CHAPTER 2

THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATURALISM

Social and Literary Background:

Literature reflects life, as coloured by the artist’s imagination. But it is also true that the literature of a country is directly influenced by the life and society of the period. There is always interplay of the personal and impersonal factors in the making of literature. It has been rightly said that literature is the result of an interplay of the man, the moment, and the milieu. There are many forces that act in combination to transform the literary standards and tastes. These forces could be economic, socio-cultural, political, philosophic and scientific. In literature, we witness the result of such forces in the form of certain “periods”, “schools” or “movements.” For the sake of convenience, literary historians have arbitrarily divided the literary output into “periods”. For the purpose of this study, a period is a certain length of time during which a particular kind of taste prevails, and the literature of which is therefore marked by various common characteristics of subject matter, thought, tone and style. However, it must be remembered that literature is produced in a continuous flow without absolute endings and beginnings. Therefore, a period overlaps
another period and chronologically speaking, a writer's work may begin in one period and end in another.

**Naturalism Preceded by Romanticism and Realism; followed by Symbolism (In the Context of French Literature)**

If we look at the chronology of these literary movements, we can see that naturalism is preceded by romanticism and realism, and is followed by symbolism. The chief exponent of naturalism is Emile Zola, that of romanticism is Victor Hugo, that of realism is Balzac, and that of symbolism are Mallarme and Paul Valery. An interesting observation to be made here is that all these authors who are the chief exponents of their respective movements are the French. In this study, we should especially note that naturalism as a literary trend has its origin in France and is strongly influenced by the works of Zola and the Goncourt brothers. Geographically, England and France are neighbours separated by forty kilometers in the form of the English Channel. The political histories of these two countries are also closely intertwined, with members of the same dynasty ruling them sometimes and the members taking political asylum and support in the neighbouring country in times of political crises. Therefore, it is no wonder that the literatures of these neighbouring countries are also found to be influencing each other significantly. This makes it
imperative for us to discuss these literary trends in the context of French literature and then proceed to focus on them as seen in the late Victorian era and the early twentieth century England.

**Romanticism**

French literature from the first half of the century was dominated by Romanticists (associated with such authors as Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, père, François-René de Chateaubriand, Alphonse de Lamartine, Gérard de Nerval, Charles Nodier, Alfred de Musset, Théophile Gautier and Alfred Vigny) and their revolutionary work in all genres (theater, poetry, prose, fiction). The effect of the Romantic Movement would continue to be felt in the latter half of the century in wildly diverse literary developments such as, “realism”, “symbolism”, and the so-called fin de siècle “decadent” movement.

French romanticism is a highly eclectic phenomenon. It includes an interest in the historical novel, the romance, traditional myths, nationalism and the “roman noir” (or Gothic novel), lyricism, sentimentalism, descriptions of the natural world (such as elegies by lakes) and the common man, exoticism and orientalism, and the myth of the romantic hero. Foreign influences played a big part in this, especially those of Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, Byron, Goethe, and Friedrich Schiller. French Romanticism had ideals diametrically
opposed to French classicism and the classical unities but it could also express a profound loss of aspects of the pre-revolutionary world in a society now dominated by money and fame, rather than honour.

**Key ideas from early French Romanticism:**

- "Le vague des passions" (vagueness of sentiment and passion) - Chateaubriand maintained that while the imagination was rich, the world was cold and empty, and rationalism and civilisation had only robbed men of their illusions; nevertheless, a notion of sentiment and passion continued to haunt men.

- "Le mal du siècle" (the evil of the century) - a sense of loss, dissillusion, and aporia, typified by melancholy and lassitude.

Romanticism in England and Germany largely predate French romanticism, although one finds a kind of "pre-romanticism" in the works of Senancour and Jean-Jacques Rousseau at the end of the 18th century. French Romanticism took definite form in the works of François-René de Chateaubriand and Benjamin Constant and in Madame de Staël’s interpretation of Germany as the land of romantic ideals. It found early expression also in the sentimental poetry of Alphonse de Lamartine.
The major battle of romanticism in France was fought in the theater. The early years of the century were marked by a revival of classicism to be seen in tragedies inspired by the classics, often with themes of national sacrifice or patriotic heroism, in keeping with the spirit of the Revolution. However, the production of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830 marked the triumph of the Romantic Movement on the stage. The dramatic unities of time and place were abolished, tragic and comic elements appeared together and metrical freedom was won. Marked by the plays of Friedrich Schiller, the romantics often chose subjects from historic periods (the French Renaissance, the reign of Louis XIII of France) and doomed noble characters (rebel princes and outlaws) or misunderstood artists (Vigny's play based on the life of Thomas Chatterton).

Victor Hugo was the outstanding genius of the Romantic School and its recognized leader. He was prolific alike in poetry, drama, and fiction. Other writers associated with the movement were the austere and pessimistic Alfred de Vigny, Théophile Gautier, a devotee of beauty and creator of the "Art for art's sake" movement, and Alfred de Musset, who best exemplifies romantic melancholy. All three also wrote novels and short stories, and Musset won a belated success with his plays. Alexandre Dumas, père wrote *The Three Musketeers* and other romantic novels in an historical setting. Prosper Mérimée and Charles Nodier were masters of shorter fiction. Charles Augustin Sainte-
Beuve, a literary critic, showed romantic expansiveness in his hospitality to all ideas and in his unfailing endeavour to understand and interpret authors rather than to judge them.

Romanticism is associated with a number of literary salons and groups: the Arsenal (formed around Charles Nodier at the Arsenal Library in Paris from 1824-1844 where Nodier was administrator), the Cénacle (formed around Nodier, then Hugo from 1823-1828), the Salon of Louis Charles Delescluze, the Salon of Antoine (or Antony) Deschamps, the Salon of Madame de Staël.

Romanticism in France defied political affiliation: one finds both “liberal” (like Stendhal), “conservative” (like Chateaubriand) and socialist (George Sand) strains.

**Realism, Naturalism and Parnasse**

The expression “Realism”, when applied to literature of the 19th century, implies the attempt to depict contemporary life and society. The growth of realism is linked to the development of science (especially biology), history, the social sciences, and to the growth of industrialization and commerce. The “realist” tendency is not necessarily anti-romantic; romanticism in France often affirmed the common man and the natural setting (such as the peasant stories of
the woman writer George Sand) and concerned itself with historical forces and periods (as in the work of historian Jules Michelet).

The novels of Stendhal (including *The Red and the Black* and *The Charterhouse of Parma*) address issues of their contemporary society while also using themes and characters derived from the Romantic Movement. Honoré de Balzac is the most prominent representative of 19th century realism in fiction. His *La Comédie humaine*, a vast collection of nearly 100 novels, was the most ambitious scheme ever devised by a writer of fiction -- nothing less than a complete contemporary history of his countrymen--. Realism also appears in the works of Alexandre Dumas fils.

Many of the novels in this period including Balzac’s were published in newspapers in serial form, and the immensely popular realist “Roman Feuilleton” tended to specialize in portraying the hidden side of urban life (crime, police spies, criminal slang), as in the novels of Eugène Sue. Similar tendencies appeared in the theatrical melodramas of the period and, in an even more lurid and gruesome light, in the Grand Guignol at the end of the century.

In addition to melodramas, popular and bourgeois theater in the mid-century turned to realism in the "well-made" bourgeois farces of Eugène Marin Labiche and the moral dramas of Émile Augier. Also popular were the operettas, farces and comedies of Ludovic Halévy and Henri Meilhac.
From the 1860s onwards, critics increasingly speak of literary "Naturalism". The expression is imprecise, and was frequently used disparagingly to characterize authors whose chosen subject matter was taken from the working classes and who portrayed the misery and harsh conditions of real life. Many of the "naturalist" writers took a radical position against the excesses of romanticism and strove to use scientific and encyclopedic precision in their novels (Zola spent months visiting coal mines for his *Germinal* and Flaubert was famous for his years of research for historical details). Hippolyte Taine supplied much of the philosophy of naturalism: he believed that every human being was determined by the forces of heredity and environment and by the time in which he lived. The influence of certain Norwegian, Swedish and Russian writers gave an added impulse to the naturalistic movement.

Gustave Flaubert's great novels *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *Sentimental Education*, and the short stories of Guy de Maupassant are often tagged with the label "naturalist", although the authors were neither devoid of comic irony nor certain romantic tendencies. Flaubert's romanticism is apparent in his fantastic *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* and the baroque and exotic scenes of ancient Carthage in *Salammbô*. Maupassant used elements derived from the gothic novel in stories like *Le Horla*. This tension between portrayal of the contemporary world in all its sordidness, detached irony and the use of romantic
images and themes would also influence the symbolists (as we shall see below) and would continue to the 20th century.

Naturalism is most often associated with the novels of Emile Zola (such as his *Les Rougon-Macquart* novel cycle, which includes *Germinal, L'Assommoir, Le Ventre de Paris* and *La Bête Humaine*) in which the social success or failure of two branches of a family is explained by physical, social and hereditary laws. Other writers who have been labeled naturalists include: Alphonse Daudet, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Edmond de Goncourt and his brother Jules de Goncourt, and Paul Bourget.

An attempt to be objective was made in poetry by the group of writers known as the Parnassians -- which included Leconte de Lisle, Théodore de Banville, Catulle Mendès, Sully-Prudhomme, François Coppée, José María de Heredia and (early in his career) Paul Verlaine -- who (using Théophile Gautier’s notion of art for art’s sake and the pursuit of the beautiful) strove for exact and faultless workmanship, and selected exotic and classical subjects which they treated with a rigidity of form and an emotional detachment (elements of which echo the philosophical work of Arthur Schopenhauer whose aesthetic theories would also have an influence on the symbolists).
Modern science and geography were combined with romantic adventure in the works of Jules Verne and other writers of popular serial adventure novels and early science-fiction.

Symbolism and the Birth of the Modern

The naturalist tendency to see life without illusions and to dwell on its more depressing and sordid aspects appears in an intensified degree in the intensely influential poetry of Charles Baudelaire, but with profoundly romantic elements derived from the Byronic myth of the anti-hero, and the world-weariness of the “mal du siècle”, etc. Similar elements occur in the novels of Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly.

The poetry of Baudelaire and much of the literature in the latter half of the century (or “fin de siècle”) were often characterized as “decadent” for their lurid content or moral vision. In a similar vein, Paul Verlaine used the expression “poète maudit” (“accursed poet”) in 1884 to refer to a number of poets like Tristan Corbière, Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud who had fought against poetic conventions and suffered social rebuke or had been ignored by the critics. But with the publication of Jean Moréas’ “Symbolist Manifesto” in 1886, it was the term symbolism which was most often applied to the new literary environment.
The symbolists often share themes that parallel Schopenhauer's aesthetics and notions of will, fatality and unconscious forces. The symbolists often used themes of sex such as prostitutes, the city, irrational phenomena (delirium, dreams, narcotics, alcohol), and sometimes a vaguely medieval setting. The tone of symbolism is highly variable, at times realistic, imaginative, ironic or detached, although on the whole the symbolists did not stress moral or ethical ideas. In poetry, the symbolist procedure -- as typified by Paul Verlaine -- was to use subtle suggestion instead of precise statement (rhetoric was banned) and to evoke moods and feelings by the magic of words and repeated sounds and the cadence of verse (musicality) and metrical innovation. Some symbolists explored the use of free verse. The use of leitmotifs, medieval settings and the notion of the complete work of art (blending music, visuals and language) in the works of the German composer Richard Wagner also had a profound impact on these writers.

Stéphane Mallarmé's profound interest in the limits of language as an attempt at describing the world, and his use of convoluted syntax, and the spacing, size and position of words on the page were important modern breakthroughs that continue to preoccupy contemporary poetry in France.

Arthur Rimbaud's prose poems in the collection *Illuminations* are among the first free verse poems in French; his biographically inspired poem *Une*
saison en enfer ("A Season in Hell") was championed by the Surrealists as a revolutionarily modern literary act (the same work would play an important role in the New York punk scene in the 1970s). The infernal images of the prose poem Les Chants de Maldoror by Isidore Ducasse, Comte de Lautréamont would have a similar impact.

The crisis of language and meaning in Mallarmé and the radical vision of literature, life and the political world in Rimbaud are to some degree the corner stones of the “modern” and the radical experiments of Dada, Surrealism and Theater of the Absurd (to name a few) in the 20th century.

Now that these literary movements have been discussed in the context of French literature, the similar developments can be seen in English literature at about the same time and it is especially significant to trace Joseph Conrad’s contribution in developing new trends.
Realism and Naturalism in the Context of English Literature

Literature at the Turn of the 19th Century (1890 - 1918)

Late Victorianism

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the development of a number of movements which amounted to a rejection of the principles of Victorianism. Early Victorian writers, responding to the social changes due to the shift from an agricultural to an industrial society and the decline of traditional religious beliefs, adopted a moral aesthetic and maintained that literature should provide fresh values and an understanding of the newly emerging society. Novelists such as Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot examined complications of forming a personal identity in a world in which traditional social structures were breaking down. Social mores were their subject and realism their form of expression.

By the 1870s, opposing what by now was perceived as a repressive aesthetic, writers began to reject any obligation to produce moral art, as exemplified in the theoretical works of Walter Pater, such as Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873). In fiction, this impulse took various forms, among them a return to prose fantasy as displayed in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson (The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, 1886) and Lewis
Carroll (Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, 1865). In his dystopian novel Erewhon, or, Over the Range (1872), Samuel Butler criticized the stringent morals of his time. The late Victorian period also saw a more searching realism, accompanied by the emergence of the so-called 'problem novel' in which the institution of marriage and traditional relations between the sexes were re-examined. George Gissing called it an era of "sexual anarchy"; an era in which the laws governing sexual identity and behavior were no longer valid. The 'fallen woman' was replaced by the 'new woman.' Once the door closed behind Ibsen's Nora, social structures oppressing women became the themes for both the playwrights such as Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, and novelists such as George Moore and Thomas Hardy.

Thomas Hardy, one of the most widely read and respected English novelists, created an important artistic bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The influence of Charles Darwin's recently published Origin of Species (1859) on his thought, and his subsequent loss of orthodox religious faith affected all of his writings. Although his novels were uneven in skill, when he stayed in the rural settings of his youth and focused on relations between the sexes, they took on a tragic power rarely equaled by other English novelists. He is credited with introducing fatalism into Victorian literature -- a pessimistic assessment of humanity's ability to cope with a changing social
environment. In two of Hardy’s final novels, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1896), his bleak and open treatment of sexuality and marriage caused such an outrage among the puritanical Victorian public that he was deeply disillusioned. Hardy abandoned fiction, and for the rest of his life wrote only poetry.

At about the time Hardy was active as a novelist, the French writer Émile Zola formulated a branch of literary realism called *naturalism*, which reflected many of Hardy’s concerns as a novelist. The terms *naturalism* and *realism* are often used almost interchangeably, but there is a significant distinction between them: while naturalists supported the realists’ aim of careful observation and mimetic depiction of the outer world, their view of the human condition and specific method of writing was strongly indebted to advances in the natural sciences, specifically the impact of Darwin’s theory of evolution. In their biologistic view, the human animal was a creature conditioned by influences beyond his or her control and therefore largely devoid of free will or moral choice; a creature shaped by external factors such as heredity, environment, and the pressure of immediate circumstances. In this respect, the premises of the naturalists have gained a reputation for pessimism. Their method was indebted to the natural and social sciences as well: according to Zola, the writer was to work as an objective ‘experimenter’ whose function was
to observe and record the chain of cause and effect dispassionately and impersonally, without moral judgments. A further formative influence on naturalism can be found in the social consequences of the Industrial Revolution. The misery of the working classes in urban slums became one of the naturalists' favorite themes in analyzing the human condition.

A rebel Victorian novelist who was strongly influenced by naturalism was George Gissing. In *New Grub Street* (1891) and *The Nether World* (1889), Gissing portrays the grinding effects of poverty. The subjects of many of his twenty-two novels were the poor and the shabby genteel, a world earlier described by Dickens but treated more seriously by Gissing. Gissing's arguably most memorable novel, however, *The Odd Women* (1891), dealt with the new woman, this time as an 'odd' or unmarried woman -- the feminist Rhoda Nunn, whose principles are tested by the attractive ex-radical, Everard Barfoot. In an interesting twist of literary convention, a woman who does not 'fall' dies in childbirth, and the new woman adopts the child. Gissing's work marks a transition from Victorian realism to a grimmer realistic mode. He was influenced by French and Russian novelists, but English Victorian propriety denied him the freedom of literary naturalists on the continent. He wrote about and lived among the lower classes, but at the same time he was not one of them,
and his ideal remained the life of scholarly seclusion evoked in *By the Ionian Sea* (1901) and his last novel, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903).

Naturalism was prominent in drama as well. ‘Free’ theaters were established throughout Europe for the presentation of naturalist plays, exploring new techniques of acting and production and making use of the potential of artificial lighting. The unsavory, often shocking, but theatrically effective products of naturalism found an expression in the title chosen by George Bernard Shaw for a collection of his dramas, *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (1898). Shaw began his career as a novelist, publishing in socialist journals. He was active in socialist and anarchist political movements, and in 1883 he became a founding member of the Fabian Society, an influential socialist organization. Although his novels found little favor with the critics and the public, Shaw began to reach a wide audience through his magazine articles and reviews. His first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was produced in 1892 and was followed in rapid succession by *The Philanderer* (1893), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893), *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1893), and *You Never Can Tell* (1895), which were all published together in *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*. To make his published plays more accessible to the reading public, Shaw added novelistic stage directions and lengthy prefatory essays revealing his mastery of English prose. During the first decades of the twentieth century,
Shaw wrote his greatest and most successful plays: *Man and Superman* (1904), *Major Barbara* (1905), and *Pygmalion* (1913). Although Shaw won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925 and went on writing plays almost until his death at the age of 94, none of the later plays enjoyed the same kind of success as these earlier works. His influence on twentieth century drama, however, was profound, revolutionizing the overwhelmingly melodramatic Victorian stage with dramas of ideas.

Another form, evolved as the reaction to Victorianism was the literary movement known as ‘decadence.’ An early influence on the movement was the erotic poetry of Algernon Charles Swinburne, which shocked the Victorian reading public in the seventies and eighties. The preoccupation with sensation shown by Swinburne and Dante Gabriel Rossetti led to the literary decadence of the 1890s, epitomized by Oscar Wilde’s play *Salomé*, which he wrote in French for the actress Sarah Bernhardt in 1893. This was followed by Wilde’s most famous play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

In its ideology of ‘aestheticism,’ a belief in the notion of art for art’s sake, decadence was also a reaction against naturalism. In literary history, the term decadence specifically applies to a late nineteenth century movement marked by supposedly amoral sentiments, extensive use of sensual or exotic
imagery, and aestheticism. A number of the principles of decadence are reflected in Wilde’s famous novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Aestheticism was cultivated in particular by the circle of writers associated with the Rhymers’ Club and the periodical *The Yellow Book* (1894-97) (which also published the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley), among them Wilde, Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson. It is this group of writers more than any other which is associated with the turn of the century: the term *fin de siècle* in art and literature is applied primarily to the movements of decadence and aestheticism.
The Twentieth Century

No sharp line separates the nineteenth century from the twentieth. One of the most highly respected poets of the twentieth century, for example, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats, was a member of the Rhymers’ Club during his early twenties. His fame goes beyond his association with this literary movement, however, and in his later years his early aestheticism was replaced by a commitment to social truth and responsibility and a dedication to the Irish cause. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1922. Yeats was considered the greatest poetical influence of the time by T. S. Eliot, whose “Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1909-11) is regarded as the first significant “modernist” poem.

Until the outbreak of World War I, prose fiction also continued to be dominated by a group of writers who had already achieved distinction during the nineteenth century, among them Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells and Henry James, were distinct. Except for Hardy, who abandoned the novel in disgust after receiving criticism on Jude the Obscure, all remained extremely active in fiction. H. G. Wells’ most famous science fiction novels, for example, among them The Time Machine (1895), The Invisible Man (1897) and The War of the World (1898), all appeared in the last
years of the nineteenth century. Although Wells later wrote a number of serious novels in the naturalist tradition, all but forgotten now, his early science fiction attracted a wide audience.

By contrast, the Anglo-American Henry James was a writers’ writer, psychologically penetrating and technically innovative. His recurring theme was the innocent American abroad, but he made of this seemingly simple story numerous personality studies of psychological complexity. In the words of Joseph Conrad, he was “the historian of fine consciences,” especially those of women—wealthy young Americans seduced by the culture and duplicity of Europe and European men, like Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). In these studies, he develops the restricted point of view consistently, characterizing his figures through effective dramatic scenes. His use of ambiguity through layers of narrative perspective is unmatched, especially in his classic tale of the uncanny, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). Three novels of the last phase of his career alone would probably have assured James’ lasting fame: *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). His impressionistic examination of consciousness in these late novels laid the groundwork for the narrative technique of ‘stream of consciousness,’ a term coined by his brother, the philosopher William James.
As a result, the experiments of modernism are deeply indebted to the work of James.

Joseph Conrad greatly admired Henry James, as did most of the important writers of the generation who followed him. Conrad’s first novel, *Almayer’s Folly*, appeared in 1895, but his most famous works did not appear until the turn of the century. In *Lord Jim* (1900), *Heart of Darkness* (1902), *Nostromo* (1904) and *The Secret Agent* (1907), Conrad proved himself a master of intricate structure, sustained irony and the sophisticated manipulation of point of view. Conrad often employed a narrator who filtered all the action for the reader, but in Nostromo, considered by many to be his finest novel, he dispensed with this technique. He was particularly adept at delineating the suffering consciousness, and besides the clash between native cultures and European civilization, his subjects were the effects of isolation and moral deterioration on the individual.

Another primary concern of writers of this period was sexuality and sexual mores. Above all it was D. H. Lawrence who abandoned the traditional concerns of the English novel -- manners and morals and society -- to portray sexual relations as a decisive element in human behavior. As a result of his frank portrayal of his favorite subject, two of his major novels, *The Rainbow*
(1915) and *Lady Chatterle’s Lover* (1928), were temporarily banned. Lawrence’s forthright depiction of sexuality, however, was an integral part of his crusade against the constricting and sterile values of modern civilization. His importance, and his continuing fame, depend less on technical accomplishments than on his subject matter. His earlier novels such as *The White Peacock* (1911) and *Sons and Lovers* (1913) did not go beyond the bounds of what was deemed acceptable, but with the publication of *The Rainbow*, Lawrence’s name began to be associated with sexual license and literary scandal. Methuen, the publisher, was prosecuted and all the copies of the novel were confiscated. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Lawrence’s last major novel and an expression of his belief in the possibility of personal fulfillment through sexual relations, was not published in England in an unexpurgated edition until 1961.

The novelist E. M. Forster was also concerned with questions of sexuality in his novels, although in his works the subject receives a much more subtle treatment than in Lawrence’s. The only novel he ever wrote which treated the subject of homosexuality frankly, *Maurice* (pub. 1971), did not appear until after his death. Forster began his literary career in 1903 as a writer for *The Independent Review*, a liberal periodical with anti-imperialist sympathies. His first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), explored the
emotional and sensual deficiencies of the English upper middle class, a theme he was to repeat in the novels that established his reputation as one of England's leading novelists, *A Room with a View* (1908) and *Howard's End* (1910). The last novel he wrote, *A Passage to India* (1924), is probably his most enduring. It is both an examination of the social codes and barriers that thwart communication and frustrate human feeling, as well as sharp diagnosis of the less than perfect relationship between the Indians and their English overlords. He eventually gave up writing novels because, as he suggested, of the obligation to write about marriage.

Forster was a member of the Bloomsbury group, the most important member of which was Virginia Woolf. Woolf was instrumental in the development of modernism. Her first two novels *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919), were conventional in form, giving little hint of the experiments to come, but in 1919 she also published the essay "Modern Fiction," which anticipated her later experiments and served as a manifesto of literary modernism:

*Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions -- trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms [...]. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and*
Woolf later asserted that “in or about December 1910” (the date of an important exhibit of modern French art) “human nature changed.” This statement emphasizes how the modernist impulse in literature paralleled anti-traditionalist movements in ‘modern’ art, beginning with cubism and abstract art in the early years of the new century. Modernism was influenced as well by developments in psychology and anthropology, especially the work of Freud and Jung and Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890); it stressed the active role of the unconscious mind and the importance of the irrational, and made use of myth as thematic material. The pioneers of literary modernism in prose, notably Woolf and James Joyce, rejected traditional narration, replacing it with impressionistic techniques such as stream of consciousness, in which internal experience rather than outward ‘reality’ is the focus and conventional chronology and causality all but vanish.

For at least a century, realism had been the dominant literary mode in the Western world. When in the twentieth century theoretical physics began to question the causal model of the universe and made room for the random and the relative in the dominant world view, realism ceased to be a compelling force as a literary doctrine. It was not until the 1920s, however, that the framework of
the Victorian novel was disrupted for good with the appearance of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*, both published in 1922. In these seminal works of literary modernism, the rejection of traditional literary forms and values of Victorian literature that started in the last decade of the previous century is complete, establishing the narrative techniques which would be integral to twentieth century literature.

The discussion of the contemporary literary developments in France and England leads one to realize that the literatures of these two countries cannot be studied and understood in isolation. As far as naturalism is concerned, it is seen that it is mainly the result of developments in science and industrialization, which in turn influenced the subject matter, thought, tone and style of the literary artists.

**Naturalism in the Arts**

In the arts generally, naturalism is an approach that advocates the factual and realistic representation of the subject of a painting or novel with no stylization. Specifically, *naturalism* refers to a movement in literature and drama that developed as a reaction to the mannered, conventional and heavily stylized approach to all the arts favoured in the 18th century.
Naturalism in art (painting)

Painters such as Constable and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood worked outdoors, directly from their subject matter, but also demonstrate the extremes to which naturalism could be taken. The English Pre-Raphaelite painter Holman Hunt stunned sheep by hurling them to the ground so that they would stay still enough to be painted and he burnt a dead horse in his garden to obtain its skeleton.

Naturalism in theatre and film

The search for naturalism in acting was begun by Russian theatre teacher Stanislavsky. This ended in an obsession with finding completely authentic stage scenery and properties required to assist the actor in sustaining a role. While increased theatre costs put an end to this kind of extravagance, in Europe, in the 1950s, the wealthier US companies under directors like Elia Kazan continued to craft elaborate naturalistic performances, supported by the New York Actors’ Studio. The US film industry provided the opportunity to extend this work, leading to actors increasing their weight to play a part or spending weeks in a wheelchair to understand a character’s psychology.
Literary naturalism

While not as extreme as naturalism in art and drama, naturalist novelists became embroiled in social debate. In France in the late 19th century the writings of Emile Zola and the brothers Goncourt, and in England, Charles Dickens, often held that people’s fates were determined by heredity, environment, and social forces beyond their control, leading to campaigns for reform.

Opinions of some critics about Naturalism in literature

Donald Pizer, in his book on Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature, presents two approaches:

1. That it is an extension or continuation of Realism with the addition of pessimistic determinism.

"... no more than an emphatic and explicit philosophical position taken by some Realists ... (that position being one of) a pessimistic, materialistic determinism." - George J. Becker

It is Realism with a "necessitation ideology." - Richard Chase

2. That it is different from Realism.

Donald Pizer further suggests specific changes in subject matter and characterization, which help in defining Naturalism as different from Realism:
1. The subject matter:

a. The subject matter deals with those raw and unpleasant experiences, which reduce characters to "degrading" behavior in their struggle to survive. These characters are mostly from the lower middle or the lower classes - they are poor, uneducated, and unsophisticated.

b. The milieu is the commonplace and the unheroic; life is usually the dull round of daily existence. But the naturalist discovers those qualities in such characters usually associated with the heroic or adventurous - acts of violence and passion leading to desperate moments and violent death. The suggestion is that life on its lowest levels is not as simple as it seems to be.

c. There is discussion of fate and "hubris" that affect a character; generally the controlling force is society and the surrounding environment.

2. The concept of a naturalistic character:

a. Characters are conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, chance, or instinct; but they have compensating humanistic values which affirm their individuality and life - their struggle for life becomes heroic and they maintain human dignity.

b. The Naturalists attempt to represent the intermingling in life of the controlling forces and individual worth. They do not dehumanize their characters.

Pizer says, "The primary goal of the late nineteenth-century American Naturalists was not to demonstrate the overwhelming and oppressive reality of the material forces present in our lives. Their attempt, rather, was to represent the intermingling in life of controlling forces and individual worth. The Naturalists do not dehumanize man."
Frank Norris on Naturalism

According to the novelist Frank Norris, Realism was the literature of the normal and the representative – “the smaller details of everyday life, things that are likely to happen between lunch and supper.”

Romanticism, according to Norris, was concerned with “variations from the type of normal life,” and in its desire to penetrate beneath the surface of experience and derive large generalizations on the nature of life it explores “the unplumbed depths of the human heart, and the mystery of sex, and the problems of life, and the unsearched penetralia of the soul of man.”

Naturalism abstracts the best from Realism and Romanticism - detailed accuracy and philosophical depth. Also important in Naturalism is the “choice of milieu.” In his book, “Zola as a Romantic Writer” Norris says:

“That Zola's is not purely romantic as was Hugo's, lies chiefly in the choice of milieu. These great terrible dramas no longer happen among the personnel of a feudal and Renaissance nobility, those who are in the forefront of the marching world, but among the lower - almost the lowest - classes; those who are falling by the roadway. This is not romanticism - this drama of the people working itself out in blood and ordure. It is not realism. It is a school by itself, unique, somber, and powerful beyond words. It is naturalism.”
Lars Ahnebrink on Naturalism

In contrast to a Realist, a Naturalist believes that a character is fundamentally an animal, without free will. To a Naturalistic writer, a character can be explained in terms of the forces, usually heredity and environment, which operate on him/her.

"Realism is a manner and method of composition by which the author describes normal, average life, in an accurate, truthful way."

"Naturalism is a manner and method of composition by which the author portrays 'life as it is' in accordance with the philosophic theory of determinism."

The Naturalists introduced new topics and helped broaden the scope of American fiction:

Prostitution and seduction - in Maggie, Vandover and the Brute, The Octopus, and Sister Carrie.

Exposure of social conditions and social evils - Main-Travelled Roads, A Spoil of Office, A Member of the Third House, McTeague, and The Octopus.

*Free Will or Determinism* - [In Naturalism, characters do not have free will; external and internal forces, environment, or heredity control their behavior. This belief is called determinism. All determinists believe in the existence of the will, but the will is often enslaved on account of different reasons.]
The term *naturalism* describes a type of literature that attempts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. Unlike realism, which focuses on literary technique, naturalism implies a philosophical position: for naturalistic writers, since human beings are, in Emile Zola’s phrase, “human beasts,” characters can be studied through their relationships to their surroundings. Zola’s 1880 description of this method in *Le roman experimental* (The Experimental Novel, 1880) follows Claude Bernard’s medical model and the historian Hippolyte Taine’s observation that “virtue and vice are products like vitriol and sugar” —that is, that human beings as “products” should be studied impartially, without moralizing about their natures. Other influences on American naturalists include Herbert Spencer and Joseph LeConte.

Through this objective study of human beings, naturalistic writers believed that the laws behind the forces that govern human lives might be studied and understood. Naturalistic writers thus used a version of the scientific method to write their novels; they studied human beings governed by their instincts and passions.

In the introduction to *American Realism: New Essays*, there appears a concise definition of Naturalism - “materialistic determinism.” In the piece,
"The Country of the Blue," Eric Sundquist comments, "Revelling in the extraordinary, the excessive, and the grotesque in order to reveal the immutable bestiality of Man in Nature, naturalism dramatizes the loss of individuality at a physiological level by making a Calvinism without God as its determining order and violent death its utopia"

A modified definition appears in Donald Pizer's Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction, Revised Edition (1984):

The naturalistic novel usually contains two tensions or contradictions, and . . . the two in conjunction comprise both an interpretation of experience and a particular aesthetic recreation of experience. In other words, the two constitute the theme and form of the naturalistic novel. The first tension is that between the subject matter of the naturalistic novel and the concept of man, which emerges from this subject matter. The naturalist populates his novel primarily from the lower middle class or the lower class. . . . His fictional world is that of the commonplace and unheroic in which life would seem to be chiefly the dull round of daily existence, as we ourselves usually conceive of our lives. But the naturalist discovers in this world those qualities of man usually associated with the heroic or adventurous, such as acts of violence and passion, which involve sexual adventure or bodily strength and which culminate in desperate moments and violent death. A naturalistic novel is thus an extension of realism only in the sense that both modes often deal with the local and contemporary. The naturalist, however, discovers in this material the extraordinary and excessive in human nature.

The second tension involves the theme of the naturalistic novel. The naturalist often describes his characters as though they are conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, instinct, or chance. But he also suggests a compensating
humanistic value in his characters or their fates, which affirms the significance of the individual and of his life. The tension here is that between the naturalist's desire to represent in fiction the new, discomfiting truths which he has found in the ideas and life of his late nineteenth-century world, and also his desire to find some meaning in experience which reasserts the validity of the human enterprise.

A

Characters: Are frequently but not invariably ill-educated or lower-class characters whose lives are governed by the forces of heredity, instinct, and passion. Their attempts at exercising free will or choice are hamstrung by forces beyond their control; social Darwinism and other theories help to explain their fates to the reader.

Techniques and plots: Walcutt says that the naturalistic novel offers "clinical, panoramic, slice-of-life" drama that is often a "chronicle of despair". The novel of degeneration—Zola's *L'Assommoir* and Norris's *Vandover and the Brute*, for example—is also a common type.
Themes:

1. Walcutt identifies survival, determinism, violence, and taboo as key themes.

2. The "brute within" each individual, comprised of strong and often warring emotions: passions, such as lust, greed, or the desire for dominance or pleasure; and the fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe. The conflict in naturalistic novels is often "man against nature" or "man against himself" as characters struggle to retain a "veneer of civilization" despite external pressures that threaten to release the "brute within."

3. Nature as an indifferent force acting on the lives of human beings. The romantic vision of Wordsworth—that "nature never did betray the heart that loved her" --here becomes Stephen Crane's view in "The Open Boat": "This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual - nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent."

4. The forces of heredity and environment as they affect--and afflict--individual lives.
5. An indifferent, deterministic universe. Naturalistic texts often describe the futile attempts of human beings to exercise free will, often ironically presented, in this universe that reveals free will as an illusion.
Naturalism as a New Trend Developed from Realism

Since naturalism is often considered to be synonymous with realism, and some times called as the scientifically based extension of realism or an extreme form of realism, let us briefly consider realism, and then try to contrast realism with naturalism and see how naturalism grew as an extension of realism.

Realism:

Realism cannot be called as a definite form of writing in fiction. Realism is an inclusive term and its interpretation varies with both writers and critics. The foundation of realism is an endeavor to depict life in an entirely honest manner, without prejudice and glamour, but in practice this virtue can only be relative.

Realism may be said to begin with such early English novelists as Defoe, Fielding, Smollet and others. It assumed the proportion of a definite literary trend in the 19th century. The advance of science and the growth of rationalism in philosophy were contributing factors.

In the English writers George Eliot, Trollope, Thackeray and Dickens we can follow the growth of realistic treatment of cotemporary life. In the U.S., Mark Twain and Whitman can be cited as outstanding examples. Ernest Hemingway introduced a new realistic style.
Characteristics of Realism:

- Renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. Selective presentation of reality with an emphasis on verisimilitude, even at the expense of a well-made plot.
- Character is more important than action and plot; complex ethical choices are often the subject.
- Characters appear in their real complexity of temperament and motive; they are in an explainable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past.
- Class is important; the novel has traditionally served the interests and aspirations of an insurgent middle class.
- Events will usually be plausible. Realistic novels avoid the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels and romances.
- Diction is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone may be comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact.
- Objectivity in presentation becomes increasingly important: overt authorial comments or intrusions diminish as the century progresses.
- Interior or psychological realism a variant form.
• In *Black and White Strangers*, Kenneth Warren suggests that a basic difference between realism and sentimentalism is that in realism, “the redemption of the individual lay within the social world,” but in sentimental fiction, “the redemption of the social world lay with the individual.”

**Characteristics of naturalism:**

• A selection of setting and subjects from the lower strata of society.

• An objective and detached method of narration on the part of the author.

• Usually a large number of characters and a hero or heroine who represent the vices and the weaknesses of a particular type or group, rather than the more conventional individual.

• An idealized leading character involved in purely personal problems or adventures.

• Accurate and meticulous details.

• Scholarly care in documentation of the historical background.

• Constant emphasis on the social environment of the characters and their subordinate relation to it.

• A pervading deterministic sense of the control over the actions and destinies of the characters exerted by impersonal social, economic and
biological forces, with the efforts of human free will shown as weak and ineffectual.

The development of naturalism as a new trend from realism:

Realism, in literary history is usually associated with the efforts of the novel in the 19th century, particularly in France, to establish itself as a major literary genre. The realism of Balzac and the Goncourt brothers was essentially an assertion that, far from being escapist and unreal, the novel was uniquely capable of revealing truth of contemporary life in society. Balzac, in ‘La Comédie Humaine’ saw himself as a scientific historian, recording and classifying the social life of France in all its aspects. The adoption of this role led to;

• A detailed reportage of the physical minutiae of everyday life- clothes, food, furniture, etc.

• The cataloguing and typefying of men into social types or species, and radical analyses of the economic basis of society.

• Accuracy and completeness of description are the virtues pursued.

However, such an effort necessarily raises a question: accuracy of what? Completeness in which terms? At its extreme, the realistic programme runs into two difficulties:
Technically it becomes obsessed with physical detail and topographical accuracy for its own, or history’s sake, and so many realistic novels may amount to little more than guide books or social documents.

Secondly, it becomes confused about the distinction between art and history or sociology: the novelist, metaphorically and incidentally, is a historian; whatever the relations of his art with the realities of society, he is finally involved in the making of fictions and has responsibilities to ‘FORM’ that the historian or sociologist does not.

The failure to acknowledge this crucial distinction is evident in the development of realistic theory into Naturalism, whose claim to an even greater accuracy and inclusiveness rested on an analogy with scientific method. Naturalism, notably in the theories of Émile Zola, borrowed its terms from post-Darwinian biology and asserted the wholly determined character of man and society. As man was simply a higher animal, his nature was controlled by the regular forces of heredity and environment. So, the novelist as social historian now appeared as the taxonomist biologist, displaying his scientific objectivity in elaborate documentation and unwonted frankness in regard to bodily functions.

All theories of realism, however sophisticated, rest on the assumption that the novel imitates reality, and that the reality is more or less stable and
commonly accessible. But it is possible to conceive the relationship between art and reality in terms of imaginative creation rather than imitation. The artist may be said to create a fictional world which is more than a copy of the real one. Such a shift in conceptual metaphors produces different attitudes to the novel. It also gives rise to the difference between the novels of naturalistic priorities and the novels of realistic tradition. The emphasis moves from accuracy of representation to aspects of form – narrative structuring, symbolic patterning, linguistic complexity, and so on. Much of the major fiction of Conrad, Henry James, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and other contemporary novelists seems to exist in this alternative poetic of naturalism. They advertise their fictional ingredients. Of course, all novels relate in some way or the other to the general complex of realism, but relatively a few can be fully understood in terms of the specific theory of realism.

Hence, the attempts to use ‘realism’ as a critical term to define the essential nature of the novel, rather than as a label for diverse but identifiable tradition, prove unsatisfactory, though initially attractive.
Realism and Naturalism Contrasted (The American Context)

Dates encompassed — 1865-1885 (Realism) 1885-1914 (Naturalism)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Naturalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overview</strong> –</td>
<td>Naturalism, on the other hand, is essentially a literary expression of determinism. Associated with bleak, realistic depictions of lower-class life, determinism denies religion as a motivating force in the world and instead perceives the universe as a machine. 18th century Enlightenment thinkers had also imagined the world as a machine, but as a perfect one, invented by God and tending toward progress and human betterment. Naturalists imagined society, instead, as a blind machine, godless and out of control. The 19th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In American literature, the term “realism” encompasses the period of time from the Civil War to the last decade of the 19th century during which Mark Twain, Rebecca Harding Davis and others wrote fiction devoted to accurate representation and an exploration of American lives in various contexts. As the United States grew rapidly following the Civil War, the increasing rates of democracy and literacy, the rapid growth in industrialization and urbanization, an expanding population base due to immigration, and a relative rise in middle-class affluence provided a fertile literary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
environment for readers interested in understanding these rapid shifts in culture. In drawing attention to this connection, Amy Kaplan has called realism a “strategy for imagining and managing the threats of social change.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

American historian Henry Adams constructed an elaborate theory of history involving the idea of the DYNAMO, or machine force, and entropy, or decay of force. Instead of progress, Adams sees inevitable decline in society.

Naturalism daringly opened up the seamy underside of society and such topics as divorce, sex, adultery, poverty, and crime. Naturalism flourished as Americans became urbanized and aware of the importance of large economic and social forces. By 1890, the frontier was declared officially closed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Realism:</strong> Post-bellum South &amp; Industrial Revolution, mass emigration (1880s)</th>
<th><strong>Naturalism:</strong> Victorian England, the “gay nineties,” women’s movement, Spanish-American War, World War I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Predominant writings -</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realism:</strong> Novels and essays, some poetry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naturalism:</strong> the “Novel of Manners,” essays, short fiction, some poetry, investigative journalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notable writers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realists:</strong> Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Kate Chopin, Sarah Jewett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naturalists:</strong> Henry James, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, William Dean Howells, George Gissing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Schools of thought -

**Realism:** Broadly defined as "the faithful representation of reality" or "verisimilitude," realism is a literary technique practiced by many schools of writing. Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. A reaction against romanticism, an interest in scientific method, the systematizing of the study of documentary history, and the influence of rational philosophy all affected the rise of realism. According to William Harmon and Hugh Holman, "Where romanticists

**Naturalism:** Naturalist writers believed that the laws behind the forces that govern human lives might be studied and understood. Thus, they used a version of scientific method to write their novels: they studied human beings governed by their instincts and passions as well as the ways in which the characters' lives were/are governed by forces of heredity and environment.
transcend the immediate to find the ideal, and the naturalists plumb the actual or superficial to find the scientific laws that control its actions, realists center their attention to a remarkable degree on the immediate, the here and now, the specific action, and the verifiable consequence”

Style -

**Realist Writers ALL tend to do the following:**

1. emphasis on verisimilitude
2. character more important than action and plot
3. characters are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past

**The Role of the Naturalist Writer:**

1. Is to present characters as biological creatures that are governed by heredity & environment.
2. The writer is factored “off-stage” as he watches naturalistic
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) class is important</td>
<td>creatures respond to their environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) events are usually plausible</td>
<td>(3) His job is to examine, explore, and expose much like a scientific exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) diction is natural vernacular</td>
<td>(4) Conflict is found between characters and their environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) objectivity in presentation becomes increasingly important</td>
<td>(5) The environment is a force which controls characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) interior or psychological realism is a variant form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trends -**

A strong trend during the period of American Realism is known as Regionalism, or local color writing

Prominent trends of American Naturalism are social commentary and depraved indifference
Idealism, Humanism and Existentialism in Relation to Naturalism

Naturalism and Idealism contrasted:

(Naturalism in terms of beliefs and temperament?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATURALISM</th>
<th>IDEALISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The naturalist accepts sense experiences as the most important avenue of knowledge.</td>
<td>A belief that there are more important avenues of knowledge than mere 'sense experience'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The naturalist believes that knowledge is not esoteric, innate, or intuitive (mystical).</td>
<td>A belief that the most important knowledge is that of understanding the subjective self and the mental life itself, not the external world or external nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The naturalist believes that the external world, of which man is an integral part, is objective and hence, not “his idea” but an existent apart from his, your, or anyone’s consciousness.</td>
<td>A belief that what we really know about the external world is subjective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The naturalist believes that the</td>
<td>A belief that the order of the external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world manifests order and regularity and that, contrary to some opinion, this does not include human responsibility. This order cannot be changed merely by thought, magic, sacrifice or prayer but requires actual manipulation of the external world in some physical way.</td>
<td>world is either mindistic or impressed upon it by man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The naturalist rejects supernatural teleology*. The direction of the world is caused by the world itself.</td>
<td>A belief that there is some kind of purpose in the world which is neither intrinsic to nature (immanent), nor impressed upon it by man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The naturalist is humanistic*. Man is not simply a mirror of deity or the absolute but a biological existent whose goal is to do what is proper to man. What is proper to man is discovered in a naturalistic context by the moral philosopher.</td>
<td>A belief that man has transcendent goals involving a spirit beyond man.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Teleology: a theory that events and developments are meant to fulfill a purpose and happen just because of that.

*Humanism: The philosophical attitude of Renaissance scholars who, turning away from medieval preoccupation with the hereafter, concerned themselves more with humanity in the present life. They conceived man as centre of all the knowledge of the universe.
HUMANISM AS AN INCORPORATE OF NATURALISM

*Humanism* is a broad category of active ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people. One version of humanism bases dignity and worth on the ability to rationally determine what is right. Humanism is a component of a variety of more specific philosophical systems. (such as naturalism)

It is generally considered to entail a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests. In focusing on man's capacity for self-determination, humanism rejects transcendental justifications such as a dependence on faith, the supernatural, sacred texts, or religious creeds. Humanists tend to endorse recognition of a universal morality based on the commonality of human nature, suggesting that the long-term solutions to our problems cannot be parochial. Thus, humanism emphasises the ideals of rationality and morality.

**Tenets**

*Atheistic vs. religious humanism*

While humanism in some ways fulfills or supplements the role of religions in people's lives and qualifies as a stance on religion, it is not a religion in itself: *It is entirely compatible with naturalism and atheism*, but
doesn’t strictly require either of these, and is in fact compatible with some types of religion.

The dominant forms of humanism are atheistic and express a disbelief in the supernatural. **All forms of humanism are built around a rejection of the importance of the supernatural in human affairs, regardless of whether or not it exists.** In this way, humanism as a group of related philosophies does not necessarily rule out some form of theism or deism, and there are many humanists who consider themselves religious, some of whom are members of (typically, liberal) religious organizations. What humanism clearly rejects is blind deference to supernatural beliefs in resolving human affairs, not necessarily the beliefs themselves.

For that matter, atheism on its own doesn’t necessarily entail humanism. For example, Objectivism and Soviet Communism are both wholeheartedly atheistic and yet strongly incompatible with humanism due to their ethical views.

**Humanism avoids blind acceptance of unsupported beliefs; it supports scientific skepticism and the scientific method, rejecting authoritarianism and extreme skepticism, and rendering faith an unacceptable basis for action.** Likewise, humanism asserts that knowledge of right and wrong is based on our
best understanding of our individual and joint interests, rather than stemming from a transcendental or arbitrarily local source.

**The basic tenets of humanism:**

*Humanism is a philosophy of life inspired by humanity and guided by reason.*

- Humanists think that science and reason provide the best basis for understanding the world around us.
- Humanists believe that moral values are properly founded on human empathy and scientific understanding.
- Humanists see no convincing evidence for gods, the supernatural, or life after death.
- Humanists believe we must live this life on the basis that it is the only life we’ll have and therefore, we must make the most of it for ourselves, each other, and our world.

The core values of humanist philosophy are reflected in the official statement adopted in July 2002 by the 50th Congress of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. Some extracts from the Amsterdam Declaration: Humanist Manifesto III are as follows⁹:
• **Knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.** Humanists find that science is the best method for determining this knowledge as well as for solving problems and developing beneficial technologies. The value of new departures in thought, the arts, and inner experience is also recognized - each subject to analysis by critical intelligence.

• **Human beings are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.** Humanists recognize nature as self-existing. We accept our life as all and enough, distinguishing things as they are from things as we might wish or imagine them to be. We welcome the challenges of the future, and are drawn to and undaunted by the yet to be known.

• **Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience.** Humanists ground values in human welfare shaped by human circumstances, interests, and concerns and extend to the global ecosystem and beyond. We are committed to treating each person as having inherent worth and dignity, and to making informed choices in a context of freedom consonant with responsibility. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone.
With this brief discussion of humanism, we can observe that many aspects are common to both humanism and naturalism.

**Important aspects common to humanism and naturalism:**

- Use of the scientific method.

- Accepting sense experiences as the most important avenue of knowledge.

- Belief that knowledge is not esoteric, innate, or mystical (intuitive). That knowledge of the world is derived by observation, experimentation, and rational analysis.

- Nature is recognized as self-existing. Belief that the external world, of which man is an integral part, is objective and hence, not "his idea" but an existent apart from his, your, or anyone's consciousness. Human beings are an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change.

- Rejection of supernatural teleology and the belief that the direction of the world is caused by the world itself.

- The naturalist is humanistic. Man is not simply a mirror of deity or the absolute but a biological existent whose goal is to do what is proper to man. What is proper to man is discovered in a naturalistic context by the moral philosopher. Humanism bases dignity and worth, on man's ability
to rationally determine what is right and endorses recognition of universal morality based on the commonality of human nature.

In the light of these common aspects, we can conclude that humanism is an incorporate of naturalism.

**Existentialism and Naturalism**

**The Concept of Existentialism:**

Existentialism, as one of the philosophical trends in human thought is a reaction to the Hegelian Idealism. In nineteenth century Europe, it challenged the then existing absolute objective idealism of Hegel (1770-1831). Existentialism is based on the subjective interpretations of life trying to solve human problems. It thus tends to be humanistic, aesthetic and radical. Existentialism has had conflicting religious and aesthetic manifestations. In its religious aspect it goes back to Kierkegaard(1813-1855) the Danish philosopher who was made popular mainly after world war-II by the writing of Jean Paul Sartre, the French writer and philosopher. The theory says that man is a unique and isolated individual in a meaningless and hostile world, responsible for his own actions and free to choose his destiny. Existentialists tend to emphasize the unique and particular in human experience. They place the individual person at the center of their pictures of the world and are suspicious of philosophical or
psychological doctrines that obscure this essential individuality by speaking as if there were some abstract 'human nature', some set of general laws or principles to which men are determined or required, by their common humanity, to conform.

According to Existentialism, each man is what he chooses to be, or make himself. He cannot escape responsibility for his character or his deeds by claiming that they are the predetermined consequence of factors beyond his power to control or resist, nor can he justify what he does in terms of external or 'objective' standards imposed upon him from outside. Sartre, in particular, insists upon the notion of the individual as the source of all value, and as being obliged to choose for himself what to do and what standards to adopt or reject. Existentialists of the Sartre school hold that we can know nothing but that we exist and are solely responsible for ourselves as existing creatures, that there is no God to share or exact responsibility.

Existentialism is a philosophy that confronts the human situation in its totality to ask what the basic conditions of human experience are and how man can establish his own meaning out of those conditions. Its method is to begin with this human existence as a fact without any readymade preconceptions about the essence of man. The spirit of existentialism that makes it stand apart in human thought lies in its deep concern with passion. Its call to man is to
create himself (because he is free) with responsibility as a being-in-the-world, to choose his ethic and work his transcendence through his consciousness. Existentialists who revolted against the Hegelian idealism justify the requirement of freedom and responsibility for man to become a free and responsible human being both in his biological and social environments.

Existentialism is a philosophy of freedom and responsibility, which has beset people of the twentieth century in all aspects of its culture and civilization, the private as well as the public, because it is both frightening and liberating. It is frightening in the sense that it hardly believes in the existence and benevolence of God and is liberating in the sense that it emphasizes freedom and responsibility for an individual’s self-preservation and self-realization.

The basic tenets of the philosophy of existentialism are:

- Right thought, right choice, heroic action, freedom and responsibility.
- It emphasizes atheism, agnosticism and humanism for a full and purposive life of human beings in the purposeless universe.
- Existence and the existent (*i.e..... “Our being in the environment we react to, and act upon.”)
- The existent as a being-in-the-world.
• The existent and his freedom and limitations.
• The existent and his experience of the absolute.

Aspects common to Existentialism, Humanism and Naturalism

1. Rejection of supernatural teleology and the concept of God. Emphasis on atheism and humanism for a full and purposive life of human beings in a purposeless universe.

2. Belief that the direction of the world is caused by the world itself, wherein man has the freedom and responsibility to create himself. Man as a being-in-the-world is both responsible and free to choose his ethic and work his transcendence through his consciousness. That is, the order that exists in this world cannot be changed merely by thought, magic or prayer, but requires actual manipulation of the external world in some physical way. Man must establish his own meaning out of the existing conditions and the existing order of the world.

3. Consideration of the human individual to be at the center of the picture of the world in the sense that, the individual’s goal is to do what is proper to man. With his freedom and responsibility, the individual is obliged to choose for himself what to do and what standards to adopt or reject. That is, what is proper to man (right thought and right choice) is discovered by
the individual in a naturalistic context. Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience of human circumstances.

4. Belief that man is an integral part of nature (the external world)

5. The concept of freedom, naturalness and the portrayal of the natural world.

Some differences between Existentialism and Naturalism

1. Existentialism believes that man is responsible for his own actions and free to choose his destiny. Though naturalism also believes in man’s freedom of action, here we find that the forces of heredity and environment influence man’s actions and destinies. Therefore in naturalism, we find the efforts of human free will to be shown as weak, ineffectual and subordinate in relation to the forces of heredity and environment.

2. In Existentialism, we find the introduction of a consumer-oriented value wherein the characters do things for self-pleasure whereas, obtaining pleasure is not an end in naturalism.
The Growth of Naturalism from the Renaissance

The Meaning of Renaissance

Renaissance is a French term meaning ‘rebirth’. It indicates the flourishing of artistic and scientific activities starting in Italy in the mid 1300s. We can say that it was a rebirth of classical learning and knowledge through the discovery of ancient texts, and also a rebirth of European culture in general. Renaissance marks a transition from the Middle Ages to the modern age. Many political and cultural historians now prefer to use the term ‘early modern’ for denoting this period, a neutral term that highlights the period as a transitional one that led to the modern world, but does not bear any positive or negative connotations.

England before the Renaissance

In the context of English literature, the age that immediately precedes this age is the age of Chaucer. This age was characterized by glaring social contrasts and rapid political change. During this period in England, the king and his nobility led a very gay and debonair life. Wealth increased among the commercial classes, but the masses of people were sunk in deplorable misery. Famine followed by the plague, the long years of war with France, the heavy burdens of taxation, a despotic ruler, social unrest and the corruption of the
church-all these led to an attempt to revive spiritual Christianity by John Wyclif. This fostered a new religious movement known as the Reformation. Till now, scholarship had been mainly restricted to the church, and men’s thoughts and feelings about themselves and the world were governed almost entirely by theology. Their minds were held in sway by the medieval habit of mind and the ecclesiastical ideas. But the spirit of the Renaissance that brought the moral ideas of Greece and Rome, gave an immense impetus to intellectual expansion and to men’s efforts to free themselves from the trammels of theology. The new culture of the Renaissance came to be called as ‘Humanism’. The Italian writers Petrarch and Boccaccio played a major role in the spread of Renaissance humanism to England, which could be seen in the quickened sense of beauty, the delight in life, and the free, secular spirit in English literature. However, the Renaissance movement was held in check in England for a long time due to adverse circumstances, and it was only in the sixteenth century that the Renaissance really flowered in England.

**The spread of the Renaissance**

The Renaissance had spread gradually at different places at different times and one could not define the exact date and place when the Middle Ages ended. The starting place of the Renaissance is almost universally ascribed to
Central Italy, especially the city of Florence. The Renaissance spread north out of Italy, being adapted and modified as it moved. It arrived in France, imported by King Charles VIII after his invasion of Italy. The Italians brought the Renaissance to Poland and Hungary in the late 15th century.

From France the spirit of the Renaissance spread to the Low Countries and Germany, and finally to England, Scandinavia, and Central Europe by the late 16th century. In these areas the Renaissance became closely linked to the turmoil of the Protestant Reformation.

In England, the Elizabethan era marked the beginning of the English Renaissance. It saw writers such as William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, John Milton, and Edmund Spenser, as well as great artists, architects (such as Inigo Jones) and composers such as Thomas Tallis, John Taverner, and William Byrd.

The English Renaissance and the Beginning of Modernity

If we see the list of modern literary movements given earlier in this chapter, we can observe that almost all literary trends come only after the European Renaissance. "English Renaissance" is a term often used to describe a cultural and artistic movement in England from the early 16th century to the early 17th century. It is associated with the pan-European
Renaissance that many cultural historians believe originated in northern Italy in the fourteenth century. This era in English cultural history is sometimes referred to as "the age of Shakespeare" or "the Elizabethan era," taking the name of the English Renaissance's most famous author and most important monarch, respectively; however, it is worth remembering that these names are rather misleading: Shakespeare was not an especially famous writer in his own time, and the English Renaissance covers a period both before and after Elizabeth's reign.

Poets such as Edmund Spenser and John Milton produced works that demonstrated an increased interest in understanding English Christian beliefs, such as the allegorical representation of the Tudor Dynasty in 'The Faerie Queen' and the retelling of mankind's fall from paradise in 'Paradise Lost'; playwrights, such as Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, composed theatrical representations of the English take on life, death, and history. Nearing the end of the Tudor Dynasty, philosophers like Sir Thomas More and Sir Francis Bacon published their own ideas about humanity and the aspects of a perfect society, pushing the limits of metacognition at that time. As England abolished its astrologers and alchemists, it came closer to reaching modern science with the Baconian Method, a forerunner of the Scientific Method and
humanism. Thus, we can say that modernity begins with the Renaissance and is still here with us.

**Beginning of Naturalism in the Renaissance**

If we consider the Baconian method as a forerunner of the scientific method and humanism during the Renaissance period, it is quite clear for one to see that naturalism begins from the English Renaissance. (It has already been seen that humanism is an incorporate of naturalism). Not only in England, but even in Italy, its birth place, the Renaissance influenced painting, sculpture, and architecture. Art became more true to life. Paintings became more realistic and focused less often on religious topics. Artists advanced the Renaissance style of showing nature and depicting the feelings of people. Their adherence to naturalism can be seen from the attention to detail in the observation of nature expressed in many paintings of the time. There was a very obvious naturalism about contemporary sculpture because highly true to life figures were being sculpted.
Tracing the Development of Naturalism

While tracing the growth of naturalism from the Renaissance, one can find that the seventeenth century English literature, especially of the restoration, was thoroughly metropolitan in nature and almost always had some political overtones. It was poetry of city life. However, there were some occasional exceptions, as in the works of Milton, where we can see naturalism. Here it is worthy to note that Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) and Lady Winchilsea (1660-1720) show a genuine sense of natural beauty and the charms of rural life. At almost the same time, it was the Scottish poets who did much to bring the love of nature into later English literature. It was in the writings of Allen Ramsay (1686-1758), that the reviving love of nature first became more noticeable. The trend that started with him reached the London public and became an influence in English literature through the works of another Scotsman - James Thomson (1700-1748). His *Seasons* can be recognized as the first important poem in which Nature is made the central theme, instead of being depicted as subordinate to man. The Welshman John Dyer (1700-1758), and his *Grongar Hill* (which draws much from Milton) is worth mentioning in this context. From this time onwards, the love of nature gained prominence in English literature. We can find it in writers like William Blake, Goldsmith, Gray, Burns and Cowper.
The trend of “return to nature” profoundly affected the later eighteenth century literature in thought, tone and style. This trend of “return to nature” was not just about an increased interest in the picturesque and the rural life. It was about a heightened sensitivity to all the aspects that arise from the contrast between nature and civilisation. There was a strengthening of the belief that, when the limiting conventions of the artificial social system prevent the free development and expression of individuality and give rise to various evils, the only way of salvation for men and nations lay through a drastic simplification of life. This led to the choice of more fundamental themes taken from the unsophisticated life of the rural people and more natural modes of treatment. Greater simplicity in the choice of subject matter, the passions described, and in the language used were the main aim of many writers of the new generation. At first, the movement towards simplicity was slow and halting, but it slowly gained ground.

The most notable of the naturalistic poets at this time is William Blake (1757-1827). He can be called as a leader in the kind of naturalistic poetry which deals with ordinary things, which was to be perfected later by Wordsworth. At the same time, we can see a slightly different type of naturalism in Blake’s contemporary, George Crabbe (1754-1832). In his works, naturalism took the form of extreme and uncompromising realism. As Crabbe
himself knew the hard life of poverty with its misery and discontent, he tried to express it in verse. He maintains unflinching fidelity to facts. Though the Romantic Movement was strong at that time, Crabbe remained completely uninfluenced by it.

The publication of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* is considered to mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of English poetry. It represents the full development of both romanticism and naturalism. In the *Lyrical Ballads*, romanticism was represented by Coleridge's single contribution, *The Ancient Mariner*, and naturalism by Wordsworth's *Goody Blake, The Thorn, The Idiot Boy* and other similar works.

**Romanticism Differentiated from Naturalism**

Though naturalism is contemporary with romanticism and both represent a reaction against Augustan ideals, it was a reaction of a different kind. Romanticism stressed the awe of "nature" in art and language and the experience of sublimity through a connection with nature. We have seen that naturalism is an outgrowth of realism and both are opposed to romanticism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment.
From Romanticism to Naturalism

The changing landscape of England that was brought about by the steam engine has two major outcomes: the boom of industrialization and privatization of pastures with the expansion of the city, and the consequent depopulation of the countryside. Most peasants poured into the city to work in the new factories. This abrupt change is revealed by the change of meaning in five key words: industry (once meaning "creativity"), democracy (once disparagingly used as "mob-rule"), class (from now also used with a social connotation), art (once just meaning "craft"), and culture (once only belonging to farming), but the poor condition of workers, the new class-conflicts and the pollution of the environment causes a reaction to urbanism and industrialization, prompting poets to rediscover the beauty and value of nature. Mother earth is seen as the only source of wisdom, the only solution to the ugliness caused by machines.

The superiority of nature and instinct over civilization had been preached by Jean Jacques Rousseau and his message was picked up by almost all European poets. The first in England were the Lake Poets, a small group of friends including William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. These early Romantic Poets brought a new emotionalism and introspection, and their
emergence is marked by the first romantic Manifesto in English literature, the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*.

During the Victorian age (1837-1901), the novel became the leading form of literature in England and most writers were now more concerned to meet the tastes of a large middle class reading public than to please aristocratic patrons. Dickens wrote vividly about London life and the struggles of the poor, but in a good-humoured fashion which was acceptable to readers of all classes. In his works and those of many of his contemporaries we can see the result of the industrial revolution in the form of *realism* from which naturalism emerged.

We have already seen earlier in this chapter that naturalism was an outgrowth from realism. Naturalism got an added impetus by the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) and the theory of evolution contained therein. The theory of evolution, combined with other developments in the field of medicine and engineering led to a loss of orthodox religious faith among the people, who came to believe the law of nature, and not the law of the church. Naturalism abstracted the best from romanticism and realism, and after the realistic works of Dickens, naturalism went on to gain firm ground in the works of authors like George Gissing, George Bernard Shaw and Joseph Conrad.
Naturalism in Joseph Conrad’s Novels

In the preceding pages the social and literary trends that led to the development of the philosophy of naturalism were examined, and then compared with some related literary philosophies. The development of naturalism from the Renaissance was also traced. The next chapter sets out to study the novels of Conrad in the light of naturalist philosophy. Therefore before starting the study of Conrad’s novels, the chief elements of naturalism as summarized from the discussion so far shall be considered first.

Subject matter and setting:

The subject matter in naturalist works deals with subjects from the lower strata of society, ordinary men who live in the actual world facing problems of real life. It also deals with misery, harsh conditions, raw and unpleasant experiences which reduce characters to degrading behaviour in their struggle to survive. That is, the stories are mostly rooted in social facts and natural reality with the most commonplace and unheroic settings wherein life is usually the dull round of routine daily existence.
Method:

In all naturalist works, one can find an objective and detached method of narration with an emphasis on accurate and meticulous details, including scholarly care in documentation of the historical background by the authors. Another notable feature of the naturalist’s method is an attempt at portraying life and society as objectively and truthfully as the subject matter of science is studied and presented (scientific method). This often leads to an elaborate documentation and unwonted frankness in regard to bodily functions (scientific objectivity). In the words of Walcutt, the naturalist novel offers “clinical, panoramic, slice-of-life drama that is often a chronicle of despair”—the novel of degeneration. 13

Plot and Characters:

Naturalist works are usually characterized by a plot having a large number of characters and a hero or heroine who represents the vices and weaknesses of a certain type or group, rather than the more conventional individual. Even if we find an idealized leading character he would be involved in purely personal problems or adventures and the characters are shown to be governed (just as real human beings are) by the forces of heredity and environment. Their attempts at exercising free will are foiled by forces beyond
their control. Here, theories like social Darwinism help to explain their fates to the reader.

The characters in naturalist works are governed by their instincts and passions and are studied through their relationships to the surroundings. There is a constant emphasis on the social environment of the characters and their subordinate relation to it. Moreover, the characters are mostly drawn from the lower or lower middle classes. They are poor, uneducated and unsophisticated. Though the characters are conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, chance or instinct, the writer does not dehumanize the characters. They are shown to have compensating humanistic values which affirm their individuality and life. Though unheroic, the characters’ struggle for life becomes heroic and they maintain human dignity. The naturalist writer tries to represent the intermingling of the controlling forces and individual worth and in doing so, the naturalist discovers in the ordinary characters, something extraordinary and excessive in human nature.
**Themes:**

Struggle of the individual to adapt to the environment, fight for the spouse, Darwinian idea of ‘survival of the fittest’, survival, determinism, violence and taboo are frequently the key themes. In naturalism, the characters do not have free will; external or internal forces, environment or heredity have control over their behaviour. Though there is a free will, it is enslaved due to different reasons. There is always a pervading deterministic sense of control over the actions of characters exerted by the impersonal social, economic and biological forces, with the efforts of human free will shown as weak and ineffectual. That is, man is shown in subordinate relation to the forces of nature (external and internal). Therefore, a characteristic belief of the naturalist writer is that, man is alone and afraid in a world he has not made and he can maintain himself only through persistent struggle undergoing much suffering. The two levels of struggle depicted are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man and nature (physical nature/world)</th>
<th>External or Metonymical level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man and society (people)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man and his own self (own mind/human nature)</td>
<td>Internal or metaphorical level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The internal struggle refers to the 'brute' within each individual, comprised of strong and often warring emotions: passions such as lust, greed or the desire for dominance or pleasure. But man fights against himself and tries to maintain human dignity and civilization despite external pressures that threaten to release the 'brute within'. This fight is actually a fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe where Nature is shown as an indifferent force acting on the lives of human beings.

With this background of the chief elements of naturalism, let us proceed to study and discuss the different novels of Conrad in the light of naturalism. An attempt shall be made hence, to substantiate the elements of naturalism in the discussion of the texts.
NOTES


10 Rajalakshmi . B, The Novels of Thomas Hardy and Existentialism
(T-3428; Karnatak University Dharwad, 1986)

