CHAPTER-V
Man and his own Self

That we come to live, and are called to die.
Yes, that's the thing
In fall, in spring,
That Yell'ham says:-
'Life offers - to deny !' 1

Man after his painful but inevitable alienation from his biological and social environment seeks consolation and contentment in his own conscience, will-power and action. It is in his detachment both from Nature and Society that he tries to make his life meaningful and authentic. However, it depends upon him whether to achieve perfection in life with the help of the existing moral and social order of life or alienate himself from his own self altogether.

This aspect of man's solitary life in different social settings is depicted in several of Hardy's poems. Hardy's men and women who are isolated from society search for a new order of life by their own will-power and action. In this regard, they try to make their life subjective and self-reliant. This view is also upheld by existentialist thinkers. According to Jaspers, life is a possible reality which can reach comprehensible transcendence only through a final surrendering of reason. Although this position puts

1. Thomas Hardy, Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses, op. cit., p. 298.
man under psychological tensions, it certainly induces him to lead a higher level of existence in isolation. In this context, the subjective way of life of a solitary man acquires more importance. Hardy states that "a 'sight for the finer qualities of existence, an ear for the still sad music of humanity are not to be acquired by the outer senses alone'; these aspects of life require a 'mental tactility that comes from a sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all its manifestations.' "2

According to Hardy, human passions and virtues like love, faith, patience, enthusiasm, action, courage, confidence, hard work, a sense of responsibility and sacrifice animate and encourage an alienated man to a higher realm of existence. This is also what Kierkegaard thinks: the more man thinks the less authentic he is. It is true that on account of the objective way of life which is incomplete in itself, man cannot achieve anything great. Another existentialist thinker, George Alfred Schrader Jr. emphasises the importance of human passion when he asserts, "Human existence is an interest (inter-esse), an unrelieved and unceasing concern with the passion, the possibility, and the predicament of becoming oneself."3 On the basis of these

views of both Hardy and existentialist thinkers, one may conclude with a greater degree of certainty that man, an emotional being, may improve himself and ascend to a higher level of existence only through a subjective way of life.

However, the protagonists in Hardy's poems who succeed in attaining selfhood amidst their mental tumults are a minority, whereas those who fail to do so are many.

In Hardy's poems, men and women who achieve self-realization in spite of their loneliness, despair, dread and difficulties are strong individuals. They are sublime in their virtues like love, mercy, faith, friendship, patience and self-sacrifice. They are right in their thought and choice; they are heroic in action; and they are responsible for their commitments good or bad. They are self-conscious and self-reliant. They neither care for nor need the help of the biological environment and society. Supporting this view, David Perkins rightly observes, "... the protagonist almost always appears as a solitary, an outsider, or an individual alienated from the life of his fellows."4 Moreover, Hardian protagonists devise various ways and means for their self-realization. They explore new roads of

transcendence — roads which obviously assist them to become more enlightened and independent.

This aspect of human existence in mental isolation for the sake of self-preservation and self-realization is depicted in some of Hardy's poems such as 'The Rover Come Home' and 'The Elopement'.

In the first poem, 'The Rover Come Home', an adventurer travels from Canso Cape to Horn and East Indian Comorin. He discharges many of his duties as a solitary figure, and achieves several things singlehanded. His way of life denotes the strong possibility of attaining self-realization in solitude:

He has fought and bled in civil wars
Of no concern to him,
Has shot his fellows-beasts and men—
At risk of life and limb.
He has suffered fluxes, fevers,
Agues, and ills allied,
And now he's home. You look at him
As he talks by your fireside.5

An isolated man's life in society is also possible as may be seen in some of Hardy's poems. A narrative poem entitled 'The Elopement' reveals a determined maiden's strong earthy desire to elope with her lover in spite of immediate difficulties and consequent repercussions. She elopes with her lover in order to be free from an arrested mode of life:

But in time convention won her, as it wins all women at last,
And now she is rich and respectable, and time has buried the past.6

The poems interpreted and assessed so far show man's existence free from an active attachment both to Nature and Society. They show how a man, who is ambitious, courageous, sincere and hardworking can attain things which he wants. Indeed, man, if he is a determined and dedicated soul, can only elevate himself to the position of the Nietzschean Superman.

On the other hand, people who have alienated themselves from society on account of their non-adjustment or maladjustment, lead a solitary life without any control over their mind and body. In fact, they are a house divided against itself -- contradictory and paradoxical. They are infirm in decision, split and disintegrated in personality and afraid of dread, despair and loneliness. In fact, they are neither able to console themselves in crisis nor capable of doing anything worthwhile. Nor are they able to revive their lost virtues and restore themselves to a good position which will liberate them from slavery. They are ignorant, coward and unprincipled. Indeed, they bring ruin on themselves. Kierkegaard calls such a man 'an imitation, a

number, a cipher in the crowd' without any sense of realism in himself. According to him, this condition "... at last leads him away from himself, so that he perishes in the dread."7 This view is also supported by Sartre and Marcel. Sartre calls him a man of bad faith, while Marcel says such man's life is like a 'dilapidated old house' or 'chronic rheumatism'. Similarly, Heidegger terms such man Dasman and Nietzsche Helot. In the view of these thinkers life without deep personal commitments is no life for an individual for the enrichment of his existence. For this they speak of 'inward hold' or an 'inward reflection' which is capable of atleast carrying man on the threshold of such a realization. In the same manner, Hardy calls such a man neither moral nor immoral but amoral, elsewhere as 'eccentric people' 'born out of due time', hence 'waiting in unhope' ('In Tenebris I'). Indeed, they lack a principled way of life, hence they remain beyond recovery. Hardy sympathetically asserts, "Why should a man's mind have been thrown into such close, sad, sensational, inexplicable relations with such a precarious object as his own body:"8 In Hardy's view, such a man's

life, unheroic and disintegrated, ends in self-alienation.

However, an alienated man, unsteady in nature, threatened by anxiety, dread, anguish and nothingness remains in psychic tensions. This is because of his emotional conflicts between his inner conscience and outer actions which ultimately disintegrate his mode of existence. Moreover, this conflict weakens his sense of stability, harmony, peace and conscience in proportion to its vigour and intensity. Ultimately the suicidal condition tends to reduce him to a state of Dasman or Helot.

According to existentialist ethic, the people who are termed Dasman or Helot are sunk into an inauthentic mode of existence because of their primordial conflict between their inner conscience and outer commitments. Their life is essentially characterized by vices like negligence, indulgence, cruelty, hostility, despair, dread and obduracy. In a sense, their heart and soul are degenerated to such an extent that they are beyond recovery. Their utter inability to achieve things which they desire leads them to an everlasting conflict. Thus, man's failure to achieve a harmonious sexual, personal and social relationship culminates in his self-alienation.

The theme of self-alienation which is variously called in existentialism as self-suppression, self-idealization and self-anaesthesia is clearly depicted in poems such as 'The Impercipient' (WP,-p.67). 'A Broken
Appointment', 'Tess's Lament' (PPP,-p.136 & 175) and 'The Orphaned Old Maid' (TL,-p.244). In these poems, the desires of Hardian protagonists are left unfulfilled despite their desperate struggle. Their ambition to do this or that and possess or realize something in society is wholly marred by their own faults, absurdities and mental conflicts. The prime reason for this, Hardy thinks, is the fate which disrupts and defeats human efforts. It is fate, an incomprehensible power that drags human beings into a mire of doom and disaster. Furthermore, it also demoralizes man's soul and heart and destroys his passions which are connected with the process of regeneration.

The first poem, 'The Impercipient' clearly states the theme of man's self-alienation. Here, Hardy also presents the visionary experience without faith. The poem seems to be centrally the poet's defence against attacks prompted by his sombre expression and outlook and it gives a religious colouring to the solace which he is deprived of. It shows the protagonist's helplessness, susceptibility and disintegration of personality. Man's self-consciousness which is his elan vital (life force) of the mind in action is being disrupted. Hence, he becomes a split-personality.

In the poem the dilemma is that the speaker is always blind to the sights his 'brethren see'. Moreover, he cannot find the joys his comrades do:

THAT with this bright believing band
I have no claim to be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining Land,
Is a strange destiny.
This is a mystery which consigns the protagonist
to infelicity. And the poem carries these implications into
a metaphor:

I am like a gazer who should mark
An inland company
Standing upfingered, with, 'Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!'
And feel, 'Alas, 'tis but yon dark
And wind-swept pine to me!'

The stanza seems to express the protagonist's as
well as Hardy's malady, that is, the sense of being cut off
from his fellow human beings. In this connection, David
Perkins in his essay "Hardy and the Poetry of Isolation"
remarks, "Throughout the poem, and especially in the image of
a "bird deprived of wings", there is nostalgia for the
beliefs and impressions which give joy to other people, a
wanting to share them, and a feeling that he cannot. And the
pathos is not weakened by the suggestion that the speaker's
vision may be truer -- the nostalgia and the isolation are
still present." The protagonist is unable to come out of
an arrested mode of existence, because he is a self-alienated
person. Similarly, in the poem 'A Broken Appointment', a
devoted lover impatiently awaits a married

9. Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems and Other Verses, op. cit.,
p.67.
10. David Perkins, "Hardy and the Poetry of Isolation",
reprinted in Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited
by A.J.Guerard, op. cit., p. 155-156.
woman whom he likes most in spite of her dislike for him. He remembers her help to him in his hour of crisis. Anyway, she does not come and his agony becomes so intense that he longs to see her thinking that 'love alone can lend loyalty'. But his misunderstanding her absence simply leads him to wait in 'unhope' - a sort of 'self-alienation'.

In another case, there are two betrothed women who are neglected by their husbands. Nevertheless, their misery and suffering is not alleviated either by Nature or by Society. They are depicted in 'She, to Him' sonnet series and 'Tess's Lament'. In the sonnets of the name 'She, to Him', a wedded woman worries that her beauty has faded and she has been neglected by her husband for another love, whereas, in the second poem, 'Tess’s Lament', a woman who is recently married suffers because of her confession. Here Tess the protagonist repents her confession:

And it was I who did it all
Who did it all;
'Twas I who made the blow to fall
On him who thought no guile.

She wishes that her memories be blotted, every relic be obliterated and all graces be banished. Hence, Tess fallen from the grace of her husband Angel Clare, resolves not to be in the hostile world where some incomprehensible forces ultimately control her life without any regard to her wishes:

Well, it is finished-past, and he
Has left me to my misery,
And I must take my Cross on me
For wronging him awhile.11

Tess is a rare woman who plays out her passionate part under the shadow of Fate that does not care whether she suffers or rejoices. Assessing her character, Harold Child says, "Her fineness and clarity of spirit, her faith and devotion, her strength and tenacity in love, her essential sweetness, compel the reader to share the author's anguish of pity for her sorrows, his passionate indignation at the stupid waste of her lovely qualities."12

Thus the conflict between her inner consciousness and outer commitments leads her to an eternal conflict which culminates in crime and consequent execution. This may rightly be called her 'self-alienation'.

Similarly, the poem 'The Orphaned Old Maid' shares the same human agony and tone, though different in theme. The protagonist, an orphaned woman, regrets having obeyed her father to remain unmarried until his death. Her action much against her wishes on account of her ignorance brings down ruin on her life. Though she was not a bad woman, she fails to fulfil her own individual destiny.

11. Thomas Hardy, Poems of the Past and the Present, OP. cit., p. 176.
People like Tess and the orphaned old woman, who are not wise enough to choose and act correctly fail to elevate themselves to the position of authentic mode of existence. Hence, they continue in a bereaved situation which is a kind of abandonment of human existence.

In these poems, particularly, 'She, to Him' and 'The Orphaned Old Maid', there is a frequent recurrence of the thought of old age as a destroyer of physical beauty and thereby undermining the dignity of woman in the view of man.

Male counterparts of self-alienation are pictured in poems like 'The Revisitation' and 'A Poor Man and a Lady'. The protagonists pictured in these poems, struggle to achieve transcendental bliss through their love and companionship. But their attempts end in abortion on account of their own individual limitations.

In the first poem 'The Revisitation' a man persuades a woman he likes to marry him despite her unwillingness to marry him because of his poverty. Similarly, in the poem 'A Poor Man and a Lady' an aristocratic lady rejects a poor man.

The theme of self-suppression is also evident in Hardy's poems 'How She Went to Ireland' (WW-p.915) and 'The Beauty' (LLE-p.616). In the first poem, a desolate woman frustrated by the absurdity of life migrates to Ireland, whereas in the second, a beautiful lady, Miss Verry, is
unhappy with her beauty because her personal attractions had been misunderstood by others:

I hate my beauty in the glass:
My beauty is not I:
I wear it: none cares whether, alas,
Its wearer live or die!13

Since, man is not in perfect harmony with his fellow-beings either because of his limitations or because of social codes, he does not think that 'love' will provide man peace and happiness. Poems like 'Revulsion' and 'Neutral Tones' (WP-p.14 & 12) portray the theme that 'love' cannot become an eternal means of self-realization. It is always mixed with hatred and indifference. Though formerly love was man's serious concern, it has now ceased to be a joy and bliss. Therefore, Hardy accuses the modern age of joyless wisdom: "The Passion of love invariably drives men and women to an extreme step in one direction or another. It will send some to the Cloister, some to the Tribune, some to the Stage, some to heroism, some to crime, and all to their natural calling.14 That is why, in the poem, 'I Said to Love' (PPP,-p.114) Hardy accepts the extinction of mankind if it is not possible without love.

13. Thomas Hardy, Late Lyrics and Earlier, op. cit., p. 616.
In Hardy's love poems we see lovers or married partners not in perfect harmony with each other on account of their decay of love, disillusion, severance, incompatibility and inconstancy. Indeed, there is the theme of unhappiness which is striking. But this is not on account of Hardy's bitter experience in married life. Supporting the view, James G. Southworth aptly says, "So much for one phase of Hardy's treatment of love. It is clear that he did not write from an embittered heart. No one had a deeper respect for the finest aspects of love than did he. No one was more careful to preserve its bloom and rare flavor."15

In existentialism, this state of life is called "the bereaved situation of human existence."16 Such bereaved men are weak, fragile and helpless as nobody cares for them in society. However, they may become good and great only by their virtue of sincerity and hard working. Upholding this view, Hardy says, "It is the man who bases his action upon what the world is thinking, no matter what it may be saying, who rises to the top."17 According to him, man, a free and conscious being, may create his own values and attain self-

17. Thomas Hardy, quoted by F.E.Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, (1840-1891), op. cit., p. 16.
realization. Similarly, Sartre thinks that man by creating a new moral and social order of life, may lead a full and purposive existence in this purposeless universe.

Accordingly, man invested with freedom and responsibility sometimes strives to create his own values and attain perfection. But in course of trials and tribulations of life he is rather misled, disturbed and defeated. However, this kind of man's unworthy struggle for existence is based on his indulgence and negligence. Therefore, existentialists think that this state of human life is based on man's gross ignorance.

This kind of man's self-alienation on account of his individual limitations is depicted in the poem 'The Two Men'. In this poem, two companions who studied in the same school and were shaped by common rules, are ambitious and adventurous. They are also equal in age, wit, status and strength. In this situation one of the two aspires for a higher level of existence:

'I'll brace to higher aims', said he,
'I'll further Truth and Purity;
Thereby to mend the mortal lot
And sweeten sorrow....

He fails miserably to become an ideal man, which he had planned to become earlier. His failure to stand for higher ideals demoralizes his life altogether:

Once done, his soul was so betossed,
It found no more the force it lost:
Hope was his only drink and food,
And hope extinct, decay ensued.

Meanwhile, his friend equally ambitious, devises various ways to find his way to fortune. He desires to become rich and respectable. But he too fails to do the 'deed so joyously hailed', for he wanted to 'live by doing nought', hence, his 'projects are wholly marred'. Thus gloom and want oppress him hard and he meets the fate of his friend:

....... living to so mean an end,
Whereby he'd lost his every friend,
He perished in the pauper sty
When his old mate lay dying nigh.18

Here, one friend ignores practical aspects of life because of his high ideals, and the other is a lazy dreamer. They are not dedicated to a purpose, hence, little by little, they are stripped of everything: position, means, respect and love. They go down gradually till they become lonely and bereft. The poem is tragic and bitter but in it we see how human desire and endeavour are thwarted by the irony of circumstance.

Hardy, an evolutionary meliorist admires the ambitious life of these two friends, but he does not like their negligence in action. He calls this their 'internal conflict'. He writes about the situation of such persons

18. Thomas Hardy, Wessex Poems and Other Verses, op. cit., P. 77-79.
"... You may regard a throng of people as containing a certain small minority who have sensitive souls; ... you divide them into the mentally unquickened, mechanical, soulless, and the living, throbbing, suffering, vital. In other words, into souls and machines."19 Here by 'souls' is meant something worthy and authentic, whereas, by 'machines', something unmeritorious and undistinguished. The former position leads man to an authentic mode of existence where man is less villainous and more human. In fact, he occupies a position where he could afford to be himself, to create and live by himself. Whereas, the position of machines leads man to an inauthentic mode of existence, where he will be more inhuman and dishonest. And in him, there is some vital weakness and radical ineffectuality that lead to his self-alienation.

Hardy the creative artist displays human reality in its bareness and frankness. His poetry being his own impression of life, reflects human existence in varied social settings. His sincere portrayal of man's psychological and moral tensions discloses an individual's suffering in loneliness which is hardly relieved by human love and compassion. But Hardy regrets his protagonist's frequent failure to get consolation and contentment even when he is

19. Thomas Hardy, quoted by F.E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) op. cit., p. 185-186.
honest, docile, hard working and a mute sufferer. This grim state of man's existence is evident in Hardy's poems 'Wessex Heights' and 'In Tenebris' I, II and III.

In the first poem 'Wessex Heights', Hardy portrays the state of mind of a man who is estranged from the hostile world. The poem also reveals his bereaved situation in its entirety. The solitary figure who is haunted by his memory, meditates over his personal crises while he is wandering over the Wessex heights. And the heights on which he meditates clearly represents his active separation from the belligerent society. However, he is meditating over the past in order to regenerate his life, his spirit is weakened:

Nobody sees it but I, and it makes my breast beat out of tune. 20

Assessing the poem, Prof. J.H. Miller writes, ".... the speaker is a memory-haunted victim of his failure to love; his movement from the lowlands to the heights represents withdrawal in fear and disgust into the emptiness of his own mind." 21

20. Thomas Hardy, Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries, op. cit., p. 319.
The same theme is enlarged in the poems entitled 'In Tenebris' I, II and III. These lyrical poems which start with Latin mottoes, display the tragic condition of human existence in the face of glaring misfortunes.

In the first poem, Hardy depicts an isolated man's meekness and weakness. The short lines of the poem emphasize the bereaved situation of his personal life. The bereaved man pictured in the poem does not suffer from doubts for he has no hopes. The title of the lyric, 'In Tenebris' means 'in the darkness' and it suggests a life without any hopes and aspirations. Moreover, the Latin motto meaning "'My heart is smitten, and withered like grass" 22 denotes the fraility and futility of human existence. Even Nature also appears bleak and degenerated, but he does not mind it, for his very head and heart are still bleaker and more demoralized. In the poem, the climactic phrase 'waits in unhope' is the very embodiment of his 'self-alienation'.

The second lyric 'In Tenebris', however different in style and versification, follows the first poem in theme. The hostile world seems a nightmare to the protagonist. Nevertheless, he does not accuse it as a bad place but he complains that it has misery and suffering. Moreover, he says happiness is not accessible to man, for it is largely

22. James Gibson, Notes on The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy, op. cit., p. 958.
destroyed by 'crookedness, custom, and fear’. Similarly he thinks, if 'way to the better there be, it exacts a full look at the worst'. Hence, he resolves not to be there any more:

The blot seems straightway in me alone: one better he were not here
.... I am one born out of due time, who has no calling here.23

The poem carries the desire of the protagonist not to live any more. The same view is expanded in the third poem 'In Tenebris' where the world appears a welter of futile doings. Therefore, the poet asserts that man's accumulated knowledge will not be helpful in his hour of crisis:

...vision could vex or that knowledge could numb,24

This lyrical poem, according to Douglas Brown and Kenneth Marsden, is connected with man's loss and bereavement. As a whole, these lyrics of the name 'In Tenebris' are pictures of man's self-alienation in their entirety.

Hardy, like his contemporary poet, A.E.Housman, has depicted the sorriest aspects of human existence. His poems display man's self-alienation in their varied facets.

Another problem which arises in the context of existentialist ethic is lack of human solidarity which unfailingly mars man's attainment of self-realization. Supporting the view, Kierkegaard maintains, "To exist is to be an individual; the abstract does not exist; and to be an individual is to choose and to be impassioned. Thus, existence is the moment of free and passionate decision; and as interpreted ontologically, this moment marks the liberty of man to will the good and the perfect." 25.

It is true, individuality is the life force or elan vital for the attainment of self-hood. Nietzsche too supports this, when he emphasizes man's action, and responsibility. Similarly, Sartre in his work 'L' Existentialisme est un humanisme (1946) insists on the issue of action and involvement in life. Accordingly he asserts, "Man comes into existence for himself and brings the world into existence for himself by the ceaseless separation and projection of himself." 26 Here by 'individualist' is meant not a selfish and greedy person anxious to satisfy his appetites, but a man of distinct personality who will definitely try to attain self-realization. In the words of

D.H.Lawrence, "He is a man who, being beyond the average, chooses to rule his own life to his own completion." 27

Thus, conscience, freedom, choice, action and responsibility which constitute the concept of individuality are emphasized for the completion of an authentic mode of human existence. If these qualities are absent in a man, he will be termed a Dasman, or a Helot or 'an imitation, a mere number in a crowd'. Therefore, Sartre insists on the necessity of authenticity to an individual to lead a heroic mode of existence. But he does not answer to the question why man should pursue authentic mode of existence especially when the other alternative, i.e., inauthentic mode of life is more attractive and easy.

Whatever may be the ethic, the necessity of possessing individuality is more important and essential to become an authentic existent. It is as D.H.Lawrence, an existentialist writer thinks, individuality is a must in order to be or become himself. Indeed, it is a necessary element for man's eternal fascination. Both Hardy and existentialist thinkers separately arrive at a similar conclusion that man sinks into an arrested mode of existence in case he fails to be right in choice and heroic in action.

It is true, life devoid of individuality becomes absurd and meaningless. Moreover, conflict between passions and choice, choice and action and action and responsibility bring to man his own inherent disaster. In this regard, to support his view, Hardy quotes from J.J. Rousseau's work *The Contract Social* that: "A man without energy or any moral worth beyond a personal good nature is useless for any social end."\(^{28}\)

The inauthentic mode of human existence is closely related to the theme of absurdity. This is shown in poems like 'At a Country Fair' and 'Fragment'. In the first poem a giant physically handicapped and mentally retarded is chased by a dwarf in a western country fair. Hardy, the narrator observes that, though the giant is physically stronger, he is not aware of it as if he were a man of no 'independent mind' or 'will' of any kind. Hence:

Wherever the dwarf decided to go
At his heels the other trotted meekly.\(^{29}\)

In this absurd pantomime, we may see man's life almost meaningless and degenerated. This tragedy of human existence shows the reason why mankind has to write its

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history everyday, and why man's life is often at the verge of
disaster and extinction. Similarly, the other poem,
'Fragment' displays the absurdity of human existence in a
different manner. Here, two solitary figures almost
unconscious of their surroundings, live a meaningless life.
The poem also reveals the feelings of fear, anguish and
nothingness of the victims. Moreover the manner of
eccentricity, neurotic expression, ambiguity, tumult and
moral and mental tensions have been found an outlet
throughout these inauthentic existents. As a whole, the poem
stands for the absurd life of modern man:

'The sense of waiting here strikes strong;
Everyone's waiting, waiting, it seems to me;
What are you waiting for so long ?-
What is to happen?' I said.

His companion's answer is that of pure ignorance:

'O we are waiting for one called God,' said they,
Waiting for him to see us before we are clay.
Yes; waiting, waiting, for God to know it'.  

For the further question as to what they want to
know from God, they reply that they are waiting to know how
things happen and by whose strange laws. Thinking these
people as eccentric, Hardy writes, "The eccentric person only
gets out of the main stream of life to float in shallow water

30. Thomas Hardy, Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses,
op. cit., p. 513.
An inner conflict and disintegration in the heart of an individual reveal bad faith (Mauvaise Foi) though it is not a perversion but a split in the sub-consciousness. Moreover, the development of dread and nothingness makes human existence largely cynical and trouble-torn. The endless dichotomy and susceptibility of human existence is reflected in several of Harcy’s later poems like ‘Nature’s Questioning’ and ‘Memory and I’. In the first poem, a man suffers in loneliness and dread. He is an alienated individual unrelieved by human love and compassion. In this situation, he wonders why he has been placed in a world of futile doing where life and death are near neighbours:

"We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here! Has some Vast Imbecility, Mighty to build and blend, But impotent to tend, Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?"

Helplessly he concludes:

Thus things around. No answerer I ..... Meanwhile the winds, and rains, And Earth’s old gloms and pains Are still the same, and Life and Death are neighbours nigh. 32

Similarly, in the poem 'Memory and I' there is an everlasting conflict between the protagonist's 'memory and 'reality'. Here the protagonist is obsessed with his past. Consequently, he asks his memory whether it will bring him consolation and contentment. On the contrary, his memory answers that as human truth has been crumbled and human joy, hope and faith have gone, it cannot provide him joy and bliss. However, the speaker asks his memory whether, at least, he will get human love and compassion:

'O Memory, where is now my love,  
That rayed me as a God above?'

But his hope crumbles when his memory reveals the fact:

'I saw her in an ageing shape  
Where beauty used to be;  
That her fond phantom lingers there  
Is only known to me.'\(^{33}\)

Indeed, the lyric shows the protagonist's self-alienation on account of his inner conflicts.

On a close inspection of this poem one thing about all of Hardy's works becomes clear, that is his interest in the past. He dwells much upon memories, and often with sympathy. It is in his memories, we see his, or his protagonist's love for wine, woman and dance, or his memory of the church music, or his memory of kith and kin and dear ones.

\(^{33}\) Thomas Hardy, *Poems of the Past and the Present*, *op cit.*, p. 186.
Hardy calls this 'bereaved situation of human existence' as 'helplessness', 'worthlessness' and 'fallenness'. In existentialism, this is referred to as intense psychological trauma or "Alienation in its most active form—the rejection of being oneself at the attempt to become the other, the ideal self". Furthermore, an alienated man wholly ruined by his own designs can hardly recover his original position and become an authentic existent. He is like a drunkard addicted to his habit of drinking. Supporting this view, Sartre compares such Dasman or Helot to gamblers. According to him: "It is that of a gambler who had freely and sincerely decided not to gamble any more and who on approaching the gambling table, suddenly sees all his resolutions melt away."

However, an individual who is fallen from grace can also become an authentic existent if he dares and does good and great works. He suffers not because of his deception by others but because of his own inherent individual limitations. If he avoids or overcomes his own limitation he will attain self-realization. In fact, his

self-alienation is not a grave danger to his primordial existence in relation to his transcendence. He may adjust with his own self, society and his biological environment so much so that he may ensure the process of his self-purification and self-realization. This phase of man's quest for selfhood is seen in the following chapter.