen as God’s recovery of all his Creation back into Himself. The events of history “come full circle,” and things are “made round” in this way. This is what Karen reads from the book:

“What was coming [The Apocalypse] was a return to the self, which is to say, a return to God. It was round. He saw all things were round. And the man saw that it had all been devoted to one
end. That the diseases in the body were the same diseases in the world. That things were ending. Yes. That things must end. And that vouchsafed to him a vision of eternity ... You see? (58)

That great revelation of the apocalyptic vision—that God is in control of the Destiny of the entire humanity and of all Creation (including the creations of the mind of man), and that man can end his fear of the apocalypse by accepting with equanimity God’s actions in the world—is the metaphysical Truth that Mamet’s play unfolds to the audience. Karen exploits this universal vision to interpret it in her own terms and to fulfil her own selfish ends.

The World as a Mystery and an Illusion

By the time Speed-the-Plow appeared on the stage, Mamet, as he writes in “A Plain Brown Wrapper,” had experienced “a growing sense of the reality of God” (Some Freaks 20). Perhaps, like the narrator in the Apocalypse novel, he had come to believe that the world, with all its seeming kaleidoscopic changes, is an illusion and the reality behind it is God—“Nothing but God” (Speed-the-Plow 68). This conception of the world as an illusion or a dream is reinforced in Mamet's last tragedy The Cryptogram. The ten-year-old John, suffering from acute psychosis that has resulted from the deceptions and betrayals that he finds around him, has a vision of “nothingness.” As he is depressed by his inner sense of the lies around him, John’s wakeful state itself becomes a “sleep” in which all apparent phenomena seem to be delusions:

Maybe there’s nothing on the thing that it is of. We don’t know what’s there. We don’t know that those things are there. [. . .]
I was lying there, and maybe there’s no such thing as thought.
Who says there is? Or human beings. And we are a dream. Who
knows we are here? No one knows we are. We are a dream. We are just *dreaming*. I *know* we are. Or else ... or else . . . (Pause.) [. . .] We don’t know what’s real. And all we do is *say* things. (Pause.) Where do we get them from? And, or that things, go on forever. (32)

Within the dramatic context, John’s monologue primarily presents the psychic void created by the betrayals the little boy finds in his family. On a wider level, it also reflects the spiritual void created in contemporary humanity by postmodernist linguistic and cultural philosophies which, denying all “objective reality,” and deconstructing every reality in terms of linguistic interrelationships, have ultimately reduced everything to nothing. John’s monologue seems to negate the existence of any objects in the external world, but its meaning, as is characteristic of Mamet’s dialogues, is not what it appears to be. By depicting the psychological crisis of his protagonist, Mamet is only questioning the postmodern theory that the meaning of objects is nothing but what the perceptive subject ascribes to it.

**The Truth about Objective Truths**

In his essay “Magic Meanings in Mamet’s ‘Cryptogram,’” Martin Schaub brings out the symbolic meanings of seemingly trivial things repeatedly discussed by the characters—the teapot, the pilot knife, and the stadium blanket—all of which are revelatory of the truths intuited by the child. Quoting Mamet’s own views of “truth,” Schaub maintains that objects do carry meaning in themselves, irrespective of the way they are interpreted by individual beings. Truth has an objective validity, and this is what semiotic theory, founded on the philosophy of absolute subjectivity, has deplorably destroyed. Schaub points
out that the postmodern theory of truth is inadequate to encompass Mamet’s conception of it:

Has postmodern theory not obliterated “truth” as an intellectual curiosity long ago? And have we not agreed on the “absence of the transcendental signified,” called for an indefinite “play of signification,” and affirmed “a world of signs . . . without truth”? These canonical tenets of postmodern theory [. . .] fall short of describing the scope and import of Mamet’s plays. In Mamet’s dramatic universe, “things do mean things”—even though, and maybe also because, his characters are constantly denying it.”

(326)

The postmodern predilection for a “world of signs” without truth has had far-reaching cultural consequences. In his book entitled *The Marriage of Sense and Soul* Ken Wilber points out the great damage such theories, with their exclusive focus on “surfaces,” have done to the inner being—the “within”—of humankind. He considers the extreme postmodernist “agenda” as “merely ideology dressed up as cultural studies, narcissism and nihilism in transformational drag” (131). “[M]ost postmodernists,” he comments, “would go to extraordinary lengths to deny depth in general,” and destroy all inner values and meanings:

“Subvert all hierarchies!”—one of the battlecries of extreme postmodernism—actually means “Destroy all value, kill all quality, massacre all meaning.” Extreme postmodernism went from the noble insights that all perspectives need to be given a fair hearing, to the utterly self-contradictory belief that no perspective whatsoever is better than any other (self-
contradictory because their own belief is held to be much better than the alternatives). (135)

Wilber is right when he says that extreme postmodernists have merely substituted their own signifiers for the former paradigms they set out to destroy: power, prejudice, ideology, gender, race, colonialism, speciesm, and so on. The inevitable consequence of dealing with such divisive and subversive forces of humanity persistently in literature and cultural studies is the denial of the human spirit and the moral values associated with “spirituality”—the set of qualities such as love, righteousness, truth, unity, faith etc. which leads to wholesome relationships between men and women and gives them inner strength. In other words, claiming to be the cure of the evils that all former philosophical and linguistic systems had brought on “modern” humanity, postmodernism brought on the contemporary humanity the worst disease that could wreck the human psyche—a sense of meaninglessness and nothingness.

Redemption through Religious Faith

Mamet’s plays essentially seek to replace this nihilism with spiritualism so that the meaning that the American society has lost could be restored to it. Crucial to this inner transformation is the perception of things as they are and as a whole—the sense of Truth that comes of faith. Mamet has increasingly felt, in the process of his growth both as an individual and as an artist, that humanity’s redemption from its present chaos is in the reestablishment of social harmony through religious faith. In his mature essays Mamet expresses his skepticism about the power of analytical reason as an instrument for investigating into the truths of the world—human and non-human. As he writes in 3 Uses of the Knife: “The heresy of the Information Age is not even that
reason will triumph but that reason has triumphed. But reason, as we see in our lives, is employed one thousand times as rationale for the one time it may be used to further understanding” (70). Mamet adds that this is what drama in general purports to bring out: “And the cleansing lesson of the drama is, at its highest, the worthlessness of reason” (70). Since reason only robs humans of their peace by leaving them eternally in uncertainties, he hopes faith could redeem them. Like most artists who have sought to cure themselves of the raging imbalance in their minds, Mamet takes recourse to spiritualism. In his book *Modern American Drama, 1945-2000* C. W. E. Bigsby points out how a number of writers in the last quarter of the twentieth century—George Steiner, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, Alice Walker, August Wilson, and David Mamet—have moved to spiritualism for their solace:

The failure of ideology to inform or shape the world satisfactorily, of psychology convincingly to offer a secular route to self-understanding or self-interest, of materialism or the rituals of social form to offer a structure to experience or a destination worthy of the journey, left them standing at the doors of faith.

[. . .] David Mamet has, perhaps, been on a similar pilgrimage.

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Mamet’s dramas realistically portray the spiritual wasteland left by postmodernist ideologies that have severed human thought from its metaphysical roots. The inhabitants of Mamet’s theatrical world intensely suffer from the loss of their familial, social, cultural and cosmic connections and sense their need to stick together in a world where they find nothing but uncertainties, betrayals, and deceptions—in a word, lies. Mamet’s insistence on the need for *a priori* spiritual values gains in enormous significance in this
context. To cure themselves of their psychic illnesses, Mamet’s subtexts suggest, Americans must reject all the surface realities that generate disharmony in human relationships, chiefly the blind drives for power, money, success, fame and carnal sex.

The rejection of shams and illusions involves a process of self-examination and self-cleansing. It makes demands on one’s moral will to strengthen one's inner being with virtues of love, honesty, and a generosity of spirit that puts sound interpersonal relationships above considerations of authority, wealth, class, colour, gender, and all the dualities that divide societies into binary opposites and destroy their harmony. It calls for a holistic, or more precisely, monistic vision of the social, national and racial consciousnesses of humanity as an inseparable part of the Whole—God as the Consciousness of the Universe in Evolution. It calls for a movement towards the resolution of humanity’s conflicts through the identity of its spiritual oneness amidst all its diversity. There is no true harmony except that which accords with the divine harmony that governs the universe. The human will, in consonance with the Divine Will, can achieve this harmony when it commits itself to Truth, the Source of its moral being—through faith.

Conformity to the Whole: Commitment to Truth

To conclude: David Mamet’s drama ingeniously brings out the dynamics of the Truth of God—the One Irreducible Reality that governs the universe—through its portrayals of the social realities that conceal the inner realities of American society. Mamet’s central concern as an artist is Truth—the fundamental Reality that underlies all the surface realities. It is the moral principle that unifies God, Nature and Humanity as a single Organic Whole. It
is not static but dynamic. It is a moral force that is eternally in a process of unfolding, and always prevails over the lies that seek to suppress it. Mamet’s plays, from the first to the last, bring to the stage this universal process. Just as the manifest universe, the apparent material reality, conceals the Spiritual Reality (of God) that animates and directs it, Mamet’s human universe consists of characters whose aggressive and egotistic language conceals the truth that emerges ultimately and reveals things as they are. In Mamet’s drama, nobody speaks what he or she means, and nothing is what it seems to be. Bringing to the stage the deceptions and betrayals that pervade American society, Mamet’s plays ultimately tend to turn the audience’s eyes inward to gain this moral vision: a whole civilization that thrives on lies and closes its doors on Truth—the spiritual reality of the Universe—denies its present inhabitants and their future generations the possibilities for peaceful coexistence. Wisdom, the inner light uniquely available to the human individual, consists in being true to one’s own spiritual nature and being committed to Truth. It consists in exercising freedom of choice, Nature’s precious gift to man, not to lead a misdirected life of intellectual and dogmatic arrogance cut off from the reality of God, but to become a harmonious part of the cosmos by living as an image of the Whole, with the qualities of righteousness, compassion, love, justice and truth governing human relationships. In Mamet’s ultimate moral vision, postmodern humanity may hope for salvation if individuals build honest, wholesome interpersonal relationships, and live in accordance with the divine moral principle that leads to harmony and peace—Truth.