Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

To what extent can man discern the profound god-like mysteries of the universe? To what extent was Eugene O'Neill as a dramatist successful in his attempts to find answers to man's eternal problems and questions such as: What is the mystery and purpose behind the universe? Has the universe any unity? Is it evolving towards some goal? Are there really laws of Nature, or do we believe in them only because of our innate love of order and structure? What is the position of man in the cosmos and his relation to the physical world? What should be the purpose of man's life in the world? Is man really, what he seems to the astronomer, a tiny lump of impure carbon and water impotently crawling on a small and unimportant planet? Does man deserve the significance attributed to him by himself or historical religions? What should be man's concept of God? What does a good life consist in? What is the role of religion in man's life? What is the recipe of happiness? Almost all these questions are of interest to speculative minds; science cannot answer them, and the confident answers of theologians no longer seem as convincing, as they did in former centuries. The attempt to find answers to these questions will lead to speculations. All definite knowledge belongs to science, all dogma as to what surpasses definite knowledge belongs to theology or religion. Theologies have professed to give answers, all too definite, but their very definiteness causes modern minds to view them with suspicion. However, to such questions no answer can be found in the laboratory either.
If even definite knowledge is unable to provide the answers to these fundamental questions on existence, one may ask, why should we waste time on such insoluble problems? To this a historian, or an individual facing the terror of cosmic loneliness may answer: These questions so vex the speculative mind that it has to grapple with it throughout its life, though it knows very well, that the encounter far from bringing it to any resolutions, reveals only the complexity of the mystery.

There is, however, a more personal answer. Science tells us what we can know but what we can know is little and if we forget how much we cannot know, we become insensitive to many things of very great significance. Theology, on the other hand, induces a dogmatic belief that we have knowledge, where in fact we have ignorance, and by doing so generates a kind of impertinent insolence towards the universe. Uncertainty, in the presence of vivid hopes and fears, is painful to some, but must be endured if we wish to live without the support of comforting fairy tales. The fact that to many, religion plays the role of a drug in misfortunes is not ignored here.

It is not good to forget these questions or to persuade ourselves that we have found indubitable answers to them. Too often, however, these great problems are not faced courageously with the highest powers of human reason; rather man exhibits an objectionable tendency to occupy his mind exclusively with busy work, or temporary expedients or to live in things of the moment, in fragmented trivia which exercises only the lower mental powers. These big questions of the ultimate meaning of life are tabled for consideration
at some undefined future date and the lack of their resolution produces a
gnawing, repressed, uneasiness in the subconscious of modern civilization.

It was in such a context that the need was felt to examine O'Neill's
reaction to these questions. All writers encounter these questions; some brush
them aside as inconsequential but the more sensitive ones grapple with them
throughout their life. O'Neill belongs to the latter category. He was almost
obsessively concerned by the predicament of man, a fact which is not
recognised by many, at least judging by the scant critical response this aspect
of O'Neill has received.

O'Neill sees the universe as it really exists and in play after play he tells
his readers how different it is from the orderly world we fancy or we see
around us. O'Neill's view of life was so mature that he did not wish away the
dark realities of life but encompassed within his rich imagination the sad
predicament of man. Any disinterested pursuit of knowledge teaches us the
limits of our intellectual power and at the same time, in proportion as we
succeed in achieving knowledge, it teaches the limits of our impotence.
O'Neill's works lead us to an impartial contemplation of the universe as a
whole which raises us for the moment above our purely personal destiny. The
present study is intended to analyse how far O'Neill has been successful in
leading the readers to this level.

Man has always been at the mercy of natural forces, which when they
choose hit man indeed very hard. Now at last, thanks to science, mankind are
discovering how to avoid the suffering such events have hither to entailed.
Modern man now faces the universe in quiet self-respect. The universe as
known to science is not in itself either friendly or hostile to man, but it can be made to act as a friend if approached with patient knowledge. Whereas the universe is concerned, knowledge is the only thing needful. Man, alone of living things, has gained the knowledge with which to win mastery over his environment. Knowledge cannot itself determine the ends of life; but it can free us from the tyranny of prejudice and from distortions due to a narrow view.

Love, beauty, knowledge and joy of life—these things retain their lustre however wide our purview. Knowledge helps us to feel the value of these things, and plays its part in man's collective work of bringing light into a world of darkness. These thoughts will put one in the right frame of mind in which to examine O'Neill's treatment of the predicament of man.

The core of the universe is the society of persons. Within it, and the very essence of a person is his subjective, heuristic anticipations and desires. The formal laws of nature and the mechanisms which operate according to them may be the same, but the organic regulation which the society of persons, angelic and human, exerts is difficult, and so the creative aspect of nature's operation is different.

As already mentioned, it seems impossible that the vast extent of the universe exists solely for the sake of the planet Earth, a mere dust speck amid the galaxies. Neither man nor the artificers of the universe are ultimately interested in expanses of inanimate matter which have no relationship to intelligent life. One of Piaget's children when asked why there were two mountains, one large and one small, in view of their home replied that the
little one was for short trips and the big one for long trips. This conceptual expression was naive, but the basic insight was correct: the universe exists for the sake of intelligent life; it is ours to explore. No one can guess the nature of the scientific developments which will make this exploration possible, but in a billion years the human race will know much more about nature than it does now.

At the forefront of those who have assiduously explored the mystery of life and of the universe is O'Neill, who has brought all his intellectual powers to bear upon this exploration. Eugene O'Neill is a dynamic blend of the classical traditions of the past, of the cultural scientific heritage of the West and of the mystical, contemplative philosophies of the East. This mental make up should be examined in detail and his world view analysed before any attempt is made to study O'Neill's explorations relating to the human predicament.

The present study deals with O'Neill's concept of God and religion and the predicament of man in the universe. O'Neill's chief concern in his plays has been to delve into and solve the mystery of man's eternal struggle with himself and with an overwhelming universe. O'Neill's vision transcends time and space, because in delineating the sufferings of modern man, he projects the picture of man who eternally suffers, in a world where one finds it difficult to reconcile its forces.

O'Neill depicts the universe as a disorderly place, sometimes teleological, more often blind and purposeless but never a static one. His conception of God also undergoes changes from play to play and in many of his plays, he often throws light upon man's incapability to discern the god-like
mysteries of man's existence in the universe. However, his plays can be called the manifestations of his search for some meaning in man's life in the cosmos.

In his plays as a whole up to *Days Without End*, one finds several different kinds of cosmologies, sometimes purposive and sometimes not. In most of his early plays, God does and does not exist and does and does not rule the cosmos. As in most other respects, there is a sharp distinction between his cosmological conceptions in the early part of this first career as a playwright and those of his second part.

O'Neill always attempts in his plays to find a general meaning to modern man, modern life and the modern 'cosmos'. His "Godism" takes various forms—socialism, syndicalism, anarchism and always, Roman Catholicism. In the world of the theatre he may have been an isolated figure, but in the world at large he was one of the millions of searchers for gods that failed them, for ideals, beliefs, causes that kept on changing, shifting and vanishing. A large group of intellectuals rediscovered the values of tradition and the orthodoxies of religion, upheld, for example, by the cultivated, modulated voice of T. S. Eliot. One could almost believe that O'Neill dramatised these two voices when he split John Loving into two characters in his play *Days Without End*. Certainly, these characters are the symbolic representations of the two forces at war within O'Neill himself.

It was inevitable that he should draw attention as a playwright to religious themes since, according to his own avowal, he was interested only in the relation between man and God. Joseph Wood Krutch in his introduction to 'Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill refers to a remark which O'Neill once let fall
in a conversation. "Most modern plays," he said, "are concerned with the relation between man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested only in the relation between man and God."¹ Croswell Bowen in his biographical sketch stated that O'Neill had lost his faith when he was thirteen years old and that he "struggled to regain it ever since."² Did he succeed? There is no definite answer. Since the birth of the unconscious, the intentional fallacy and the biographical fallacy, it has become an accepted doctrine that a writer cannot possibly know what his plays say or do not say about himself; nor does it matter.

Nevertheless, O'Neill's depiction of man in his relation to the physical world is based on his conception of man as a free and determined being, in a universe which seems to be indifferent and even inimical and cruel as far as human beings are concerned. In the subsequent plays of O'Neill, God is dead and the cosmos, whose mysteries once haunted his plays, dims and fades away, while man as man occupies the whole stage, absorbs all meanings and embodies all mysteries and complexities; henceforth, man is to be the measure of all. His late plays were set in the past and he would let the universe go its mystifying ways. The only generalization that remained was the principle of polarity for he could never see human experience except in terms of antimonies, alternations and repetitions.

O'Neill's preoccupation with religion and his belief that a performed tragedy could wipe out the agnosticism and faithlessness of the modern era by its emphasis on sin and guilt which also presupposes the sinful nature of man, are evenly matched by his belief in the innocence of man and his need to
have a reprieve from the suffering imposed on him. The ambivalence prevalent in these two conceptions of man as sinner and sinned against is one of the major features of O’Neill’s works. It distinguishes his tragedies in which man is exalted by his consciousness and recognition of the results of his actions from those plays in which the suffering of his characters is seen as arising independently of their commitments. In his depiction of man as worthy of our admiration, he is closer to the classical conception of tragedy and in his delineation of man as a puppet in the hands of fate and in his depiction of suffering as arising independently of his characters’ commitments, he has paved the way for the theatre of the absurd, for according to the Absurdist playwright, suffering occurs from the nature of the world and not because of the hero’s commitments.

Nevertheless, each play of O’Neill is simultaneously a philosophical and a psychological document and no one play can be reduced into one theme or preoccupation or genetic theory; rather each is a microcosm mirroring, in its own way, the macrocosm of the whole.

The present study on O’Neill is intended not merely to catalogue O’Neill’s ideas on man’s life in the physical world, but it involves also a critical examination of the grounds for fundamental beliefs and an analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs.

The purpose of the present study, is to systematize those aspects of O’Neill’s conception of God and the purpose of human life in the cosmos: his views on the meanings and values of life in the physical world, his inner desire and hopes for a happy society, the principles of morality and attitude to
religion and, in short, the predicament of man in the universe, in general, as perceived by O'Neill in his plays. This dissertation further deals with the gradual development of O'Neill's conception of man as a being within the physical world and man's position in the universe and the evolution of O'Neill's attitude to nature and the forces of the physical world.

In other words, the primary purpose of this dissertation is to shed new light on those aspects in Eugene O'Neill's works which help us to have a better awareness of the plight of man in the physical world and to learn how to lead a meaningful life after realizing the meaninglessness of what is devoid of meaning. The present study is also intended to piece together from his works the ways of creating a happier society by overcoming as far as possible the obstacles that deny peace and happiness to mankind.

The year 1988 marked the centennial anniversary of the birth of Eugene O'Neill. As America's foremost dramatist, O'Neill transcends the barriers of time and place. O'Neill wrote most of his plays between the two wars and became the conscience of this era, but his message is for all mankind and it cuts across all barriers of time and space.

This dissertation is designed to bring out the contemporary relevance of O'Neill whose approach to the predicament of man in the physical world is rationalistic. The study involves an interpretative analysis of the most of his plays so as to create the right perspective of his cosmological outlook. During his lengthy artistic career, O'Neill functioned as national archivist, social critic and moral guide and made invaluable contribution to American drama, culture and thought. This work is based on the totality of his intellectual
contribution, though, of course, most of it is based on the evidence supplied by his works. His plays do not seek the support of a poetic faith in any of the conceptions which served the classical dramatists but are no longer valid for us. They are, on the contrary, modern in their acceptance of a rationalistic view of man and the universe.

O'Neill has one tale to tell in his work: his own tortured, convoluted life story. His relationship to his mother, father, brother, wives, children and friends is dramatised in endless variations in the plays. Because all human lives pivot around the same types of familial ties and friends, O'Neill's work assumes universal dimensions. He speaks the common language of the heart, expressing the longings of all mankind to love and be loved, to belong, to determine the why of existence. Because this language is readily understood by people of all classes and races, O'Neill has become an international playwright, respected and produced in countries throughout the world. Yet despite his universality, the dramatist was uniquely American in his depiction of and response to life. His plays are distinctly nationalistic in the historical perspective. They present people living in a particular cultural and social milieu, a capitalist society subtly governed by puritan principles that decree a demanding work and moral ethic. As O'Neill perceives and records the phenomenon, the drive to attain wealth and to maintain the aura of respectability and morality distorts and dichotomizes the American nation and character.

However, O'Neill cannot be classified merely as American. He continuously stressed his identity as an Irish-American. His Irish heritage
exerted the strongest single influence on him as man and playwright. How precisely did his Irishness affect him? One of the major premises in his work is the concept that family life is rooted in the past, in one’s collective racial and individual heritage. It formed his personal character. Deeply introspective by nature, sensitive and moody—qualities exacerbated by his mother’s indifference and his own feelings of lovelessness and loneliness, the author became a true Black Irishman in mind and spirit. When God apparently failed to heed to the young man’s prayers to cure his mother, it led him, in despair to abandon the ardent Catholicism of his youth. O’Neill suffered serious guilt feelings and began a lifelong search to replace his once-meaningful religious faith. Most of his plays, even when most materialistic, in their spiritual implications, can be said to be a search and a cry in the wilderness. The rejection his Irish family experienced by snobbish, wealthy Yankee New Londoners led him to identify throughout his life with the outcasts and victims of discrimination.

Between 1907, after his expulsion from Princeton and 1912, prior to his confinement in a sanatorium for tuberculosis, O’Neill was a homeless vagabond and an outcast from a personal shipwreck of alcoholic dissolution. Lacking a formal, advanced education, he became a voracious reader, absorbing the theories of Nietzsche, Jung and Freud and studying the techniques of European dramatists: Stringberg, Ibsen, Synge, Hauptmann, Kaiser and Toller. He developed a unique philosophy of life, a strange hotchpotch of the tenets of Irish Catholicism, elements of Irish and Eastern mysticism, the political concepts of Proudhon and other anarchists like Michael Bakunin and observations derived from reading and contact with
members of family and friends. O'Neill continuously expanded his dramatic horizons, going from the one-act plays of 1913-1919, to multi-act plays in the 1920s, to trilogies in the late 1920s, to the Cycle in the mid-1930s. He also experimented with theatrical devices: masks, choruses, interior-exterior sets and thought asides. Through his own Herculean efforts he managed to transform the American theatre, directing it away from the frivolous romanticism and crude melodrama of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and into the current international mainstream of serious tragedy. He was one of the most fertile and comprehensive artists of the twentieth century. No one ever questioned O'Neill's inborn theatrical sense or the range of his imaginative grasp of contemporary life. He touched in his plays at so many points of the twentieth century American scene that he became for two decades a major spokesman of it. Anarchism, socialism, expressionism, realism, naturalism, the myth of the American frontier, technological advance, Darwinism, psychoanalysis, the collective unconscious, race relations, Nietzsche, the literary avant-garde in Europe, Greek Tragedy, oriental thought—these influences and countless others nourished O'Neill's polymorphous dramaturgy.

He was the greatest theatrical experimentalist in American history and through his daring and the authority of both his failures and successes became the father of modern American drama. Critical fashions will come and go, but O'Neill's achievement abides, a monument to one artist's courage in a world that filled him with sorrow and rage.
What, in turn, did the world do for him? In the 1920s and early 1930s O'Neill won national recognition and acclaim and three Pulitzer prizes. His career as the virtual founder and the predominant playwright of the American theatre, with an international stature resulted in his being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936.

When Sinclair Lewis, in his Nobel Prize address to the Swedish Academy, referred to O'Neill's miracle of transforming a false world of theatrical trickery into a world of splendour, he was indirectly drawing the attention of the Nobel jury to an artist, whose claim to international recognition could no longer be ignored.

O'Neill's career is spread over three decades and the young O'Neill of the Great War, initially sharing the sentimental self-pity of the 'lost generation,' later imbibed, in the wake of World War II, the astringent pessimism of the years that gave birth to the existentialist philosophy. Taking his plays as a record either of his spiritual and psychological states or of his philosophical ideas, does not mean that he was to be treated a philosopher, psychologist or saint and that he had no ambition to discover new gods, new metaphysics or even new theatrical techniques for their own sake. Basically, a dramatist, it was in the quest of the tragic in the modern idiom that he explored each aspect of modernism and promised to offer an equivalent of some ingredient of Greek tragedy. When one substitute failed, he turned to another, when one field proved barren, he moved to the next. He has tried persistently, if not quite consistently, toward the creation or recreation of tragedy in the classic
sense—toward a concern, as he put it, less with the relation of man to man than with that of man to God.

It was only when O'Neill met Jig Cook that he acquired the aspiration to return to Greece and to recreate an atmosphere in which an American equivalent of the Dionysian dance could be born. In a number of statements, O'Neill reiterated his pursuit of the Greek ideal which he called the noblest view of life. The earliest such statement on record goes back to Summer 1917:

The tragedy of Man is perhaps the only significant thing about him. What I am after is to get an audience to leave the theatre with an exultant feeling from seeing against the eternal odds, not conquering, but perhaps inevitably being conquered. The individual life is made significant just by struggle.³

Perhaps the most comprehensive summing up of this aesthetic creed is available in his letter to Arthur Hobson Quinn written in 1925 in which he wanted the critics not to miss in his works the poet who saw transfiguring nobility of tragedy in apparently the most ignoble and debased lives:

And just here is where I am a most confirmed mystic, too for I'm always trying to interpret life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character. I'm always acutely conscious of Force behind—Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it—Mystery certainly—and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an
infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my profound conviction is that this is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible—or can be—to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which may to some degree bring home to members of a moderate audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage. Of course, this is very much a dream, but where the theatre is concerned, one must have a dream and the Greek dream in tragedy is the noblest ever!

Likewise, when Mary Mullet once pressed him to state his fundamental scheme of life, O'Neill made a statement that is again an echo of many of these observations:

People talk of 'the 'tragedy' in them [my plays], and call it 'sordid', 'depressing', 'pessimistic'—the words usually applied to anything of a tragic nature. But tragedy, I think, has the meaning the Greeks gave it. To them it brought exaltation, an urge towards life and evermore life.

It roused them to deeper spiritual understandings and released them from the pretty greeds of everyday existence. When they saw a tragedy on the stage, they felt their own hopeless hopes ennobled in art . . . life in itself is nothing. It is the 'dream' that keeps us fighting, willing—living! . . . The dreams that can be completely realized are not worth-dreaming. . . . A man wills his own defeat when he pursues the unattainable . . .
such a figure is necessarily tragic. But to me, he is not
depressing; he is exhilarating.\(^5\)

O’Neill was aware that his personality could not possibly be integrated:
“I always will be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want
and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in
love with death! (LDJN 135)” Again and again he avers that he wants
to make the audience sense the presence of the inscrutable
Mysterious Force which thwarts human aspirations; that this is
not a pessimistic approach, for in man’s failure should be sensed
a tragic joy; that hopeless hope, though unachieved, should itself
be felt as a victory; that a man wills his own defeat when he
pursues the unattainable and that tragedy in life is what makes it
worthwhile.\(^6\)

O’Neill sees life as a sort of polarity between the social and the divine
within the macrocosm and the microcosm. Here the macrocosm stands for
the huge universe in which man is a mere creature and the microcosm stands
for the petty human world in which he is himself the creator. Tragedy is
inherent in this dichotomy because the tragic moments are those when some
inexorable laws of the macrocosm come into conflict with the relative and
imperfect microcosmic values.

True, O’Neill was already familiar with many of the writers that the
intellectuals there talked about—for example Nietzsche, Freud, Jung,
Stringdberg, Marx, Michael Bakunin et al. His interest in ideas acquired the
dimension of a philosophical preoccupation that gradually elbowed out
interest in vital life. It also opened new vistas and he came to devote himself to the creation of tragedy out of modernism. The drift gradually led him from naturalism to expressionism, from life to ideas, from drama to theatre, from soul to psyche, and from experience to 'case histories'.

Parallel with this drift in themes ran a drift in techniques. The growing fascination for modern thought had raised the problem of exteriorizing the primal mystery of the soul and yoking the Jungian unconscious to the Dionysian spirit. Coming in contact with Kenneth Macgowan, O'Neill had a glimpse of the 'theatre of tomorrow' which would dissolve individualism to effect unification with primordial existence. He was thrilled at the prospects of expressing the spiritual quests of a man in a theatrical action that would be a sort of ritual rather than mere entertainment. With modernism came the dramatic potentialities of the European drama, especially expressionism. Experimenting with new forms, O'Neill drifted from naturalism to expressionism, and then to pure theatre.

O'Neill had, earlier aimed at depicting the spiritual torture of a man with a soul and later at showing the sickness of today, i.e. the alienation of a man without a soul—i.e., a man whose outer life has passed in a solitude haunted by the masks of others, the inner life being hounded by the masks of his own self. Thus gradually, O'Neill moved from the soul to the mystical psyche of Jung, and then to the Freudian psyche unrelated to the soul and finally to Eastern mysticism. O'Neill's subsequent plays, therefore, show modern man's dilemma, his desublimated existence in a godless world, and
the consequent neurosis. O'Neill's creed during the period is summed up in
the letter he wrote to George Jean Nathan:

The playwright today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today
as he feels it—the death of old God and the failure of science and
materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving
primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to
comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying
to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the
little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling
around on the surface of things and has no more real status than a
parlour entertainer.7

In effect, this digging at the roots of the sickness of today and striking
deeper than the surface of things, meant portraying the neurotic sensibility of
modern man, the mystery of life and the mysterious working of the psyche.
With the lengthening of the shadow of the imperiding World War, he became
convinced that the modern man's soul could not be cured by social tinkering
or by finding a panacea or by applying the balm of material comfort to the
body-politic.

In the press interview, on the eve of the production of his play The
Iceman Cometh, O'Neill said:

I am going on the theory that the United States, instead of being
the most successful country in the world, is the greatest failure. . . .
We are the greatest example of 'for what shall it profit a man if he
gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’. We had so much and could have gone either way.

If the human race is so damned stupid that in two thousand years it hasn’t had brains enough to appreciate that the secret of happiness is contained in that one simple sentence, which you’d think any grammar school kid could understand and apply, then it’s time we dumped it down the nearest drain and let the ants take over.8

To Karl Schriftgesser he confided the source of the drastic change in his viewpoint in his plays from the tragic affirmation to the ironic neither/nor, when O’Neill observed: “Inwardly . . . the war helped me realize that I was putting my faith in the old values and they’re gone. It’s very sad but there are no values to live by today. Anything is permissible if you know the angles.”9

O’Neill thought of himself as a writer of “ironic tragedy.” Pity, indignation, despair at the human predicament, robbed his tragedies of the irony he intended them to convey. His plays are attempts to explain human suffering and, somehow, to justify it. The result is not irony, but the classic two-fold justification of the ways of God—or fate—to man: first, that suffering and the very need to explain and symbolize it are the fountainhead of human action and creativity and second, that fated though he may be, man is ultimately a free and responsible agent who brings most of his grief upon himself owing to factors other than those beyond his control.

His philosophy presents an orderly view of the human situation. If pain and action are separable, then it follows that the active, creative, sensitive man
is doomed to suffer. He is the one who knows that the desire to express or to avoid grief is the impelling force of life—that pain is the Janus—face of joy; but then he becomes aware of the duality of the value. He sees that life and action exist in a perpetual tension between opposites, each of which owes its existence to the presence of the other. This tension is the source of all change and growth, for as night exists only in contrast to day, so night flows eternally into day and day to night again. The life of the race is perpetuated in the flow of natural process from birth to death to birth again; life of the individual man, moves from joy to pain and from pain to joy eternally. Just as an active, creative and necessarily painful life moves from one value to another, so it must also move from one self-image to another.

This view of life has, of course a long, familiar history in philosophy and art. O'Neill's conception of process as the unity in which opposites are reconciled has numberless philosophical parallels and sources—in the works of Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Lao-Tse, Nietzsche, Emerson to mention only a few.

But O'Neill was after all not a Greek, nor an Elizabethan, nor a nineteenth-century romantic. As a twentieth-century man, he had to interpret the ancient idea in twentieth-century terms and symbols. He found those in the conditions of modern living and in the language of psychoanalysis. O'Neill knew, of course, the general outlines of Freudian theory, but his imagination was stimulated most by the work of Jung, and especially by those Jungian concepts formulated by analogy to the universal human problems expressed in art, literature and philosophy. Jung sees man's primary need,
not in the desire to satisfy physical drives or to fulfil any single emotional necessity such as power, security, or love, but in a longing for a life of meaning and purpose—for a sense of order in the universe to which man can belong and in which he can trust. Jung is a mystic in the same sense that O'Neill is mystical; he recognizes what he calls "psychological truth" as existing independently of objectively provable facts. The constant, eternal longing of the human mind for a universal order and the expression of the longing in archetypal symbols constitute what Jung accepts as the "psychological" truth of the existence of such an order. To O'Neill also, the order of existence which he refers to as "Fate", "Mystery", "the biological past" is to be sought in the forces at work in the human psyche. According to Arthur Hobson Quinn O'Neill assumes, with Jung, that one's problems and actions spring not only from his personal unconscious mind, but from a "collective unconscious" shared by the race as a whole, manifesting itself in 'archetypal symbols and patterns latent in the minds of all men' and man is in fatal error when he assumes that his conscious ego can fulfil all his needs without acknowledgement of the power of the unconscious, the modern equivalent of the gods.¹⁰

Clinically speaking, the ignorance or suppression of unconscious needs results in neuroses and psychoses; poetically speaking, to consider oneself the sole arbiter of one's destiny is to court destruction. On the other hand, the conscious ego must attempt to assert itself, for complete submission to the unconscious drives, means withdrawal from reality and action just as does the
fatalistic and complete submission to the "Will of God." O'Neill's answer, like Jung's is the classic one. Man can achieve the mystic sense when he attains self-knowledge and finds a middle way which reconciles the unconscious needs with those of the conscious ego. This means that life inevitably involves conflict and tension, but that the significance of this pain is the growth which Jung calls "individuation"—the gradual realization of the inner, complete personality through constant change, struggle and process.

If O'Neill has consciously echoed some of the thought of Jung, he has unconsciously anticipated the findings of the "Neo-Freudian" like Erich Fromm. They, too, have turned to humanities for insights to be applied in the clinic. Freud saw man as the victim of animal drives which, at best, could be sublimated to constructive ends. Although the Neo-Freudians revere and use Freud's insights and techniques, they see man as a free and dignified being capable of creating his own destiny. The Neo-Freudian, however, particularly Karen Horney, have provided a theory which gives order and coherence to O'Neill's unconscious self-revelations and clearly relates them to his conscious philosophy.

This dissertation is intended less to make the plays reveal their author than to use the author's thought patterns to illumine his works. O'Neill was impelled by his own deep-seated needs to justify pain and these needs were the greatest threat to the philosophy which grew out of them. Indeed, within O'Neill's very thesis lurked its antithesis. Since all of O'Neill's work circles around a basic problem, a given play must be placed in the context of that problem for full interpretation.
The problem itself postulates a changing picture of the human dilemma; O'Neill's various descriptions of it and solutions to it proceed in a consecutive chronological order, and it is in this order that the plays are to be analysed. Obviously, the important dates must be those of the conception and composition of the plays rather than the publication or performance (O'Neill has provided these for the plays through *Days Without End* in a chronology, with notes, furnished to Richard Dana Skinner for his study, 'Eugene O'Neill, a Poet's Quest, New York, 1935).

The chief concern, however, of a devotee or of a critic of O'Neill must be with the relationship between the play and the consciously formulated idea which underlies it. The nature of the idea itself may pose other critical questions, since O'Neill was chiefly concerned with the resolution of inner conflicts; with the search for a philosophy which can give order and meaning to such inevitable conflicts.

In his final dramas, O'Neill no longer celebrated the romantic dreams of his characters, nor condemned their selfish materialism, nor even participated emotionally in their human tragedies. Rather he transcended both the actions and the passions which he described, so that his characters seemed to live out their tragedies without help or hindrance of the author. His final dramas cease to be romantic and become "transcendental" but the author's transcendence of his material and his achievement of objectivity toward it did not diminish the earthy realism of the emotional intensity of the tragedies—rather the reverse.
In all the earlier dramas, O'Neill had identified himself emotionally with one of his characters and he had condemned the others. In the *Great God Brown* for instance, he obviously sympathized with Dion Anthony, the sensitive dreamer, rather than with Billy Brown, the unfeeling materialist. In *Desire Under the Elms*, he identified with the young Eben Cabot's opposition to his unfeeling father, Ephraim. And in *Marco Millions*, his identification with "the great Kaan" (a dramatic incarnation of "the mystery and spell of the East which lures me in the books I have read") [Vol. I Beyond The Horizon 85] became complete, as did his condemnation of the materialistic Marco. But in the later plays, O'Neill kept aloof. In *The Iceman Cometh*, he no longer identified with the sensitive philosopher Larry. And in *Long Day's Journey into Night* he achieved objectivity even toward his autobiographical self. The true subject of his final dramas—as of all the earlier ones is the romantic dream of beauty, and the secret which is hidden over there, beyond the horizon. The transcendental tragedy of the later O'Neill achieves a goal much like that of Oriental religion and Philosophy which "lured" O'Neill throughout his life, and which found final expression in "Tao House" the residence he built out of his appreciation for Taoism. In the final tragedies, the veil of Maya seems to be torn aside and all the illusions of human life laid bare. The veil of Maya is the substance of life itself. But the goal of life, then, is the recognition that all man's dreams and romantic imaginings are, indeed, illusions. When man accepts the fact that he can never find "the secret hidden over there" and reconciles himself to the impossibility of finding it, he may realize perfect peace. When the veil of Maya is torn aside, he may achieve an approximation of Nirvana. This modern philosophy of tragedy, which sees
man's life as necessarily doomed to defeat, but also suggests that man's recognition of the necessity of defeat, constitutes a kind of victory, arrives at much the same goal as the most important religions of the Orient. By dramatizing man's romantic dreams and acting out their inevitable defeat, O'Neill was able to remove his tragedy from the realm of realistic description to that of transcendent art. And the Oriental Nirvana, or the stilling of human desires could then become the transcendence of these desires and the recognition of their illusory nature.

If O'Neill's dramatic characters gave passionate expression to their emotions, they also learned to use or to sublimate these emotions in order to achieve a mystical understanding or illumination.

Just as O'Neill's passionate emotions have appealed to Latin and continental readers, who have always distrusted the inhibitions of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, so his mysticism has appealed to religious-minded and Oriental readers, who have distrusted American practicality. Much of O'Neill's greatness lies in his appeal beyond the limits of his own country and language to the peoples of other nations and continents; his personal and artistic development combined in itself the various elements of both Western and Eastern mysticism.

The reasons both for O'Neill's greatness and for his limitations lie implicit in his theory of tragedy. Although he never proclaimed this formally, or developed it in detail, he suggested the outlines of it in early letters and interviews. Moreover this theory guided his dramatic practice throughout his career, and it was realized progressively in the composition of his plays.
O'Neill's theory of tragedy consists of three underlying principles. First, he asserts that our emotions are of primary importance, both in theory and in practice. Second, the expression of our emotions, through the medium of tragic drama, is a life-giving process, leading to a deeper spiritual document understanding. Third, because our emotions are primary and the expression and understanding of them are of first importance it follows that our thoughts and even actions are of secondary importance.

In an interview published in 1922, he asserted:

Our emotions are a better guide than thoughts. Our emotions are instinctive. They are the result not only of our individual experiences but of the experiences of the whole human race through the ages. They are the deep undercurrent, whereas our thoughts are often only the small individual surface reactions. Truth usually goes deep. So it reaches you through your emotions.\textsuperscript{11}

His theory was, rather an affirmation of belief, and of value: "Our emotions are the better guide." It was a statement of faith, and as such, it cannot be proved scientifically, or argued logically.

O'Neill's fundamental belief in emotion, however, placed him in sharp conflict with the dominant beliefs of the modern, Western world, for modern scientific philosophy has always asserted the primary importance of our thoughts (\textit{Cogito ergo sum}) and of our actions (pragmatism). But O'Neill contradicted this philosophy; he reaffirmed the age-old belief, typical of the Eastern world, in the primacy of emotion. For, in the eyes of the Orient, the
Western emphasis on logical thought and practical action has always seemed "naive." And from his earliest years O'Neill had been attracted to this Oriental belief.

Through his plays, O'Neill was reaffirming the traditional values of tragedy. And historically, this was his great accomplishment; he reclaimed the spiritual values of tragedy for a nation concerned chiefly with material things and for a generation concerned chiefly with entertainment. But, in his rebellion against American materialism and his scorn for the superficialities of the literature and theatre of his time, he went on to attack all "materialism" in such a way as to minimize the pragmatic values of man's struggle. And, by his exclusive concern with emotion, he progressively excluded the element of action, upon which tragedy has traditionally depended for its most dramatic effects. O'Neill further believed that only by means of tragedy, could he transcend his own selfish emotions and achieve illumination. O'Neill stated in 1922:

> It seems to me that man is much the same creature, with the same primal emotions and ambitions and motives, the same powers and the same weaknesses, as in the time when the Aryan race started toward Europe from the slopes of the Himalayas. He has become better acquainted with those powers and those weaknesses, and he is learning ever so slowly how to control them.\(^{12}\)

His tragic dramas consciously described man's struggle to become acquainted with his inner emotions and, ideally, to control them. This inner exploration
and this spiritual control were the primary purposes of his tragic writing. This was also the age-old purpose of mysticism, which had begun "on the slopes of the Himalayas."

But O'Neill's exclusive belief in emotion and the extreme nature of his mysticism have, to average audiences, limited the appeal of his tragedies. They have resulted in a kind of introversion and in a corresponding lack of concern for external things. The mysticism of O'Neill's theory of tragedy—which idealized the exploration of man's inner emotions and the transformation of them, rather than the more common Western ideal of exploring man's conscious mind and controlling his external actions—has caused most of the negative criticism of his plays.

O'Neill's theory of tragic emotion brought him into conflict with two groups—First, he joyously attacked the American Philistines who believed that "tragedy" is merely "morbid" and "depressing." At first this group included his own father; and he answered it with the defiant exclamation. "Life is a tragedy, hurrah!" But then he explained; if tragedy brings physical defeat (as the Philistines argue), it also brings spiritual exaltation, through the recognition that man's tragic struggle is like that of Prometheus—although destined to defeat by the nature of things, it gives greatness to man's effort to learn the secrets of life. O'Neill's exclusive concern with emotion resulted also in an exclusive interest in tragedy. It has been said that "life is a tragedy" to him who feels, but a comedy to him who thinks.

O'Neill's single life long passion was his work. All else was sacrificed to it. Other world dramatists may excel him in lofty lyric power or philosophical
discourse. None, however, surpass him in the sheer magnitude of the men and women who people his plays. O'Neill understood the human psyche, its baseness and its greatness, as few other writers have. And though he was always "a little in love with death" it is life he celebrates in his plays, not some fanciful version of it but the tragic, comic, splendid reality of it. He tried to awaken the noblest aspirations of a growing nation to foster its pursuit of the high ideals of the early founding fathers. He cared about his country and countrymen. He urged them not to live on the surface of life but to search both within the self to determine an inner, behind-life force and without for the secret of life "beyond the horizon." In his work he tried to contribute to this discovery. "The theatre," he said "should be a source of inspiration that lifts us to a plane beyond ourselves as we know them and drives us deep into the unknown within and behind ourselves. The theatre should reveal to us what we are." He adds: "Holding the mirror of a soul up to a nation, it is time we returned to this if only to prove that the theatre still has a soul unsullied by contact with appearances." 

O'Neill is America's premier playwright. To date, there has not been any dramatist to equal him. Tennessee Williams comes closest to him in characterization, depicting the broken, tragic misfits of life. Arthur Miller concerns himself, as did O'Neill with the social problems that afflict us, but Arthur Miller could hardly be classified as the spokesman for the poor and the downtrodden. No one has usurped O'Neill's place in the American theatre. He carved out the path in the wilderness; others followed.
But the unique quality of O'Neill does not lie in his modernity. Although his tragedy was typically American and although it sought to dramatize the "sickness of today" it also remembered the mysticism of the ancient East. Living in the most modern age of the most practical nation in the farthest West of the World, O'Neill followed a dimly remembered but not unfamiliar path. Marked by the psychologic of the emotions, it led through a series of tragedies designed for "the theatre of tomorrow" and to a goal not unlike that of the most ancient religions of the East. O'Neill described all men's hopes as "pipe dreams"—as the illusions of Māyā, and the source of all life. And he described man's goal as a mystical experience resembling that of Nirvana—"the discovery of meaning" through the transcendence of all hopes and selfish illusions. O'Neill's final greatness lies in his appeal beyond the modernity of his America to the timeless element in all civilization.

Eugene O'Neill was not pretentious or given to self-aggrandizement. He was a simple man, a deeply compassionate man who had reverence for all living things. He was a Black Irishman who fell in love with words. Often he stumbled. Occasionally he succeeded, and when he did, he added new lustre to the American Theatre, which he, through his efforts, single-handedly transformed.

When all has been said, O'Neill remains an enigma. His plays have been acted and read, the story of his life told, but the essential question remains unanswered. Unlike Hemingway and Faulkner, who have been soundly applauded and clearly defined, he remains unknown. He was a major dramatist certainly, and his historical importance remains unquestioned.
First of all, O'Neill was the "founder of the American drama." Before him, no playwright of such importance had emerged. By his influence and example, he practically created native drama in America. In granting him this distinction, critics are almost unanimous. His historical importance is clear. But after O'Neill had achieved fame in the 1920's many other American dramatists won distinction. Some were his contemporaries, like Maxwell Anderson and Paul Elmer Rice; others like Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, followed the path he explored. But no contemporary or follower has approached his stature.

The autobiographical nature of his writing has become increasingly apparent since his death: he wrote directly out of his own life and emotions. Beyond their individual qualities, they seem to describe the successive stages of a spiritual quest. Like Melville's actual and fictional voyages, O'Neill's plays both autobiographical and symbolic seem to suggest his continuing search for salvation, or for "meaning." They are autobiographical, that is, both in a literal and in a spiritual sense. Much more than Lewis or Hemingway, who were chosen for the Nobel Prize primarily because of their American reputations, O'Neill has spoken directly to a world audience. This is his last and perhaps his most important, claim to greatness.

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill, dramatist, was born in New York City on 16 October 1888. His father, James O'Neill, was a popular romantic actor, who exposed his son to the theatre at a very early age. O'Neill entered Princeton in 1906, after attending a Catholic boarding school and a preparatory school in Connecticut, but within a year he had flunked out and had taken up an
adventurous life, working variously as a seaman, gold prospector, journalist and actor.

O’Neill wrote his first play The Web in the winter of 1913-14 and by 1916 he had become associated with the Provincetown players, who in the following three years produced many of his plays, including Bound East for Cardiff (1916) and The Moon of the Caribbees (1918). His first great success came in 1920 with the Broadway production of Beyond the Horizon, which won O’Neill a Pulitzer Prize. He followed this with several other naturalistic tragedies with American settings; these were not tragedies of destiny or fate, but of personal psychology. They include Chris Christopherson (1920), rewritten as Anna Christie (1921; Pulitzer Prize), Different (1920), Gold (1921); The Straw (1921) and The First Man (1922). O’Neill also created two experiments in symbolic expressionism. The Emperor Jones (1920) and The Hairy Ape (1922). After The Hairy Ape he returned to a naturalistic approach with All God’s Chillun Got Wings (1924) and Desire under the Elms (1924).

The political Fountain (1925) was followed by The Great God Brown (1926), in which masks are worn and Lazarus Laughed (1927), featuring choral chanting. Marco Millions (1928); Strange Interlude (1928; Pulitzer Prize), in which O’Neill experimented with a stream-of-consciousness technique and Dynamo (1929). Mourning Becomes Electra, an adaptation of Aeschylus’ Orestes, followed in 1931. Ah, Wilderness! (1933), a light comedy, and Days Without End (1934) were the last plays to be produced for many years, although O’Neill worked on several others, including The Iceman Cometh (1946). In 1936, he was awarded the Nobel Prize.
O'Neill’s masterpiece *A Long Day’s Journey into Night*, a semi-autobiographical family tragedy, was written in 1940-41 and posthumously produced in 1956. *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, his last play, was written by 1943 and produced in 1947. After O'Neill’s death in 1953 a number of other plays were posthumously produced; *Hughie*, a one-act character study, was acted in 1958, and two plays from a projected eleven-play cycle, *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed*, were also produced: *A Touch of the Poet* (published in 1957, acted in 1958) and its sequel *More Stately Mansions* (1964). His *Poems* were collected in 1980.

In creating a drama which attempted to confront powerful social and moral issues realistically and with force, O'Neill, despite his debt to Strindberg and Ibsen and his somewhat simplistic use of the ideas of Freud, Jung and others, made an original contribution to the American stage, and has generally been considered his country’s greatest playwright.

The major biographical works on O’Neill are the following. By almost any measure, Arthur Gelb and Barbara Gelb’s *O’Neill* (1962) would be considered a definitive biography. O’Neill’s life, from his relationship with his parents and brother, through his sea faring days to his remarkable final years with his last wife, Carlotta Monterey O’Neill, was as dramatic as anything he ever wrote. His life, of course, provided source material for much of his writing. The Gelbs’ massive biography captures the drama and torment of his life. It is hardly a funny story and the Gelbs have brought their man back alive. Well written, rich in detail, the Gelbs’s *O’Neill* is an outstanding biography; a new edition adds an “epilogue.” The picture is altered
somewhat by another excellent biography, this one in two volumes, Louis Sheaffer's *O'Neill: Son and Playwright* covers the dramatist's life up to 1920 when *Beyond the Horizon* opened on Broadway. Sheaffer's second volume, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (1973) covers O'Neill's rise to celebrity world wide and the period of the decline of his reputation, which ironically is now seen as the time of composition of his greatest, most enduring drama. Sheaffer's massive biography is carefully researched and well presented. Perhaps it is enough to say that a giant of the proportions of O'Neill deserved two such comprehensive biographies.

There are other, quite worthy, studies of O'Neill's life. Since O'Neill was a remarkably autobiographical writer, the number of biographical examinations is warranted. The first book completely devoted to O'Neill is Barrett H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill* (1926). This was revised and reissued in 1929 as *Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays*. Of subsequent editions of this volume, perhaps the most useful, is the one issued in 1947. This is a pioneer work without the completed canon at its disposal, but it remains a worthwhile reference source. Although not technically a biography, also of interest is Agnes Boulton's *Part of a Long Story* (1958). This memoir by an O'Neill wife and the mother of two of his children is, as the title suggests, only part of a long story. While the focus of Boulton's story is chronologically narrow, Croswell Bowen's *The Curse of the Misbegotten* (1959) was the first significant attempt to cover the playwright's life from birth to death. Written with the co-operation of O'Neill's son, Shane, Bowen's account focuses upon the life of the dramatist and the lives of those around him. The O'Neill tragedy is seen as the "curse" of a lack of communication of love that
bedeviled both O'Neill's parents and brother's relationship with him and his with his wives and children.

Like Sheaffer's first volume, Doris Alexander's *The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill* (1962) covers the important periods of O'Neill's life up to his earliest success. Alexander centres on that part of his life which was to be the crucible from which he would draw what were later his best plays. This biography is a significant scholarly item. Frederic I. Carpenter, *Eugene O'Neill* (1979) is an outstanding briefer look at the playwright and his plays. Carpenter's book is intelligent and readable, a good place to begin for those interested in O'Neill. Since O'Neill must be considered an eminently autobiographical dramatist, many of the books listed above treat the biography in one way or another in relation to the plays.

Scholarship and criticism on O'Neill's work is vast and varied, to which the catalogue of books in Miller will bear testimony. The Gelbs, Sheaffer and Carpenter do deal with the plays and Barrett Clark's biography (1926) was also the first critical book.

The first major critical book is Sophus Keith Winther's *Eugene O'Neill: A Critical Study* (1934). Treating the canon up to the time of the Nobel Prize (1936), this book is an excellent pioneering study, a highly favourable estimation of O'Neill and an interesting approach to his thought. In an enlarged second edition, Winther adds a brief final chapter "O'Neill and Modern Tragedy" on the four plays published since the first edition. A final item worth notice from the 1930s is Richard Dana Skinner's *Eugene O'Neill: A Poet's Quest* (1935).
In the 1940s, the United States went to war, her premier dramatist into withdrawn isolation, his reputation into near total eclipse, and serious scholarship on him into hiding. But the giant did not sleep. Suffering from physical ills and tormented by psychological introspection and reverie, his trembling hand tended the golden eggs that many critics now consider his finest works. With the New York premiere of *The Iceman Cometh* in 1946, and O'Neill's death in 1953 and the subsequent availability of new materials, the magnificent first American production in 1958 of *Long Day's Journey into Night* directed by Jose Quintero, the 1957 production of *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and the 1958 production of *A Touch of the Poet*, and a profusion of Quintero staged revivals in the 1960s, O'Neill criticism and scholarship once again flourished. An important source of information on O'Neill's association with the Theatre Guild is Lawrence Langner, *The Magic Curtain* (1951). The first extensive scholarly analysis is Edwin A. Engel's, *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill* (1953). Engel explores recurrent and dominant themes in the plays—dreams, dunkensness and death—tracing them back to Nietzsche and Jung. The book is of interest precisely because it does not deal with biography but does a close literary analysis, concerned with themes and the merit of the plays themselves. Of special significance is the recent reissue (1981) of Doris V. Falk, *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension: An Interpretive Study of the Plays* (1958). Psychological in approach, relating the pattern to the mind of the man who wrote the plays, this is a valuable piece of O'Neill scholarship, done with the permission of his wife, Carlotta to study and quote from the manuscripts in the O'Neill Collection at Yale.

John Henry Raleigh, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (1965) considers the plays not in chronological sequence but as one organic whole made up of a variety of themes, characters, and preoccupations. Raleigh’s analysis and evaluation of O’Neill’s completed, published plays sees the great late plays not breaking new ground or discovering new themes but demonstrating mastery over similar elements in the earlier plays.

Perhaps the best scholarly studies of O’Neill are those provided by Timo Tiusanen, Egil Törnqvist and Travis Bogard. A major critical study on many elements of O’Neill’s plays, Tiusanen, *O’Neill’s Scenic Images* (1968) concludes that the later plays are the great plays and is one of the most significant volumes of O’Neill scholarship. Another volume by an eminent O’Neill scholar is Egil Törnqvist, *A Drama of Souls: Studies in O’Neill’s Supernaturalistic Technique* (1969). Another excellent volume is Travis Bogard, *Contour In Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (1972) which contains outstanding discussions of the individual plays.


The proposed dissertation is broadly divided into six chapters. The present study concentrates on one of the scantily explored areas of Eugene O'Neill's plays. It investigates how the dramatist delineates the sad and poignant aspects of the human predicament, how he expresses his conception of God and religion, how he delves into the mystery of man's eternal struggle with himself and with an overwhelming universe and how he seeks to find the means of resolving the existential problems socially mystically or transcendentally. It is sought to prove that with a blend of the classical traditions of the past, the cultural and scientific heritage of the West and the mystical, contemplative philosophies of the East, Eugene O'Neill one of the most penetrating intellects of America, gains new insights into both the existential and the contemporary problems of humanity as a whole.

O'Neill's vision transcends time and space because in delineating the sufferings of modern man he has projected the picture of man as eternally suffering, in a world where one finds it difficult to reconcile its forces. O'Neill depicts the universe as a disorderly place, sometimes teleological, more often blind and purposeless. Most of his plays can be said to be the manifestations of his search for finding some meaning in man's life in the cosmos. Plucked out from raw life, his plays invariably depict the universal condition of the spiritual isolation of man and man's inability to discern the profound mysteries of the universe. The present study is an attempt to analyse the way
O’Neill tries to resolve the self-imposed and socially imposed miseries of humanity and to overcome the existential problems of man by way of transcendence or by attaining a mystical mind.

Chapter One introduces the dramatist, Eugene O’Neill, expounds the everlasting appeal of his plays and outlines the scope and theme of the dissertation: the predicament of man in the universe with reference to his plays. The chief concern of the study is to analyse man’s plight on earth as O’Neill sees it and to trace out the values that make human life meaningful on this planet. It is also examined whether O’Neill in his plays treats Nature as friendly or as indifferent to human beings as far as life on earth is concerned.

Chapter Two “The Human Predicament” analyses the main themes and concerns of the human predicament which persistently engaged O’Neill’s attention in his major plays. The plight of man on earth, depicted in the ‘Cave Image’ in Plato’s The Republic is metaphorically and analogically recalled at the outset of this chapter to show its similarity to the picture of the predicament of man as portrayed in the plays of O’Neill. For the same purpose, the views of Emerson, Einstein and Bertrand Russell on the predicament of man are compared with those of O’Neill. An attempt is also made to expose how O’Neill in his plays recognizes the necessity of finding a philosophy that could reconcile a rationalistic view of the universe to find a remedy for the spiritual vacuum man feels and a justification for the fragrant inconsistenceis of the human condition and also to find the mysterious power behind the scientific laws of nature, which were the true, though inanimate
rulers of the universe. It is also shown how O'Neill pursues in his plays his quest for light in the labyrinth of darkness in the path of man's life on earth.

Chapter Three "God and Religion" is an analysis of O'Neill's conception of God and religion with reference to his plays. It is also analysed how O'Neill could imaginatively and at the same time rationally think of God as revealed in his plays. Further, O'Neill's rationalistic view of God is juxtaposed with that of Albert Einstein, one of world's greatest scientists of all time. God is conceived as the power behind the marvellous structure of the physical world or as the spirit behind the harmony in the laws of Nature and also as the mystery behind the eternity of life. It is the knowledge of something which our perceptions of the profoundest reason cannot penetrate. It is also shown how far O'Neill was a determinist in his outlook on life as revealed in his plays. O'Neill's determinism, similar to that of Einstein, was based on his idea of fate that everything that takes place is determined by the laws of Nature and that this holds good for the actions of people also. But our actual knowledge of these laws is imperfect and fragmentary. However, it leads to the idea that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe—a spirit vastly superior to that of man. In other words, it is all about a God even more intangible and impersonal than a celestial machine-runner, running the universe with indisputable authority and expert touch. In this chapter, it is also examined how Eastern and Western thoughts have influenced O'Neill's view of life as revealed in his plays. Further it seeks also to analyse whether it is possible to have some sort of rapprochement between the Eastern and Western Metaphysics behind the ideas implied in his plays.
Chapter Four "Society and Happiness" deals with O'Neill’s attitude to human miseries and shows how he distinguishes the self-imposed and socially-imposed sorrows from those sorrows which are irresolvably inherent in human existence. It is also examined how O'Neill explores the possibilities of ameliorating the human condition. The attempt to conceive imaginatively a better ordering of human society than the destructive and cruel chaos in which mankind have hitherto existed, is by no means modern, it is at least as old as Plato, whose Republic set the model for the utopias of subsequent philosophies. O'Neill is an optimist in the sense that he thinks it possible to hope that the world will not get worse. O'Neill as a dramatist is not expected to suggest any kind of panacea for the social evils; but he has conscientiously attempted to highlight in some of his plays the tragic plight of individuals whose destiny was determined by the social system. In his early one-act-plays like The Fog and his later plays like Iceman Cometh, The Hairy Ape and Days Without End, O'Neill depicts a doom which could have been avoided by a better ordering of the society by the political system of the benevolent rulers or by the voluntary and charitable measures of their fellow-beings. O'Neill exposes also that the real danger to modern civilization is the stupidity and timidity of the ruling classes. As the machine created wealth, it destroyed the joy of living, the only thing that wealth is good for. The machanized society as portrayed in The Hairy Ape deprives its people of their ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘sense of identity’. Though O'Neill was not satisfied with the status quo evils of capitalism as we see it in The Hairy Ape and Marco Millions, he does not seem to believe that mere socialism can do anything about the unbearable present.
O'Neill believed that the materialistic world of today further brutalized and frustrated man, while religion and proposals for social and economic reforms were beyond its feeble ability to understand and to carry out. None of the particular political systems, already founded by man, interested O'Neill. But he laments man's fear of change and his indifferent reaction to the socially imposed evils, which they allow to continue instead of trying to combat it.

Chapter Five entitled "The Evolution of the Humanist and the Mystic in Eugene O'Neill" is devoted to a study of the evolution of the humanist and the mystic in Eugene O'Neill with reference to his life and plays especially his *Long Day's Journey into Night* his latest autobiographical play. At the outset of this chapter, mysticism is defined and it is differentiated how physicists deal with different aspects of reality with the help of sophisticated instruments and how mystics probe into consciousness with the help of sophisticated techniques of meditation. The basic oneness of the universe is considered not only the central characteristic of the mystical experience, but it is also one of the most important revelations of modern physics. One of the most convincing aspects of the mystic illumination is the apparent revelation of this oneness of all things, evoking a consciousness similar to that of pantheism in religion and that of Monism in Philosophy.

O'Neill believed that, today more than anything else, humanity needs a spiritual interpretation of the universe and a spiritual regeneration of humanity as well. He believed it to be possible only by elevating our minds and lives to evolve a mystic insight within ourselves. This mystic insight is experienced only when the mind is freed from all preoccupation with self and when the
mind feels the possibility of the universal love and joy in all that exists and such a mind is of supreme importance for the conduct and happiness of life.

O'Neill has helped us to realize that we are clearly standing on the frontier between two eras—one in which both Western civilization and communist ideology have not only failed to liberate humanity, but draw it instead into disaster and causing the new spirit to recoil in disillusionment and one where humanity in search of deliverance will try a new road and take a new direction, and will liberate its essential nature. Over this dark and dispirited world, O'Neill shows how mysticism will set a holy lamp like a new sun, by whose light, the man alienated from himself will perceive anew his primordial nature, rediscover himself and see clearly the path of salvation.

This chapter further deals with O'Neill’s acquaintance with oriental religions. The climax of The Fountain dramatizes a mystic vision involving Buddhist and Moslem priests. The Great God Brown (1925) alludes to nirvana and transmigration; the protagonist of Lazarus Laughed (1926) resembles Buddha in his serenity and non-egotism. At the dawn of his life, O'Neill had discovered Taoism of the Chinese sage ‘Tao Te Ching’.

In O'Neill’s early apprenticeship periods, 1913-20, where he makes his first attempts to use mysticism to signify a “behind-life force,” personal happenings in his life, such as his sea-experiences become the focus of his one-acts. His mysticism, his fascination with the mystery of life, is contained even in his first one-act plays such as “The Web” (1913) and “Bound East for Cardiff” (1914). O’Neill however aims at something more through the use of mysticism for supernaturalism in his plays, enabling viewers to identify also
the qualities of soul, of the inner being of characters, perceiving them so deeply on so many levels of meaning that they seem to take a universal and at times, mythic dimensions. In his play "The Fountain" (1921), Juan experiences the ecumenical, mystical vision—feeling unity with all creation only after undergoing suffering and a personal inner regeneration.

Taoism appealed most to the tormented O'Neill, who longed to transcend his Western, dualistic worldview and attain a vision of a larger, flowing unity that promised peace and harmony.

Further, this chapter shows how O'Neill's interest in mysticism and Eastern philosophy peaked in 1920s, in such plays as Marco Millions, The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed and Days Without End looking for refuge in Christian mysticism. O'Neill's memorable mystic experience can be traced in the play Long Day's Journey into Night where we see him bound for Buenos Aires, lost in the rhythmic harmony of the flow of life and he belonged to something greater than his own life, perhaps even to God. Later he describes a veil being drawn back by an unseen hand that provides a vision of beatitude that allows him for a brief second to see the secret and its meaning. Here stands the real O'Neill, sharing perhaps the great climactic mystic experience of his life—the consolation of a benign "behind-life" mystic force in life. It is here at last we discover O'Neill's mystical evolution—the fusion point of humanism and mysticism.

O'Neill as a humanist reaffirms the classical proposition that man's condition precludes him forever from the full realization of his ideals. O'Neill believes ardently in charity, equality and the universal brotherhood of man
and in the need for a World Government for administering justice and for the equal distribution of natural resources and comforts to the whole humanity. He vehemently denounces racial discrimination. He is distressed by his countrymen’s total disregard of humanity, dignity and the rights of those they considered inferior. O’Neill was aware that the discrimination problem had broad ethnic dimensions, cutting across cultural, social, religious, racial and geographical lines as it was revealed in his play *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*. Invariably, he depicts non-whites, non-Christians and non-Europeans as spiritually, morally and physically superior.

There is no evidence that O’Neill was influenced directly by the writings of the New Humanists. But it is clear that he shared many of their primary concerns. Thus it is that *Days Without End* (1931-34) interprets a humanism which is Christian in tone. Its resolution conforms to the notion of a “true humanism” espoused by Americans such as Paul Elmer More and Europeans such as Jacques Maritain. In this play John Loving finds his humanity in willing submission to God. On other occasions, O’Neill’s perspective paralleled that of rationalistic humanists. Like Irving Babbitt, he attempted to translate essentially religious concepts into a secular language. Plays such as *Strange Interlude* treat what New Humanists such as Babbitt and Paul Elmer More interpreted as the essential dilemma of modern man—a crisis of faith. The affirmation of man’s humanity as the primary motive in history is a theme in both his plays: *The Fountain* and *Marco Millions*.

Like the New Humanists, O’Neill appears to have regarded American democracy as the expression of a new theological situation, one which
requires not only a reconsideration of the nature of man's responsibility for man but also a reappraisal of the role of God in human affairs.

O'Neill is thus portrayed as a simple man, a deeply compassionate man who had reverence for all living things. He was a black Irish man who fell in love with words. He used those words to articulate the sorrows of his life and those of mankind. What O'Neill had absorbed in his heart and soul in the noble life he had lived, harming no man, doing good for all, in his last lucid moments, there was no fear in this soul's mystic meeting with the Absolute—the infinite—neither in life nor in death.

Chapter Six, "The Conclusion," which is in the form of a summary and conclusion recapitulates the main arguments of the dissertation and locates the position and the contemporary relevance of Eugene O'Neill's currently valid rich and profound ideas inherent in his plays in depicting the human predicament and in showing the paths of salvation or regeneration possible, both by means of having the will for socio-economic reforms or by way of transcending the existential problems by attaining a mystic mind through knowledge or wisdom. His plays uphold love and knowledge as the only urge or emotion that keeps up man's zest for living and disclose that it is the value of love and human comradeship in human life which helps man to get over the feeling of his being an exile on an inhospitable shore.

The final chapter which ends with a gist of the main argument of the dissertation in a nutshell is followed by a bibliography.
NOTES

1 Eugene O'Neill, *Nine Plays* (New York: Liveright, 1932) XVII.


14 Ibid. 114.