CHAPTER IV

ANGUISH OF THE SOCIAL ABSURD

Hardy's Secular Ethics of Human Responsibility
I
Preliminary Statement of the Argument

Metaphysical absurd and metaphysical ethics are the subject-matter in Hardy's earlier novels. The tone and style of the language there likewise express a serene and composed mind which is reconciled with the world despite all its natural evils of indifference.

But, as J. I. M. Stewart observes, Hardy is becoming increasingly conscious of the human evil since The Woodlanders onward: "Uptill now he has been mainly concerned with the Potter and the Pot. Now, and while not abandoning his usual role of an advocate for the pot in some more than supernal court, he is becoming increasingly conscious that the pots big and little, regularly treat one another with a merciless intolerance." That is to say that Hardy deals, especially in Tess and Jude, his last two novels, with the social absurd, the spectacle of man at variance with the apathetic, even antipathetic society of his fellows, though the metaphysical absurd is still conspicuously present as the cosmic back-drop to the social scene. The subject-matter itself changes and changes accordingly Hardy's treatment of it.

The universe cannot be made to break its silence. Therefore,
the best way to conquer it is to lay down arms, terminate the straining of the active human term of the absurd against it, and to match in harmony the neutral frame of mind with the neutrality of the universe. But the society of human beings is not likewise inanimate, and cannot long remain impersonal if stung persistently by the Socratic gad-flies on its body. It is curious that the social existence of man need not be absurd and yet it is so, that both the confronting terms of strife in it are human, active and equally responsible. To set right the wrongs in the social mechanism of the human make is not an impossible hope. The affirmative ethical response to it is not resignation but revolt. That is why Hardy himself supports his rebels through the authorial comments in Tess and Jude. He cuts in bitterly critical mood at Nature, society and the God of Christian belief with the incoherence puzzling to those who seek dispassionate philosophy of the traditional academic kind which Hardy, as discussed in the first chapter, did not attempt in his fiction. He is, however, coherent in voicing out his concern for the unnecessary human suffering, and stressing unmistakably on the need of the secular ethics of human responsibility in the world deserted by God. Douglas Brown is right when he observes:

"With so many others, he adhered to firm moral standards and kept his conscience unusually sensitive, but without acknowledging any transcendental Cause as the ground of moral values......His moral feeling is outraged by the
Indifference of nature to human values. But a profound sense of human responsibility remains. The very range and force of Hardy's later pessimistic beliefs imply firm convictions, something like the solid earth beneath the countryman's feet.  

Hardy's ethical position is thus humanistic. In this he is at one both with the scientific philosophers of his own age like Comte, Spencer and T. H. Huxley, and the existentialist thinkers of the later generation. The essentials of humanism which they all share in common despite their metaphysical and temperamental differences, can best be summarised in the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan:

"Humanism is a protest against naturalism on the one side and religion on the other. The soul of man is not a thing of nature; nor is it a child of God. Devotion to values would be inexplicable, if men were entirely products of nature. As against religion, humanism contends that this world is our chief interest and perfection of humanity our one ideal. The ultimate harmonious interrelations of all individuals with one another is the aim of humanism. Loyalty to the great community, as Royce said, is our highest duty. The humanist has no sympathy with all religious taboos which tend to drive away the blood from our veins. Morality is not meaningless self-mutilation. While asceticism is encouraged by religion, humanism believes in balance and proportion. It is based on the Greek doctrine of harmony and the Roman sense of decorum."  

The thinkers since Darwin have tried successively with rhetoric rather than reasoning to retain, while rejecting the irrational theology, the moral aspect of religion as a necessary force for regulating the selfish impulses of man. The foundation of their humanism is altruistic sentiment which, though a tangible need
for happy and healthy social existence, is not acceptable to those who refuse to regard it as intrinsically and ultimately valuable. The further disadvantage of humanism is that it leaves man alone to work out his morality without mythical incentives which religion has to offer. That is why the philosophers of religion dismiss it as a poor substitute for religion. Professor D. Miall Edwards observes:

"Unconditional authority of the moral law must be grounded in the nature of things, must have its roots in God. It has need of religious hypothesis to back it up. If the good is not the power that rules the world, why should I recognize its authority over my life? Morality cannot defy the universe. Huxley's famous idea of the ethical process as a gladiatorial fight against the whole cosmic process - an open war against what he called "the unfathomable injustice of the nature of things" - may at first have the effect on us of a challenging call to arms. But an adventure based on an open defiance of the cosmos is a policy of despair which is bound in the nature of things to fail. To doubt that the universe is buttressed up by divine purpose is sooner or later to suffer collapse in the moral enterprise."4

Dr. Radhakrishnan also writes:

"A proper adjustment of happiness to virtue is possible only if we assume a divine being who is able to bring the cosmic into conformity with the moral and regulate the combination of happiness and virtue......If we do not accept the postulate of God, we shall be faced by a dualism between the moral law which claims our allegiance and a universe which is apparently indifferent if not hostile to the demands of morality."5

Such criticism reflects our arbitrary connection of morality with...
the material sort of happiness, and the philosophers' habit of 
sacrificing our clear perception of the absurdity of existence 
for the convenience of an absolute harmony of thought. The human
istic contention that man has to create his values in the world 
divested of its illusory lights shocks the subtle human instinct 
for a bargain which is accustomed to see in every act of self-
abnegation a sort of saving of the capital for future use in 
heaven. But it is fallacious to aver that because the 'cosmic' 
ought to be brought in conformity with the 'moral', it is thus 
already brought somehow though we do not see it, and that we must 
regard God as real as He serves our necessity for this purpose 
whether He exists objectively or not. Edwards, Radhakrishnan and 
philosophers of religion in general have shown in their unfair cr-
iticism of humanism preference for illusion to truth, the want of 
courage to find in the very indifference of the universe the 
reasonable foundation of ethics, and implied illogical admission 
that the criterion of truth is not experience but necessity.

But the real paradox of all humanism is that it regards 
both 'pleasure' and its sacrifice for others' good as equally 
great values. It advocates the golden mean of moderate indulgence, 
insists upon the equitable distribution of happiness to all concer-
ned, but cannot logically justify the extreme instances of un-
rewarding selflessness since it can admit of no kind of spiritual
gain for the agent himself in its hedonistic philosophy. Even Albert Camus, the greatest of the latest humanists, regards in The Myth of Sisyphus both 'passion' and 'moderation' as self-justified values relevant to life here and now, but failing to define a point where indulgence should end and moderation begin, leaves it to the discretion of the moral agent to decide how far to pursue the gratification of passion and where to stop in the pursuit, for integrity, as he says, needs no rules and has sure intuition to understand right and wrong with reference to circumstance and situation.

Hardy's humanism, however, is free from this paradox, for to him, self-abnegation alone is the ultimate value. Renunciation of desires brings the serenity of affirmative resignation which deepens, as discussed in the second chapter, into a sort of mysticism in the 'introvertive' sense and becomes a positive spiritual gain for the moral agent. Hardy accepted the utilitarian maxim 'the greatest good of the greatest number' as a guide-line for moral action from Bentham and Mill. But his distinguishing feature is that he was not a hedonist like them. 'Seek pleasure and shun pain', another maxim of the utilitarian philosophers, it seems, appeared to him as explaining not an ethical ideal, but the actual nature of our pursuits merely. His ideal characters illustrate that the pleasure of indulgence is too trivial compared to
the continual feast of contentment, and that unconditional sacrifice of self-interest for the well-being of others is the supreme ethical value.

Hardy did not, in keeping with all this, approve of the pagan zest for existence of the humanity when it was young, and sought to substitute for it the view of life as a thing to be put up with as considered earlier in our discussion on The Return of the Native. In this, though without the consolations of belief in heaven, he was nearer to the essential and authentic Christianity than those who criticised him as a heathen and a heretic were. Yet owing to Hardy's sympathy for Eustacia's Olympian grace and beauty come to grief in The Return of the Native, Angel's pleading in Tess and Sue's in Jude that ancient Greece, not ancient Israel should have been the source of Europe's inspiration, people are often misled into thinking that Hardy favoured the pagan view of life. Correctly interpreted, it only implies his admiration for their uninhibited flow of life in accordance with Nature and culture founded on the freedom of thought and feeling, and his regret that the Christendom had lost it. He, it seems, felt that Christian morals, essential not formal, if freely chosen to follow, were excellent in themselves, but they had degraded into repressive taboos and customs. There were in ancient Greece also Pythagoras, Plato and stoics who taught the philosophy of negation and self-
denial not dissimilar to Christianity. They practised renunciation not because scriptures had ordained it, not because custom wanted it, but because they did not find like Hardy himself anything so alluring in the transient pleasures of life. They, in fact, were Hardy's kin among the ancient Greeks and Romans, not their mass-mind that desired to stay stuck upon the earth for ever, to devour all that Nature yielded to their greedy appetite, to forget what sorry victims of time and circumstance they were till some sudden calamity or spectacle of death caused them to reel, rave, imagine anthropomorphically a god or a whole pantheon of gods responsible for their misfortune, and spin fables of tragedy which is always the fruit of sanguine optimism rudely shocked.

Hardy did not want to do away with religion altogether. As considered in the third chapter while discussing *Jude the Obscure* he wanted to retain Cross from Christianity. But he wished to rid religion of its cumbersome dogma and obsolete theology. He wrote in his long defensive *Apology to Late Lyrics and Earlier*:

"It may indeed be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry - "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression of science", as it was defined by an English poet who was quite orthodox in his ideas."
The religion of modern man must be humanism informed with Christian compassion and renunciation, based on the human need of harmonious co-existence of men which can mitigate to the extent possible the sense of alienation by founding in the land of exile a community of outsiders.

Hardy did not like the traditional moralists prescribe or follow any arbitrary list of formal virtues. He did not regard virtues and vices as any kind of absolutes. Nothing can be judged as either good or bad independent of the actual situation in which the moral agent is involved. Mechanical adherence to the customary norms of behaviour without bothering to understand what vests an action with moral value and why, without reference to its motive and possible consequences, is anything but ethical. Integrity of motive and moral necessity might make under certain circumstances conformity to the accepted norms vicious and deviation from them virtuous. Hardy fully agreed in practice with Shakespeare who wrote:

"Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
And vice sometime's by action dignified."

That is why Hardy calls Tess a pure woman, her first submission to Alec amoral, and her final fall the supreme ethical act of self-sacrifice. She had committed the infringement of custom, but kept aflame the essential moral spirit. The seeming inconstancy
in Ethelbertha’s decision to give up Christopher Julian for aged Lord Mountclere turns out to be self-abnegation with reference to her motive and the consequences of her action. She makes all concerned materially happy and ennobles herself spiritually by total effacement of self-interest. Phillotson in Jude follows most courageously what Kant called the ‘categorical imperative’, the unconditional command of duty, offends in this the people who held that morality is no more than conformity to conventions, suffers himself in consequence dire poverty and virtual ostracism, but tries despite all this to make Sue and Jude happy. The integrity of motive is most important in the ethical conduct. The right consequences for others must be honestly intended before undertaking an action. But the moral agent can be absolved of responsibility if his calculations are upset. That is how Sue’s decision to return to Phillotson remains worthy in spite of its fatal consequences to Jude who died pining and repining for her.

The metaphysical ethics is comparatively easier to practise, for one has to do nothing in it except being affirmatively resigned to all that happens. But the social ethics ordains action above passive endurance and demands from the will a novel response in every new situation. This means ceaseless strain and anxiety. Every time the moral will is left more or less in the darkness, it has to enlighten itself before acting; as to which of the many
courses of action open to the agent is largely good and most benefi-
cial to others. Kierkegaard is right when he observes:

"The act of choosing is essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical. Whenever in a stricter sense there is a question of an either/or, one can always be sure that the ethical is involved."8

Hardy shows what Kierkegaard says. The case of casuistry, according to Hardy, it seems, is not an occasional occurrence as in the traditional ethics. The casuistic dilemma is sure to be present in every situation that is essentially moral. Virtue emerges from grim grappling with it. Hardy resembles existentialists, without, of course, their well-worked out technical jargon, in emphasising the experience of 'dread' before making a 'choice', and in asking the agent to bear the 'responsibility' of his action all alone. Like them, again, he regarded moral action as 'gratuitous', and had in his humanism as distinguished from the humanism of his contemporary agnostics and rationalists, what Michael Unamuno, the Spanish existentialist, calls 'the tragic sense of life'.

It is charged that Hardy ceased to be a pure artist in his last two novels and employed fiction simply as a vehicle of his thought. William Rutland observes that "Before he ceased to write novels, Hardy turned his fiction into propaganda."9 And Lionel Johnson writes with special reference to Tess:

"The novels, which 'vindicate the ways of God to man',
are indeed wearisome: but fully as wearisome are those, which vindicate the ways of man to God: and it is because *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* contains so much insinuated argument of this kind, to the detriment of its art that I cannot rank it so high, as certain other of Mr. Hardy's books."10

But if literature has not to be content with serving to the idle readers mere 'distraction' or amusement to while away their leisure hours, and has to become what existentialists have called 'engagement', moral and metaphysical problems which no speculative or analytical philosophy divorced from the human interest would attempt to solve, must come dominant in fiction, and be boldly faced. Dr. Everett W. Knight observes:

"We cannot determine what the questions of our time shall be, but we can determine that what we write shall be an answer. Whether or not our answers come to be considered "literature" is not the point, because in any case there will be no literature apart from them........It was after all precisely in such a way that Milton's *Areopagitica* and Pascal's *Letters Provinciales* came into being."11

That is how Hardy's *Tess* and *Jude* also came to be written. That his answers are not so definitive as his revolt is defiant, goes to his credit and does not define his limitation. The true import of his revolt is never understood. Lionel Johnson and the critics of his kind fail to see that Hardy's quarrel was not with Divinity, heathen or Christian, but with society, its irrational laws and customs. He could not possibly cry curses to the Being he ceased to believe in, but did lash out, as considered in the first chapter,
at the easy popular belief in Him which blinds us to the evils of our existence in Nature, and the ills of our responsibility in society. His revolt is moderate and affirmative, seeking reform, not revolution. It is similar in many ways to Albert Camus' philosophy of revolt in our own age. Both Hardy and Camus are great humanists concerned for the fate of man upon the earth. Both of them share with the existentialists certain characteristics of thought and feeling in common, but are not themselves, strictly speaking, existentialists. Absolute sincerity rings through all the works of both. But they are dissimilar as well. Hardy seems rather crude compared to the cosmopolitan mind, conceptual clarity and lucid utterance of Camus. But Camus' impassioned rhetoric seems immature compared to Hardy's hoary wisdom and serenity that surmount the strain of the absurd. A brief comparative study of Hardy and Camus so far as it is thought enlightening on the nature of Hardy's revolt, is, therefore, attempted at the proper place in the pages that follow.

This much must suffice for the preliminary statement of the points to be substantiated in the study of three novels - *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Hand of Ethelberta* and *Jude the Obscure* - attempted in this chapter.
Dorothy Van Ghent writes that the subject-matter of *Tess* is "mythological, for it places the human protagonist in dramatic relationship with the non-human and orients his destiny among preternatural powers." Richard Carpenter represents most of the Hardy-critics and lay-readers when he interprets mythology as metaphysics and asserts that while the "social critique" is merely the side-current of the story, Hardy principally shows in it *Tess* as the helpless victim of "principalities and powers for which no human agency can be held responsible." It is rarely perceived that Hardy's chief concern here is the actual and the ideal of man's relationship with his fellows. Tony Tanner is nearer to truth when he observes that "*Tess* is damned, and damns herself, according to man-made laws which are as arbitrary as they are cruel." But he feels further that we find in the novel also "Nature itself turning against *Tess*, so that we register something approaching sadism of both the man-made and the natural directed against her." Mr. Tanner has thus queerly confused the causes of *Tess*'s tragedy and missed the central moral motif of the novel.

*Tess* at the metaphysical level of the symbolic meaning in the novel is the representative of humanity. But the "preternatural..."
powers" - "the President of the Immortals" stuff of the novel - are merely the mythical impersonation of the naturalistic universe, neither good nor evil if our thinking does not make it either, and do not signify Hardy's belief in any such Being or beings. Earth as the blighted apple, physically because unlike the celestial fire-balls it is infested with the human and other insects, morally because the natural law is not satisfactory to the demands of consciousness, is the setting to the social scene here. The metaphysical absurd is presented as the conspicuous back-drop to the human drama here as earlier. But what has perturbed the readers of Hardy is the glaring colours of unresolved anguish with which it is painted, and Hardy's angry comments indiscriminately flung at Nature, God and society alike. The evils of human responsibility which made Tess miserable account for his disturbance. He deliberately indulged in blasphemy with a view, as discussed in the first chapter, to lashing out at the easy aspirational belief in the benevolent Providence, for he believed that truly responsible moral life is not possible without ridding man of the superstitious certitudes of theology and realising the loneliness of humanity. This does not mean that his 'truce with trouble' achieved earlier has terminated into strife, and reconciliation with the world into confrontation with it.

At another symbolical level Tess stands for an individual
human being left alone in the midst of society which scorns her misfortune while the universe stays merely neutral to her needs. Moving about in a state of undesired pregnancy after dusk amid the hills and dales adjoining her village

"She had no fear of the shadows; her sole idea seemed to be to shun mankind - or rather that cold accretion called the world, which, so terrible in the mass, is so formidable, even pitiable, in its units."16

That "cold accretion", the organised mass of individuals, is the social world which instead of becoming a structure of fortification to a poor pitiable 'unit' against the neutral ways of the natural world, turns positively stifling and hostile. Tess fears it, not the shadows, the self-projected spirits and invisible princes of the world. Compared to the cold cruelty of the conventional society the spectacle of life in the primal harmony of Nature is positively refreshing, for hate is unknown there. Bad and unsatisfactory as the state of existence in Nature is, it is at least better than the artificial ills and cruelties of the human creation in the social world. In showing this, however, Hardy has not contradicted his well-known view that the state of consciousness, of sentience so to say, amid Nature is not at all satisfactory. Lionel Johnson is wrong in thinking that "the suggestion that on the desert island, away from censorious eyes, Tess would have felt innocent and unashamed, is worthy of
Hardy's principal concern here is to work out right kind of social ethics in ameliorative response to the perception of the social absurd - the sort of reasonable ethics that will at once regulate our conduct and show indulgent sympathy to those who deviate from its code owing to ignorance or weakness. Since Nature is not what Wordsworth called "law and impulse" both, we must, when pitiable "units" cry for help and pity, assume collectively the responsibility of proving such a guardian to them. Hardy closely examines various broad ethical tendencies, explores for the sound foundation of morality and propounds his own humanism. Each tendency, as it emerges from the novel, deserves discussion in necessary detail.

(1) Customary Morality

It is hardly a morality if moral action is to be defined as a well-considered response of the agent to the exigencies of the hour with a view to doing good to others in disinterested spirit. Harold H. Titus observes:

"Customs are passed on from one generation to succeeding generations by imitation and by precept, Students of
early group life agree that the individual is almost completely submerged in the life of the group. The individual's ways of acting, and feeling, and thinking are controlled by the group. Men tend to do the things which the group they respect expects them to do. What is custom in the group becomes habit in the individual."18

The morality of customs is valuable in so far as it serves to give stability to society and enables us to act without effort in a way agreeable to all in the community. But what is thus practically useful is usually treated as God-ordained and good in absolute sense, and worshipped as a fetish by the masses who are neither particularly earnest nor pious. According to Hardy it proves positively immoral as when it punishes such a pure woman as Tess so pitilessly. The conscience conditioned by its code such as was Angel's initially is not fit to appreciate essential morals.

Felix and Cuthbert, Angel Clare's elder brothers, represent this kind of morality. To Angel they are merely 'contented dogmatists' treading the trodden ways, following the line of least resistance, requiring neither the purity of soul nor the originality of thought. Hardy writes of them:

"They were both somewhat short-sighted, and when it was the custom to wear a single eyeglass and string they wore a single eyeglass and string; when it was the custom to wear a double glass they wore a double glass; when it was the custom to wear spectacles they wore spectacles straightway, all without reference to the particular variety of defect in their own vision. When Wordsworth was enthroned they carried pocket copies;
and when Shelley was belittled they allowed him to grow dusty on their shelves. When Correggio's Holy Families were admired, they admired Correggio's Holy Families; when he was decried in favour of Velasquez, they sedulously followed suit without any personal objection. 19

In ethics also these ministers of Church conform mechanically to what the clergy have taught for centuries and laity have believed to be good without daring to doubt.

The artisan who has undertaken on Sundays to paint the scriptural texts wherever he finds space enough for this derives from his dull work pious satisfaction of service to God, shares in common with Felix and Cuthbert the moral inertia and apathy, and is different from them only in the crudity of his speech and manners. His conversations with Tess are revealing:

"'It is early to be astir this Sabbath morn!' he said cheerfully.
'Yes', said Tess.
'When most people are at rest from their week's work.' She also assented to this.
'Though I do more real work today than all the week besides.'
'Do you?'
'All the week I work for the glory of man, and on Sunday for the glory of God. That's more real than the other - hey?'" 20

But in this 'more real' work for 'the glory of God' he has only 'dons' and 'damnations' to write in order to warn against vices those who have not swerved as yet from the formal virtue, and to
chill the blood of those who have already suffered a lapse. So Tess asks:

"'Do you believe what you paint?'...... "Believe that text? Do I believe in my own existence.' "But,' she said tremulously, 'suppose your sin was not of your own seeking?'

He shook his head.

'I cannot split hairs on that burning query', he said. 'I have walked hundreds of miles this past summer, painting these texts on every wall, gate, and stile in the length and breadth of this district. I leave their application to the hearts of the people who read 'em.'

'I think they are horrible', said Tess. 'Crushing. Killing.'

'That's what they are meant to be,' he replied in a trade voice."21

The population of Marlott also knows no other morality. They cannot be kind and humane to Tess because in being seduced by Alec and bearing a child in consequence before marriage, she had infringed custom and offended popular sentiment. That was the reason why her family was expelled from the village after her father’s death. Hardy observes with a bitter sting of satire:

"Ever since the occurrence of the event which had cast such a shadow over Tess's life, the Durbeyfield family (whose descent was not credited) had been tacitly looked on as one which would have to go when their lease ended, if only in the interests of morality......By some means the village had to be kept pure. So on this, the first Lady-Day on which the Durbeyfields were expellable, the house, being roomy, was required for a carter with a large family; and Widow Joan, her daughters Tess and 'Liza-Lu, the boy Abraham and the younger children, had to go elsewhere."22

"Had she not come home her mother and the children might probably have been allowed to stay on as weekly tenants."
But she had been observed almost immediately on her return by some people of scrupulous character and great influence: they had seen her idling in the churchyard, restoring as well as she could with a little trowel a baby's obliterated grave. By this means they had found that she was living here again; her mother was scolded for 'harbouring' her; sharp retorts had ensued from Joan, who had independently offered to leave at once; she had been taken at her word; and here was the result."

Tess, in Marlott's view, was perpetuating the sin she had earlier committed in loving her child when alive and after it was dead. They never pause to reflect how mother's love for her child, legitimate or illegitimate, could be regarded as sin, and how their own absolute want of compassion for the bereaved family of Durbeyfield in evicting them from their ancestral hut could be called correct.

Customary morality is not, according Hardy, the right and reasoned ethical response of the collective mass to the pitiable cries of the "units" of society in distress. It adds to the social misery instead of mitigating it and sacrifices the end which is the possible happiness of each and all in the worship of the means which is the code of conduct. It plays in the tragedy of Tess the role of a villain. It pervades her social surrounding, causes in her own soul the sense of guilt which we have discussed in the previous chapter, and springs up to surface of Angel's consciousness from the hiding below it as soon as he learns of her lapse, and punishes her persistently.
Sincere Religious Ethics

Its basic position can best be stated in the words of Emil Brunner:

"What God does and wills is good; all that opposes the will of God is bad. The good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God. The Good is based on the Holy." "Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am Holy." The Holy means God, as the unconditionally sovereign Lord of the world; a thing is holy because, and in so far as, it is His property and is recognised as such. The holiness of man consists in knowing that he belongs to God. Insofar as he acknowledges in his life, and in his existence, this property-right of God, and thus obeys the will of God, he is good. No one has a claim on a man, or on a people, save God alone, and his claim permeates all the relationships of life. It is the only valid norm: Hence the "religious" element is also the ethical element, and the "ethical" is "religious"."24

The moral and the religious thus identified and animated with compassion and sympathy, more to the weak than to the strong, morally and physically, is excellent ethics if sincerely practised despite the theological absolutes and certitudes which have, rationally considered, no spiritual backing of the universe. Such ethics is best illustrated in the character and conduct of old Mr. Clare, Angel's father, and also of Mrs. Clare, his mother. They were the sincere and simple souls "who knew neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil in their own hearts."25 In service of their 'sick parishioners', in feeding the hungry of them, 'the
self-denying pair used to forget their own appetite. Such was their love for their fellow-men. Hardy writes of Mr. Clare:

"Old Mr. Clare was a clergymen of a type which, within the last twenty years, has wellnigh dropped out of contemporary life. A spiritual descendant in the direct line from Wycliff, Huss, Luther, Calvin; an Evangelical of the Evangelicals, a Conversionist, a man of Apostolic simplicity in life and thought, he had in his raw youth made up his mind once for all on the deeper questions of existence, and admitted no further reasoning on them thenceforward. He was regarded even by those of his own date and school of thinking as extreme; while, on the other hand, those totally opposed to him were unwillingly won to admiration for his thoroughness, and for the remarkable power he showed in dismissing all question as to principles in his energy for applying them..... The New Testament was less a Christiad than a Pauliad to his intelligence – less an argument than an intoxication. His creed of determinism was such that it almost amounted to a vice, and quite amounted, on its negative side, to a renunciative philosophy which had cousinship with that of Schopenhauer and Leopardi. He despised the Canons and Rubric, swore by the Articles, and deemed himself consistent through the whole category – which in a way he might have been. One thing he certainly was – sincere."26

He did not have hatred for the fallen from the standard morality even when their sins were of their own choosing and contrivance. It was his mission to restore the lost souls to the path of virtue, and he has suffered in this abuses and even blows from them. He tried to convert Alec who in his turn "did not scruple publicly to insult Mr. Clare, without respect for his gray hairs."27 Angel protested that his father ought not to have exposed himself "to such gratuitous pain from scoundrels."
"'Pain?' said his father, his rugged face shining in the ardour of self-abnegation. 'The only pain to me was pain on his account, poor, foolish young man. Do you suppose his incensed words could give me any pain, or even his blows? 'Being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all things unto this day.' Those ancient and noble words to the Corinthians are strictly as true at this present hour.'

He would have readily absolved Tess of all blame and rebuked Angel for treating her so harshly if Angel had the courage to present her pitiful case to him, or if she herself instead of "estimating her father-in-law by his sons" had approached him straight in the hour of her need. He did learn later the truth about her when even Angel was reconciled to Tess and it was too late to save her.

"From his (Angel's) remarks his parents now gathered the real reason of the separation; and their Christianity was such that, reprobates being their especial care, the tenderness towards Tess which her blood, her simplicity, even her poverty, had not engendered, was instantly excited by her sin."30

To old Mr. Clare morally upright man without devout faith in God was inconceivable. Likewise inconceivable was morally bankrupt believer in God. That is why he could not be reconciled with the new humanism of his son Angel that disavowed belief and emphasised exclusively on the moral aspect of religion.

Hardy could appreciate such morality as old Mr. Clare's
despite its irrational foundation in the outdated belief, because it did not condemn pitilessly the deviators from the norm, but lifted them up to the standard with infinite compassion even when their sins were not of mere 'inadvertance' as those of Tess, but intention as of Alec. There is not the element of supernatural hedonism in it found in the average religious morality which demands the multiplied return in heaven of all that is sacrificed on the earth. Its sole purpose is to please God, and the only reward intoxication of having done an act of spiritual significance.

Hardy, however, could not approve of it whole-heartedly because it is an enemy to intellectual enlightenment. It posits a Divine Power to govern our affairs instead of basing the sympathetic ordering of the social world on the human need and responsibility. It easily degrades into customary morality which dries up the essentially moral founts of pity and sympathy in favour of technical religious beliefs. Tess's cry

"Don't for God's sake speak as saint to sinner, but as you yourself to me myself - poor me."

is, in fact, the strong but inarticulate feeling of many needing in their dumb distress sympathy and help from their fellows. But the ministers of an institutional religion like the village-parson of Marlott to whom the cry in the novel is addressed rarely
wake up to humanity and are usually wont to speak in the manner of a saint to sinners.

(iii)
Supernatural Hedonism of Religious Morality

There are, then, pious believers who are little more than hedonists in the supernatural sense. They need God only to guarantee them reward in heaven for all the moral toil they have suffered to earn it here. There can be no ethics worth the name without the admission that an act of goodness is valuable in itself, or at the most for the inward satisfaction of non-material character, irrespective of whether it proves rewarding in terms of 'pleasure' here or hereafter or nowhere, immediately or in the long run or never, to the agent himself. But, in the words of Bertrand Russell:

"So unwilling, however, are people to admit self-sacrifice as an ultimate duty that they will often defend theological dogmas on the ground that such dogmas reconcile self-interest with duty."32

The faith of such supernatural hedonists represented here by the converted Alec is instantly blasted when confronted with the lucid logic of atheism. Tess, when Alec asked her to pray for him, refused to do so on the ground that she was forbidden by her husband "to believe that the great Power who moves the world
would alter His plans on my account." And the dialogue follows:

"'You seem to have no religion - perhaps owing to me.'
'But I have. Though I don't believe in anything supernatural.'
D'Urbervilles looked at her with misgiving.
'And you think that the line I take is all wrong?'
'A good deal of it.'
'H'm - and yet I've felt so sure about it', he said uneasily.
'Yes, in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, and so did my dear husband......But I don't believe -'
Here she gave her negations."55

Tess reasoned and reproduced the arguments of the atheistic thought which she had learnt from Angel "which might possibly have been paralleled in many a work of the pedigree ranging from the Dictionnaire Philosophique to Huxley's Essays."54 These thinkers as also Angel and Tess had disavowed faith in the irrational theology but had affirmed at the same time the new religion of humanism founded on the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the disinterested altruistic sentiment. Alec, however, was not so much anxious to propound sound moral philosophy as he was for the supernatural reward. Consequently "The drops of logic Tess had let fall into the sea of his enthusiasm served to chill its effervescence to stagnation."55 His brief conversion to Christianity came to an end. He tells her later:

"'Since I last saw you, I have been thinking of what you said that he said. I have come to the conclusion that there does seem rather a want of common-sense in these threadbare old propositions; how I could have been so
fired by poor Parson Clare's enthusiasm, and have gone so madly to work, transcending even him, I cannot make out!' As for what you said last time, on the strength of your wonderful husband's intelligence — whose name you have not told me — about having what they call an ethical system without any dogma, I don't see my way to that at all.'

'Why, you can have the religion of loving-kindness and purity at least, if you can't have — what do you call it — dogma.'

'O no.' I'm a different sort of fellow from that! If there's nobody to say, "Do this, and it will be a good thing for you after you are dead; do that, and it will be a bad thing for you", I can't warm up. Hang it, I am not going to feel responsible for my deeds and passions if there's nobody to be responsible to; and if I were you, my dear, I wouldn't either.'"36

The fact of God's absence is disheartening to such as Alec who do not want to risk 'pleasure' without rich compensation or suffer its loss without regret. The moral conclusion they arrive at from the metaphysical nihilism is similar to the deduction of Camus' Caligula that everything is permitted in trying to gratify our desires since death terminates life and the consolations of the aspirational logic are merely the roses of illusion. It is similar to the moral despair of Sartre's Roquentin in Nausea who sees no reason in the Self-Taught-Man's recognition of service to humanity as the purpose of life and comments: "I was just thinking........ that here we sit, all of us, eating and drinking to preserve our precious existence and really there is nothing, nothing, absolutely no reason for existing."37 It leads to the perversion of values
which the scientific enlightenment did not imply and which appalled sincere humanists. H. G. Wells writes of this tendency:

"Towards the close of the nineteenth century a crude misunderstanding of Darwinism had become the fundamental mindset of great masses of the "educated" everywhere......Prevalent peoples at the close of the nineteenth century believed that they prevailed by virtue of the Struggle for Existence, in which the strong and cunning get the better of the weak and confiding. And they believed further that they had to be strong, energetic, ruthless, "practical", egotistical, because God was dead – which was going altogether further than the new knowledge justified."38

Hardy himself observed that "to model our conduct on Nature's apparent conduct, as Nietzsche would have taught, can only bring disaster to humanity."39 But it cannot be avoided if morals are not altogether dissociated from metaphysics and theology. Alec has "mixed in his dull brain two matters, theology and morals."40 So have a great majority of mankind who are no more than supernaturally hedonistic in their religion. Hence, with the collapse of theology which cannot now be prevented, morals connected with it also inevitably collapse. The recognition of the indifferent universe leads to the disastrous amorality of all actions, or the perverted morality of the right of the might, and the replacement of self-abnegation by sheer selfishness as the summum bonum.

The aspirational faith despite its dogmatic metaphysics appears positively refreshing as a useful means for regulating the
human behaviour if the naturalistic vision of the world leads not to responsible morality but to permissive licence. Tess cries out to Alec: "O why didn't you keep your faith, if the loss of it has brought you to speak to me like this."41 And again: "I would rather you had kept the craze (of religion), so that you had kept the practice which went with it!"42 That is why William James, the American philosopher, insisted that faith despite its irrational foundation must be retained to serve its pragmatically useful function of actuating average man to moral action. Radhakrishnan abandons by implication experience and objectivity as the criteria of truth in favour of practical utility when he wishfully seeks to justify the validity and relevance of faith:

"However crude and misconceived the savage's religion may be, it gives him the security that the real is friendly to his values, and is not indifferent to his welfare."43

But it is the 'security' of self-deception, not of truth, of ignorance, not of wisdom, and cannot stand unshaken when assailed by the reasoning such as Tess's. It signifies the lack of courage to face the burning light of 'lucidity' all alone, and is an instance of 'bad faith'.

The right way is to make morals independent of religion and metaphysics. We are not concerned with the nature of the universe. Ethical values are not God-given. They are not to be
discovered ready-made by the exercise of either faith or reason. They are to be created in the light of human need. To quote E. W. Knight:

"There is no virtue in obedience, no virtue in doing what we will be recompensed for doing, no virtue in a sacrifice however great which is not gratuitous.

"This is the positive element of modern atheism.... The existence of God is incompatible with human virtue, for if God exists our acts are either determined by predestination or motivated, if not by the hope of reward, at least by the reluctance to offend, the desire to obey. The glory of man and the source of his uniqueness in the scheme of things is not his reason, considered as a means of attaining an Absolute, that is, of suppressing the gratuitous, but his freedom to be totally disinterested. Here is the answer (if one is needed) to the old fear that when men cease to believe in God "everything will be permitted.""44

That is existentialist position. Hardy's own position as represented through Tess, discussed partially in the present section, and to be discussed in further detail in the next, is not different.

(iv)

Secular Ethics of Human Responsibility

Angel Clare, and Tess as taught by him in theory and her own experiences in practice, represent the humanistic ethics informed with sympathy under the light of life's pathos or the 'tragic sense', dissociated from theology and metaphysics.
and worked out in response to the secular human need.

Angel welcomed the new light of the scientific thought which exploded the very foundation of the obscurantist dogma. That is what alienated him from the Vicarage, his father's residence which symbolises the traditional Christianity.

"Its transcendental aspirations - still unconsciously based on the the geocentric view of things, a zenithal paradise, a nadiral hell - were as foreign to his own as if they had been the dreams of people on another planet."45

But Angel is not an impatient revolutionary wishing to do away with the past altogether or disown Christianity entirely. He merely aims at moderate reform. He tells his father:

"I love the Church as one loves a parent. I shall always have the warmest affection for her. There is no institution for whose history I have a deeper admiration; but I cannot honestly be ordained her minister, as my brothers are, while she refuses to liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatry."46

And again:

"My whole instinct in matters of religion is towards reconstruction; to quote your favourite Epistle to the Hebrews, "the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.""47

He wanted to teach old morals with new metaphysics and would have entered the Church if she was willing to disown its untenable
theological part. He says to Tess:

"Though I imagine my poor father fears that I am one of the eternally lost for my doctrines, I am of course, a believer in good morals, Tessa, as much as you. I used to wish to be a teacher of men, and it was a great disappointment to me when I found I could not enter the Church."48

Both Angel and his father were at one as far as the moral aspect of Christianity is concerned, Hardy comments:

"Now, as always, Clare's father was sanguine as a child; and though the younger could not accept his parent's narrow dogma he revered his practice, and recognized the hero under the pietist. Indeed, despite his own heterodoxy, Angel often felt that he was nearer to his father on the human side than was either of his brethren."49

In the father and the son are contrasted the essential old faith and the new humanism. The new is significantly the child, not the enemy of the old. When the father grieved at the son's atheistic doctrines, said:

"What is the good of your mother and me economizing and stinting ourselves to give you a University education, if it is not to be used for the honour and glory of God?"50

the son's simple answer is

"Why, that it may be used for the honour and glory of man, father."51
This is the clear pronouncement of humanism based on the human need. But Angel is still a growing humanist who, though forward in theory, is backward in practice. He has, in fact, never rationally worked out his moral values, and his intellectualism is confined only to the recognition of the human situation in the world without God. While his father despite his dogma has truly Christian spirit of pity and generosity, Angel's morals are rather crude and of customary kind though he himself is unaware of it. That is why Tess's confession of her seduction by Alec entirely changes his view of her although he himself could not claim to have immaculate chastity. Her tears and mortification could not melt to pity the hard-heartedness he exhibited towards her. She pleads pitiably:

"'Angel! - Angel! I was a child - a child when it happened; I knew nothing of men.'
'You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit.'
'Then will you not forgive me?'
'I do forgive you, but forgiveness is not all.'
'And love me?'

To this question he did not answer.
'O Angel - my mother says that it sometimes happens so; - she knows several cases where they were worse than I, and the husband has not minded it much - has got over it at least. And yet the woman has not loved him as I do you.'
'Don't, Tess; don't argue. Different societies, different manners.......

Angel fails to understand that if 'manners' change from society to society, from clime to clime and time to time, they are not
an essential part of virtue. Morals such as mental purity, compassion, sincerity and self-abnegation are not thus relative to the geographical and historical factors, and have been eternally valuable everywhere. Tess was a devoted wife, trusting and obedient to a fault, to him, and had in her character the essential virtues. But, then, how is it that Angel whom Hardy himself described as "a man of great subtility of mind"53 in his chat with Raymond Blathwayt could not recognize it? Partly the cobwebs of custom which he has inherited, and partly the lack of moral courage account for his failure. He tells Tess:

"You don't in the least understand the quality of the mishap. It would be viewed in the light of a joke by nine-tenths of the world if it were known."54

Hardy comments:

"With all his attempted independence of judgment this advanced and well-meaning young man, a sample product of the last five-and twenty years, was yet the slave to custom and conventionality when surprised back into his early teachings. No prophet had told him, and he was not prophet enough to tell himself, that essentially this young wife of his was as deserving of the praise of King Lemuel as any other woman endowed with the same dislike of evil, her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency."55

But Angel undergoes in Brazil, away from Tess, home and the moral clime of his native soil, a process of purification.
"During this time of absence he had mentally aged a dozen years. What arrested him now as of value in life was less its beauty than its pathos. Having long discredited the old appraisements of mysticism, he now began to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting. Who was the moral man? Still more pertinently, who was the moral woman? The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its history lay, not among things done, but among things willed."56

Life's 'pathos' must kindle in us pity and sympathy for all those who suffer under heartless heaven. The quality of an action must be judged in the light of the motive that actuated it. The action is amoral without reference to it. Such views of Angel were further corroborated by his companion in Brazil:

"The stranger had sojourned in many more lands and among many more peoples than Angel; to his cosmopolitan mind such deviations from the social norm, so immense to domesticity, were no more than are the irregularities of vale and mountain-chain to the whole terrestrial curve. He viewed the matter in quite a different light from Angel; thought that what Tess had been was of no importance beside what she would be, and plainly told Clare that he was wrong in coming away from her."57

"The cursory remarks of the large-minded stranger, of whom he knew absolutely nothing beyond a commonplace name, were sublimed by his death, and influenced Clare more than all the reasoned ethics of the philosophers. His own parochialism made him ashamed by its contrast. His inconsistencies rushed upon him in a flood. He had persistently elevated Hellenic Paganism at the expense of Christianity; yet in that civilization an illegal surrender was not certain disesteem. Surely then he might have regarded that abhorrence of the un-intact state, which he had inherited with the creed of mysticism, as at least open to correction when the result was due to treachery. A remorse struck into him."58
Angel sincerely regretted his harsh treatment to Tess, and was now as eager to reach her as previously he was to run away from her.

"He had undergone some strange experiences in his absence; he had seen the virtual Faustina in the literal Cornelia, a spiritual Lucretia in a corporeal Phryne; he had thought of the woman taken and set in the midst as one deserving to be stoned, and of the wife of Uriah being made a queen; and he had asked himself why he had not judged Tess constructively rather than biographically, by the will rather than by the deed."59

Now in the characters of chastened Angel are combined his own earlier atheism with the essential Christian spirit of love, compassion and forgiveness, the combination that Hardy stood for. The Pagan freedom and generosity are not inconsistent with the Christian virtue. In fact, they alone can make it truly a virtue as distinguished from mere conformity to the customary norms. Angel becomes at the end an accomplished humanist of Hardy's notion and treats Tess with extreme kindness and love in their hide-out before she was arrested to be hanged for murdering Alec.

Tess is not learned in books as Angel, and has not his power of utterance in the new philosophical phraseology. Yet her humanism, right from the start, is more authentic in the essential feeling of compassion to all creatures in general and
human beings in particular. She tells Angel that before she killed Alec in a fit of anger "I never could bear to hurt a fly or a worm, and the sight of a bird in a cage used often to make me cry."60 The awareness of sorrow pervading all sentient existence, the 'tragic sense of life', leads her to conclude that since there is no God to be responsible for suffering either in Nature or in the human society, it is man's gratuitous duty to lift the entire burden of responsibility on his shoulders. It is considered earlier while discussing the Supernatural Hedonism of such as Alec that God's absence, according to Tess, does not imply permissive licence but responsible secular ethics. The religion of loving-kindness she alludes to and the morality of the Sermon on the Mount, is to be founded on the stern and uncompromising atheism, and is therefore difficult to practise.

Her second surrender to Alec is to be viewed in the light of the above. When on the eve of their departure from Marlott, the date of their expulsion from their ancestral residence, the children are singing to care-worn Tess

"'Here we suffer grief and pain,
Here we meet to part again;
In Heaven we part no more.'"61

"Tess turned from them, and went to the window again. Darkness had now fallen without, but she put her face to the pane as though to peer into the gloom. It was really to hide her tears. If she could only believe
what the children were singing; if she were only sure, how different all would now be; how confidently she would leave them to Providence and their future kingdom. But, in default of that, it behoved her to do something; to be their Providence; for to Tess, as to not a few millions of others, there was ghastly satire in the poet's lines

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

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

The children are singing inside the home with continued regard on "the centre of the flickering fire", it is the eve of their expulsion, and outside there is darkness and uncertainty. A little reflection will reveal that apart from Tess's inward conflict and determination to help the young ones stated clearly in the passage quoted above, every detail in the situation has a symbolic meaning. Tess's ancestral home suggests the home our forefathers have built us with the light and fire of faith inside, the fire which seems in its last flicker near the end of the nineteenth century. Children, or those who are intellectually so, or poets like Wordsworth, can still sing songs of hope in heaven. But for the adult and enlightened like Tess there is no meaning in such babble and bubbles of religious emotion, for they look courageously to the darkness outside, the darkness which has double significance of one of sleep in death which awaits us instead of heaven hereafter, and of existence here
Itself where the fire of faith is extinguished, wherein the feeling of being at home which our ancestors had cultivated sedulously is transformed into the ache of alienation. The birth, human existence and universe are gratuitous. Life has no meaning, the world has no reasons for its being there, and philosophy is a futile attempt at inventing meaning and reasons which objectively exist nowhere in the roll and rush of time. But suffering is genuine so long as it lasts, and something must be done to mitigate it. It is the common bond that binds all humanity, all sentient existence so to say into a fraternal community. Self-sacrifice for others' well-being is still meaningful in the irrational universe. It constitutes a value in itself and has not to depend for its justification on any Super-mundane being or hope for personal happiness after death. The darkness of metaphysical nihilism itself has to become the light and guide for moral endeavour. Man has to be man's Providence in absence of any Friend behind or beyond phenomena. Tess's loyalty to Angel even if it brought sorrow and starvation only to her sole self might be vindicated as a virtue, and she would have exhibited it unto last breath. But it was no longer virtue since it brought sorrow and starvation to her whole family. She could not abdicate her responsibility to them for the luxury of her hopeless love for, her "dumb and vacant fidelity" to Angel whose return seemed to her now impossible. Therefore, the humanist in
her led her to surrender to Alec and sacrifice of herself thus. She is spiritually dead after this, and continues to live merely for her family. Angel, when he returns, is quick enough to perceive "that his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognise the body before him as hers - allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will."65

All this resembles largely the atheistic existentialist ethics. The central problem in it as also in Hardy's philosophy is the reconstruction of morals on a new basis. Both question the validity of the traditionally received religions morality, and reject it as absurd and impossible. Sartre's Goetz in The Devil and the Good Lord cries in moral agony of an earnest believer:

"Lord, if Thou dost refuse us the means of doing good, why hast Thou made us desire it so keenly? If Thou didst not permit that I should become good, why shouldst Thou have taken from me the desire to be wicked?"36

Of Tess also Hardy writes:

"She - and how many more - might have ironically said to God with Saint Augustine: 'Thou hast counselled a better course than Thou hast permitted.'"67

Charles I. Glicksberg observes in his The Tragic Vision in Twentieth Century Literature:
"Sartre's tragic humanism rests on an atheistic premise. Since God does not exist, man must give up the futile search for standards outside himself. There is nothing disheartening in the discovery that man is alone in the universe."68

The same applies to Hardy's tragic humanism as well. What seemed disheartening to his readers and reviewers in his own age does not seem so to us. To quote Glicksberg again:

"If there is anything disturbingly new in Existentialism it is not "the doctrine" per se, the phenomenological ontology set forth in Being and Nothingness, but the febrile intensity with which it stresses the theme of alienation, the nothingness of man vis-a-vis the universe and the necessity he is under to affirm his freedom, the psychology of "bad faith". Freedom — that is the single, obsessive burden of its message. Man's freedom is inescapable and manifests itself in each of the choices he makes. Freedom is what one is, even though it functions always within a given situation."69

Hardy has not attempted, has not thought it worth attempting, the phenomenological description of the world. But his perception of the metaphysical and social absurd, and his intense feeling of alienation as frequently discussed earlier, are unmistakable. Tess also realizes alienation and resolves her moral conflict in the light of it by choosing freely to offer herself as a sacrifice. Hardy is a pessimist, if at all he is one, in the existentialist sense, and he is certainly not a determinist, for a determinist can logically claim to have no ethics. 'I ought', as Kant contended, implies 'I can', and the determinist being unable to
accept the power and freedom of will, can prescribe no 'oughts' or ideals of ethics. All throughout this novel Hardy shows how Tess and other men could have saved her though they did not, and champions the ethics of entire human responsibility. Surely, a determinist does not do so. Hardy, in fact, differed from the Darwinian Naturalists of his times and resembled existentialists as discussed in the second chapter, in admitting man as a free agent and refusing to regard him as a physico-chemical organism of the mechanistic notion.

There is, yet, a vital difference between Hardy's ethics as we derive it from his novels, and the atheistic existentialist ethics as represented chiefly and popularly by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sanity, compassion and renunciation which make the one as gentle as it is bold, are a singular want in the other. The human being in existentialism means basically an individual's 'being-for-itself' (Pour-soi), and anything that curbs or curtails its spontaneous volitional flow even when it seems criminal towards his fellows, is to be dismissed as a taboo, for other men, to him, are little more than objects. All ideals and moral injunctions, consequently, are no more than inhibitions, and society is a vast mass of irreconcilable freedoms seeking to encroach upon one another, exploit one another for self-fulfilment, and united together in the only and irremedi-
ble relationship of hatred. As James Collins observes:

"Sartre is especially insistent on the impossibility of overcoming hatred through motives of love, personal respect or belief in God. It is just as natural to desire a loving, interpersonal, human community as to desire to become God – and just as impossible of fulfilment."70

There can be no sound humanism without recognizing the ideal of love to unite a 'for-itself' with other 'for-themselves', to moderate his freedom by renunciation for their welfare. That is precisely what an existentialist cannot enjoin if he has to maintain his basic position, and cannot do without illogically advocating if he has to be humanistic. The paradox is irresoluble. It weakens the existentialist humanism.

Hardy would agree that hate, the result of the ruthless pursuit of self-interest, characterises the human community in the actual, else why should coarse appropriate the fine, the wrong man the woman, the wrong woman the man, the phenomenon, which no analytical philosophy can explain satisfactorily to our sense of moral order or harmony.71 But he does not confuse the actual with the ideal, does not think that this hate cannot be overcome. A perfect community interpenetrated by the spirit of selfless love may be inconceivable. It is at least inconceivable at the present hour. But there are sure to be exceptional individuals who lay down even their lives for the gratuitous love for
others. It is within our power to become such men. Hardy's great characters are not self-seeking brutes liberated from all restraint that theology had imposed on man previously. They are like Tess who with loving-kindness freely choose to appoint themselves as the Providence to guard their unfortunate fellows against sorrow so far as possible even at the cost of self-delight. The disappearance of God binds them all the more steadfast to humanity but does not lead to the pervert love of self.

III

The Hand of Ethelberta: Hardy vis-a-vis J. S. Mill

Hardy's tragic genius has played here against its own power in attempting to write a light social satire or 'A Comedy in Chapters'. The result, obviously, is poor. It is trivial from literary point of view and is usually dismissed as "the most brittle and superficial of his works."72

It is, however, important from the autobiographical point of view. Hardy, according to Robert Gittings, has shown in The Hand of Ethelberta which had been "an enigma to critics, a puzzle to the reading public, a disappointment to its editor and publisher, and a stumbling-block to its talented illustrator, Du Maurier"75, his own struggle in terms of his poetess-heroine's
ambitious course from the class of servants to the world of higher learning, letters and aristocracy. She represents, moreover, his own obsessions, his awareness of the human predicament, and the trends of his metaphysical and social ethics. She is influenced as Hardy himself was, by Mill's Utilitarian ethics, and has adapted its principles to her own vision of the world. We can, consequently, compare Hardy's moral philosophy expressed discernibly enough in this novel, with that of J. S. Mill.

Ethelberta, as the title of the novel clearly suggests, is the central character here. She is a woman of rare charms and accomplishments. As one of her admirers says:

"Old men like her because she is so girlish; youths because she is womanly; wicked men because she is good in their eyes; good men because she is wicked in theirs."74

Old Lord Mountclere exclaims:

"Her education - how finished; and her beauty - so seldom that I meet with such a woman."75

She moves among the high London society as one of them and draws lovers round her like candle draws moths. The third of a butler's ten children, she passes as the daughter of the late Bishop of Silchester, and carefully conceals her origin and identity, not because she is ashamed of owning her parents, but because she
wants to rise higher for raising her family up from poverty, and providing her brothers and sisters brighter chances of life and better education. Self-abnegation is the chief characteristic of her soul. Iron will and ability at contriving situations in desired directions despite the adversity of circumstances, are other characteristics. She knows no despair or defeat, regards larger happiness of all concerned in her actions as the sumum bonum and places the disinterested duties even when they are painful to herself in the emotional sense, before the pleasures of personal fulfilment.

She truly loved Christopher Julian, a poor musician. Her chosen happiness lay in marrying him. But in her situation marriage itself had to become a means of doing good to her family. So she married instead, certain Mr. Petherwin, the son of a rich house where she was employed as a governess. But her calculations are upset as he dies shortly after the marriage leaving her a twenty-one years old widow. A quarrel over the publication of her 'Metres by E.' estranges her with his mother. Ethelberta is consequently disinherited except for the tail-end of a lease on a house in London before the older woman also dies shortly afterwards. She is free once more to make a fresh start.

She meets Christopher again. Now instead of marrying for the utilitarian end, she decides to wait till he becomes a rich
man, managing meanwhile to pull on for family requirements in various ways—turning during the tenure of her lease the house into lodgings for foreigners, publication of verses, public recitals and relations of romances, etc. But she realizes then that Picotee, her sister, had developed hopeless one-sided passion for Christopher. Out of tender maternal regard for the younger sister, consequently, she subdues her own passion, leaves Picotee free to love Christopher, and decides even to accomplish their marriage. As for herself, she turns her mind to manoeuvring for a useful marriage rather than a marriage for love. After careful consideration about the suitability of three suitors for her hand—Heigh, Ladywell and Lord Mountclere—her choice falls upon the last one who is older than her own father. She consults, before reaching a positive decision on this issue, J. S. Mill's Utilitarianism and finds guidance from the treatise. The passages in which she does so must be quoted at length as they throw light not only on this one critical choice of her life, but also on the sort of thinking that usually guides her willing:

"She took down a well-known treatise on Utilitarianism which she had perused once before, and to which she had given her adherence ere any instance had arisen wherein she might wish to take it as a guide. Here she desultorily searched for argument, and found it; but the application of her author's philosophy to the marriage question was an operation of her own, as unjustifiable as it was likely in the circumstances."
"The ultimate end*, she read, 'with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people) is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality. This being, according to the utilitarian opinion, the end of human action, is necessarily also the standard of morality.'

"It was an open question, so far, whether her own happiness should or should not be preferred to that of others. But that her personal interests were not to be considered as paramount appeared further on:-

"The happiness which forms the standard of what is right in conduct is not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator."

"As to whose happiness was meant by that of 'other people', 'all concerned', and so on, her luminous moralist soon enlightened her:-

"The occasions on which any person (except one in a thousand) has it in his power to do this on an extended scale - in other words, to be a public benefactor - are but exceptional; and on these occasions alone is he called on to consider public utility; in every other case private utility, the interest or happiness of some few persons, is all he has to attend to."

"And that these few persons should be those endeared to her by every domestic tie no argument was needed to prove. That their happiness would be in proportion to her own well-doing, and power to remove their risks of indigence, required no proving either to her now."

"By a sorry but unconscious misapplication of sound and wide reasoning did the active mind of Ethelberta thus find itself a solace. At about the midnight hour she felt more fortified on the expediency of marriage with Lord Mountolere than she had done at all since musing
on it. In respect of the second query, whether or not, in that event, to conceal from Lord Mountclere the circumstances of her position till it should be too late for him to object to them, she found her conscience inconveniently in the way of her theory, and the oracle before her afforded no hint. 'Ah - it is a point for a casuist,' she said.

"An old treatise on Casuistry lay on the top shelf. She opened it - more from curiosity than for guidance this time, it must be observed - at a chapter bearing on her problem 'The disciplina arcani, or, the doctrine of reserve.'

"Here she read that there were plenty of apparent instances of this in Scripture, and that it was formed into a recognized system in the early Church. With reference to direct acts of deception, it was argued that since there were confessedly cases where killing is no murder, might there not be cases where lying is no sin? It could not be right - or, indeed, anything but most absurd - to say in effect that no doubt circumstances would occur where every sound man would tell a lie, and would be a brute or a fool if he did not, and to say at the same time that it is quite indefensible in principle. Duty was the key to conduct then, and if in such cases duties appeared to clash they would be found not to do so on examination. The lesser duty would yield to the greater, and therefore ceased to be a duty.

"This author she found to be not so tolerable; he distracted her. She put him aside and gave over reading, having decided on this second point, that she would, at any hazard, represent the truth to Lord Mountclere before listening to another word from him. 'Well, at last I have done', she said, 'and am ready for my role.'

"In looking back upon her past as she retired to rest, Ethelberta could almost doubt herself to be the identical woman with her who had entered on a romantic career a few short years ago. For that doubt she had good reason. She had begun as a poet of the Satanic school in a sweetened form; she was ending as a pseudo-utilitarian. Was there ever such a transmutation effected before by the action of a hard environment? It was without a qualm of regret that she discerned how the last infirmity of a noble mind had at length nearly
departed from her. She wondered if her early notes had had the genuine ring in them, or whether a poet who could be thrust by realities to a distance beyond recognition as such was a true poet at all. Yet Ethelberta's gradient had been regular: emotional poetry, light verse, romance as an object, romance as a means, thoughts of marriage as an aid to her pursuits, a vow to marry for the good of her family; in other words, from soft and playful Romanticism to distorted Benthamism. Was the moral incline upward or down?76

It is difficult to understand why Hardy calls it all "the application of her author's philosophy to the marriage question" which was "an operation of her own as unjustifiable as it was likely in the circumstances", "unconscious misapplication of sound and wide reasoning" and "distorted Benthamism", for Mill's treatise read rightly as a whole would fully sanction the ethical conduct of Ethelberta all throughout her career and in this event in particular. There is no reason why the utilitarian theory which lays down general principles for moral guidance should specifically exclude the marriage question from their application. Mill writes of the criterion of good actions:

"The creed which accepts, as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest-happiness principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and privation of pleasure."77

To the question which Hardy has posed our emphatic answer in the light of Mill's reasoning is that the moral justification of her
choice of marriage and the clear upward incline can be seen in the motive that actuated her and the consequences which her act entailed.

As for the motive, it is wrong to assume that Ethelberta married the old Lord Mountclere for the wealth, title and status, for the furtherance and fulfilment of personal ambition. She was mortified at the discovery that her duty to Picotee demanded the sacrifice of her pure passion for Christopher. She had lied when she told Picotee that she did not care to marry him. Duty spoke in stern tenderness when she said, "I would much rather he paid his addresses to you." 78 But her real sorrow burst out when, after Picotee had left her room, she "shook in convulsive sobs which had little relationship with tears." 79 She not only clears her sister's way to Christopher, but also carries her ultimately to the goal of marriage with him. For the self-undertaken responsibility towards her younger brothers and sisters, to Picotee in particular, she decided to marry a man older than her father at the cost of her love and liking. It is discussed in the previous chapter that when love conflicts with duty towards fellow-beings, Hardy's characters, at least the ideal of them, have always sacrificed the romantic passion for the larger happiness. In thus intending "not the agent's own happiness but that of all concerned" Ethelberta's conduct, in point of motive, is unimpeachable.
As for the consequences, she achieves what she intends. With Lord Mountclare's money and influence at her command she proves virtually "the prime ruler of the courses of them all." Mr. and Mrs. Chickerel, her parents, have built a decent house in Sandbourne called Firtop Villa. They are living there free from the shadow of poverty and want. Sol and Dan, her brothers, are settled in London as builders. Emmeline is employed as Ethelberta's reader. Gwendoline and Cornelia are married off to two brothers "who were farmers, and left England the following week" for Queensland. "Georgie and Myrtle are at School." They are thinking of making Joey or Joseph a parson. Picotee and Christopher gradually come closer through correspondence which was established between her and Faith, his sister, by Ethelberta's arrangement. Attachment grows between the two and matures into matrimony. All of Ethelberta's plans are finally realized.

It does not mean Ethelberta did it all at the cost of Lord Mountclare. Even like a true follower of Kant's intuitionist school of morality she makes no one the means to her personal or family ends. Her presence brought Lord Mountclare health, happiness and wealth. It introduced order and discipline into his life and property. Passing by the Red Lion inn on the way towards Knollsea when Christopher asks the coachman if Lord Mountclare was still alive and well, the coachman answers:
"'O ay. He'll live to be a hundred. Never such a change as has come over the man of late years.'
'Indeed.'
'O, 'tis my lady. She's a one to put up with. Still, 'tis said here and there that marrying her was the best day's work that he ever did in his life, although she's got to be my lord and lady both.'"82

She thoroughly reformed the Lord that was a known loose and lascivious character. The coachman says further:

"'Poor old nobleman, she marches him off to Church every Sunday as regular as a clock, makes him read family prayers that haven't been read in Enckworth for the last thirty years to my certain knowledge, and keeps him down to three glasses of wine a day, strick, so that you never see him any the more generous for liquor or a tint elevated at all, as it used to be. There, 'tis true, it has done him good in one sense, for they say he'd have been dead in five years if he had gone on as he was going.'"83

She manages cleverly his estate which had known before no management worth the name. To continue what the coachman has to say:

"'She's steward, and agent, and everything. She has got a room called "my lady's office", and great ledgers and cash-books you never see the like. In old times there were bailiffs to look after the workfolk, foremen to look after the tradesmen, a building-steward to lock after the foremen, a land-steward to look after the building-steward, and a dashing grand agent to look after the land steward: fine times they had then, I assure 'ee! My lady said they were eating out the property like a honeycomb, and then there was a terrible row. Half of 'em were sent flying; and now there's only the agent, and the viscountess, and a sort of surveyor man, and of the three she does most work, so 'tis said. She marks the trees to be felled, settles what horses are to be sold and bought, and is out in all winds and weathers. There, if somebody
hadn't looked into things 'twould soon have been all up with his lordship, he was so very extravagant."84

She herself leads contented life later. Mill assigns "to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feeling and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensations."85 All such pleasures are hers. She spends her leisure hours in library, and has planned an epic.

Virtue, according to Mill, as considered earlier here, is what promotes the happiness of the agent and others concerned with his act. But it is never an end in itself. The traditional ethics is mistaken in so far as it confuses the ends with the means on account of their usual association in causal relationship, in regard to what is called virtue as intrinsically valuable. They cannot think otherwise even when it ceases to be an effective means under certain circumstances towards the realization of happiness which is the indisputable end. He writes:

"All honor to those who can abnegate for themselves the personal enjoyment of life, when by such renunciation they contribute worthily to increase the amount of happiness in the world; but he who does it, or professes to do it, for any other purpose, is no more deserving of admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar. He may be an inspiring proof of what men can do, but assuredly not an example of what they should."86

Ethelberta's self-abnegation, as we have seen earlier, and her marriage, realize the welfare of many, and are therefore morally
valuable. Those who contend that she had twice shown the lack of virtue in not marrying where she loved, assume without justification that loyalty is intrinsically valuable even when it does greater harm than good and reduces instead of increasing the 'amount of happiness in the world.' Even chastity or fidelity is not an absolute virtue, and Tessa's second surrender to Alec, as considered earlier, is the noblest sacrifice under her circumstances. Ethelberta does not practise anything for its own sake. She tells clever lies, cheats the whole of the high London society, but injures none and achieves the good of all. She never deceives herself, and when a lie was likely to prove real dishonesty in disturbing her would-be-husband sometime in future at the probable discovery of her origin and identity, she boldly undeceives him. He was, of course, already undeceived without her knowledge before she confessed everything to him. But her confession proves her integrity. She illustrates in her conduct thus the utilitarian ethics.

Yet why does Hardy write that it was misapplication of Benthamism to the 'marriage question'? His remarks are often misplaced. His conscious comments sometimes contradict instead of corroborating what he shows spontaneously.

There are, however, differences not difficult to discern, between Mill's Utilitarianism and Hardy's ethics as it issues
from this novel and others. Some of their basic convictions are different. Mill believed, as we learn from his *Three Essays on Religion*, in spite of his rationalism, in God as the Creator Who is curiously enough benevolent but not omnipotent, for if He were both, the problem of evil could not be satisfactorily explained.

"The only admissible moral theory of Creation is that the Principle of Good cannot at once and altogether subdue the powers of evil, either physical or moral; could not place mankind in a world free from the necessity of an incessant struggle with the maleficent powers, or make them always victorious in that struggle, but could and did make them capable of carrying on the fight with vigor and with progressively increasing success. Of all the religious explanations of the order of nature, this alone is neither contradictory to itself, nor to the facts for which it attempts to account. According to it, man's duty would consist, not in simply taking care of his own interests by obeying irresistible power, but in standing forward a not ineffectual auxiliary to a Being of perfect beneficence; a faith which seems much better adapted for nerving him to exertion than a vague and inconsistent reliance on an Author of Good who is supposed to be also the author of evil." 87

In short good God is yet growing towards greater power and needs mankind's support through their morality for fighting evil and the eventual realization of absolute happiness. It is a sort of compromise formula between atheism which the rationalist logic carried to the conclusion cannot shirk, and theism which the wishful in man unable to stand alone and all-responsible cannot do without. It is a dubious position between stark truth and comfortable belief. J. M. Robertson is rightly critical of Mill when he writes:
"Curiously antipathetic to the method of Spencer, who, with whatever laxities of logic in detail, early reached the vital perception that the causation of the Infinite Universe must remain unknown to man. Mill left us in his posthumous Essays on Religion a theistic theorem which can never have satisfied a philosophic mind. Guided as much by his strong moral sympathies as by his logical recognition of the hopeless inconsistencies of Theism in all its traditionary forms, he firmly rejected, as did his father, the impossible formula of a Benevolent Omnipotence which foreplans all evil and yet hates evil. But instead of accepting Spencer's reminder that the inferred Power "behind the Universe" (a crude phrase, in itself anthropomorphic) is not rationally to be regarded in terms of Mind but inferred as necessarily transcending Mind, he fell into that form of the Sympathetic Fallacy which tentatively pictures a God animated by the best intentions but unable to control the Universe to his will."

It need not be repeated what is discussed in the first chapter and elsewhere earlier here that Hardy believed in no God and hazarded no inference regarding the Power "behind the Universe". He imagined occasionally an evil Power for his poetic purposes. But imagination is not belief and poetry is not intended to be philosophy. Hardy never confused the two. His atheism was clear and uncompromising.

Another point that follows from the passage quoted from Three Essays is that Mill finds the world as it is, though having in it much "to correct and improve", good enough to yield positive pleasures, and his liberal humanism is founded on the stubborn hope that all the social evils, some of even terrestrial evils of life, will be rectified at a still higher stage of human progress
and scientific inventions in future. He writes also in Utilitarianism:

"All the grand sources, in short, of human suffering, are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort; and though their removal is grievously slow; though a long succession of generations will perish in the breach before the conquest is completed, and this world becomes all that, if will and knowledge were not wanting, it might easily be made — yet every mind sufficiently intelligent and generous to bear a part, however small and unconscious, in the endeavour, will draw a noble enjoyment from the contest itself, which he would not, for any bribe in the form of selfish indulgence, consent to be without."89

Hardy finds such optimism childish. Pleasures of the world do not seem so alluring to the mind awakened to the human predicament. Only those who forsake 'lucidity' and betake to 'bad faith' may find happiness here. Ethelberta says: "In a world where the blind only are cheerful we should all do well to put out our eyes."90 Hardy, as considered in the first chapter, did not share the liberal hope and the view of evolution as progress. The evils, increased in number, and some of them different in kind, in our own age which was Mill's and Hardy's future, have belied the former's hope, justified the latter's want of it, and exploded the myth of moral progress in a world heading fast towards total annihilation. Hardy, in fact, never envisaged a success in distant future, or failure for that matter, for he was neither an idealist visionary, nor a pessimist, either to coax our moral endeavour or
to discourage it. What seems important to him is the struggle against evils today irrespective of the eventual result.

Mill regards happiness not only as the end of the actual human pursuits, but the ideal of the moral endeavour as well. The sacrifice of indulgence, according to him, is not contrary to happiness, but constitutes 'a noble enjoyment'. Then, it seems, the agent accustomed to such noble enjoyments will fret and fume in dissatisfaction when generations later in a perfect society of Mill's dream 'contest' will end in triumph, self-sacrifice will become superfluous, and only sensations will be available in plenty. The perfect society where nobler enjoyments are no longer available to the refined humanity, must be an unhappy society, indeed!

The fact, however, is that the rosy dreams of future, or the interpretation of the renunciation of pleasure as also a sort of superior pleasure in the hedonistic language, though they evidence reasonable moral anxiety and hope, are plainly wishful, fallacious and unnecessary in sound moral philosophy. The self-denial of happiness does not in itself constitute a higher happiness, but implies a value higher than happiness. The injunctions of ethics have to run counter to the instinctive quest, and therefore, what is usually desired is not morally desirable. The end of ethical behaviour is not just 'happiness' but the 'happiness of others.'
The agent himself has to endure, not enjoy, the privation of pleasures for the realisation of this higher end. All morality worth the name is 'other-centred', not 'self-centred'. In Hardy's social ethics also we see that the goal is always 'the happiness of others' to be realized even at the cost of personal comfort and peace. Winterborne in *The Woodlanders*, when he dies delirious death for the honour of Grace, Tess when she surrenders herself to Alec for the sake of her family's welfare, John Loveday, when he abnegates his love for Anne, for the happiness of his brother in *The Trumpet-Major*, do not derive the higher kind of happiness Mill speaks of, but suffer positive mortification as a result of obedience to the higher command of duty. That precisely enhances the moral significance of their free choices.

There are, however, those of Hardy's moral heroes who seem to realize some kind of nobler satisfaction from their acts of self-sacrifice. Clym Yeobright in *The Return of the Native*, Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Elizabeth-Jane in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, to a certain sure degree even Phillotson in *Jude the Obscure*, and Ethelberta here do realize a sort of tranquillity which does not have its source in indulgence. All this, we feel momentarily, is in keeping with the ethics of Mill who observes:

"The main constituents of a satisfied life appear to be two, either of which by itself is often found sufficient for the purpose - tranquillity and excitement."
But it must be remembered that the 'tranquility' of Hardy's heroes comes from resignation to the frowns and favours of fortune, not from renunciation for their fellows. It is the result of ideal relationship of harmony established between man and his world as discussed in the second chapter. Self-courted suffering for the peace and happiness of others is Hardy's ideal in social ethics. It may bring to the agent himself no peace at all. Affirmative resignation to all chance changes of life which resolves the metaphysical absurd and deepens into inward serenity of the 'introvertive' mystical kind, is his ideal in the metaphysical ethics. All his characters do not fully represent both these ideals in their practice. Ethelberta, however, does. Her spirit is even like Clym's, essentially that of a hermit, although she is driven under the pressure of necessity to undertake strenuous work for the welfare of her family. She ever longed for a day "when she might draw her boat upon the shore, and in some thimy nook await eternal night with a placid mind." 92 Her personal ambition even at its worst is not bad enough to strike or enhance the disharmony with the world. It is of a peculiar sort, imbued with the spirit of affirmative resignation. She tells Christopher Julian:

"Life is a battle, they say; but it is only so in the sense that a game of chess is a battle – there is no seriousness in it; it may be put an end to at any inconvenient moment by owning yourself beaten, with a careless
"Ha-ha.'" and sweeping your pieces into the box. Experimentally, I care to succeed in society; but at the bottom of my heart, I don't care."95

Christopher repeats the same idea which characterises her spirit as much as his, in different words when he answers:

"For that very reason you are likely to do it. My idea is, make ambition your business and indifference your relaxation, and you will fail; but make indifference your business and ambition your relaxation, and you will succeed. So impish are the ways of gods."94

She resembles in all this somewhat the karmayogin of the Geeta concept who keeps emotionally withdrawn into an inner quietude even while engaged in the hectic activities for the general good of others.

Mill and the utilitarians regard only consequences as the criterion to judge the moral worth of an action by, and ignore the motive behind it. Intuitionists like Kant, on the contrary, uphold motive alone as the right criterion. The right theory must assign each of these two its due place in moral judgement of an action as Hardy does. Rightness of motive saves Sue's desertion of Jude despite its disastrous consequences to the latter, from immortality, as considered in the previous chapter, and makes it only less than altogether moral. Alec's gift of horse to Tess's father, of toys to her brothers and sisters, before he seduced her, and his help later before he won her back to his command,
although happy in consequences to many who wanted bread and shelter, are far less moral in that it was all intended to further his self-interest, but yet not absolutely immoral. Tess lacked sound judgement which, as we shall see in the next section, would have counselled her that she could and should have married Alec after she was seduced, for the happiness of all concerned. Therefore, in spite of the hardships which she and her family had to suffer in consequence of her serious omission, it remains just amoral, but surely not immoral. Ethelberta's conduct illustrates the ideal in which her motives are worthy, judgement unerring and consequences happy.

Utilitarianism, finally, is essentially a social and political philosophy extended to the domain of ethics. "For the Utilitarians or Benthamites, as they were called after the founder of the school, philosophy was only a means to social and political reform. They were not so much a philosophical school as a political party, and are better described as 'philosophical radicals'. Their Utilitarianism was rather a political ideal than an ethical principle, while their common empiricism and associationism were still more subordinate to the practical purposes which united them in a common social effort." 95 Hardy's principles of secular ethics of human responsibility as we derive them from his novels are applicable to the narrower province of private relationships
only. He never had the ambition of becoming a great reformer or plunging into the field of active politics. He did revolt, of course, against the tyranny of custom and irrational marriage laws. But it was just incoherent revolt which could refuse to conform to what was mechanically being practised by others and had no idea of what should replace it.

IV

Tess and Ethelberta: The Error of Judgement and its Rectification

Both Tess and Ethelberta are beautiful women placed in similar situations of responsibility towards family. But the difference is that Tess is a tragic heroine who atones in her death and suffering for her own errors, while the other is a heroic character who gives desired shape to the adverse circumstances by the power of calm judgement and strong will, and triumphs through the hurdles that fortune puts in her way. In one case we see how what is ordinarily regarded as a virtue may itself turn into vice through wrong application; in the other how a correct application may transform a vice of the traditional notion itself into a virtue. It is interesting to study the flaws and omissions of one in comparison with the merits and actions of the other.
Tess is innocent, even ignorant, like a child, and is nearly a child at the start of the novel. "Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her nineth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then."96 She is docile accordingly. Her mother is right when she says that "she's tractable at bottom."97 She feels guilty when Prince, the horse, was killed in an accident on her account, and is pushed in consequence to Trantridge for employment. But her womanly intuition in spite of her ignorance senses danger in the person of Alec there. She says:

"I killed the horse, and I suppose I ought to do something to get ye a new one. But - but - I don't quite like Mr. d'Urbervilles being there."98

Walter O' Grady is not fair when he observes that the plot in the novel is controlled entirely by the outward situations which are accidental such as the death of Prince,99 for Tess in spite of this accident would not have gone to Trantridge if her own tractability, as serious flaw in the situation, together with her parents' insistence had not goaded her towards disaster which she had vaguely apprehended.

Ethelberta, on the other hand, is shrewd. She cleverly
guards herself against the ways of the world, and acts always according to her own unerring judgement. She is never influenced by anybody's opinions or insistence. She tells Picotee:

"Ah, Picotee,' To continue harmless as a dove you must be wise as a serpent, you'll find - ay, ten serpents, for that matter."100

She does not believe in immediate or absolute trust even in the lover:

"You see, my dear Picotee, a lover is not a relative; and he isn't quite a stranger; but he may end in being either, and the way to reduce him to whichever of the two you wish him to be is to treat him like the other."101

She is therefore never betrayed as Tess was.

What follows from this is that the humanist heart of Ethelberta sees clearly the course leading to the larger good, and has the will to subdue sincere emotions if they hinder her way. She knows that she cannot marry where she loves if she has to lift her family up from poverty and educate her younger brothers and sisters.

"Here were bright little minds ready for a training, which without money and influence she could not give them. The wisdom which knowledge brings, and the power which wisdom may bring, she had assumed would be theirs in her dreams for their social elevation. By what means were these things to be ensured to them if her skill in bread-winning should fail her? Would not a well-contrived marriage be of service?"102
She, therefore, tells clever lies, plays a joke on the society and schemes the most expedient marriage which, though contrary to the accepted notion of virtue, proves happy to all concerned including her lover, husband and herself in consequence, and therefore highly virtuous.

The humanist heart of Tess lacks sound judgement. She could not see that she should have schemed to marry Alec at least for the well-being of her family, at least after she was seduced. Her mother rightly rebukes her:

"Why didn't ye think of doing some good for your family instead o' thinking only of yourself? See how I've got to teave and slave, and your poor weak father with his heart clogged like a dripping-pan. I did hope for something to come out o' this. To see what a pretty pair you and he made that day when you drove away together four months ago! See what he has given us — all, as we thought, because we were his kin. But if he's not, it must have been done because of his love for 'ee. And yet you've not got him to marry."103

Hardy himself comments:

"Get Alec d'Urbervilles in the mind to marry her! He marry her! On matrimony he had never once said a word. And what if he had? How convulsive snatching at social salvation might have impelled her to answer him she could not say. But her poor foolish mother little knew her present feeling towards this man.... Hate him she did not quite; but he was dust and ashes to her, and even for her name's sake she scarcely wished to marry him."104

In fairness to her feeling she could not entertain the thought of
marrying him. She fails to understand that acting against the actual emotion, the idea of marriage without love, though usually wrong, can be converted into right with reference to consequences beneficial to all concerned, and if actuated by the selfless altruistic motive. In the social world of rigid customary morality where the duty to help other 'units' in distress is more important than love, Tess's sincerity, her truthfulness, her unwillingness to tell or act a lie, itself constitutes a hamartia. What is virtue in the traditional definition spells ruin in her situation. She realised this later when she had matured into full woman. Then in a desperate attempt to become the Providence to her starving family she boldly bids good-bye to virtue, surrenders to Alec once more, and sacrifices her feeling. Instead of being a "mere vessel of emotion untinted by experience" had she been as sagacious as Ethelberta, aware right from the start that there are nobler ethical ends than indulgence in love or devotion to absent lover or estranged husband, for one under the burden of self-undertaken duties and responsibilities to others, she could have contrived a successful marriage with Alec in defiance to her feeling of aversion for him and thus averted tragedy. Her serious omission of advisable course of action accounts for her tragedy.

It is wrong to assume that Alec d'Urbervilles is just a "stock-figure of the heartless seducing squire", and that because
he had never spoken a word on matrimony, he would not have married Tess even if the latter had taken pains to accomplish it. He is, of course, a promiscuous pleasure-seeker skilled in seducing country-wenches like the Queen of Spades and the Queen of Diamonds who themselves do not mind irregular indulgence. But he had never met such an unusually sensitive cottage-girl of quiet dignity like Tess. His passion for her as is amply born out all through the novel was hot and genuine, not flitting as it had been for other maids he had philandered with. Tess's mortification as a result of her seduction does awaken tenderness in his heart. He promises her all help if ever she needed it. He never knew until he met her again after a long lapse of time that she had conceived and delivered a child by him. When he did learn of it and the misery that dogged her footsteps in consequence, his remorse was genuine, for Alec in spite of all his vices and weaknesses is not a hypocrite. His heart is not inhuman, and he is at least better than old Lord Mountclere in *The Hand of Ethelberta* who had been consistently unkind to all the maids he had played with. If Tess had tried to force matrimony on him, he would have certainly yielded and agreed. He proposed to her for marriage later on of his own accord not knowing that she was by that time already bound in wedlock with Angel.

Tess does not play skillfully her 'trump-card' which, accord-
ing to her mother, is "her face" for 'the greatest good of the greatest number', She ignores Alec's right advice:

"You can hold your own for beauty against any woman of these parts, gentle or simple; I say it to you as a practical man and well-wisher. If you are wise you will show it to the world before it fades." Therefore she unwittingly makes a tragedy of what could have been made into a serene drama.

Ethelberta, on the contrary, as Lord Mountclere's brother observes, "is a clever young woman, and has played her cards adroitly." She converts consequently the serious battle of life into the sport-battle on the chess-board.

Ethelberta shows, in short, the rectification of Tess's errors, and wards off by her will and wisdom the misery which the latter could not keep off from herself and her family until her death.

V

Jude the Obscure: Hardy's affirmative revolt

Jude the Obscure seemed in its anguished revolt more shocking than Tess of the D'Urbervilles to those content with cozy illusions.
It marks clear departure from the Victorian tradition of literature, and seems decisively modern to us. A. J. Guerard is quite right when he writes:

"The dismal unfaith and rudderless society of Jude, the anxieties of sexual maladjustment and social misemployment, the chronic self-destructiveness of both Jude and Sue, the total vision of weakened vitality and gray despair - all these may give, to the twentieth century reader, a comforting sense of familiarity and home." 110

Hardy has exhibited here more unmistakably than ever before man's alienated plight in the world. But that is not all here. There is in addition to "the scorn of Nature for man's finer emotions, and her lack of interest in his happiness" 111 which spells the metaphysical absurd, also the "freezing negation that those scholarized walls had echoed to his (Jude's) desire" 112 in Christminster which is not Nature. It signifies social silence to the reasonable cries and cravings of man. Jude's remark, "Well - I'm an outsider to the end of my days." 113 applies as much to the University which is a symbol of apathetic society, as to the Universe which has never wanted or welcomed the emergence of consciousness. Ground thus between the social and metaphysical absurdity of existence it is natural for man occasionally to conclude: "Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would." 114

But it is certainly not Hardy's own reasoned conclusion. His characteristic approach to the human situation has always been
melioristic. No evils seem to him absolutely irremediable. He is reconciled with Nature and has established harmony with it by virtue of resignation. That is the right affirmative response to make oneself proof against all the indifferent ways of Nature which cannot be made responsive to the human aspirations. But resignation only amounts to the abdication of responsibility if applied to the perception of the social absurd where both the confronting terms being human, the strife is not hopelessly irresoluble. The affirmative approach here is moderate revolt. The hopes of rectifying the wrongs in society are reasonable and realizable. It is with these hopes, not with despair, that Hardy supports his rebels in their struggle against the evils of social creation.

We have already dealt at length with Hardy's revolt against marriage laws and customary sex-morals as issuing from this novel in the previous chapter. It may briefly be recapitulated here. The Pagan Sue pleads for licence. Hardy does not approve of it. He approves, however, later of her assertion of the moral will which seeks to regulate her lawlessly selfish impulses, but blames none-theless her blindness to consequences which count considerably in moral judgement of an action. She exhibits existential 'authenticity', but not Hardian sanity. Her mind lacks composure which is an essential qualification of a responsible moral agent.
Phillotson represents balanced position which is an ideal between extremes. When asked to submit his resignation "on account of my scandalous conduct in giving my tortured wife her liberty— or, as they call it, condoning her adultery"115, he refused to do so, for the resignation meant here not simply resigning his post of a teacher in the school, but resignation to the tyranny of customary morality. It meant renunciation of what is essentially right in conduct and submission to social injustice. He says:

"I don't go unless I am turned out. And for this reason; that by resigning I acknowledge I have acted wrongly by her; when I am more and more convinced every day that in the sight of Heaven and by all natural straightforward humanity, I have acted rightly."116

Phillotson illustrates in his conduct candour, pity, generosity and least love of self. Social scorn and poverty which he has to suffer for his right behaviour fail to shake his convictions. His composed mind is not disturbed much. His will refused to bow. He represents thus right kind of affirmative revolt which shuns alike servile submission and liberty without restraint.

Jude has suffered much from the marriage laws and customary morals. Yet his essential revolt is a little different. It is directed against the social apathy and injustice to his well-deserved aspiration for education. He smarts at the want of opportunity to train his talent and the indifference of the University and its dons
to his desires. He complains bitterly:

"...— How it scorns our laboured acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them; how it sneers at our false quantities and mispronunciations, when it should say, I see you want help, my poor friend." 117

He writes in defiant mood on the wall beside the College gates:

"'I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?'—Job xii.5" 118

He addresses the supercilious undergraduates in a Christminster tavern under intoxication:

"I don't care a damn.....for any Provost, Warden, Principal, Fellow or cursed Master of Arts in the University.' What I know is that I'd lick 'em on their ground if they'd give me a chance, and show 'em a few things they are not up to yet.'" 119

He struggles nobly despite distractions and obstructions for the realization of his ambition, but proves a miserable failure in the end. He harangues on his old acquaintances who ridicule his failure at Christminster on the Remembrance Day:

"'It is a difficult question, my friends, for any young man — that question I had to grapple with, and which thousands are weighing at the present moment in these uprising times — whether to follow uncritically the track he finds himself in, without considering his aptness for it, or to consider what his aptness or bent may be, and re-shape his course accordingly. I tried to do the latter, and I failed. But I don't admit that my failure proved my view to be a wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one; though that's how we appraise such attempts nowadays — I mean, not by their essential soundness, but by their accidental
outcomes. If I had ended by becoming like one of these gentlemen in red and black that we saw dropping in here by now, everybody would have said: "See how wise that young man was to follow the bent of his nature." But having ended no better than I began they say: "See what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy."

"However it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one; and my impulses—affections—vices perhaps they should be called—were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages; who should be as cold-blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig to have a really good chance of being one of his country's worthies. You may ridicule me—I am quite willing that you should—I am a fit subject, no doubt. But I think if you knew what I have gone through these last few years you would rather pity me. And if they knew— he nodded towards the college at which the Dons were severally arriving—'it is just possible they would do the same.'"120

All this is deeply tragic. That precisely is the reason why it is not pessimistic. There are three factors that make for Jude's tragedy here. These are: (1) his ambition in poverty, (2) his strong weakness for woman and wine, and (3) the society which has scant respect for the first and utter hatred for the other. The tragedy could have been averted if the first had been less assertive, or the second had bent to the regulations of the right will, and the third had not been usually so apathetic and occasionally even hostile. The second of these is already dealt with at length in the previous chapter. Let us consider each of the other two in some detail here.

There is substance in the advice of T. Tetuphenay, the Master
of Bibloll College, that Jude would have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in his own sphere and sticking to his own trade than by adopting any other course. But Jude could not see "that here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of the colleges." He strove for what was beyond his reach. In a world where wishes are not horses even if based on deserts and backed by sincere diligence to realise them, Jude's ambition is a tragic flaw which spells fatal consequences. Its renunciation could have achieved him some peace of mind and reconciled him with his existence in the metaphysical sense. But he was, as he himself admits, "a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days," and so he dies a premature death.

But this is not to say that his tragic flaw which accounts in part for his disintergration is any moral flaw which could absolve the society of its sins of indifference. Quite on the contrary Hardy sees nothing wrong in Jude's ambition and supports him in his rebellion against the conditions of his 'being in the society' that thwart it. Jude "rambles on upon the defeat of his early aims" on his death-bed:

"I was never really stout enough for the stone trade, particularly the fixing. Moving the blocks always used to strain me, and standing the trying draughts in buildings before the windows are in, always gave me colds, and I think that began the mischief inside. But I felt I could do one thing if I had the opportunity. I could
accumulate ideas, and impart them to others. I wonder
if the Founders had such as I in their minds - a fellow
good for nothing else but that particular thing?..."124

Hardy is bitterly critical here of the soulless social institutions
and general human apathy that thwart Jude's well-deserved ambition.
The moral flaw lies with the society, not with Jude. What stands
and need not have stood as a wall between him and the fortunate
inmates of the University, is his poverty, not his want of talent
or industry. In a just social order no work is mean and the digni­
ty of manual labour must be maintained. But it must also enable
everyone to serve the rest of the mass in a way best suited to his
special abilities and aptitude. It must establish the only possi­
ble equality - the equality of opportunity. That alone can contri­
bute in full measure to the all round progress and happiness of
humanity. Jude in such a social order should have become a Unive­
rsity don, but has to die of defeated aims in a defective society.

The ultimate outcome of the book is a hope. To continue
Jude's rambling:

"......I hear that soon there is going to be a better
chance for such helpless students as I was. There are
schemes afoot for making the University less exclusive,
and extending its influence. I don't know much about it.
And it is too late, too late for me! Ah - and for how
many worthier ones before me!"125

V. S. Pritchett unjustly dismisses the idea that "if Jude had been
born a little later he would have gone to the Ruskin College and the whole tragedy would not have happened" as "a nonsensical criticism."¹²⁶ It is patent in what is quoted above that Ruskin College was precisely what Jude had hoped for and not found. It could have saved him as it might have actually saved many others like him from the tragedy of unfulfilled aims. But for indignant revolt of such spokesmen as Hardy of the mute despair of thousands like Jude, Ruskin College would never have been founded. Hardy’s revolt was based on a moderate hope that the social evils and injustices are not quite irremediable, that they can be reduced numerically and in degree even if they cannot be absolutely eradicated, although, as we have considered earlier, he did not share the sort of stubborn hope in nearly perfect future which Mill cherished. The present day English society is free from the rigidity of customs and inequality of opportunity Hardy has deplored so much in this novel, and justifies his hopes. It seems inexplicable how in spite of all this he is regarded as a pessimist particularly in this novel. H. C. Webster is right when he observes:

"In Jude Hardy not only shows us the worst contingencies that a man may be called upon to meet; he also shows us that much of the misery man suffers is remediable by greater social enlightenment. Much of the evil against which man must contend is due not to the relentless and unconscious action of natural forces but to the conscious actions of man, who, because of this very consciousness, may change those things that are shaken and of ill repute."¹²⁷
We have already considered in II (iv) of the previous chapter Hardy's religion of Cross without Christian theology or the religion of humanism somewhat similar to Auguste Comte's as emerging from this novel. It is the secular ethics of human responsibility as discussed in the preceding parts of this chapter. Jude, although he abandons as irrational the old theology he had formerly stood by, shares in common like his author with Clym and Angel the "standing desire to become a prophet, however humble, to his struggling fellow-creatures, without any thought of personal gain." He represents Hardy's own infinite compassion which includes within its compass not only humanity but entire sentient creation as one family. Harold Orel observes rightly of Hardy's reasoning on such compassion:

"If correct reading of Darwin's 'discovery' had indeed 'shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively', taking care of animals is the same as protecting our own interests, men and animals are no longer to be considered 'essentially different', and we would do well to remember that every living creature's death diminishes us....A tree, then, is an organic creature, and has life;....and what Hardy, as he aged, believed with deeper conviction was that it, no less than all varieties and other hierarchies of life, had rights to be, and to continue to live and develop." 129

That is why Jude could not "bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in
their original place the next morning. He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy.... He carefully picked his way on tiptoe among the earthworms, without killing a single one."130 All these beings are born unwanted and have no God to look after them. "They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them."131 This awareness entails moral responsibility in the finer, more grown human form of consciousness capable of understanding and sympathy such as Jude's, towards all men and even the lower sentient forms. Sue's cry "O why should Nature's law be mutual butchery!'"132 states emphatically in question form that reverence for life and mutual love are the ethical ideals to be realized as the law is not as it should be. The being of God would reduce if not render quite superfluous the human responsibility. Only the supernatural hedonists would find their bargain morality untenable without God. Real morality is possible only in the absence of God. Jude does not abdicate his responsible ethical impulses even when he outgrows his early irrational theology. Sue's former lover and friend, the Christminster graduate whose enlightened ideas are passed on to Jude via Sue, was also, as she says, "the most irreligious man I ever knew, and most moral."135
The criterion of good conduct, it emerges clear and unequivocal here, is not just 'happiness' in Mill's utilitarian sense, but the 'happiness of others'. The following dialogue between Sue and Jude states it plainly:

"'...Remember that the best and greatest among mankind are those who do themselves no worldly good. Every successful man is more or less a selfish man. The devoted fail......"Charity seeketh not her own."'

'In that chapter we are at one, ever beloved darling, and on it we'll part friends. Its verses will stand fast when all the rest that you call religion has passed away.'134

Truly disinterested compassion and charity as signified by Cross without, of course, the Christian belief in God, had always been Hardy's guiding moral principles.

Jean Brooks considers Jude as the existentialist hero. She observes:

"Jude's arhythmic wanderings and sexual relationships trace his progress towards self-definition. His quest is the basic myth of twentieth-century man; of Gide's Oedipus and Sartre's Orestes, isolated from conventional securities and comforting myths of a Holy Plan, free, without hope, to create ethics without dogma and the terms of his own being."135

But it seems to be a mistaken view. Sue appears more like an existentialist heroine than Jude, both in her early Paganism which dismisses all the customary norms of conduct as negative inhibitions, as well as her later transfiguration into 'authentic' being
as discussed in the previous chapter, though even she is not quite an existentialist owing to her morality of Cross later. Jude never goes to the extreme of dismissing reasonable limits to his freedom as negative barriers, and ever upholds charity as a value higher than indulgence. High sensitivity to the suffering of others, spontaneous pity and compassion are the characteristics of his mind. His ethics remains 'other centred', not selfishly individualistic like Sartre's. He is not an existentialist, but a humanist man despite his enormous likeness with the existentialist heroes, and his author is nearer to Albert Camus, the humanist among the authors of the twentieth century who exhibit existential disillusionment, metaphysical despair and moral anxiety, than to the doctrinaire existentialists like Sartre. That is the point to be discussed in the next section in further detail.

VI
Hardy and Camus: A Brief Comparative Study of their Moral Philosophies

It is considered at length in the second chapter that Hardy reacted to the Naturalistic world-view in a way not very different from that of existentialists, shared some of their characteristics of thought and feeling in common, but could not be himself describ-
ed as one of them.

Albert Camus' position is also somewhat similar. He had to deny emphatically the label of existentialism some of the critics had sought to put on him: "No, I am not an existentialist. Sartre and I are always surprised to see our names coupled together."136

Both Hardy and Camus are strictly speaking humanists. They are kindred thinkers who found alike their gratuitous morality on the secular human need and the absence of God. We have already considered Hardy's atheistic humanism as issuing especially from Tess and Jude. Camus also observes:

"The toiling masses, worn out with suffering and death, are masses without God. Our place is henceforth at their side, far from teachers old and new."137

And again:

"When the throne of God is overthrown, the rebel realizes that it is now his own responsibility to create the justice, order and unity that he sought in vain within his own condition and, in this way, to justify the fall of God."138

"Camus", writes Rev. Reynold Borzaga, "developed only one theme: the absurdity of existence, and against this absurdity he fought with the passion and the vigor of a giant."139 That Hardy also had, before Camus was even born, the undimmed awareness of this absurdity and man's expulsion from the primal paradise of Nature's harmony, emerges indisputably clear from his novels, especially
from The Return of the Native and Jude the Obscure, to anyone who cares to read critically enough.

John Cruickshank observes: "Art for Camus, is imaginative confirmation of the absurd." Camus himself writes: "A novel is never anything but a philosophy put into images." He writes again: "Artists of the past could at least keep silent in the face of tyranny. The tyrannies of today are improved; they no longer admit of silence or neutrality. One has to take a stand, be either for or against. Well, in that case, I am against."

Hardy also shows similar 'engagement' especially in his last two novels, Tess and Jude, as considered earlier in this chapter, without of course, having worked out in critical terms, the theoretical justification for his practice as Camus has done. Yet art was not entirely 'engagement' to him. His conscious ambition until quite near the end of his career as a novelist, was simply to prove a success at serial writing. What he did in the direction of reacting sharply to the problems of his times and place was done rather spontaneously, desultorily and without conscious intention on his part to do it.

Yet there are basic differences between the temperaments of the two authors. Hardy, as Margaret Drabble writes, "was something of a recluse, although he became one of the most famous and
feted writers in the country."143 Sheila Sullivan also observes of Hardy's introvertive withdrawl from the active world:

"Towards the end of his life, when he was a very old man, his parlour-maid, Miss Titterington, and his secretary, Miss O'Rourke, both remarked on this quality of withdrawl from the world; and T. E. Lawrence found him 'refined into an essence', as if the world could no longer touch him. This habit of retreat from facts and faces and objects arose, not from disdain for the outward trappings of things, but because the intensity of his inner life was such that often the world became an irritation."144

Miss Sullivan, however, is wrong in her interpretation of Hardy's usual mood of retreat. It signifies not so much the intensity as serenity of inner life, affirmative resignation to rather than active interest or involvement in the world that surrounded him. He found like his own Clym Yeobright nothing so alluring in life's transitory pleasures though he saw nothing short of selfishness as positively disdainful. His attitude to the world was that of a detached spectator, a passive onlooker.

Camus was, on the contrary, a fierce activist and an extr-overt thinker. He was painfully attached with the world, and could never have a glimpse of the sort of tranquillity Hardy experienced. His attitude to the world was not that of a spectator but of an actor - the attitude which nevertheless was philosophical in a novel sense. The actor is both attached with and detached
from his performance, a sensualist and a stoic, enjoys the advantages of both but suffers the losses of none. He is detached in that he knows that he merely acts on the stage for a brief period of three hours; therefore he will not foolishly hope to survive when the curtain falls and the final scene of the drama is closed. He is attached in that he realizes full identity with the character he plays, weeps and laughs and loves and loses and enjoys his role on the whole.

"He will die in three hours under the mask he has assumed today. Within three hours he must experience and express a whole exceptional life. That is called losing oneself to find oneself."145

This double consciousness of an actor enables man to live joyfully and retire off-stage without murmur when life ends in death.

Both Hardy and Camus were passionate seekers after God. But since man's wish is not world's reality, Hardy boldly bade good-bye to all forms of faith. He finds it natural for man to revolt against the conditions of his being in Nature but does not approve of it as a wise attitude, for metaphysical revolt, according to him, posits unconsciously a supernatural Power who could be pricked or provoked to anger by it. The characters of the second group as considered in the second chapter represent
their own heresy and do not speak for their author. As for himself, Hardy seeks to resolve the metaphysical absurd into ethical harmony by the power of affirmative resignation, and is at one with the third group of his characters.

Camus also obstinately refused to have consolations of any form of faith. But he regards in The Myth of Sisyphus the metaphysical revolt as a self-justified value relevant to life here and now. His characters like Martha in Crosspurpose represent as much themselves as their author. He forgets that such a revolt itself implies faith in God, an evil God of course, and is an instance of 'philosophical suicide' which he deplores in the theistic existential philosophies of Kierkegaard, Chestov, Jaspers and others who abandon reason and blind themselves to the light of 'lucidity' by a cowardly 'leap of faith'. If there is neither Friend nor Enemy behind phenomena, against whom does Camus revolt? One does not revolt against a Nothing, against a stone or the Universe which is lifeless like a stone. It would be madness to do so. Yet Camus himself does not always stand distinguished from his characters, often blasphemes with them and thus allows, unconsciously of course, his atheism to degrade into heresy.

The principal theme in Camus' fiction is Man's alienation,
and the title of his first novel is *The Outsider*. The prison-cell here appears as a symbol of the human situation. Its gray stone-walls, though steeped in the human suffering, are deaf to man's tears and sobs. These are the insurmountable absurd walls man is condemned to live within.

We have considered earlier that Jude is also presented as an outsider as much to the university as to the universe. He also views while breathing his last the world as a vast prison as he recites Job: "There the prisoners rest together;......" It is a vision not dissimilar to Camus'. But it is Jude's vision, not Hardy's. Hardy has for himself, as discussed in the second chapter while considering Egdon Heath as the setting to the action in *The Return of the Native*, converted the prison-like conditions of the world into serene hermitage and the ache of loneliness into tranquillity of solitude which assumes without his awareness 'introvertive' mystical significance. What a difference between a prison and a prison!

Camus is a naive hedonist. He regards the gratification of passion and sheer 'quantity' as against quality of pleasures as indisputably valuable. His moral hero is Don Juan who combines in his character both stoical courage and passionate sensuality of Camus. Largest quantity of the most pleasant experience is the
only gain life might yield to him and it is all he cares for. He refuses to be tied down to one woman only, for "why should it be essential to love rarely in order to love much?.......This life satisfies his every wish, and nothing is worse than losing it. This mad man is a great wise man." But if the 'quantity' of pleasures constitutes an ultimate value, the absurd logic cannot permit its sacrifice for altruistic purposes. Camus contradicts his stand when he asks the agent to find the limits of his right and freedom to be happy in others' right of self-fulfilment, and prescribes 'moderation' as an equally great value. It is because the humanist in him, anxious to realize the well-being of many, least of all the happiness of the moral self in the priority-order, is stronger than the hedonist in him. So where logic fails him he betakes to rhetoric:

"The absurd does not liberate; it binds. It does not authorize all actions. 'Everything is permitted' does not mean that nothing is forbidden." Camus' anxiety as is seen in the above is sound and reasonable. Guided by it, his characters like Dr. Rieux and Tarrou in The Plague, never err in their moral practice. Yet in theory his 'moderation' remains a hopeless tug-of-war between the sensualist and the humanist in him who assert mutually opposed values. No hedonist who attempts a moral philosophy can, in fact, escape
this irreconcilable paradox, and Camus is no exception.

Hardy, on the contrary, was not a hedonist at all. Passion was more a weakness than a value to him. The moral will has to subdue or regulate it. He attaches no importance to the quantity of pleasures. Love of his great characters is least physical, and the fidelity they illustrate is the very opposite of Camus' Don Juanism. "Charity seeketh not her own" is his guiding principle though he has disavowed faith more authentically than Camus. The gratuitous sacrifice of personal gains and comforts for others' good is the only value he upholds in his social ethics. There is, consequently, no hedonistic paradox in Hardy.

Camus' love and pity embrace all human kind struggling weakly under the stifling sky for meaningful existence. The absurd-recognition is the reasonable starting point of his ethics which has to allay as its end the anguish of the alienated humanity. Even those guilty of crimes in their pursuit of happiness against their fellows are not beyond his sympathy. It is but natural that when our values have no metaphysical justification, morality loses all its drive. In having insatiable desire for happiness man is innocent in relation to the universe. But in trying to gratify it in society even by foul means and at others' expense, he is guilty in relation to his fellow-beings. Camus
introduces in *The Fall* a novel tie which unites all men into brotherhood, and it is human guilt, for we are all, according to him, more or less guilty. This guilt is as inescapable as the desire to be happy. So he concludes here with his hero Jean-Baptiste Clamence:

"How intoxicating to feel like God the Father and hand out the definitive testimonials of bad character and habits. I sit enthroned among my bad angels at the summit of the Dutch heaven and I watch ascending towards me as they issue from the fogs and the water, the multitude of the last judgement. They rise slowly; I already see the first of them arriving. On his bewildered face, half hidden by a hand, I read the melancholy of the common condition and the despair of not being able to escape it. And as for me, I pity without absolving, I understand without forgiving and above all, I feel at last that I am being adored."

Hardy's sympathy is similarly generous. That is why he has no villains in his novels. To quote J. C. Powys:

"There are no Iagos in the Wessex novels, and hardly any thoroughly wicked people. The evil doers are only a little less pitiable than the the righteous. All are victims together of the nature of the Universe."

He does not altogether blame Alec D'Urbervilles for his hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. But he does not forgive him because he had overstepped his limits and forsaken his responsibility towards a hapless girl like Tess. The consequences of the loss of belief in God in Alec are a milder version of the nihilism of Caligula, Camus' hero in the play of that name. If metaphysics and morals
are to remain associated as in the traditional ethics, nihilism is the logical conclusion which cannot be avoided. But both Hardy and Camus reject this inhuman logic, dissociate morals from metaphysics and regard altruistic sentiments as sufficient reason to found ethics on. So they both pity without absolving and sympathise without forgiving.

Camus regards the sanctity of human life as a basic value, and the offence against it a serious crime. That is why he does not allow his rebel to kill even a tyrant without paying with his own blood the price of murder:

"The rebel has only one way of reconciling himself with his act of murder if he allows himself to be led into performing it: to accept his own death and sacrifice. He kills and dies so that it shall be clear that murder is impossible." 152

His ideal rebel is Russian Kaliayev, as presented in his drama The Just, who assassinates the Grand Duke and then atones willingly for the murder by accepting his own execution. Camus regards both suicide and murder as the violence of human life which is sacred.

Hardy's compassion moves a step further to include within its compass, as we considered while discussing Jude the Obscure, all sentient creation and its dumb suffering. He upholds sanctity
of life in general as a value. He did not allow trimming, pruning or cutting of the trees in his garden at Max Gate, could not tolerate violence of the smallest creature, and discouraged the game of hunting. "So intensely did he detest the 'needless suffering' of animals about to be butchered that he left money to two societies - the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Council of Justice to Animals - 'to be applied so far as practicable to the investigation of the means by which Animals are conveyed from their Homes to the Slaughter-houses with a view to the lessening of their sufferings in such transit and to condemnatory action against the caging of wild birds and the captivity of rabbits and other animals.'"155

Both Hardy and Camus refrain from giving rigid rules of right conduct applicable in every situation, and reject absolute values of the traditional ethics. They lay down only broad guide-lines, attach greater importance to the rightness of the motivating will and emotion, and leave it to the sincerity of the agent to distinguish right from the wrong and choose his course of action with reference to the circumstances. Rules, in fact, rarely help, often imprison the conscience aware of its disinterested duties, and are not, strictly speaking very necessary. Camus says:
"I have seen people behave badly with great morality, and I note every day that integrity has no need of rules."154

Hardy shows similarly that the 'letter killeth', that the rules once given survive in rigid customary norms and forms soon after the need that gave them rise changes or is different in certain situation, that formal virtue is usually a dead habit and often proves immoral in practice, and that the integrity of the conscience is capable of working out temporary rules in the light of the moral need of the hour.

Hardy, as we have considered earlier, does not share Camus' metaphysical revolt. But his rebellion against the social conditions is somewhat similar to Camus'. Both of them were rebels not revolutionaries, and sought moderate changes, not total change in the set-up of society in keeping with a new political ideology or dogma. "Rebellion", writes Camus, "is, by nature, limited in scope. It is no more than an incoherent pronouncement."155 It is always directed against the excesses of tyranny or injustice. It expresses anger at what ought not to prevail, but has no clear answers as to what should replace it. To quote Camus again:

"Rebellion arises from the spectacle of the irrational coupled with an unjust and incomprehensible condition. But its blind impetus clamours for order in the midst of chaos, and for unity in the very heart of ephemeral. It protests, it demands, it insists that the outrage come to an end, that there be built upon rock what until
It is vague and emotional in character. Its outburst is spontaneous. It does not function within theoretical framework. Love and sympathy for the oppressed inspire it, and its righteous wrath is directed against oppression as such, against no men or masters in particular. It is a form of humanism. Revolution, on the contrary, has to function unemotionally according to a well-spelt ideology. Its cruelties are cold and calculated. Its violence is informed with hatred, revenge, retaliation. It assumes the form of religion wherein God is replaced by an equally non-existent and abstract notion of 'Future'. The interests of the humanity of today are to be sacrificed for the realization of this 'Future'.

Hardy shows similar rebellion which seeks balance between extremes. Thus Jude does not dream of a sort of socialistic revolution in spite of his poverty. He just wants that the opportunity to study and progress towards desired direction must be granted to the deserving. On the marriage issue also Hardy, as we have considered in the previous chapter, advocates the dissolution of the wedlock when it is bad. That is the mean between the unbreakable rigidity of marriage and no-marriage promiscuity. We read in his last two novels anger against the
social conditions and customary morals. It expresses just the sense of outrage, and is necessarily vague and blind. Its characteristic is heat, not light. If asked what precise formula of change he had to propose, or whether he wished to upset entirely whatever was traditionally established, he would answer like his own Phillotson in Jude, "I don't know - I don't know." As I say, I am only a feeler, not a reasoner."157 Angel Clare as considered earlier represents his author when he tells his father that he wanted "'the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.'"158 All this means that Hardy wished for moderate reform, not total revolution.

But it must be admitted that while Camus preferred rebellion to revolution because he had witnessed like the rest of his generation the self-defeating upheavals which shook Europe in the twentieth century, and the horrors and excesses that were committed in the name of revolution in Russia and elsewhere, Hardy has shown only rebellion because his gentle and humane soul was poor at theorizing and could conceive no idea of a revolution on big scale. It was Hardy's limitation. But Camus regards such a limitation as a great virtue. Hardy stood where Camus had to turn after bitter experiences.
Camus' philosophy of rebellion is basically political although it could be extended to the narrower spheres of human conduct as well. Hardy had never seriously thought of politics. His rebellion as manifest in Tess and Jude is directed against the social ills and apathy with a view to making society aware of them. His ethics is essentially the ethics of private and personal relationships. It is a point of difference as much between Hardy and Camus as it was between him and J. S. Mill.

Hardy was rather rough and uncouth. His serene mind had truly philosophical depth and detachment. His reasoning was sane. But he lacked terminological exactitude. He had never taken much trouble to systematize his ideas. His genius had retained in spite of his great achievement the crudities of a countryman.

Camus, on the contrary, is the master of elegant craft. He lacks Hardy's sanity and has in his philosophy a pack of unresolved contradictions. But he has shown greater lucidity of utterance and more appealing rhetoric. His concepts are well-defined, and his genius has truly cosmopolitan character.