The last chapter suggested a precise relation between history and novel. The changing history of the Five Towns contributes to a new concept of the novel form—new realism as distinguished from its antecedent, mimetic and period realism. Initially, Bennett's realist novel is pre-eminently concerned with the life of provincial man firmly structured within a totality of Victorian complacency; at the same time, we also see him in relation to the changing history of the Five Towns. The result is that Bennett has been condemned as a writer with a traditional cast of mind or is regarded as a mere chronicler of provincial life. It is this controversial view that is important in relation to his literary realism and realism of life. Man's evolution is identified within the historical, economic, religious and social forces. Nevertheless, Bennett sees man struggling for independent existence in the conservatism of Victorian philistinism. This chapter attempts to survey the effects of Victorianism and philistinism on the individuals who, ultimately, become inevitable victims of the environment created by themselves or are able to rise above the social type.

According to Hippolyte Taine, the character of a given work of art is determined by three factors that he calls race, milieu, and moment—that is, elements fixed by heredity, by physical and cultural environment, and the particular point in history at which the work has been created. Taken together
these may all be called "heredity", "environment", and "determinism", which are traced in Zola's naturalism and here, we can apply some of these conclusions to Bennett. In Bennett, 'moment' is the transitional history of the Five Towns, cultural environment is Victorian philistinism, and 'race' consists of provincial potters, shopkeepers, drapers, printers and misers. Only by identifying these elements can one determine Bennett's epistemology. The first may be called historicism; the second, Victorian philistinism; and the third, naturalism of the late nineteenth century. In the first, Bennett aims to explore the history of the Five Towns—its genesis and the processes by which it comes to Victorian age—in the second, he aims to trace the effects of Victorianism on his individuals and; in the third, he aims to see man in the light of naturalist movement. The relatively immobile social and religious background serves an important epistemological purpose, for it determines Bennett's departures from being to becoming. This reveals new insight to Bennett's realism and its development. Bennett's empirical belief is that man can improve his condition if he acts authentically in contradiction to the static, hardened, and complacent principles. Hence in Bennett's view of life, the possibilities of altering human condition are unlimited to the extent 'human experience is unlimited' as Henry James believes. In this Bennett's realism is not only critical but ameliorative too. For the real understanding of such a realism, therefore, our discussion should include some knowledge of Victorianism in which Bennett starts writing his serious novels. Such a concern may be called
Although the words 'Victorian' and 'Victorianism' refer to a distinct period in English history, they have acquired so many connotations that for the present context they need clarification. The English historian, G.M. Young, repeatedly states that Victorianism is a local phrase of a cultural period common to all Western Europe. The common ideals, virtues, and attitudes linked with it are the growth of industry, population and bourgeoisie. In this sense, people's habits of thought and sentiment, imbued with progress and respectability, tend to preserve 'their self-confidence. Duty, work, self-denial, self-help, thrift, these were the values that sustained self-confidence. Lapses from this code were regarded with horror.' Leaving aside the characteristics of the era historically considered as 'Victorian', any consideration of English literature of the period that extends over the second half of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century, reveals a whole constellation of features associated with 'Victorianism'. More narrowly, it suggests complacency, hypocrisy, squeamishness in the prevailing attitudes, pride in puritan ideals, high standards of decency and respectability combined to produce a spirit of moral earnestness linked with self-satisfaction. There are other derogatory epithets attached to Victorian and Victorianism—crass materialism, excessive religion, lamentable idealism, nostalgia for the
past, slavish conformity, sentimentalism, rigid dogmas, and complacency. Victorianism does not end with the historical period, rather with the dawn of the twentieth century it becomes "a shield for the conservative and a target for the modernist." But later on critics that with Victorian "inheres a single tragic flaw which vitiates all its sounder impulses . . . to one it is a moral hypocrisy, to another a deliberate sentimentalism, to a third a social snobbery. An eminent debunker laments . . . the total failure of the critical faculty." In short, the central "aim of all classes and orders with power is by dint of rigorous silence, fast shutting of eyes, and stern stopping of the ears, somehow to keep the social pyramid on its apex, with the fatal result of preserving for England its glorious fame as a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor." Even in the first quarter of our century, Victorianism has a derogatory sound, with overtones of hypocrisy, prudishness, self-satisfaction and devastating lack of humour. Meanwhile the growing literature of criticism and critics "exposed" morals, sacred principles and Victorian "conscience as hypocritical or self-deceived", with the result that the age as such stands, for most writers, as one of smug complacency, unhealthy prudery, self righteousness and narrowmindedness.

Likewise, the word 'Philistine' (or 'Philistinism') also has its history and context. In general use it stands for a complacently uncultured, conventional person with mental
horizon shut in by material, resistant to new ideas and new developments in religion, education and taste; indifferent to art, culture, refinement, beauty and romance; devoted to money, material pursuits, the commonplace, prosaic and uncouth; an opponent of change and spirit of enquiry; a complacent lover of things as they were or as they are. Such intellectual phenomena of the Victorian age, according to a renowned critic, are common throughout Western civilization in the late nineteenth century, but they set fuller and more immediate expression in England than elsewhere. As terms of abuse in the above sense, 'philistine' and 'philistinism' are first given wide currency in England by Matthew Arnold. "Philistinism'' remarks Arnold, "we have not the expression in English. Perhaps we have not the word because we have so much of the thing." But, while using these terms in his literary and critical works, for people, places, and things, he assigns them specific meaning. In his Culture and Anarchy (1869) he divides people in three classes — Barbarians (aristocracy), Philistines (middle class), and Populace (common class)—and discovers the tedium, narrowness and downright ugliness of middle class life. They believe that their greatness and welfare is proved by their being very rich; they tend to oppose necessary developments in education. The religion of the philistines is defective; they have a low standard of manners, have a dislike of what is new, they are self-satisfied. They are neither religious nor insular, but are poseurs, hypocrites, muddled, and complacent. Matthew Arnold writes: "Philistine must have originally meant, in the mind
of those who invented the nickname, a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people, of the children of the light." And later on, it is commonly used because of "his absorption in material things, his unlovely way of life, his lack of appreciation of what is highest in art and literature. On the other hand, the narrowness of his aims, and his concentration on worldly success, tend to bring him riches and, sometimes, high position." More powerful preoccupation of these people is with their "Gentility": they are "mainly concerned with making a good appearance before the world and pushing their way upwards in society . . . probably more than all." Matthew Arnold is very critical of their tastes and attitudes. He writes:

Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tone of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouth, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it? 18

II

A quick survey 19 of Victorian literature indicates that the phenomenon of philistinism is prevalent, in one form or another, in other notably writers of the period. The emergence of the capitalistic and bourgeois culture in England is also attributed to the Industrial Revolution. To some extent, philistines correspond to bourgeois. According to Flaubert a bourgeois is "one who 'thinks basely',
but he is more accurately defined as one who does not think at all . . . one totally unresponsive to desire or initiative."20

Everett Knight, discussing "The Case of Dickens" observes that the Victorians in their merc antile pursuit, can "sell out to their betters by accepting the contradictory and hypocritical preposition of the bourgeois: everyone has a fully creditable identity provided he is willing to prove it. . . . Victorian people were told to be clean and tidy, to have self-respect."21 All these attitudes are protested against at the time and in the generations immediately to follow as hypocritical, false, complacent, narrow, empty or callous. The realistic part lies in the social criticism. The first counter attack against the materialistic ideas associated with it, or with bourgeoisie, however, is launched by the romantic poets, with their dissatisfaction with and escape from the crass materialism. Matthew Arnold says in his Literature and Dogma (1873) that "man is hardly yet ripe" to employ "his knowledge to learn the art of life." In his programme, the idea "of intelligence, of looking before and after, of raising oneself out of the flux of things" requires "a very wide experience from comparative observation in many directions and a very slowly acquired habit of mind."22 Precisely, this is also the central concern in Bennett's serious novels.

Against this background, then, it can be argued that the society which the realist novelists of the second half of the nineteenth century portray is characterized by shrill complacency, false pride, prestige, sentimentalism, and hypocrisy.
Dickens, with all his warmth of a generously humane nature, attacks social institutions in the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). He declares his mixed attitude in the following words:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

Thackeray through his satire and cynicism plays over the evils of society and becomes a showman of *Vanity Fair*. And Meredith's "insistence that man is of the earth and should remain faithful to the earth and his own nature. In this belief he shook off much Victorian convention of thought." George Moore writes in his preface to *Memoirs of My Dead Life*: "How false and shameful is the whole business. We are allowed to state that we prefer pagan morality to Christian, but are interdicted from illustrating our beliefs by incident. So long as we confine ourselves to theory we are unmolested." Precisely, such an enquiry gives an impetus to the development of critical realism. But in the "realistic' writing" of this period "we need to know the importance of distortion of fact. . . . Its truth lies not of course in fact, but in its exposure" of the prevailing philistinism. Anthony Trollope, in his lecture (1870) advocates that Victorian realistic novel includes five elements — 'truth', 'moral purpose', a 'love plot', 'entertainment', and 'sensationalism'. 
They are interestingly close to the dominant Victorian dimensions of consciousness. We might relate 'truth' to scientific interest about the nature of the social and physical world; a 'moral' with the rigid religo-ethical Victorian framework; a 'love plot' with the ritualization of experience found also in the reassuringly triumphant heroine of melodrama — while 'entertainment' and 'sensation' approximate to the systole and diastole of Victorian emotion also reflected in the altering genres of Victorian playbills. These dimensions of experience, in life as in fiction could be separated and could conflict ... between types of awareness, religious and scientific, that were to be brought into tragic conflict by the theories and discoveries of Darwin. The novel, however, provided a matrix into which to some extent conflicting dimensions could be reconciled and controlled, although moments of uneasy transition between levels of truth produces artistic lapses in the finest Victorian fiction. 28

We also notice that this type of realistic novel is not an exclusive product of the nineteenth century, but its seeds are found, as Lukacs notes, in the novels of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to him the "great bourgeois culture of the eighteenth century, whose realism experienced a last flowering in the first half of the nineteenth century, had its social basis" in the second half of the nineteenth century in its "ever increasing hypocrisy." "To all outward appearance the bourgeoisie still figures as the leader of progress" in the Victorian period. But "since the interests represented are in fact the narrow and egoistic class interests of the bourgeoisie, this kind of 'extension' can only be achieved by means of hypocrisy, hushing-up, lies and demogogy." 29 We notice that the phenomenon of Victorian philistinism is a universal one. Our present interest lies in what happens in the English novel?
In the Victorian novel, to quote Matthew Arnold, the "trouble has . . . been with the doubts whether things which people assured us really existed or had really happened but of which we had no experience ourselves and could not satisfy ourselves that any one had had any experience either, were really as people told us." A noted English critic, Tillyard, comes to our rescue stating that "Matthew Arnold's lament at . . . the England of the Philistines may serve to corroborate the sober truth of Bennett's presentation."

Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy exclusively treating with the middle class people are in revolt against the middle class. The point here is not to identify Bennett's attitude towards Victorianism with other writers or critics — nor their attitudes perhaps resemble his. But it offers a kind a lineage and defines Bennett's view with a difference. Precisely, their attack is directed on the citadel of Victorianism, its righteousness, conscience as hypocritical, self-deceived and conceited notions about religion, family, station, love, marriage and allied matters. The central romantic concern of Bennett's revolt against such attitudes is manifest in the basic conflict between the 'old order' and the 'new order', convention and individual aspiration, and what is known as 'closed' and 'open' ways of life. The dichotomy between the old generation and the new generation exhibits a double standard of "living together and . . . fighting one another, in a state of tacit agreement on what the nature and meaning of human existence is."

In Bennett, the change is not a
revolutionary one; it comes as a gradual evolution. The transition incorporates attitudes of both traditional and modern.

Bennett's ostensible purpose is to see the conflict between parents and children, which rests on tradition versus the individual instinct for experience, requirements of the society and family versus promptings of the heart, duty versus love. The reasons of such a revolt are obvious.

Parents behave insufferably to their children because they love them; children behave insufferably to their parents because they are inhabitants of a world totally different from, unguessed by, and inimical to the adult world. Bennett is . . . treating, with an admirable blend of irony and compassion, the inevitable conflict. 34

Secondly, Bennett's revolt is against the religious hypocrisy. Bennett has known from his personal experience that in his family religion is a cogent force. His biographer, the Drabble, has summed up the situation in the following words:

Wesleyanism was truly a religion of the people and for the people. It was a genuine working-class movement, which offered spiritual hope and material improvement to its followers. It offered education, betterment, a bright future in material terms, and an emotional release from the grim realities of the present. It preached thrift, discipline and frugality. . . . It was the double-thinking of Methodism that annoyed Bennett most profoundly, as a child and as an adult, and his rebellion against it lies behind its . . . extraordinarily double-edged affair. One of its most puzzling features, to those not reared under its shadow, was . . . its strange combination of emotionalism, enthusiasm, even fervour, and extreme dourness and repression; and this was, at heart, evidence
of its greatest hypocrisy, its most profound double-thinking. For Methodism really was, in a sense, the opium of the people. 35

Bennett is well aware of the vices, pretences, tyrannies, and exploitation of Methodist religion. The Wesleyan Methodists, especially the old generation, are seen as hypocrites, conformists and conservatives. "Most families attended the Wesleyan Chapels regularly from habit formed in childhood." 36 Therefore Bennett makes it a point to expose old generation's repression over the new generation. He "burlesques religious revivals, shows up hypocrites, and tells of the resentment of boys who are forced to sit in Sunday Schools when they want to be running in the fields." 37 Bennett himself has passed through these stages of repression and compulsions, but he "abandoned both his Wesleyan allegiance and his Staffordshire birthplace and that he was very critical of the things he had given up." 38 Having been reared and "bred in Midland Nonconformity he knew it from within"; and "having emerged from it he could view it from without. He was thus qualified to be its artistic interpreter." 39 The following pages are devoted to see the phenomenon of Victorian philistinism in his novels, through his character portrayal, the reaction against the prevailing conditions and what his men and women think about themselves and others.

IV

Anna 'of the Five Towns' is richly educated in Victorian philistinism. She 'spends on her twenty four hours' in her services of religion, revival meetings, Sunday school
teaching, prayers and penitence; she is particular about respectability, social gradation and financial security. For her Henry Mynors, a successful potter, is socially important because he is "morning Superintendent of Sunday-School and conductor of the men's Bible-class held in the lecture-hall on Sunday afternoon" (p.16). The second man who loves Anna is Willie Price, a potter, a sympathetic figure, an unsuccessful businessman — because of his father's bankruptcy and incompetence — and also secretary of the Bible class, but is not held in high esteem. "The idea of being in debt was abhorrent to her. She could not conceive how a man who was in debt could sleep at night" (p.45). Under her father's discipline she is trained only in domesticity and religious services. This training results in her conservatism, self-complacency and lack of imagination. Her sense of duty, responsibility, obedience, morality and prayers fail her in the practical world, where she has "the sensation of feeling vulgar, clumsy, tongue tied" (p.102). She becomes a Sunday school teacher and is a sincere believer at that, but at times she has difficulties in realizing the religious zeal. "Why did she teach? Not from the impulse of religious zeal. Why was she allowed to have charge of a class of immortal souls? The blind could not lead the blind, nor the lost save the lost. These considerations troubled her. Conscience pricked, accusing her of a continual pretence" (p.57). She tries desperately, at a revival meeting, to be converted and saved. But she is not "converted; technically she was a lost creature; the converted knew it, and in some subtle way their bearing to her, and others in
her case, always showed that they knew it" (p. 57). She spends her night in agony and in a sense of guilt. Next morning with her sense of penitence she goes to the Chapel to seek 'salvation'. In the Church sermon singers seem to sing with "a determination to make the best of things", but Anna is lost in her moral dilemma. She falls under the spell of the emotional, hypnotic force of the revivalist, and filled by "a vague sensation which was partly sorrow and partly an inexplicable dull anger — anger at her own penitence" (p. 59).

When she emerges from Chapel she feels ashamed and comforted. She is in a conflict: her temperamental dictates and her religious ceremonies contend within her, and at the same time, she is at war against confining pressures outside her. She seeks to break through the meshes of parental authority, the boring, monotonous, humdrum, routine, complacent, commonplace, conventional Victorian patterns of life into which she is born and being brought up, and with which she is expected to come to subservient terms. It is with all this that she feels most painfully out of harmony because "a doubt whether the whole affair was not after all absurd flashed through her, and was gone" (p. 62).

In "The Revival" meeting Anna is shown to be "in despair at her own predicament." Bennett tells us that "the sense of sin was not more strong than the sense of being confused" (pp. 69-70). Anna's condition is described in the following paragraph:
Anna was now in the profoundest misery. The weight of her sins, of her ingratitude to God, lay on her like a physical and intolerable load, and she lost all feeling of shame, as a seasick voyager loses shame after an hour of nausea. She knew then that she could no longer go on living as aforetime. . . . She recollected all her sins individually — lies, sloth, envy, vanity, even theft in her infancy. She heaped up all the wickedness of a lifetime, hysterically augmented it. . . . Her virtuous acts shrank into nothingness.

Anna tried to imagine herself converted, or in the process of being converted. She could not. She could only sit moveless, dull and abject. She did not stir, even when the congregation rose for another hymn. In what did conversion consist? Was it to say the words, 'I believed'? She repeated to herself softly, 'I believe'. But nothing happened. Of course she believed. She had never doubted, nor dreamed of doubting, that Jesus died on the Cross to save her soul — her soul — from eternal damnation. . . . What, then, was lacking? What was belief? What was faith? (p.70).

As we glance through the pages of Bennett's novels, we come across many moral terms — 'retribution', 'evil', 'wrong', 'misconduct', 'lies', 'guilt', 'fault', 'offence', 'adhorrence', 'censure', 'penance', 'punishment', and 'death'. But, above all, individuals are open to self-deception and because of their ignorance and diffidence they are not in a position to estimate the forces that have made them so. This is also the result of prevailing bourgeoisie, materialism and self-interest. The connections between religious and social/individual activities are implicit: salvation and business success are coupled together; the rich pay dividends on the "saved" souls. The typical example in Anna of the Five Towns is of her father, Ephraim Tellwright, whom Bennett repeatedly calls "miser", who has inherited a fortune from his father, a
Wesleyan Methodist, and who, himself an ardent Methodist, and a financier of Methodism. For him "The circuit was a going concern", and he "reduced the cost per head of souls saved, and so widened the frontiers of the Kingdom of Heaven" (p.32).

His chief interest lay in those fiscal schemes of organisation without whose aid no religious propaganda can possibly succeed. It was in the finance of salvation that he rose supreme—the interminable alternation of debt raising and new liability which provides a lasting excitement for Nonconformists. In the negotiation of mortgages, the artful arrangement of appeals, the planning of anniversaries and of mighty revivals he was an undisputed leader. To whom the circuit was "a going concern" (p.32).

Bennett also traces the effects of religious and financial enthusiasm, spiritual thrift, miserliness, meanness, hypocrisy, and selfishness. The immediate victims of Ephraim Tellwright's and pursuit are Titus pPrice, Willie Price and Anna. Titus Price is involved in a fraud and fails to face its consequences, with the result that he commits suicide. His son, Willie Price, is bankrupted and ruined for life. He knows the truth about his father's conduct but allows himself to be silenced. Ephraim's humiliations on them are responsible for their committing suicide. They of course, kill themselves for good reasons—because they are in grave financial and legal difficulties, and because their "souls" cannot be "saved", by any reduction in price. What is more is that Tellwright's selfishness shatters Anna's world. She comes to sympathize with Willie Price but she is forced to marry Henry. The result is that Ephraim succeeds in his parntal duty; Henry succeeds as ever; Anna succeeds in her performance of "duty" to be a
"good daughter", "good wife" and a "good" woman. Titus Price achieves "dignity" at the hour of death but Willie Price, the inevitable victim, fails.

She had sucked in with her mother's milk the profound truth that woman's life is always a renunciation, greater or less. Hers by chance was greater. Facing the future calmly and genially, she took oath with herself to be a good wife to the man whom, with all his excellences, she had never loved. Her thoughts often dwelt lovingly on Willie Price, whom she deemed to be pursuing in Australia an honourable and successful career, quickened at the outset by her hundred pounds. This vision was her stay. But neither she nor anyone in the Five Towns or elsewhere ever heard of Willie Price again. And well might none hear!
The abandoned pit-shaft does not deliver up its secret. And so—the Bank of England is the richer by a hundred pounds unclaimed, and the world the poorer by a meek soul stung to revolt only in its last hour (pp. 235-36).

Thus the religious teachings trying to teach an individual to lead a spiritual life are likely to have disadvantageous results. But there seems to be no reason to think that Bennett sympathises with any of the specific doctrines of Victorian religion. Hepburn tells us:

Bennett confessed himself unable to believe in the divinity of Christ, virgin birth, heaven, hell, the immortality of soul, or the divine inspiration of the Bible, But he admitted the greatness of Christ as a teacher; he was not prepared to assert there isn't a hell; he believed in God in the respect that he could not help believing in a first cause and a source of order in the universe; and he thought the presence of conscience in men suggested divine implication. Christianity was failing because Christians did not follow Christ, and he imagined that any new religion would have to be based upon kindliness. 40
In the chapter "The Downfall" Bennett discusses the inefficiency of such a religion followed by Anna.

She went to bed without opening her mouth. Irresolute, shamed, and despairing, she tried to pray for guidance, but she could bring no sincerity of appeal into this prayer; it seemed an empty form. Where, indeed, was her religion? She was obliged to acknowledge that the fervour of her aspirations had been steadily cooling for weeks. She was not a whit more a true Christian now than she had been before the Revival; it appeared that she was incapable of real religion, possibly one of those souls foreordained to damnation. This admission added to the general sense of futility, and increased her misery. She lay awake for hours, confronting her deliberate promise to Willie Price. . . . It is my duty to a Christian to pity and succour him (pp. 198-99).

The remarkable manifestation of Victorian philistinism comes in the following paragraph, devoted to Titus Price's death. We cannot but quote the whole paragraph:

As a theatrical effect the death of Titus Price could scarcely have been surpassed. The town was profoundly moved by the spectacle of this abject yet heroic surrender of all these pretences by which society contrives to tolerate itself. Here was a man whom no one respected, but everyone pretended to respect — who knew that he was respected by none, but pretended that he was respected by all; whose whole career was made up of dissimulations: religious, moral and social. If any man could have been trusted to continue the decent sham to the end, and so preserve the general self-esteem, surely it was this man. But no! Suddenly abandoning all impostures, he transgresses openly, brazenly; and scratching a bit of hemp cries: 'Behold me; this is real human nature. This is the truth; the rest was lies. I lied; you lied, I confess it, and you shall confess it' (pp. 188-89).

Philistinism is also illustrated by character portrayal — "Characterization is of the first importance" to Bennett. In this respect his men and women in all his novels can be
divided into two categories: old order or tradition-bound — Ephraim Tellwright, John Baines, Mrs. Baines, Shushions, Auntie Hamps, Aunt Harriet, Mrs. Hamps, Mrs. Orgreave, Darius Clayhanger, Earlforward, and so on so forth— who are material minded, misers, selfish, cruel and "sufficiently Philistine to resist their strangling fascination." The second group of people consists of the new order or rebels — Richard Larch, Willie Price, Sophia, Edwin Clayhanger, Hilda Lessways. They are or they intend to be self-made people of the new generation; they are adventurous, romantic, and are guided by an instinct for experience, self-help, learning and realization. The old generation people embody the spirit of Victorian philistinism, which is working on and shaping them and also influencing the new generation. Some critics (especially the naturalists) may see "crude scientific determinism . . . responsible for this." But in Bennett it is "simply a question of environment and custom" which is called a "scientific" attitude. In the light of the foregoing theoretical discussion, we find that Bennett's people show forth in their propriety, culture, self-respect, and general distinction of manner in public, a code of morality about which they can tell us nothing without appearing hypocrites or complacent. For the supreme expression of morality and good conduct one must go to Church, attend revival meeting, Sunday schools, must appear respectable in gesture and mannerism and have an air of virtue. Their self-complacency and conceit are expressed in the opening pages of The Old Wives' Tale:
Happily the inhabitants of the Five Towns in that era were passably pleased with themselves, and they never even suspected that they were not quite modern and quite awake. They thought that the intellectual, the industrial, and the social movements had gone about as far as these movements could go, and they were amazed at their own progress. Instead of being humble and ashamed, they actually showed pride in their pitiful achievements. They ought to have looked forward meekly to the prodigious feats of posterity; but, having too little faith and too much conceit, they were content to look behind and make comparisons with the past. They did not foresee the miraculous generation which is us. A poor blind, complacent people! (pp. 11-12).

Epistemologically, Bennett's exposure of individual's hypocrisy, narrow philistinism, inherent complacency, pretention, falsity and selfishness, makes man know his ignorance and understand human nature. John Baines epitomizes selfishness, corruption, and complacency. He is a victim of nervous restlessness and is never left alone. The vigil is certain Aunt Maria, who is not a "real aunt". And John Baines, now "so far gone in decay and corruption" (p. 43), "having foreseen [that he] would have a 'stroke' and need a faithful, tireless nurse, he had begun fifty years in advance by creating Aunt Maria, and he kept her carefully in misfortune's way, so that at the proper moment she would be ready to cope with the stroke. Such at least is the only theory which will explain . . . the Baines" (p. 41). This "wreck" and "ruined organism" is kept morally alive by other hyprocrites of his family. He knows that they are not faithful to him, and they also know that they are deceiving him as well as themselves. The following passage describes John Baines' irony of existence:
Even the ruined organism only remembered fitfully and partially that he had once been John Baines. And if Mrs. Baines had not, by the habit of years, gradually built up a gigantic fiction that the organism remained ever the supreme consultative head of the family; if Mr. Critchlow had not obstinately continued to treat it as a crony, the mass of living and dead nerves on the rich Victorian bedstead would have been of no more account than some Aunt Maria in similar ease. These two persons, his wife and his friend, just managed to keep him morally alive by indefatigably feeding his importance and his dignity. The feat was a miracle of stubborn, self-deceiving, splendidly blind devotion, and incorrigible pride (p.42).

Sophia and Constance are the victims of parental authority, of do's and don't's, must and mustn'ts. They should take castor oil as and when Mrs. Baines bids them; before leaving the house they must get permission from her; they must not go with men of their age; they must attend to the matters of household and shop and must preserve a proper distance while talking to shop assistants. They must be careful that they should not talk secret matters in the presence of the servant, Maggie. They must look after the paralytic father with proper punctuality. They must attend to Mrs. Baines's instructions and morals quietly. These are the main parental rules that both the girls ought to observe. Ironically enough, as Bennett notes, these rules fade with the death of John Baines:

They knew not that they were gazing at a vanished era, John Baines had belonged to the past, to the age when men really did think of their souls, when orators by phrases could move crowds to fury or to pity, when no one had learnt to hurry, when Demos was only turning in his sleep, when the sole beauty
Then there is Mr. Povey, a "surrogate" of Mr. Baines in the shop, "absolutely faithful" and "absolutely efficient", according to the standards of their judgement.

Mr. Povey, a person universally esteemed, both within and without the shop, the surrogate of bedridden Mr. Baines, the unfailing comfort and stand-by of Mrs. Baines, the fount and the radiating centre of order and discipline in the shop; a quiet, diffident, secretive, tedious, and obstinate youngish man, absolutely faithful, absolutely efficient in his sphere; without brilliance, without distinction; perhaps rather little-minded, certainly narrow-minded; but was a force in the shop! The shop was inconceivable without Mr. Povey (p. 14).

This is, however, not the real portrait of Mr. Povey. What his appearance and demeanour indicate in public hide what he is in private. "None could possibly have guessed that Mr. Povey was afraid of going to the dentist's. But such was the case. . . . The paragon of commonsense, pictured by most people as being somehow unliable to human frailties, could not yet screw himself up to the point of ringing a dentist's door-bell" (p. 15). "Life was very complex for Mr. Povey" (p. 76).

His faithfulness, sincerity and accuracy in business result in his marriage to Constance. "Not for an instant did he deceive Constance, who read his real sensations with accuracy. . . . The basis of her regard for him was, she often
thought, his honesty, his industry, his genuine kindliness of act, his grasp of the business, his perseverance, his passion for doing at once that which had to be done" (p.129). But little later we find, as both of them also discover, "Each was deceiving the other: Mr. Povey hid his crime, and Constance hid her knowledge of his crime. False! False! But this is what marriage is! (p.134). At the hour of his death people "liked and respected him. He was a very honest man . . . at the end of his life, destiny took hold of him and displayed . . . the vein of greatness which runs through every soul without exception. He embraced a cause, lost it and died of it" (p.215). Later on when his funeral is over, we are told that a great realization comes to Constance. "And now, she was a widow. How strange and how impressive was life! . . . Times were changed, Bursley was still Bursley; but she had kept it." "And lo! the affair was over. The simplicity of the funeral would have satisfied even Samael, whose tremendous self-esteem hid itself so effectually behind such externals that nobody had ever fully perceived it. Not even Constance was aware that he had a ridiculous side, that his greatest lack had been a lack of spectacular dignity. Even in the coffin, where nevertheless most people are finally effective, he had not been imposing" (pp. 216-17).

Bennett traces the philistine endeavours of Constance from her youth to old age till her death. According to Tillyard, "this woman is part of the means by which he interprets the 'accepted unconscious metaphysic' of the provincial Nonconformity in which he grows up."
Constance embodies the habits of her parents. She dislikes change, loves the old house, old furniture, regards trusted friends the real companions and thus marries the trusted servant.

Sophia also nourishes and exhibits her Five Towns provincialism. Having decided to leave Bursley and its narrow ways of life, she elopes with Gerald Scales to Paris. She inherits the provincial quality that a woman is secure after marriage, so before proceeding to Paris she insists on getting married in London. Gerald Scales, although a worldly man, is surprised at this. But "he did not reflect that this fragile slip of the Baines stock unconsciously drawing upon the accumulated strength of generations of honest living, had put a defeat upon him" (p. 259). Tillyard comments that Sophia, "far from escaping from Bursley as she intended to do, carries with her a great parcel of it and through this possession achieves her peculiar narrow triumph." In Paris, Sophia enjoys the exciting and passionate life. There occur significant changes and developments in her life, career and outlook, but in her unconscious self she also carries with her the Victorian miserliness. She, like any Victorian woman cannot "see money thrown away." Sophia cannot stand Gerald's extravagance in buying her clothes in Paris.

The prices frightened her. The simplest trifle here cost sixteen pounds; and her mother's historic 'silk' whose elaborateness had cost twelve pounds, was supposed to have approached the inexpressible! Gerald said that she was not to think about prices. She was, however, forced
by some instinct to think about prices — she who at home had scorned the narrowness of life in the square. ... With extraordinary rapidity she had formed a habit of preaching moderation to Gerald. She hated to see money thrown away, and her notion of the boundary line between throwing money away and judiciously spending it was still the notion of the square (p.261).

Later on when she is deserted by Gerald she runs a boarding house, with a full knowledge of business. She is talented, frugal and unerringly in her calculations. She is fully a Victorian commerce woman. She is now independent to have her ways. Gerald has abandoned her. But at bottom she is also puritanical in her sentiment and passions. She is attracted by Chirac, Gerald's friend, but she preserves her Victorian sexual morality.

But all the time she knew that she wanted love. Only, she conceived a different kind of love: placid, regular, somewhat stern, somewhat above the plane of whims, moods, caresses, and all mere fleshly contacts. ... She hated a display of sentiment. And even in the most intimate abandonments she would have made reserves, and would have expected reserves, trusting to a lover's power of divination, and to her own! The foundation of her character was a haughty moral independence, and this quality was what she most admired in others. Chirac's inability to draw from his own pride strength to sustain himself against the blow of her refusal gradually killed in her the sexual desire which he had aroused (p. 364).

When Sophia dies, Constance stands at her dead body, full of pity, but justifying her religious faith, involving judgement and nemesis:

Sophia's charm and Sophia's beauty—what profit had they been to their owner? ... What a career! A brief passion, and then nearly thirty
years in a boarding house! And Sophia had never had a child; had never known either the joy or the pain of maternity. She had never even had a true home till, in all her sterile splendour, she came to Bursley. . . . And she had ended — thus! This was the piteous, ignominious end of Sophia's wonderous fight of body and soul. Hers had not been a life at all. And the reason? It is strange how fate persists in justifying the harsh generalisations of Puritan morals. . . . Sophia had sinned. It was therefore inevitable that she should suffer. An adventure such as she had in wicked and capricious pride undertaken with Gerald Scales could not conclude otherwise than as it had concluded. It could have brought nothing but evil. There was no getting away from these verities, thought Constance. And she was to be excused for thinking that all modern progress and cleverness was as naught, and that the world would be forced to return upon its steps and start again in the path which it had left (p.492).

Cyril Povey, Constance's son, becomes a surrogate of Sophia, the rebel. He also belongs to the new generation. His "confidence in his skill increased with years" (p.181). In a few years Cyril "struck at the very basis of society" because "deep down in his heart a little voice was telling him. . . that he had set the example" (p.185). In this way the "structure of blind faith had once again crumbled at the assault of realities, and unhealthy, un-English truths (pp. 207-08). Cyril "was the pivot of the house; every desire ended somewhere in Cyril. The shop existed new solely for him." Samuel and Constance "ceased to be self-justifying beings; they never thought of themselves save as the parents of Cyril" (p.162). This gives a shock to his tradition-bound
Instinctively they concealed the fact as much as possible. They never admitted it even to themselves. Samuel, indeed, would often say: 'That child is not everybody. That child must be kept in his place'. Constance was always teaching him consideration for his father as the most important person in the household. Samuel was always teaching him consideration for his mother as the most important person in the household. Nothing was left undone to convince him that he was a cipher, a nonentity, who ought to be very glad to be alive. But he knew all about his importance. He knew that the entire town was his. He knew that his parents were deceiving themselves. . . . He never imparted any portion of this knowledge to his parents (pp.162-63)

In the Clayhanger trilogy the 'old order' is represented by Darius Clayhanger, Big James, the foreman; Mr. Shushiens, the aged Primitive Methodist, Aunt Clara and Auntie Hamps, the ladies who thrive on their tact and pretence, and Mr. Orgreave, the architect. They are inextricably tied up in the net of Victorian philistinism which they have inherited from the previous generation. They don't stretch or they cannot be moved without considerable force, beyond the boundaries of the Five Towns. They are the champions of conventional religion and politics and are of the and for the Five Towns. Edwin Clayhanger and Hilda Lessways who belong to the 'new order' are surrounded by these people and tremendously influenced by their activities. Their aspirations are thwarted by the complacency of their parents. It is relevant to study the character of the people belonging to the old order, to determine the epistemology of Edwin's and Hilda's learning and knowledge. In Clayhanger, there are "two beings so dissimilar, antagonistic, and ill-matched -Edwin Clayhanger and his father", Darius Clayhanger (p.417). Darius, a
representative of the old generation, thinks himself to be the creator of destinies and moulder of the future of younger generation, like John Baines in The Old Wives' Tale. Both of them die almost a similar death. When Darius dies, nobody in the household had the sense of time, the continuous consciousness of existence was deranged, and all values transmuted" (p. 414). When he dies, all the members of the house — Maggie, Alicia, Clara, Albert, Auntie Hamps — become suspicious. Darius, who was once a "little boy!" is dead; death has "relieved him", they thought.

Darius lay in exactly the same position; except that his mouth was open a little wider, he presented exactly the same appearance as in the afternoon. His weary features, pitiful and yet grim, had exactly the same expression. But there was no sign of breathing. Edwin bent and listened.

Edwin, now alone, looked again at the residue of his father. The spirit, after hiding within so long, had departed and left no trace. It had done with that form and was away. The vast and forlorn adventure of the little boy from the Bastille was over. Edwin did not know that the little boy from the Bastille was dead. He only knew that his father was dead. It seemed intolerably tragic that the enfeebled wreck should have had to bear so much, and yet intolerably tragic also that death should have relieved him. His father was, and lo! he was not. That was all, but it was ineffable (p. 416).

Shushions "was the doddring old fool who had given his youth to Sunday schools when Sunday schools were not patronized by princes, archbishops, and lord mayors, when Sunday schools were the scorn of the intelligent" (p. 237). Shushions "had lived too long; he had survived his dignity; he was now nothing but a bundle of capricious and obstinate
Worse than these merely material phenomena was the mumbling toothless gibber of his shrill protesting; the glassy look of idiocy from his fatigued eyes; and the inane smile and impotent frown that alternated on his features. He was a horrible and offensive old man. He was Time's obscene victim. Edwin was revolted by the spectacle of the younger men baiting him ... to protect the old man not only from the insults of stupid and crass bullies, but from the old man himself, from his own senility ... to restore to him, by a benevolent system of pretences, the dignity and the self-respect which he had innocently lost, and to keep him decent to the eye, if not to the ear until death came to repair its omission (p. 235).

Orgreave has his "device for maintaining his prestige among the turbulent mob. Dignified and brilliantly clever as Osmond Orgreave had the reputation of being in the town, he was somehow outshone in cleverness at home, and he never put the bar of his dignity between himself and his children. Thus he could only keep the upper hand by allowing hints to escape from him of the secret amusement roused in him by the comicality of the spectacle of his filial enemies. He had one great phrase, which he would draw out at them with the accents of a man who is trying politely to hide his contempt: 'You'll learn better as you get older!'" (p. 200). Whatever he has been, his death offers a great relief to the new generation because old 'epoch' comes to an end. In These Twain, we are reminded of the death of Orgreave and Mrs. Orgreave. "On the previous Tuesday Osmond Orgreave had died, and within twenty-four hours Mrs. Orgreave was dead also. . . . An epoch was finished, and
the . . . episode that concluded it, in its strange features and its swiftness, resembled a vast hallucination" (These Twain, p.158). Mr. Shushions, the primitive Methodist, "not just because he grows old but because he is rooted in a moment of history which becomes outmoded." He lives in "the very texture of living in time in a particular place", but remains of the old order. Then, there is Clara Hamps, one of the chief forces of Victorian philistinism working within the Clayhanger family. She is sentimental, hypocritical, egotistic and insincere. Her "unambitious marriage to Albert Benbow, the birth of their several children and her imperceptible progress towards incurious philistinism" are also observed by Edwin. As Edwin comes in contact with all such members of his family his dissatisfaction grows but he becomes self-conscious. He also gains more knowledge of human nature. He finds that his family is devoid of interest and taste. Later on he realizes that the chasm between his family and his personal aspirations is becoming wider.

There is one Auntie Hamps. She prides in her hypocritical existence; her appearances can hide all her hypocrisies and meannesses; she thrives on insincerity. Bennett draws an interesting pen portrait in the following passage:

And she was fine. . . . With her clear, rosy complexion, her white regular teeth, her straight spine, her plump figure, her brilliant gaze, her rapid gestures, and that authentic hairs of her falling in Victorian curls, she offered to the world a figure that
no one could regard without a physical pleasure and stimulation. And she was shapely correct in her black silk and black velvet, and in the massive jet at her throat, and in the slenderness of her shoe! It was useless to recall her duplicities, her mendacities, her hypocracies, her meannesses. At any rate she could be generous at moments, and the splendour of her vitality sometimes, as now, hid all her faults. She . . . kept at least the appearance of victory. If you did not like Auntie Hamps willingly, in her hours of bodily triumph, you had to like her unwillingly. Both Edwin and Maggie had innumerable grievances against her, but held their allegiance and even their warm instinctive affection, on the morning of her sixtieth birthday. She had been a lone widow ever since Edwin could remember, and yet she had continued to bloom. Nothing could desiccate nor wither her. Even her sins did not find her out. God and she remained always on the best terms, and thrived on insincerity (Clayhanger, p.423).

In These Two in Bennett devotes a full-length chapter—"Auntie Hamps Sentenced"—to describe her posture in the death-bed, absurdity of her career, her past, her attitude towards life and finally her end. Auntie Hamps's view of life, is that "superb pretence must be kept up, and she kept it up" (p.41). Edwin "at once perceived from the conspiratorial glance in her splendid eyes that in suggesting a move she had intended to deceive her fellow conspirator in life, Clara" Auntie Hamps "could not live without chicane. And she was happiest when she had superimposed chicane upon chicane in complex folds" (p.38).

Edwin and Hilda, who belong to the new order, differ from the old order in matters of keeping up appearances. Edwin "considered that in the presence of a third person husband and wife should always at any cost maintain the
convention of perfect conjugal amenity. He knew couples who achieved the fact, Albert and Clara, for example. But Hilda, he surmised, had other ideas, if indeed she had ever consciously reflected upon this branch of social demeanour. Certainly she seemed at moments to lose all regard for appearances" (p.306). And Edwin also feels that "Auntie Hamps had not quite succeeded" (p.325) in her life. Bennett, never seems to side with the so called 'pillars of society', and champions of conventions', for he has seen such people as kept appearances, dying animal's death. Bennett's description of Auntie Hamps in the death-bed may be cited as an exquisite example. She also dies like John Baines, "She oughtn't really to be left alone for a minute! When Edwin opens the door where Auntie Hamps is confined, he is alarmed, shocked, for it was at once apparent that she must be very ill. She lay reclining against several crumpled and crushed pillows, with her head on one side and her veined hands limp on the eiderdown ..., hung from the carved mahogany tester. The posture seemed to be that of an exhausted animal, surprised by the unconsciousness of final fatigue, shameless in the intense need of response. Auntie Hamps had ceased to be a Wesleyan, a pillar of society, a champion of the conventions, and a keeper-up of appearances; she just an utterly wearied and beaten creature, breathing noisely through wide-open mouth. ... He knew that more than once she had recovered when good judges had pronounced recovery impossible; but he was quite sure, now, that she would never rise from that bed. He had the sudden dreadful thought. 'She is done for, sentenced, cut off from the rest of us. This is the end for her, she won't be able to pretend any more. All her efforts have come to this' ... And two somewhat contradictory ideas sprang from it: first, the entire absurdity of her career is revealed by its close, and secondly, the tragic dignity with which its close was endowing her death. (These Twain, p.327).
Later on Edwin realizes that Auntie Hamps "had learnt nothing from the material progress of civilization" (p. 339) whereas such a "wonder of life" (p. 338) teaches him much. Ruminating over Auntie Hamps' career and her ideals, Edwin is "grieved, with a compassionate grief, that Auntie Hamps had learnt so little while living so long. He knew that she was cruel only because she was incapable of imagining... He understood. She worshiped God under the form of respectability... she placed religion above morality; hence her chicane, her inveterate deceit and self-deceit. It was with religious aim that she... had lived" (pp. 340-41). And Auntie Hamps is dead; she deceived and is deceived and no one knows who is deceived for she maintains her dignity even after her death.

And the emissaries spoke of Auntie Hamps as a saint; they all averred with restrained passion that her death was an absolutely irreparable loss to the circuit; and their apparent conviction was such that Edwin's whole estimate of Auntie Hamps and of mankind was momentarily shaken. Was it conceivable that none of these respectable people had arrived at the truth concerning Auntie Hamps? Had she deceived them all? Or were they simply rewarding her in memory for her ceaseless efforts on behalf of the safety of society (p. 367).

She is forgotten with the passage of a new minutes, for those who remember her at her death remember with their hypocritical appearances. They also know it.

Mr. Higginbotham, by virtue of his age, began to read the service, and Auntie Hamps became 'She', 'her', and 'our sister' — nameless. In the dining room she had been the paragon of all excellences — in the drawing room, packed securely and neatly in the coffin, she was a sinner snatched from the consequences of sin by a miracle of divine sacrifice (p. 366).
Mrs. Lessways, Hilda's mother, is a ludicrous fool. She was not good at strategy, especially in conflicts with her daughter. She was an ingenuous, hasty thing, and much too candidly human. And not only was she deficient in practical common-sense and most absurdly unable to learn from experience, but she had not even the wit to cover her shortcomings by resorting to the traditional authoritativeness of the mother. Her brief, rare efforts to play the mother were ludicrous" (Hilda Lessways, pp. 18-19). This creature comes to an end with nervous breakdown. But, to Hilda, the "reasoning and the resultant phrase, 'nervous breakdown', had meant nothing at all" (p. 116). Hilda, a lover of Victor Hugo, looks at her mother's death with nonchallance but with Victorian sense of sin and punishment.

Words! Empty words! She knew, profoundly and fatally, the evil principle which had conquered her so completely that she had no power left with which to fight it. This evil principle was sin; it was not the force of sins, however multifarious; it was sin itself. She was the sinner, convicted and self-convicted. One of the last intelligent victims of a malady which has now almost passed away from the civilized earth, she existed in the chill and stricken isolation of incommutable doom (p. 116).

Another victim of self-complacency, conceit, hypocrisy, but fully aware that "she had willfully brought the maladies upon herself" (p. 220), is Sarah Gaily, the "martyrdom". She "constantly suffered physical torture" (p. 219). "She eschewed aid — she could manage for herself — and she did not encourage company, apparently preferring to be alone with fate. In her easier hours, one hand resting on another and both hugged
close to her breast, rocking to and from with an astounding monotonous perseverance, she was like a mysterious Indian god in a subterranean temple® (p.220). She is comparable to John Baines who thought himself "capable of making destinies." Both Hilda and George Cannon know that this fretful spinster was a victim, utterly innocent and utterly helpless, of destiny, and that she merited nothing but patient sympathy. . . . Then, future, it was necessary always to minister to Sarah's illusion that Sarah was the mainstay of the house, that she attended to everything, that without her governance the machine would come to a disastrous standstill: the fact being that she had grown feeble and superfluous, Sarah had taught all she knew to two highly intelligent pupils, and had survived her usefulness. She had no right place on earth. But in her morose inefficiency she had developed into an unconscious tyrant — a tyrant whose power lay in the loyalty of her subjects and not at all in her own soul. She was indeed like a deity, immanent, brooding, and unaware of itself! (Hilda Lessways, p.220).

Therefore, in Bennett philistinism means many things: mask, duplicity, role-playing, pose, diplomacy, timidity, hypocrisy, artificial appearance, selfishness, so on and so forth. All these factors influence and shape the conduct of his protagonists. Bennett's central concern therefore is to endow his individuals with courage and free will to shake these codes of conduct and defy the constrictions, as Bennett himself has done. In Edwin's depiction, Bennett recalls his own "days of repression, when his duty was pointed out and insisted upon. It took him back instantly to Hanley, where the weight of responsibility for his juniors was a heavy burden." Thus, there can be no doubt that Edwin's situation is Bennett's own. Like Bennett himself, Edwin is in the clutches of the
surrounding relatives. "In the fight for his own soul, his father is the archenemy, Clara a thorn in his flesh, and Mrs. Hamps a dead weight, not actively hostile, but uncertain, likely at any moment of tension to crash down on the other side of the scale and out-balance his will with hers." But in the chapter entitled "The Chain Broken" (Clayhanger) Darius's death assures Edwin's freedom. Edwin now "confirmed himself in the rightness of his own opinions, that he first began to realize an individual freedom. . . . The chain was at last broken that had bound together those two beings" (p.477) with all their dissimilarities and antagonism. Edwin has several grudges against society, Sunday schools and his father, but he is on the way to solve his dilemmas.

Edwin hated Sunday schools. Nay, he venomously resented them, though they had long ceased to incommode him. They were connected in his memory with atrocious tedium, pietistic insincerity, and humiliating contacts. At the bottom of his mind he still regarded them as a malicious device of parents for wilfully harassing and persecuting inoffensive, helpless children. And he had a particular grudge against them because he alone of his father's offspring had been chosen for the nauseating infliction. Why should his sisters have been spared and he doomed? He became really impatient when Sunday schools were under discussion, and from mere irrational annoyance he would not admit that Sunday schools had any good qualities whatever. He knew nothing of their history, and wished to know nothing (Clayhanger, pp. 212-13).

He was disgusted more comprehensibly by the tradition, universal in his class and in most classes, according to which relatives could not be formally polite to one another. He obeyed the tradition as slavishly as anyone, but often said to himself that he would violate the sacred rule if only he could count on a suitable response (Clayhanger, p. 217).
The most inevitable victim of Victorian philistinism is Janet, once in love with Edwin. Janet has a "charming, good-natured face with its vermilion lips eager to part in a nice, warm, sympathetic smile... a conscientious girl, and her age being twenty-five her soul was at its prime, full, bursting with beautiful impulses towards perfection. Yes, she would accuse herself of being too happy, too content" (Clayhanger, p. 148). She was the kindliest, the most dignified, the most capable creature; but she was now an old maid. . . . Her youth was gone; her complexion was nearly gone. And though in one aspect she seemed indispensable, in another the chief characteristic of her existence seemed to be a tragic futility" (p. 148). She is doomed because she is a victim of parental authority. Sophia is different from her and from Hilda. Sophia is also forbidden by her mother to move out with boys of her age, and, in the case of Edwin too "one Sunday evening, when Edwin, entering, had first mentioned to his father a woman's name, his father had most terribly humiliated him" (These Twain, p. 15). But with the passage of time "all Victorian phenomena had been put upon their trial and most of them condemned. And condemned without even the forms of justice" (p. 14). Edwin starts nourishing grievances against his father and is bent upon taking revenge. As a result, in the same drawing room he "finally betrothed himself to Hilda. That by comparison was only yesterday; yet it was historical and distant" (p. 15). And in a similar fashion, Hilda also revolts against her mother's authority, complacency and discipline.
Her mind was full of an adventure through which she had passed seven years previously, when she was thirteen and a little girl at school. For several days, then, she had been ruthlessly mortifying her mother by complaints about the meal. At last, one noon, when the child had refused the whole of a plentiful dinner, Mrs. Lessways had burst into tears and, slapping four pennies down on the table, had cried, 'Here! I fairly give you up. Go out and buy your own dinner! Then perhaps you'll get what you want!' And the child without an instant's hesitation, had seized the coins and gone out, hatless, and bought food at a little tripe shop that was also an eating-house, and consumed it there; and then in grim silence returned home. Both mother and daughter had been stupefied and frightened by the boldness of her daughter's initiative, by her amazing flaunting disregard of filial decency (Hilda Lessways, pp.23-24).

Philistine forces, Bennett insists, dominate man, but these forces ultimately may be overcome. To what extent, therefore, is man morally responsible for his failures or frustrations? If failure is a result solely of forces which are beyond the control of man, worldly success is impossible. This is apparent in his individuals' revolt against prevailing philistinism say of Sophia and Hilda or Edwin. Bennett believes that man's colossal ignorance is the chief cause of his failure; when man clings to the complacent philosophy of life he is bound to meet with failure and frustration.

He is intolerant of the petty vices of deceit, hypocrisy, treachery, spitefulness and censoriousness. In his Christlike concern he may afford to be tolerant of faults in human character but he holds their egotism, religious and moral hypocrisy to nature so that they can see their faces. He is very critical of religious methodism. Time and again he comes to discuss the prevailing religious hypocrisy,
boredom of Chapel-going and enervating religious experience. "Many preached Christianity," he declares in a newspaper article, "but few practised it. I was depressed by the examples of this hypocrisy that I saw around me."50

Another predominant factor responsible for individual's failure, is egotism. Harvey Darton has put it in the following words:

Egotism, then, moral and social, is their predominant characteristic. It is a local condition, explained by local conditions. The potteries refused railways at first. They had been engaged for countless generations in one single self-sufficing and prosperous craft. They preserved, therefore, without change, not merely their trade customs, but their personal manners. They were, until quite recent years, a piece of England walled off in the very heart of England.51

Bennett writes in his article: "In my opinion, at this time of day it is absolutely impossible for a youngman with first-class intellectual apparatus to accept any form of dogma." Therefore, he says, "I came to London at the age of twenty-one with no definite ambition, and no immediate save to escape from an intellectual and artistic environment which had long been excessively irksome to me."52 Pound tells us that Bennett is "doctrinally irreligious" and "instinctively opposed" to the dogmas of Church.53 His religion is 'humanist' and deals with the ills of society; therefore, "it is the duty of the individual to live up to the best that is in him" and to his satisfaction. Bennett writes:

There is one major satisfaction—and it may not be the greatest of all—which is equally open to
all. I mean the exercise of benevolence. I do not necessarily mean what are called 'good works' in Victorian morality, which by the way are often bad works, regrettable in their subtly minister influence on the doer as well as on the receiver, and which in any case many people have neither the time nor the ability to perform.

We must learn to perceive the absurdity, the impudence, and the preposterousness of sitting in judgement. To err is human, to forgive ought to be. Here is the finest form of benevolence, and it will produce the finest form of satisfaction — a satisfaction which increases from year to year and only reaches its maximum when life ends." 54

IV

Norman Foerster, 55 suggests that the term "Victorian" should be replaced by "realist". On a realistic standpoint, then, our foregoing discussion is not merely image of the Five Towns society and its philistinism, as it "shows its people its natural face in a glass and leaves to posterity the record of the manner of man it found," but the real face of man as he is. Bennett's probe into human nature results into the emergence of his realism. The question of philistinism, therefore, seems closely bound up with Bennett's realism. Bennett's criticism, to unmask the prevailing social appearances, to expose hypocrisy and complacency and raise questions in favour of empirical ethics, forms his realist basis. By his criticism of vices, follies, absurdities in human behaviour and relationships, Bennett desires to teach complacent provincial man "sense and sensibility."

In view of the late nineteenth-century French realists, who "emphasized man's subjection to material laws and
tended to represent morbid state of mind and repressive aspects of social experience”, observes Ioan Williams, the English writers “sought to discard or transcend Victorian conventions and limitations and to establish through literary experiment, or through naturalistic reproduction of experience, the truths that Victorianism obscured. The novels of Thomas Hardy reflect this process at a deeper level, but it is clearly working in the fiction of George Moore, of George Gissing, of H.G.Wells, and Arnold Bennett.” Bennett, therefore, is not a sole critic of Victorianism or philistinism. This criticism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century is variously reflected. Scott-James notes that Matthew Arnold laments “the infection of our mental strife”; Hardy broods over “the modern vice or unrest”; Butler exposes “the skeleton . . . of Victorianism”; Shaw sets himself “in opposition to hypocrisy and humbug; Nietzsche proclaims “the emancipation of the individual from the mentality of slaves”; Wells strives to assert man’s freedom in the “sordid but everchanging world to make their own lives as magnificently as they chose”; Galsworthy describes the conflict between the “healthier natural instincts and the stock notions of class conventions and moral prejudice”; Lawrence asserts “with lyrical unrestraint the glory of the human body” in the constricting conditions of provincialism. And, Arnold Bennett, “restrained, aloof, putting the whole panorama of yesterday and today before us, familiarizing us with the normality of perpetual change”, gives a realistic picture. In this connection we may cite John Wain:
Bennett's purpose is surely the purpose of all realist writing: to establish the truth. The eighteenth-century novelist had tended to exhort his readers, or to lash their follies and vices with satire; and this was still a living tradition in the pages of Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot. Realistic fiction, however with its roots in a more complex and difficult world, proceeds on the assumption that moral honesty is not possible until we have sorted out appearance from reality. Its tone, therefore, is sober and unimpassioned, its surface unvarnished.

Scott-James observes that Shaw, Wells, and Bennett "were in the thick of things belonging to their own time. Their criticism of life was essentially a criticism of contemporary life, or of the life that has led up to it." He suggests that Bennett, "out of the abundance of his imagination, from an inordinate eagerness to reproduce human life in all its profusion in its littleness", falls in the realistic tradition of Fielding, Smollett, Dickens, and Thackeray. More especially, in his criticism, Bennett combines "the realistic modern method with the bitter, ironical, sententious method of Thackeray." But later on, Scott-James suggests that Bennett is not "bitter"; he is "alternatively humorous and grim, but is too philosophical, interested, and detached ever to be bitter."

Bennett's meticulous portrayal of the characteristics of the old order—Tellwright, John Baines, Mrs. Baines, Darius Clayhanger, Shushions and Auntie Hamps—has led some critics to identify Bennett with the philistines, although he is a man of "good taste"; if not, at least he has tried to transform the primitive world to a world of taste. Bennett, as
as Norman Collins puts it, is a man of fine taste and in order to cultivate "his native capacity" for enjoyment, learned the "whole delicate business of living daintily," and remained a "boorish Philistine in a London of fashionable fastidious aesthetes." In the light of transition in English novel in the late years of nineteenth century, what is not recognized in Bennett in the early twentieth century is his empirical way of looking at life.

This view gives rise to a conflict between convention and empirical ethics, tradition and individual aspiration, closed society and open world, submissiveness and revolt. Bennett's realism cannot always develop within a firm and defined traditional framework. The reason being that his main concern is to know 'what life is', which involves man's potential living, personal honesty, struggle for existence and personal morality. Bellamy notes that the dominant feature of Bennett's serious novels "is one of permissive rather than renunciatory adaptation, and an essential element in the new liberality is the accepted presence of fleshly reality, which is no longer felt to be a threat to spiritual existence." Bennett's aims are pragmatic rather than idealistic. Bennett "has so much practicality and commonsense—the sense of fact which in his art stands him in such good stead — that he has even been prepared to sacrifice his art to the main practical necessities of life."

In conclusion, two points are evident: on the one hand, Bennett's novel is informed by a greater sense of history,
accurate facts of provincial world in the transitional stage, knowable and verifiable world, full of snobberies, self-deceptions, petty humiliations, scheming self-interest, complacency, humbug, sham, hollowness, social cruelties, injustice, and religious hypocrisy. This describes the provincial chronicle of England (especially the Five Towns) in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. In general, this forms the environment of the provincial race, the Five Towns milieu and the moment of Victorian era. On the other hand, Bennett's novel is informed by a strong sense of critical realism. The conflict which emerges between individual and society, children against parents is structured within the epistemology of relations. This distinguishes Bennett's realism from the traditional realism. His realism in the second sense is linked up with the individual trying to be free from the constraining fetters of Victorian society, its closed circle and narrow philistinism. In view of Bennett's epistemology, most of his novels have at least one person, usually a protagonist, who is somehow sparked with what Clayhanger calls the "flame", that is, the desire to change "imperfection to perfection", ignorance into knowledge, complacency into awareness, stupidity into wisdom, convention into experience, all leading to a knowledge of 'what life is'.

REFERENCES


2. Originally a convenient label for a distinct period in English history, it later came to suggest certain vide ideas in such fields as morality and arts. In these usages "it has been applied for beyond the limits of its British origin and its historical precision, in architecture, interior decoration, costume, and so forth, 'Victorian' has been made to imply elaborate ornamentation that has little meaning in relation to the object upon which it is imposed." — J. D. Cooke, "Introduction" to English Literature of the Victorian Period (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949), p. 1.


5. The period between the death of Sir Walter Scott (1832) and 1870 (when Charles Dickens died) was a time of the gradual lessening of the romantic impulse and the steady growth of realism in English novel. The year 1832, when Reform Bill was passed, marks the beginning of Victorian period. Then, the period between 1870 and the death of Queen Victoria saw a full flowering of the impulse of realism which had set in as early as the 1840's (early Victorianism) but which had been subordinated to the dominant romanticism of the first half of the century.


8. Ibid., p. 3.

9. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

11 Historically, it is associated with Philistia—the country of the philistines, in South-West Palestine; also, the people—and philistines—who were "alien worklike people who occupied the southern seacoast of Palestine, and constantly harassed the Israelites." "Applied (humorously or otherwise) to 'the enemy', into whose hands one may fall; formerly, also, to the debauched or drunken. Philister, applied by German person deficient in liberal culture; one whose interests are material and commonplace"—The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, rev. ed. C.T. Onions; 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 1487.


13 According to George Lukacs, in the nineteenth-century German literature the "esthetic" and the "ideological-moral standpoints" are "reduced to a dreary philistinism." And then he adds: "We recall simply that it was the Fascist development in German literary history which enacted . . . in order to remove all that was progressive and, above all, revolutionary from pre-1848 German literature, to glorify the reactionary stagnation," And in Russia: "The great democratic-revolutionary Russian philosopher and critic, Chernyshevsky . . . recognized this motive in E.T.A. Hoffman's criticism of philistinism," And Walter Pater found in Gottfried Keller and Adalbert Stifter "who combined . . . the most narrow-minded philistinism with an alleged literary mastery of the loftiest and most detached kind."—"The Historical Novel and the Crisis of Bourgeois Realism", The Historical Novel, pp. 295, 297. In American criticism, the philistinism is equated with the "Genteel Tradition".


Ibid., p. 231. It is in this sense that Amy Cruse calls Thackeray's Book of Snobs "the book of the Genteel Philistinism" for the simple reason that he details their philistine meanness, their conversation, their houses, their clothes, in addition to satirizing the ills of society.

Cited by Amy Cruse, p. 220.


Ibid., p. 109


28. Ibid., p. 197.


32. This revolt has been explored by Richard Chris Buckstead, "H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy: Three Novelists in Revolt against the Middle Class", *Dissertation*, State University of Iowa (1960). I regret my inability to procure this dissertation to supplement my views of the 'theme of revolt'.


37. Ibid., pp. 317-17.

38. Tillyard, p. 177

39. Ibid., p. 178.

Bennett, The Author's Craft, p. xviii.

John Wain, "The Quality of Arnold Bennett", Preliminary Essays, (London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1957), p. 124. Wain has identified various groups of characters. However, for the present purpose it is sufficient to see his portrait gallery in terms of two groups of people — old generation and the new generation.

Ibid., p. 126.

Tillyard, "Bursley", p. 177.

Ibid., p. 181.

Lucas, Arnold Bennett, p. 137.

Ibid., p. 139.

Swinnerton, Arnold Bennett: A Last Word, p. 20.

Wain, "The Quality of Arnold Bennett", p. 147.

Cited by Pound, Arnold Bennett, p. 37.

Cited by Pound, p. 60.

Cited by Wain, Arnold Bennett, pp. 12, 13.


Cited by Pound, p. 19.

See Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship", p. 234.

57 The Realist Novel, pp. xiii and 201-02.
58 See R.A. Scott-James, Personality in Literature, pp. 19-21.
59 *Arnold Bennett*, p.9.
60 Personality in Literature, pp. 10, 77, 79 and 82.
63 Collins, p. 260.
64 Bellamy, "Arnold Bennett", p. 150.
65 R.A. Scott-James, "Arnold Bennett", p. 79.