CHAPTER 1

REALISM and its THEORIES

The problems of the nature, kind and representation of 'reality' seem to be as old as philosophic thought. 'Realism', though a cogent concept for writers, readers, and critics, like reality, is very much in dispute. There is, from the first, a difficulty about the philosophic application; then, there is a problem about the historical span and its application in different literary periods. "Some critics have gone so far as to deny that there was such a thing as a realistic movement in literature; others deny the possibility of a realistic work, whatever the literary affiliations of the author... most critics deny the existence of a realistic aesthetic."¹ Even then the question of realism has, understandably enough, loomed large in philosophy, art, literature, criticism and aesthetics.² To obviate the various problems and make the issues much simpler we had better limit our contexts and define our premises at the outset.

I

Realism had originally a philosophical connotation. The early philosophers ascribed idealistic significance to it and associated it with higher realities. Plato was a realist of this kind because he believed in the theory that literature was an imitation of an Ideal World. On the other hand, Aristotle, who differed with Plato, was also a realist: he believed in observation and the sense experience of an individual. This paradoxical view of realism underwent, with the passage of time,
a qualitative evolution and gradually came to acquire literary implications in the eighteenth century. Further, to offer a historical justification, as Rene Wellek observes, the tradition of realism that "descended from antiquity" was "reformulated by the philosophers and critics of the Romantic Age." In view of the prevalence of romanticism, realism was considered as a deliberate effort to oppose or combat the romantic tradition; it tended to be anti-romantic. "In short", as Wellek notes elsewhere, in literary realism, "there was a universal feeling for the end of romanticism, for the rise of a new age concerned with reality, science, and this world." And again, realism as a "period term" or "in a historical context as a polemical weapon against romanticism", Wellek considers it "as a theory of exclusion as well as inclusion." Unlike classicism and romanticism, however, the term 'realism' — and later on, likewise its counterpart, naturalism — carried even more conflicting meanings than its kindred terms that denoted movements or periods of literary history of the nineteenth century. Like these period terms, although realism is used in quite different senses, it is at the same time a typological term for trends that transcend particular ages and periods. In fact, the history of development and dissemination shows that it has meant all things to the critics, theorists and writers ("realism means different things in different contexts") as Harry Levin, the celebrated theorist of realism put it.

Historically, realism came to be recognized as a conscious movement in the second half of the nineteenth century,
when writers in France, England and the United States became involved in a heated debate over the questions of its definition, subject matter, purpose and scope, by pointing out its merits and limitations. This worldwide controversy rested on several issues: Idealism vs Realism or Classicism vs Realism; Realism vs Romanticism; Realism vs Naturalism; Naturalism vs Aestheticism; Realism vs Symbolism; Art vs Life. However, the critical controversy that originated and was fought in the name of realism in art (especially painting) and literature of France during the period from 1840 to 1870, came to be debated in England and America in the 1890s. According to Prierson, the active controversy was ended by 1896 and most of the issues involved were "finally decided in favor of the realists." It is during this period that French realism is widely received in Germany, England and America with a single denominator: "In the future even those who sneer at realism and misinterpret it most wilfully will be obliged to put their productions more in accord, with veritable experience." On the historical position there is another view: "It is not possible to argue that we have always had realism in art", George Becker insists, "though there may have been abortive tendencies toward it. Now that the thing has existed, we shall no doubt continue to have sporadic instances of it in the future."

In view of the nineteenth century developments and importance of science, psychology, and social awareness, realism tended to consider man in particular relation to his environment and cultural context.

Science aided the transition, modern writers aimed at reproducing, not the ideal conditions of an artificial society, but the infinite diorama of
nature; not nature 'methodized' but dishevelled.
Politics, aided too, by the overlaying of
democracy on aristocracy. History aided by
discovering the causes of the movements. . . .
Psychology was gathered out of remnants of the
older sciences and swept away many delusions. 14

Our immediate interest is in the continuity of realism in the
literary movements of the nineteenth century. In this sense, as
Levin observes: "The relationship between the two movements
romanticism and realism, as we acknowledge more and more,
is continuous rather than antithetical. The realism of the
romanticists has its dialectical counterpart in the romanticism
of the realists". Further, "realism, heralded by romanticism and
continued by naturalism, has been the animating current of
nineteenth-century literature." 15 In general, however, "what
remains alive today in romanticism, in naturalism, as in all the
poetic and literary movements that have come after them
Symbolism, Surrealism, Existentialism etc is their element
of realism." 16 Whatever be the definition of realism, we find
its prevalence in literary movements. This realism essentially
differed from traditional 'imitation'. The fact that representa-
tion of reality was first called 'realism' in the eighteenth
or nineteenth century reflects, of course, corresponding cultural
values and social assumptions that are shared 17 by writer and
reader. It is significant to note that, in the nineteenth
century critics and theorists tried to distinguish their 'realism'
from traditional mimetic bearing. Let us now consider some of the
definitions of realism in art, literature and life.
Realism in art is often supposed to be simply an affair of subject. It would be the representation of average humanity and ordinary scenes; it is supposed to be a picture of the intensely humdrum, or, perhaps, of all those unpleasant things.

A theory of writing in which the familiar, ordinary aspects of life are depicted in a matter-of-fact, straightforward manner designed to reflect life as it actually is; (2) treatment of subject matter in a way that presents careful descriptions of everyday life, often the lives of so-called middle or lower classes.

Realism in literature is an attitude which purports to depict life and to reproduce nature, in all its aspects, as faithfully as possible. It rejects the idealizing of reality in favour of beauty together with stylization in expression and the treatment of transcendental and supernatural subject matter.

By surveying a random sampling, we may summarize: realism is obviously 'a theory of writing', 'an attitude to depict life', without 'idealizing', 'sentimentalizing', or 'stylization'. According to Linda Nochlin, such a realism, "doing no more than mirroring everyday reality" cannot be "used to define stylistic categories." To other critics, realism is "that effort, that willed tendency of art to approximate reality;" a formula of art which, conceiving of reality in a certain way, undertakes to present a simulacrum of it." To Wimsatt and Brooks realism is "a trick of presenting something either better or more significant than reality." Wellek calls it an "illusion of reality" and condemns it by saying that such a "realistic theory is bad aesthetics." To Osborne, an advocate of aesthetic principles of art and literature, realism "in the sense of representing or accurately describing an actuality...
is neither a necessary nor a sufficient requirement" to qualify it "as an aesthetic creed and a practical principle of criticism". He asserts that any study of literature on a realist basis should "remain rooted in the reality of things.\textsuperscript{27} Collingwood, advocating the cause of 'truth' in art and literature suggests that "addition of truth should add to the aesthetic value and contribution to a better understanding of reality.\textsuperscript{28} According to Barnard Bosanquet this means "an extension of the sense of beauty by which its familiar and formal basis is not narrowed but on the contrary is both enlarged and fortified.\textsuperscript{29} Eric Heller phrases the whole thing as "The Realistic Fallacy\textsuperscript{30} which, he calls "a sort of make-believe in terms of what manifestly it is not, namely, reality.\textsuperscript{31} Philip Rahv finds it impossible to use realism "without taking reality for granted" for, he concludes, whatever be the context, "it is reality itself which they bring into question.\textsuperscript{32} Such an assemblage of the points of view leads to "a disconcertingly trivial conclusion\textsuperscript{33} for the critics and writers are divided on the question of reality. Therefore they have defined realism "according to all sorts of different analogues (realism is empiricism; it is moral skepticism; it is a documentary attentiveness based on research, itself perhaps managed according to hypotheses or procedural categories; it is a pursuit of a moment of authentication; etc. etc.)\textsuperscript{34}

By so summing up the various notions of realism we do not intend to recover the traditional realistic forms, but one thing is certain:
We know very well that the realism of art is a made thing, and that the claim to realism or authenticity in art is a shifting claim, from writer to writer and age to age. Indeed almost every movement in fiction, or for that matter literature, from... extremes of determinism, naturalism, or 'research' to those which have espoused versions of high formalism or aestheticism have called themselves 'realist' (this of course includes the exponents of modernism in literature). The front edge of realism keeps shifting, so that one generation's realism is another's romanticism or high fantasy or escapism, and the definitions are extraordinarily multiple; truth or authenticity is, just like reality and history, open to extremes of disputatiousness. You can always show that a work's realism is highly fictional, because that is precisely its nature, being art. None the less there is sense in proposing a mean of realism somewhere in the history of the novel, a certain sort of balance or poise in the relationship between words and what they speak of, a certain equivalence between the making and the made, a certain openness of access between the writer and his characters.35

Such a "tradition of nineteenth-century realism, which underlies most contemporary English fiction, depended on a degree of relative stability in three separate areas: the idea of reality; the nature of fictional form; and the kind of relationship that might predictably exist between them."36 It is partly such a relative view or a sort of relation which is most profitable for our present purpose; but it presents certain problems because of shifting claims on reality. If it were possible to make 'realism' independent of the idea of 'reality' without reducing its empirical significance, the problem would be much simpler. In the fictional form of realism, most of the critics have often ignored the "empirical observation", as observed by Linda Nochlin, and have depended on the "commonplace notion that Realism is... a mere simulacrum or mirror image of visual reality." On the other hand, in certain novels empirically
realistic some critics have stressed on the conventions of realism. She, thereupon, explicitly states: "If one takes the opposition between convention and empirical observation in art as a relative rather than an absolute criterion, one can see that in Realism the role played by observation is greater, that by convention smaller." The two contradictory terms may be clarified. In Levin's opinion, "Convention may be tentatively described as a necessary difference between art and life"; and, on the other hand, "our empirical confidence", according to Auerbach (Literary Language and its Public, 1965), is "our spontaneous faculty for understanding others on the basis of our own experience." It is precisely this opposition that the nature and definitions of realism have been a matter for speculation and disagreement. In the light of this discrepancy, Coleridge's definition of imagination as the "esemplastic" power of mind which fuses the life of things into one seems to be more helpful. And Flaubert, called a realist, probably does not mean anything very different when he says: "What sustains me is the conviction that I am within the truth. . . . An author must write as he feels. He must be sure that he feels well; and then he may snap his fingers at anything else on the earth." This brings us to the question of subjectivity and objectivity in realism. Therefore, to state the whole thing in the words of a Marxist protagonist of the realist novel:

Realism however is not some sort of middle way between false objectivity and false subjectivity, but on the contrary the true solution, bringing third way, opposed to all these pseudo-dilemmas engendered by the wrongly-posed questions. . . . Realism is the recognition of the fact that
Thus, even if, there are agreements by way of what may be held in common, in all these established views on literary realism and the generalized empirical observation, the basic question would still remain: what constitutes the plausible relation between representation of reality and empirical observation, between literature and life. Partly, it is evident in Hawthorne's definition of a novel: it "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." And, "To write realistic novels," according to Alice R. Kaminsky, "is to deal with imaginary events and characters and with the hypothetical formulation of possibilities, in other words, with the counterfactual, for the sake of illuminating political, social, economic, psychological, or moral 'truths' of an age." The "difference between non-fiction and realistic fiction is that fictional characters are authenticated by the novel alone." Such definitions, relationships and differences may be multiplied; however, for our present purpose, two points are evident. First, all novels are realistic because they display, one way or another, "the willed tendency" to approximate reality or to create an illusion of life and verisimilitude; second, there is an implicit suggestion for a viable realism which is "more down to earth, closer to everyday life, and thus well within the experience" of man. In the second type of realism, to apply Lawrence's conclusion, nothing is "important but life. And for myself,
I can absolutely see life no where but in living."

The test of realism by empirical observation would, without doubt, broaden its domain. When we come to appropriate the strategic part that literary realism is able to play, we shall be better equipped to deal with the 'realism of life'. In this regard, the premises of literary realism should be "broad enough to extend from the plane of technical scrutiny to the plane of human experience, and that its most useful function may well be to improve the relation between them literature and life."

However, so far our enquiry has been within the circumscribed conceptions of realism, therefore, it is worthwhile to have an insight into the existing theories of realism.

III

Erich Auerbach proposes sociological theory in *Mimesis* by propounding ways and means for the representation of reality in Western literature. He brings to his consideration different periods, writers and their attitudes towards reality. Auerbach sets no rules; he chooses texts from Homer, the Old and New Testaments, through Latin and Medieval French authors, and among moderns, from Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, all the way to England — to Virginia Woolf. He subjects these passages to his scrutiny stating that his "purpose is always to write history" of how reality has been represented. To do so, he combines philosophy, history, sociology, aesthetics, stylistics, artistic taste, imagination and learning. Auerbach's frequent use of the terms 'realistic' and 'realism' — he does not define
them — is, therefore, wide-ranging, various, and illustrative. "Indeed", concludes Auerbach towards the end of his book, "concerning the definition of the concept realism" and the "basic motifs in the history of the representation of reality ... demonstrable in any random realistic text", the present book "may be cited as an illustration" (p. 548).

As illustrations, Auerbach has repeatedly used such terms as 'medieval realism', 'modern realism', 'radical realism', 'forceful realism', 'critical realism', 'serious realism', 'farcical realism', 'comic realism', 'coarse realism', 'atmospheric realism', 'realism of life', and 'cosmopolitan realism'. Auerbach "seems averse, on principle", comments Wellek, his reviewer, "to discussing and analysing his terms and methods." Wellek adds: "Every author has the right to limit his theme, and Mr. Auerbach is narrowly circumscribing realism manages to survey a large cross-section of the world's literature...

... But I cannot help feeling that Mr. Auerbach's extreme reluctance to define his terms and to make his suppositions clear from the outset, has impaired the effectiveness" of his realism. Second limitation of Auerbach's theory is that realism as it is understood in the 19th century as "truthful observation, minute analysis, in a scientific spirit, or realism as a diagnosis of social ills, based on the insight of the writer into the structure of his society, is discussed only very briefly." Whatever be his premise and limitations, for our present purpose, we discern two basal elements in Auerbach's theory of realism. He "tries to combine two contradictory conceptions of realism; firstly, something which might be called..."
existentialism: the agonizing revelations of reality in moments of supreme decisions, in 'limiting situations'! There is, however, a second realism in Auerbach, the French nineteenth-century realism, which he defines "as depicting contemporary reality, immersed in the dynamic concreteness of the stream of history." The first category corresponds to realism of life and the second to literary realism.

Levin's brief essay "What Is Realism?" (1953) condenses a point of view arrived at through a continuing series of studies in the French novel. Levin, "tentatively calling this process" as "approximation realism," suggests that "Realism means different things in different contexts." Then, he goes on to consider "the measurable advantage of working from texts as well as contexts". In the face of such formulations, Levin praises Auerbach's realism for "stylistic analysis" of text but concerns himself primarily with contexts, and develops an entirely different concept in general. It seems hard to resist his comment on Auerbach: "When Professor Auerbach finds no formula for the presentation of actuality in different languages at different epochs, he impressively documents our need for assuming a relativistic point of view." Levin therefore aims to define a radical shift in the traditional mimetic realism. It does not aim backward to revive the static institutions, but attempts to place itself with some relation to life.

In The Gates of Horn (1966), Levin adopts similar premises and propounds a number of contexts. According to him, realism of the novel is a product of philosophical, ideological,
historical, social, political, and cultural causes. Thereby proceeding with the assumption that literature is our "institution", he moves on to social criticism. Levin, in advocating a theory of realism, is aware that institutional forces that impinge upon literature can no longer be ignored in a realistic study. In this sense, realism "registers the impact of social changes upon artistic institutions, brings about the breakdown of old conventions and the emergence of new techniques, and accelerates the momentum of the novel toward an increasing scope and flexibility." The main premise of his theory of realism, Levin himself states, "is the relation between literature and life" (p.3). In stressing this connection he emphasizes the importance of environmental, social, religious, cultural and institutional causes. Thus, in this sense, realism of literature "may add something to life or that it may subtract something from life... that literature is at all times an integral part of life". He states:

Like other institutions, like the Church or the law, it cherishes a unique phase of human experience and controls a special body of precedents and devices; it incorporates a self-perpetuating discipline, while responding to the main currents of each succeeding period; it is continually accessible to all the impulses of life at large, but it must translate them in its own terms and adapt them to its peculiar forms. Once we have grasped this fact, we begin to perceive how art may belong to society and yet be autonomous within its own limits (pp.20-21).

The second feature of Levin's theory is social criticism. He says that in order to establish 'realism of life' a realist has, first of all, to repudiate "all bookish precedent", challenge the "conventions that gave literature its frequent air of
unreality", and cross the barriers that separate "expression from experience". Precisely, he emphasizes that literature has "to be attacked in the name of life" (p. 43). "When we call a book realistic, we mean that it is relatively free from bookish artificialities" (p. 66). He clarifies it by saying that "literature is a mode of expression, and life is something else; therefore the attack had to be carried out in literary terms" (p. 43). Levin thus attempts to reconcile literature and life.

In a recent essay "On the Dissemination of Realism" (1972) 56 Levin's central argument is that reality is not static; and since it is subject to a continual change, it may assume as many shapes as possible. Thus, his theory shows a shift of focus from "approximation realism" to a realism that "corresponds to known and felt realities" (p. 246). Since the changing reality has "its own existence", a realistic writer in justifying that "existence" becomes an "iconoclast, and starts "shattering the false images of his day" (p. 248). This happens because "in a closed society, one in which all the organs of opinion must rigorously be controlled... realism is unable to function". And since its "identifying gesture is image-breaking", "the realistic impetus becomes "a liberating force" (p. 253) and "a dynamic principle" (p. 257). In such a dissemination the realistic writers "have generally moved on toward social criticism".

He sums up his stance as follows:

Our criterion is a variable, since it must depend upon the experience of various individuals more or less like ourselves; it must be subjective in essence, though objectified by the environment and interests they have in common. The colors and contours of reality will vary from one country to another (p. 246).
In his "Postscript" to this essay Levin reiterates his critical stance: "Realism, by my definition, is nothing if not critical. When the writer's task is not social criticism but the glorification of a regulative society, it is something else again" (p. 259). "True realism like objective criticism, is empirical" (p. 260) and is concerned with teaching "us how to tell the living realities" (p. 261). The clear inference is that his theory of realism shows a remarkable shift: from static, mimetic, representative to dynamic, empirical and critical. It is partly at least in revolt against the conventional restrictive realism and its emphasis on social criticism that it brings a fresh dimension into the scope of realism.57

George Lukacs's Studies in European Realism (1972) offers a kind of "true realism" which, he explains: "true realism is the great writer's thirst for truth, his fanatic striving for reality — or expressed in terms of ethics: the writer's sincerity and probity."58 Lukacs has in mind primarily the novels of Stendhal, Balzac, Zola, and Tolstoy and is concerned mainly to designate a socialist realism depending for its vitality or roots thrust deep into social realities. "The poetic form of reflecting reality", he states, "can move in more than one direction and follow more than one trend of development and ... fall short of reality in depicting the animated surface of social existence" (pp. 168-69). There seems a dimension lacking in Lukacs's interpretation of reality when he suggests that "the live portrayal of the complete human personality is possible only if the writer
attempts to create types" (p.8). Nevertheless, the opinions call to mind a not dissimilar judgement of Auerbach on the realism of fifteenth century:

While the old order declines, there is nothing in this realism to announce the rise of a new one. This realism is poor in ideas; it lacks constructive principles and even the will to attain them. It drains the reality of that which exists and, in its very existence, fails to decay; it drains into the dregs, so that the senses, and the emotions aroused by them, get the flavor of immediate life; and, having done that, it seeks nothing further. Indeed, the sensory itself, for all the intensity of the expression, is narrow; its horizon is restricted.

We may discern similarities between Lukács's premises and Auerbach's approach. Auerbach, however, confines himself for the most part to the questions of aesthetics, criticism, and style; Lukács shares his social and historical view of reality with Auerbach's similar approach. It seems, at this juncture, pertinent to seek affinities between Lukács and Levin. They share the assumption of totality in realism. To Levin "Literature is more dependent on feelings than on facts" and other details. According to him

the novelist is a witness who is emotionally involved. Incidental details may be discredited without seriously affecting the novel's veracity; it must finally submit to the more searching verification of a total response. It must satisfy our mingled interest in the exotic and the familiar; it must convince us that what seems fabulous is, for the moment true; it must enlarge as well as corroborate, our purview by accrediting what may seem incredible.

To Lukács, whatever his premise is, realism depicts 'the essential determinants' of social progress through an affirmation of historical inevitability. He writes:
The true artistic totality of a literary work depends on the completeness of the picture it presents of the essential social factors that determine the world depicted. The hallmark of the great realist masterpiece is precisely that its intensive totality of essential social factors does not require a meticulously accurate or pedantically encyclopaedic inclusion of all the threads making up the social tangle. The exact copying of reality by a mere onlooker offers no principle of grouping inherent in the subject matter itself.

George J Becker's early essay on 'definition' of realism and his 'documents' on literary realism remind us of a similar view on traditional realism offered by Auerbach. He writes:

Basically, the way in which we view human life and society is the same whether we are concerned with things of the past or things of the present. A change in our manner of viewing history will of necessity soon be transferred to our manner of viewing current conditions. When people realize that epochs and societies are not to be judged in terms of a pattern concept, but rather in every case in terms of their own premises.

But in his recent essay on "Society and Literature" (1971) Becker's view is empirical and tends to supplement more or less the relationship between literature and life that Levin tries to build up in The Gates of Horn. Becker is "concerned above all with a renewed attempt to answer the question: "What is man?" He states that the writers of the Romantic generation of the early 19th century engaged in much the same kind of enquiry, were inclined to see men as essence, not existence, as abstraction, not concrete, mutable entity, and thus were able to remove him from his social milieu. Writers of our day are more empirical than philosophical." The second striking
feature of Becker's realism is the "sense of society as process rather than fixed tableau, as becoming rather than being, as dynamic rather than static. This is an inevitable result of close observation of modern life. In other words, there is an existentialist impulse implied in his "understanding of the human condition". He writes:

The individual human being has been raised to a level of great importance than convention accorded him. Men do not exist in society merely as objects for the streamroller of impersonal social force to run over and crush. Rather they exist in the midst of exterior social forces as dynamic beings, fighting back significantly if not efficaciously instead of inertly allowing themselves to be destroyed.

The conclusion toward which we are driven by these investigations of various meanings and conceptions of realism brings us back to reconsider our premises. With the overall agreement of the definitional variants, realism may be seen, most satisfactorily, from two levels: 'literary realism' and 'realism of life'. The formulation of a workable concept may be examined from one vantage point that these two categories of realism may be combined for convenience, but on one condition of keeping in view that the purpose is (especially in the present enquiry) to seek a plausible balance between literature and life. Such a moderate conclusion, therefore, is more stimulating than either extreme position, because it fosters enquiry instead of closing it off with traditional cliches that have become platitudes in their own right. Not surprisingly, therefore, the foregoing indications of literature and life, convention and empirical observation, society and self, imitation and experience, though
they may lead to different conclusions, nevertheless, offer more reliable answers to the question: What is realism? We may, now spell out two realisms—'literary realism' and 'realism of life'—and find out a relationship between the two.

IV

Alice R. Kaminsky, in his essay "On Literary Realism" finds no point of convergence; rather, he claims that the tendency is to "remain forever tangential to infinity". He concludes: "Thus while literary realism does not answer metaphysical questions about the nature of reality, it... functions like that strange, straight line in mathematics, the Asymptote, which approaches but never meets the curve, destined to remain forever tangential to infinity." This view seems to divorce literature from life. Therefore, if literary realism is to be valuable and significant outside literature, "then its fictional creations must 'match and make' a world in which the realistic attitude (in its 'real-life' meaning) makes sense. And this attitude in turn only makes sense... in a world in which there are people, individuals of some degree of interest and coherence of character." Or, to put it differently, in terms of human "experience as it is felt in the living", literary "Realism is valueless unless it can be understood as a 'direct human action'—unless we find it in some sense validated and authenticated from the author's experience and understanding, manifested and felt through the worked, the probable, likely, difficult experience of the characters in the specified historical,
Such a relationship can be supported by the generalizations of other critics, for example, Arnold Kettle calls these two categories or tendencies within the novel "pattern" and "life", and the English novel may be defined, in some degree, a compromise between these two forms of realism. Kettle's suggestion of "life" denotes an existential concern of living one's life; whereas, he says, "pattern" has no sentience concern. Watt's central argument rests on a synthesis between "realism of presentation" and "realism of assessment" or "fictional" and "empirical" modes of experience. Picking up this argument, Scholes and Kellogg suggest in The Nature of Narrative, a synthesis of two modes—"fictional" and "empirical"—although realism is not their basis.

Certainly, more than often, literary realism acquires a derogatory connotation; it becomes repetitive and boring, because it is characterized by the commonplace cliches and platitudes. Empirical realism has a glimpse into the reality of human existence, fundamental problems of living and an affirmation by learning, experiencing life and realization. Literary realism which is "inspired by imagination" can be made viable if it is "sustained and confirmed by the experience of reality." What we need in realism is "exactitude and inclusiveness, a sharp and more thorough specification of the whole experience of man." Precisely, the viability of realism lies in standing the test of human experience.
J. P. Stern's seminal book *On Realism* (1973) suggests a way out from this hopeless jumble. He distinguishes between 'realism in literature' and 'realism in life' in the following manner:

Realism in literature connotes a way of depicting, describing a situation in a faithful, accurate, 'life-like' manner; or richly, abundantly, colourfully; or again, mechanically, photographically, imitatively.

Realism 'in life' connotes a way of estimating, evaluating or asserting a situation; having 'an eye for the main chance', making a fair or comprehensive and adequate judgement... 'realistic' is also synonymous with clever, sharp, expedient, all the way to cynical and... unscrupulous.

What we notice in this distinction is that in his 'realism in literature' Stern uses, single handedly, the same vocabulary that other theorists have used in combination. It is in his 'realism in life' that he offers new directions. Stern further clarifies his premises by saying that in "literary talk... 'realism' may refer either to assessment or description or both, whereas in real-life talk 'realism' seems to be largely confined to assessment" (p. 139). The "distinction" between the two lies "between means and ends: between the way a person or a thing or a situation is presented or described, and the use to which such a description is put, that is, the assessment or evaluation or judgement it is subjected to or is made to provide" (p. 130). In the first, it means "a way of writing", in the other, it means "a way of thinking" (p. 42); in the one it marks "the beginning of a new round of events" but...
in the other, i.e. "in life the verdict is final" (p.140). This
distinction, we may recall, corresponds with Auerbach's
representational and "existential" or Watt's realism of
"description" or "presentation" and "realism of assessment" or
Kettle's "pattern" and "life" or Scholes' and Kellogg's
"fictional" and "empirical". In Stern, however, this distinction
is "not concerned with two different vocabularies... Nor do
the two kinds of realism appear in isolation" (p.130); rather
it "suggests possibilities of interchange" (p.40).

Stern's synthesis is based on Wittgenstein's "theory
of family resemblances" which, "it seems to me", writes Stern,
"resolves a host of problems that have bedevilled literary
criticism from Aristotle onwards, and I shall do no more.
Continues Stern7 here than quote one of the versions of the
theory and adapt it to our present purpose".

The tendency is to look for something common to
all the entities which we commonly subsume under
a general term. We are inclined to think that
there must be something common to all examples of
realism, and that this common property is the
justification for applying the general term
'realism' to the various writings; whereas
'realistic writings' form a family the members
of which have family likeness. Some of them
have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and
others again the same way of walking; and these
likenesses overlap. The idea of a general concept
being a common property of its particular
instances... is comparable to the idea that
properties are ingredients of the things which
have the properties; e.g. that beauty is an
ingredient of all beautiful things as alcohol
is of beer and wine... (pp.28-29).

This frame of reference is open, all inclusive and
existential: it shows and reveals the lived and experienced side
of life. In this light, literary realism seems "merely a hardened convention." This is not, however, always, to claim the superiority of realism of life over literary realism; but in the latter we have been discussing in the preceding pages, we land in a hopeless jumble of evasive words — "reality", "truth", "faithfulness to actuality", "absence of authorial judgement", "closer to reality", etc. etc. Accordingly, "since its reality cannot bear precisely the same significance for any two human beings" we call this realism approximation realism of presentation. We appropriate the latter realism, as Walter L. Myers suggests (in his The Later Realism), by "conveying to the reader whatever else may be accomplished, a strong sense of things actual in experience and within the range of the average life." In view of the trend of modern thought toward empiricism, materialism, pragmatism, and naturalism, realism of life tends to an existential view of experience. According to existentialists man starts with a quest to realize himself in the world of experience, by finding some answers to his questions. Unfortunately, "we arrive instead, not at any answer, but at the questioner himself. For questions are asked only by existing man. Except for a living man of flesh and bone, not a question would be heard in the boundless ocean of being in which we are cast." This is, precisely, a realism of life that Stern has summarized in the following words:

To speak of realism in 'real life', therefore, is to speak of it always within this infinitely vulnerable sphere of attainable ends. Here the realism of assessment predominates because the sphere of attainable ends is time bound through and through: because here all hurries
on, ineluctably, in one direction. Every thing that lives and has its being in this sphere presses for decision, refuses to tarry over description, seeing description and understanding as means to an end — means to decision and action and the attainment of new ends. 'Realistic' here is the watchword that distinguishes the possible from the impossible, the tried from the untried, the effective from the ineffective, the true from the false, the purposeful from the capricious and illusory. 'Realistic' is the word that expresses the likelihood of a successful translation of talk and thought into another mode of experience, into another mode of action (p.139).

Summarily, the validity of literary realism depends upon its confirmation or corroboration by human experience: what can be experienced is real. Literary realism may attain viability only if it can be traced back to experience through the epistemology of learning, gaining knowledge and then making an assessment of life. The final realization of man to know or to understand, on the basis of experience, "What Life Is" is Bennett's 'realism of life'. Bennett does not, however, start with this 'realism of life'; he resorts to other forms of literary realism. His 'realism of life', on the contrary, is a committed interest in life, romance and grandeur, of its progress involving man's conscious understanding of it, by confronting it in his circumstances and environment; it is a perpetual striving to make it worth living, romantic and interesting. The purpose of establishing a balance between two categories of realism, however, does not imply that Bennett assimilates all the literary and experiential influences upon him, and strives to work them out in his novels. Before attaining his maturity through his empirical and pragmatic attitude toward life, Bennett
makes his novels historically concrete to make his realism meaningful and purposeful. Such a concern that lies behind the kind of realism that measures reality both by outer and inner developments, that attempts to provide at least a provisional equilibrium between the concrete world of things and a world of human experience, a plausible balance between literature and life, tends to be epistemological. The evolution of realism of life from literary realism, in Bennett, is primarily epistemological. When the Victorian conceptions of man cease to offer viable explanations, when the traditional levels of the universe cease to make sense of reality, Bennett aims to offer a newer model of experience — an epistemological model.

In the succeeding chapter an attempt is made to trace the various influences responsible for his literary, experiential and pragmatic growth. He experiences several environments and conditions of life; he understands the prevailing literary currents and movements, but roots his serious novels into the soil of his own observation and experience. In other words, his central concern in his novels is with the lives of his men and women in a process of gradual evolution. The ensuing chapter deals with making up of Bennett, his attempt to give historical, artistic, romantic and naturalistic meaning to realism and, finally an epistemological significance to human experience and learning. This shows the larger content of perennial human experience.
REFERENCES


3 See Wellek, "Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship", p. 225. Ian Watt, Realism and the Novel Form, The Rise of the Novel (London, Penguin, 1972), pp. 9-37. Watt has elaborately drawn the dispute between idealism (or philosophical realism) and realism that later on descends to the novel. In drawing his analogies between philosophical realism and realism in the novel he draws attention to a characteristic of the novel which is analogous to the changed philosophical meaning of realism, that it rejects the universals. This change is ushered by the 18th century philosophers. Watt gives a fuller examination of the philosophical realism and novel form in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. A debate between idealism and realism gives rise to no comprehensive theory. So much so that Meredith writes in the late nineteenth century that "between realism and idealism there is no natural conflict: This completes that. . . . A great genius must necessarily employ ideal means, for a vast conception cannot be placed bodily before the eyes and remains to be suggested. Idealism is an atmosphere whose effects of grandeur are wrought out through a series of illusions that are illusions to the sense within us only when divorced from the groundwork of the real." And according to Lewis, "Realism is the basis of all Art, and its antithesis is not Idealism, but Falsism"—See Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, 1650-1870 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 168, 173.

In a discussion which considers the problems of definition of realism in relation to romanticism, Wellke passes on an appropriate warning from Valery: "It is impossible to think seriously with words such as Classicism, Romanticism, Humanism, or Realism. One cannot get drunk or quench one's thirst with labels on a bottle."— "Romanticism Re-examined", Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. Northrop Frye (New York: Columbia Uni, Press, 1963), p. 111. But Harry Levin, a critic and scholar of Wellke's standing, qualifying realism and romanticism as mutually relative terms says: "In their eagerness to garner local color, to tackle forbidding subjects, and to break down classical genres, the romanticists anticipated the realists; while the realists, we must bear in mind, took over a considerable residue of romance", Levin's synthesis: "The tendency of the romanticists to live their writings and write their lives" is one of the clearer statements of romantic-realism— The Gates of Horn (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 67. 21. Also for "Realism in the Age of Romanticism" see F. J. W. Hemmings, The Age of Realism (London: Penguin, 1974), pp. 36-43. For continuity between romanticism and realism see Marshall Brown, "The Logic of Realism: A Hegelian Approach", PMLA 96 (March 1981), 226-28; also F. Anthony De Jovine, "Romanticism and Realism as Style", The Young Hero in American Fiction: A Motif for Teaching Literature (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971), pp. 107-20.

See for example, E. B. O. Borgerhoff, "Realism and Kindred Words: Their Use as Terms of Literary Criticism in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century", PMLA, 53 (1938), 837-43; George J. Becker, "Realism: An Essay in Definition" Modern Language Quarterly, 10 (June 1949), 184-197.

For a comprehensive treatment to the origin, development, dissemination and comparison of realism in France, Germany, America and England, see Harry Levin, "On the Dissemination of Realism", Grounds for Comparison (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 244-261; Rene Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship", Concepts of Criticism, pp. 222-255.

"What is Realism?" Contexts of Criticism (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 69. In another essay "On the Dissemination of Realism", Levin observes that "since circumstantial particularity was a major aim of realism", it gives rise to "distinctive traits of each country that took it up..." they differed in their fulfillment of the patterns that France laid down. The British, found their way to realism through empiricism of 18th century; in the
nineteenth century they included sentimentality" and "moralizing." The Germans, included metaphysics; their typical genre was "introspective" Bildungsroman. The "Russians, discovered their "humanitarian conscience in the truth telling" (p.250). This corroborates the pronouncement that realism means different things in different contexts.


10 Frierson, "The English controversy over Realism in Fiction", pp. 549, 548.


12 Frierson, p.547.

13 Documents, p. 36.


15 Levin, "What is Realism"? pp. 72, 74.


21 Realism (England: Penguin, 1971), pp. 14, 13. According to F.W.J. Hemmings, the analogy of mirror seems to have been invented by Stendhal, who in his Journal de Paris (21 Dec 1826), writes: "It has been said that a poet is a mirror which reflects every image and retains the impression of none" —The Age of Realism (England: Penguin,1974), p.67 (Notes). He applies this analogy to define novel: " novel is a mirror carried along a high road. One moment it will reflect into your eyes the azure of heaven, the next the mire in the pot-holes along the road"(p.48). Taine's definition of a novel as "a kind of portable mirror which can be conveyed everywhere, and which is most convenient for reflecting all aspects of nature and life"—Cited Levin, The Gates of Horn (p.19). But, we may point out that the metaphor of mirror only points to a photograph of external reality, which Plato called an imitation. It seems, on the basis of modern standards of realism, a commonplace notion, the most conventional form of criticism, "Literature" points out Levin, "instead of reflecting life, we might better say, refracts it" — The Gates of Horn, p.20.

22 Levin, The Gates of Horn, p.3.

23 Becker, Documents, p. 571.
"trick", according to Wimsatt and Brooks, may involve fictitious and unreal things with the antitheses: Universals vs. particulars; ideal vs. real; realism vs. fantasy; history vs. fiction. The main antithesis suggested is nature vs. art (p.334).


26 Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship", p.254.

27 *Aesthetics and Criticism* pp. 109, 26. Harold Osborne says: "You may even delight in the unreality of the conditions which the author creates, provided that they are consistent in the degree and manner of their unreality so that for the time being they seem real" (p.95).


30 It is the title of his essay included in *Documents*, pp. 591-98.


33 Wellek, "Realism in Literary Scholarship", p.252.


37 Realism, p.18.

38 *The Gates of Horn*, p.18.


45 David Goldknope, "Realism in the Novel", *Yale Review*, LXI (October 1970), 70.


50  Erich Auerbach, Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages, tr. Ralph Mannheim (London, 1969), cited by J.P. Stern, On Realism, p.29.

51  Wellek, "Auerbach's Special Realism", The Kenyon Review, XVI, No. 2 (Spring 1954), 303, 304.

52  Ibid., p.301.

53  Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship", p.236.

54  Levin, Contexts of Criticism, pp. 67-75; hereafter references are inserted in the text.

55  Levin, The Gates of Horn, p.30; hereafter all references are incorporated in the text.

56  Grounds for Comparison, pp.244-261. Further references are given in the text.

57  Elsewhere Levin shares his concept of social criticism with Taine's aspirations of critical theory, based on the practice of the realist novelists. He quotes Taine: "From the novel to criticism and from criticism to the novel, the distance at present is not very great" — The Gates of Horn, p.7.


59  Auerbach, Mimesis, p.259.

60  The Gates of Horn, p.26

61  Lukacs, Studies in European Realism, pp.147-48.

Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p.443


Ibid., p.301

Ibid., p.303

Ibid., pp.302,304. Here again, it seems pertinent to point out that Bennett's protagonist is set against the static conventions and Victorian philistinism to realise his potential as a living man, he fights and revolts against the conventions and complacency.


Malcolm Bradbury, *Possibilities*, p.17. This point is amply clarified by Stern. He says of Balzac: "When... we speak of Balzac's 'realistic prose'... as part of our literary description, we speak something about Balzac's way of writing and at the same time bring it into a certain relation with its author's world, society, and life". Stern, *On Realism*, p.42.


See Eugene Current Garcia, Realism and Romanticism, p. 145.


Stern, p. 40; further page references are given in the text.


Levin, "What is Realism?" p. 68

Cited by Muller, Modern Fiction, p. 38


It is the title of Bennett's fourth book of The Old Wives' Tale.