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Some Manifestations of the Ironie Sense
in

The Works of Thomas Hardy

by

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SOME MANIFESTATIONS OF THE IRONIC SENSE
IN
THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY

THOMAS HARDY'S IRONIC PHILOSOPHY

"As, in looking at a carpet, by following one colour a certain pattern is suggested, by following another colour, another; so in life the seer should watch that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe, and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately, a going to Nature; yet the result is no mere photograph, but purely the product of the writer's own mind."¹

There are many influences to which the formation of Thomas Hardy's philosophy can be traced. The Victorian period with its two chief and distinct schools of thought, the one of complacency, the other of doubt, is responsible for many of Thomas Hardy's ideas. In addition, the man's heredity, childhood, nature, and finally, his ambitions and disappointments formed a basis for the view of life that he came to hold.

The early Victorian period was prone to a careful blindness to ideas and events that were at all disquieting, being nurtured by the economic prosperity of the times and by the expansion of the British Empire. The age was, in fact, inclined to be self-satisfied and complacent, although before 1810 Linnaeus, Erasmus Darwin, Treviranus, and Lamarck had already laid the foundation for the Darwinian Theory and for a great reversal of attitude. Even after the theory of evolution was published by Charles Darwin in 1859, the same satisfied feeling remained. Faith in the old ideals

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891, London, 1928, p. 198.

continued unshaken; Darwin's theory was interpreted as a still further proof of man's superiority in the Universe. Man, from this point of view, was the acme of perfection, and occupied the centre of the Universe as his undisputed right. This complacency survived in some quarters to the twentieth century.

While an optimistic strain continued from the early period into the second half of the nineteenth century, the later period was deeply affected by science. Doubt and despair and questioning were the keynotes of this second tendency in Victorian life. For those people who followed this trend, there was a definite challenge in Darwin's theory to man's elevated position in the Universe. The destruction of all the former ideas of religion, morality, and human supremacy (even of the English) seemed imminent, while science itself offered neither joy nor hope to this thinking group.

Thomas Hardy was born into a world in which the optimism of the earlier period was blending with the despair and pessimism of the later age. The moral, intellectual, and religious worlds were suffering great shocks and entering a period of chaos. Charles Darwin's iconoclastic treatise found Hardy a sensitive, thinking boy of nineteen who, because of his own interests, chose to build a philosophy that was in reaction to the complacent and in agreement with the darker view of the Universe.

The family background of Thomas Hardy is not only interesting but illuminates his character and ideas. The

Hardy family was descended from the le Hardys of Jersey through John, son of Clement le Hardy, who settled at Wareham in the Fifteenth Century. Although there had been many eminent men in the family, among them the Elizabethan Thomas Hardy who endowed the Dorchester Grammar school and Thomas Hardy of the Victory at Trafalgar, at the time of Hardy's birth the family had declined. As Hardy himself wrote in his note-book while he was on a trip through his own country in 1888-9: "The decline and fall of the Hardys very much in evidence hereabout. An instance: Becky S's mother's sister married one of the Hardys of this branch, who was considered to have ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~meant~~ ^{meant} himself by the marriage.. 'All Woolcombe and From Quintin belonged to them at one time,' Becky used to say proudly. She might have added Up-Sydling and Toller Welme. This particular couple had an enormous lot of children. I remember when young seeing the man--tall and thin--walking beside a horse and common spring trap, and my mother pointing him out to me and saying he represented what was once the leading branch of the family. So we go down, down, down." ¹

The Hardy heredity was of such a nature that it tended to develop a gloomy and doubting trend of thought in Thomas. A panoramic view of the Hardy family showed him how little an individual's life affected the growth of a single family. This reflection probably helped him to the conclusion that one man could hardly count for much in the sum total of the Universe. There was, in addition, another heritage from the Hardys. "They all had the characteristics of an old family of spent social energies, that were revealed even in the Thomas Hardy of this memoir (as in his father and grandfather), who never cared to take advantage of the many worldly opportunities that his popularity and esteem as an author afforded him." ²

1. Ibid, p. 281.

2. Ibid, p. 5.

On the maternal side Hardy was descended from an Anglo-Saxon family--the Childs. His grandmother, who married without her father's consent, had been widowed early in life and had had much difficulty in raising her family. Her influence over the youthful Hardy was a marked one. She told the child the folk-tales of the countryside and interpreted characters for him from the wisdom of her years. Hardy's mother, who had seen great hardship in her early life, was always an energetic, ambitious, and progressive character. Thomas Hardy owes his Anglo-Saxon ancestors much for his energetic and justice loving nature.

Higher Bockhampton, the situation of the Hardy's home, where Hardy was born, and lived during his childhood, was a secluded spot. Here he came to love the solitude and the quietness of the moors. The heath and Hardy became friends, friends who did not welcome human companionship. Hardy was often distressed by the attentions of people as is well shown in the following quotation: "Hardy was popular--too popular almost--with his school-fellows, for their friendship at times became burdensome. He loved being alone, but often, to his concealed discomfort, some of the other boys would volunteer to accompany him on his homeward journey to Bockhampton. How much this irked him he recalled long years after. He tried also to avoid being touched by his playmates. One lad, with more insight than the rest, discovered the fact: 'Hardy, how is it that you do not like us to touch you?' The peculiarity never left him, and to the end of his life he disliked even the most friendly hand being laid on his arm or shoulder. Probably no one else ever observed this." ¹

Whenever Hardy was hurt, it was to this wide countryside, that made man seem small and insignificant, that he turned

1. Ibid, p. 31.

for consolation.

Throughout his life Hardy was interested in art. From a very early age he was attracted by colour, by music, and by poetry (especially of the church service). He apprenticed himself to an architect from whom he learnt about design and form, and the construction of different types of buildings. But even while he was engaged in following architecture, his interest went back to literature. He began to write novels, only to be convinced that his true interest was in the writing of poetry. Because Hardy often saw what he believed to be the laws governing the Universe violated and because he could find no satisfaction in science his artistic nature, seeking always for order, led him to create a Universe of his own that expressed his philosophy.

The man was extraordinarily sensitive--sensitive to colour, harmony, form, people, relationships, and to spiritual values. Sham and deceit, vulgarity and coarseness he detested. He was easily hurt. Large artificial social gatherings were not at all to his taste, for it was in them that he found the hypocrisy that so upset him and made him gloomy and, at times, even cynical. He appreciated recognition, but he made no special effort to receive notice and was sometimes embittered by indifferent treatment.

Levity has no place in Thomas Hardy's nature or outlook. As he himself expressed it: "A man would never laugh were he not to forget his situation, or were he not one who has never learnt it. After risibility from comedy, how often does the thoughtful mind reproach itself for forgetting the truth? Laughter always means

blindness--either from defect, choice or accident." ¹
 This gloomy attitude is not one of pessimism in the usual sense; it is, rather, a looking facts in the face. Under the caption "A Pessimist's Apology" Hardy wrote: "Pessimism (or rather what is called such) is, in brief, playing the sure game. You cannot lose at it; you may gain. It is the only view of life in which you can never be disappointed. Having reckoned what to do in the worst possible circumstances, when better arise, as they may, life becomes child's play." ²

In order to offset the twilight view that gathered around Hardy, he developed a habit of inactivity that gave his mind free play and seemed to relieve him of the weight of his body and of earthly considerations. He discussed the subject in the following manner: "...For my part, if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things. To think of life as a passing away is sadness; to think of it as past is at least tolerable. Hence even when I enter a room to pay a simple morning call I have unconsciously the habit of regarding the scene as if I were a spectre not solid enough to influence my environment; only fit to behold and say, as another spectre said: 'Peace be unto you.'" ³

During the period when Thomas Hardy was writing his first three novels, he wrote: "The sudden disappointment of a hope leaves a scar which the ultimate fulfillment of that hope never entirely removes." ⁴ Several hopes entertained by Hardy were dashed to the ground, later some of them were fulfilled. One of the first of the frustrations was in relation to a University training. His

1. Ibid, p. 148.

2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928, London, 1930, p. 91.

3. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit. p. 275.

4. Ibid, p. 153.

people wished him to continue with architecture, but he knew that his interest did not draw him to the profession. Mr. Moule, the school-master to whom the boy turned for advice, told him that, if he were required to make a living in the following year, the practical course would be architecture. This profession was very tying and, in addition, he lost the opportunity of going to a University. In 1888 he entered in his note-book: "April 28. A short story of a young man--'who could not go to Oxford'--his struggles and ultimate failure. Suicide. (Probably the germ of Jude the Obscure.) There is something (in this) the world ought to be shown, and I am the one to show it to them--though I was not altogether hindered going, at least to Cambridge, and could have gone up easily at five and twenty." ¹ In 1926, in relation to Jude the

Obscure, he wrote again: "Would not Arabella be the villain of the piece? --or Jude's personal constitution? --so far as there is any villain more than blind chance. Christminster is of course the tragic influence of Jude's drama in one sense, but innocently so, and merely as crass obstruction. By the way it is not meant to be exclusively Oxford, but any old-fashioned University about the date of the story 1860-70, before there were such chances for poor men as there are now. I have somewhere printed that I have no feeling against Oxford in particular."²

Life as a scientific game to earn money did not appeal to Hardy, and in architecture he found himself pledged to and bound by a set of definite rules. So while still following this profession, he turned to writing. However once he started writing novels, he found that this calling was just as exacting as architecture had been. Furthermore, there were publishers to be taken into account. Moreover it was not as a novelist that he hoped to be known in letters

1. Ibid, p. 273.

2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, op. cit., p. 249.

but as a poet. The fulfillment of his desire to be a poet came after his last novel Jude the Obscure was published, but it was so long in coming that it probably gave Hardy very little pleasure.

The scientific movements of the Nineteenth Century influenced Hardy, but he could not find any joy in them. He accepted the scientists' discoveries, but counted them as scant repayment for his loss of God. Science, merely as a logical arrangement of facts, had no warmth, no pleasure, and no compelling interest for him.

Other men, with the same influence of materialism, respect for science, and a general inquisitiveness as to the past of the world and its people, were building the many theories of evolution, industry, democracy, humanitarianism, and of the progress of critical reason. These men were finding happiness in their systems of thought, but to Thomas Hardy their systems were mere palliatives. The theory of evolution shattered his orthodox religious faith, while it gave him no definite hope or goal in return. From industry, its theories, and present day repulsiveness, he turned away in despair. Democracy and liberty were myths to his sharp eyes in the age that was supposed to be dedicated to them. The humanitarians offered him a God, who was not sufficiently strong to do away with evil, but because he was not strong enough to do so, was not held responsible for it. A type of 'evolutionary meliorism' gave Hardy relief for a time, yet during the World War, he seemed to cast off even this

belief. Hardy's interest in man and in the Universe and their relationships made him turn to the country of his childhood home where he sought to discover the true relationship between man and the Universe.

It is difficult to discover the influences that have determined the building of a man's philosophy; however, it seems probable that the background just sketched did affect Hardy's idea of the world and govern the view of life that he came to hold. The philosophy that Thomas Hardy outlined in his large brush strokes has not a cheerful cast, but it is realistic and it is an attempt to meet reality as he found it. His philosophy deals with man as an intelligent being. Its problems are the origin, nature and range of man's intellectual powers, his present duties and his future prospects. Man is the central theme, all else is of interest only as it throws light upon his position.

The two main considerations that Thomas Hardy as a philosopher took into account in dealing with man's setting are, of course, space and time. The whole of the Universe, the whole planetary system including our own little globe, is the overwhelming background for man. The earth itself is treated as if it were very small. For instance, in The Dynasts the scene moves easily and with no apology from the Overworld to England, to France, to Italy, to Austria, to Russia, to Spain. Back and forth the point of view moves, showing that the apparently diverse actions are really a minute part of the whole pattern being worked out on the

earth. Time, the second part of the setting, extends back beyond the memory of man into chaos and stretches far, far ahead. The ^{length} ~~life~~ of one man's life would be rather less than one tick of the clock in comparison with the eons of time that have existed and are to exist. In the great unity of time and space each man's individual life is like a speck of dust picked out for a moment by a beam of light.

This huge Universe is run by an obscure volition which goes by various names in Thomas Hardy's writings. This force is usually called the "Immanent Will" or just the "Will." However, as Hardy said, the "word 'Will' does not perfectly fit the ideas to be conveyed--a vague thrusting or urging internal force in no premeditated direction. But it has become accepted in philosophy for want of a better, and is hardly likely to be supplanted by another, unless a highly appropriate one could be found, which I doubt. The word...--Impulse--seems to me to imply a driving power behind it; also a spasmodic movement unlike that of, say, the tendency of an ape to become a man and other such processes." ¹ For the pronoun "It" by which he referred to the "Will" Hardy claimed originality. "I believe, too," he said, "That the Prime cause, this Will, has never before been called 'It' in any poetical literature, English or foreign." ²

The characteristics of the Will are given by the Spirit of the Years in The Dynasts.

It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
 Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
 Whose patterns, wrought by rapt aesthetic note,
 Seem in themselves Its single listless aim,
 And not their consequence. ³

1. Ibid, p. 124.
2. Ibid, p. 125.
3. Ibid, p. 2.

And a little farther on:--

...In the Foretime, even to the germ of Being,
Nothing appears of shape to indicate
That cognizance has marshalled things terrene,
Or will (such is my thinking) in my span.
Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
The Will has woven with an absent heed
Since life first was; and ever will so weave.¹

The extent of the "Will's" power is shown in yet another quotation from The Dynasts.

"Spirit of the Years (to the Spirit of the Pities)
As keystone to the whole, I first lay bare
The Will-webs of thy fearful questioning;
For know that of my antique privileges
This gift to visualize the Mode is one
(Though by exhaustive strain and effort only).
See, then, and learn, ere my power pass again.

"A new and penetrating light descends on the spectacle, enduing men and things with a seeming Transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity and vitalized matter included in the display.

"Spirit of the Pities (after a pause).
Amid this scene of bodies substantive
Strange waves I sight like winds grown visible,
Which bear men's forms on their innumerable coils,
Twining and serpentine round and through.
Also retracting threads like gossamers--
Except in being irresistible--
Which complicate with some, and balance all.

"Spirit of the Years
These are the Prime Volitions,--fibrils, veins,
Will-tissues, nerves, and pulses of the Cause,
That heave throughout the Earth's compositure.
Their sum is like the lobule of a Brain
Evolving always that it wots not of;
A Brain whose whole connotes the Everywhere,
And whose procedure may but be discerned
By phantom eyes like ours; the while unguessed
Of those it stirs, who (even as ye do) dream
Their motions free, their orderings supreme;
Each life apart from each, with power to mete

1. Ibid, p. 2.

Its own day's measures; balanced, self complete;
 Though they subsist but atoms of the One
 Labouring through all, divisible from none;

But this no further now. Deem yet man's deeds self-done.

"The anatomy of the Immanent Will disappears." 1

The subject of Free-will and Necessity is raised in the preceding quotations. Concerning the topic Thomas Hardy said: "This theory, too, seems to me to settle the question of Free-will v. Necessity. The will of a man is according to it, neither wholly free nor wholly unfree. When swayed by the Universal Will (which he mostly must be as a subservient part of it) he is not individually free; but whenever it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers are free to go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else and the head does not rule them..." 2

Thomas Hardy accepted the theory of evolution; but he believed that man had become over-developed in some respects, while he was not developed as much as it is possible in others. He noted in his diary: "A woeful fact-- that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates ^{to vertebrates} did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences. Other planets may, though one can hardly see how." 3

At a slightly earlier date, he had written: "We (human beings) have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfaction." 4

1. Ibid, p. 7.
2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, op. cit., p. 125.
3. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 285.
4. Ibid, p. 213.

The underdevelopment according to Hardy was that a generation had to start at almost the same point of achievement as its parents had. Whereas said Hardy: "Had the teachings of experience grown cumulatively with the age of the world we should have been ere now as great as God."¹

Just as long as an individual is working in accordance with the "Immanent Will," he is assured of success; however, the moment he is in opposition to "It," he will most probably be crushed. No matter what good intentions people have in opposing the "Will," opposition is all that counts for the "Will" is non-moral and unconscious. Its working is not discerned by many, therefore when "It" is in equilibrium and man's will counts for^a little, the chances are that man will choose incorrectly. The "Will" works "eternal artifices in circumstance" that almost completely deceive men. "The Hypocrisy of things, Nature is an arch-dissembler. A child is deceived completely; the older members of society more or less according to their penetration; though even they seldom get to realize that nothing is as it appears."² So it is in trying to understand the "Will." But in dealing with "It" there is also another factor to deal with--chance.

Chance in Hardy's work is closely connected with the theory of Necessity. The "Will's" power extends into every part of creation, but in working out its great pattern, "It" does not trouble about the fate of individual parts of creation. The factor of probability, called by Hardy, Chance, is a third party at all transactions. It is merely the "Will's" indifference to its creations, although

1. Ibid, p. 73.

2. Ibid, p. 231.

at times chance seems to be actively hostile.

The human race's two great foes then are: first, that knowledge is not cumulative; second, that there is an element of probability in all things, known as Chance. The first is complicated by the errors which are implied in man's nature, namely, the greed, passion, desires and downright selfishness of the human animal which tend to his destruction.

Thomas Hardy had two endings to his philosophy and never definitely decided on one of them. The hope that Hardy saw for mankind was in "the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism." ¹ Yet during and immediately after the war he leaned towards the second and less hopeful

ending. As Mrs. Hardy said: "It may be added here that the war destroyed all Hardy's belief in the gradual ennoblement of man, a belief he held for many years, as is shown by poems like 'The Sick Battle-God,' and others. He said he would probably not have ended The Dynasts as he did end it if he could have foreseen what was going to happen within a few years.

Moreover, the war gave the *coup de grâce* to any conception he may have nourished of a fundamental ultimate wisdom at the back of things. With his views on necessitation, or at most a very limited free will, events seemed to show him that a fancy he had often held and expressed, that the never-ending push of the Universe was an unpurposive and irresponsible groping in the direction of the least resistance, might possibly be the real truth." ²

Yet despite his misgivings Hardy did not defini-

1. Hardy, Thomas, Collected Poems, London, 1928; p. 527.
2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, op. cit., p. 166.

tely adopt his less hopeful ending and gainsay the end of The Dynasts. In fact Hardy's last poem A Philosophical Fantasy seems to bear out the hopeful note of the end of The Dynasts, which is:--

"But--a stirring thrills the air
 Like to sounds of joyance there
 That the rages
 Of the ages
 Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts
 Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all ^{that were,}
 things fair."¹

THOMAS HARDY--CONSCIOUS IRONIST

"There is no more painful lesson to be learnt by a man of capacious mind than that of excluding general knowledge for particular."²

The basis of irony is a discrepancy, a disagreement or "a contrast between a reality and an appearance."³ An ironic writer draws attention to these differences and exaggerates them, sometimes slightly, sometimes a great deal, in order to arouse interest and score his point. The material for the stories must be selected expressly for this purpose, because it must, first of all, contain an inherent disagreement. The eyes and ears of the author, who regards such material, are human, but they are freed from human limitations--the limitations of time and space. That is to say, the poet sets himself up as a godlike creature who

1. The Dynasts, p. 525.
2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 72.
3. Chevalier, Haakon M., The Ironic Temper: Anatole France and his time, New York, 1932, p. 42.

knows all and sees all. The Truth lies at his fingertips. Like Janus, he can see what has happened and what will happen--time holds no mystery for him. As for the limitations of space, he can move from place to place as if he were provided with a magic carpet. So wide is his view that he regards any happening as "part of the pattern in the great web of human doings then weaving in both hemispheres from the White Sea to Cape Horn."¹

Irony implies that someone with more information than ordinary be present. When a person has so much information that events and speeches have a secondary significance, beneath the surface one, in addition to the surface meaning itself, for him irony is present. The person who has the greatest knowledge of events and speeches of a story is the author himself. He has control, superior knowledge and, as a spectator, has the best opportunity to recognize irony. The author is the ironic spectator only when he is presenting material with an inherent disagreement in it and is conscious of the disagreement.

Now the accompaniment of irony, namely pleasure, is one of the attractions irony holds for an author. This pleasure may be regarded, if one likes, as a type of conceit in the author's perception that he has additional information. It will come also to perceivers of irony, but obviously it will not be as intense for them as for the author.

"Irony, which originates in an awareness of incongruity, becomes readily a superior satisfaction, a conscious

1. Hardy, Thomas, The Woodlanders, London, 1920, p. 21.

pleasure in such awareness. In actual experience Irony characterizes the attitude of one who when confronted with the choice of two things that are mutually exclusive, chooses both. Which is but another way of saying that he chooses neither."¹ He does,

however, keep the enjoyment of both and the illusion that he has chosen both. The ironist enjoys "standing upon the vantage ground of Truth, and to see the errors, the wanderings, and mists, and tempests in the vale below."

Thomas Hardy's nature was one that would lead him to an ironic viewpoint. His was not a closely integrated character. His mind was very fertile, too fertile to allow him to carry out all the ideas that came to him. He was variously gifted and found it difficult to decide upon his career. He needed only to concentrate upon architecture or novel writing to make a success of either. He chose these two professions one after the other, but all the time his heart was in the writing of poetry. As the poet he recognized this diffuseness in people's natures that was so marked in his own. "I am more than ever convinced," he said, "that persons are successively various persons according as each special strand in their character is brought uppermost by circumstance."²

The lack of unity in Hardy's own nature led him to regard himself and events in a peculiar way. He came to have "double vision," to search for and contemplate the two sides of events and speeches. He became a spectator and a conscious spectator of life rather than an actor in it. This explains the apparent lack of action mentioned in the following quotation. "He constitutionally shrank

1. Chevalier, Haakon M., op. cit., p. 80.

2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 301.

from the business of social advancement, caring for life as an emotion rather than life as a science of climbing, in which respect he was quizzed by his acquaintance for his lack of ambition."¹

Hardy was quite definitely conscious of the many strands in human character and of the many lights in which events may be regarded. Furthermore he was well aware of this consciousness and of the "melancholy satisfaction" he drew from it, thereby admitting himself to be a conscious ironist. In addition there is proof of his consciousness in the employment of irony in his books.

The constant recurrence of the word "irony" and "ironical" in his work shows that Hardy had the concept of irony in his mind and was conscious in its use. He labelled one example of Socratic irony which occurs in The Woodlanders. After Fitzpier's long speech about love the following takes place: "Is it part of a country doctor's duties to learn that view of things, may I ask, sir?" said Winterborne, adopting the Socratic 'eironeia' with such well assumed simplicity that Fitzpiers answered readily..."² Winterborne was not nearly as uninterested as Fitzpiers believed him to be. In reality the two men were both in love with Grace Melbury but Fitzpiers did not know that he was speaking to a rival. The whole passage presents an excellent example of Socratic irony and Hardy could hardly have arrived at such a finished product and named it without some realization of what irony means and of its use.

1. Ibid, p. 70.

2. The Woodlanders, p. 138.

In Far from the Madding Crowd Hardy used the word to describe Sergeant Troy's exclamation after Fanny's mistake about her wedding appointment. This is Troy's remark when Fanny asks when they will be married now: "'Ah, when? God knows!'" he said, with a light irony, and turning from her walked rapidly away."¹ Well he knew that he had had little wish to marry her and at that moment considers himself released from his promise. In Jude the Obscure there is this statement: "The ironical clinch to his sorrow was given by the thought that the intimacy between his cousin and the schoolmaster had been brought about almost entirely by himself (Jude)."²

The word is also found in A Group of Noble Dames. In The First Countess of Wessex the following use is observed: "Hast heard from thy husband lately?" said Squire Dornell, when they were indoors, with an ironical laugh of fondness which demanded no answer."³ In The Duchess of Hamptonshire it appears to describe Emmeline's speech to her vicar friend. "...I resolved to write to you, as I had no other friend.' She added, with a dreary irony, 'I thought I would give him some ground for his suspicion, so as not to disgrace his judgement.'"⁴ Still again in the Tale of The Honourable Laura the observation made about Captain Northbrook is: "His tone of addressing the landlord had in it a quiet frigidity that was not without irony."⁵

Wessex Tales also contributes several uses of the word irony and its derivatives. In Interlopers at the Knap "the ironical directing-post stood in solitude as before, holding out its blank arms to the raw breeze,

1. Hardy, Thomas, Far from the Madding Crowd, London, 1927, p. 132.
2. Hardy, Thomas, Jude the Obscure, London, 1923, p. 133.
3. Hardy, Thomas, A Group of Noble Dames, London, 1928, p. 17.
4. Ibid, p. 223.
5. Ibid, p. 245.

which brought a snore from the wood as if Skymir the Giant were sleeping there."¹ In The Distracted Preacher

Lizzy used the word as she drew off some of her smuggled liquor for the new minister, Stockdale. "'You are quite right, they are barrels,' she said, in an emphatic tone of candour that was not without a touch of irony."²

The Spirit Ironie in The Dynasts is the denizen of the Overworld who points out to the other spirits the discrepancies he views. For instance at the scene of the Battle of Waterloo this spirit points out the ironies he perceives.

"Napoleon can now be seen, across the valley, pushing forward a new scheme of some sort, urged to it obviously by the visible nearing of further Prussian corps. The Emperor is as critically situated as Wellington, and his army is now formed in a right angle ('en potence'), the main front to the English, the lesser to as many of the Prussians as have yet arrived. His gestures show him to be giving instructions of desperate import to a general whom he has called up.

Spirit Ironie

He bids La Bedoyère to speed away
Along the whole sweep of the surging line,
And there announce to the breath-shotten bands
Who toil for a chimaera trustfully,
With seventy pounds of luggage on their loins,
That the dim Prussian masses seen afar
Are Grouchy's three-and-thirty thousand, come
to clinch a victory."³

Then when the English are pursuing the French after the Battle of Waterloo this conversation takes place.

" Spirit of the Pitie
Is this the last Esdraelon of a moil
For mortal man's effacement?

1. Hardy, Thomas, Wessex Tales, London, 1928, p. 184.
2. Ibid, p. 230.
3. The Dynasts, p. 510.

Spirit Ironic

Warfare mere,
 Plied by the Managed for the Managers;
 To wit: by frenzied folks who profit nought
 For those who profit all!"¹

The title of this epic-drama The Dynasts is also ironic. Dynast means lord or ruler. The men who are the rulers and who have the power over countries believe themselves free and rulers in very earnest. Thomas Hardy, however, in his belief in necessity and very limited free-will, brought the irony into view--these dynasts are not really rulers but the puppets of fate. Other titles show the same double view, for instance, Life's Little Ironies. The irony in this title is chiefly in the word "little." The ironies in such stories as The Son's Veto and On the Western Circuit are anything but "little." There is a certain amount of ironic humour in the title The Well-Beloved. In this novel the man loves successively three generations of the same family but finally marries the woman with whom he had run away as a lad. The word "the" the title is therefore rather incongruous. Attention is called to the fact that, although he was pursuing an ideal love, he found it in many successive embodiments. The "double vision" is working again.

Thomas Hardy's attitude to his own philosophy is ironic. In 1901 in the Preface to Poems of the Past and Present the author does not lay claim to an organized philosophy. "Unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in hum-

1. Ibid, p. 515.

bly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change."¹

The introduction to The Dynasts re-states the same idea.

"Their (the Spirits') doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burden of the mystery' of this unintelligible world." ² When the two above

quotations are read in relation to the following poem, there is a great deal of irony in his view of his own philosophy.

"O my soul, keep the rest unknown!
It is too like a sound of moan
When the charnel-eyed
Pale Horse has nighed:
Yea, none shall gather what I hide!
Why load men's minds with more to bear
That bear already ails to spare?
From now alway
Till my last day
What I discern I will not say....
And if my vision range beyond
The blinkered sight of souls in bond,
--By truth made free--
I'll let all be,
And show to no man what I see."³

Thomas Hardy complained of man's lack of power to recognize that some things are mutually antagonistic and yet both good. Under the heading "Why true conclusions are not reached, notwithstanding everlasting palavers," Hardy said, "men endeavour to hold to a mathematical consistency in things, instead of realizing that certain things may be both good and mutually antagonistic: e.g. patriotism and universal humanity; unbelief and happiness."⁴

One of an artist's duties was, Hardy believed, to bring a double vision into play for his public. This idea is

1. Collected Poems, p. 75.

2. The Dynasts, p. viii.

3. Hardy, Thomas, Winter Words, London, 1928, p. 202.

4. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, op. cit., p. 54.

stated in a note that he wrote while he was "In the Gallery of the English Art club: 'If I were a painter, I would paint a picture of a room as viewed by a mouse from a chink under the skirting.'"1 But since Hardy did not specialize in painting, he did his best to write as 'a mouse from a chink under the skirting.' At another time Hardy said: "The business of the poet and novelist is to show the sorriest underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things."2 There is another entry in his notes on the same subject: "...If you look beneath the surface of any farce you see a tragedy; and, on the contrary, if you blind yourself to the deeper issues of a tragedy you see a farce."3 Proof that the poet definitely sought to present his work in this light of double vision is found in his statement: "Perhaps I can do a volume of poems consisting of the other side of common emotions."4

The admiration that Hardy had for Daniel Defoe and Anatole France also links him with the ironic school of writers. In 1913 Thomas Hardy expressed his admiration of Anatole France and mentioned the qualities in the author's works which are similar to his own. "In these days when the literature of narrative and verse seems to be losing its qualities as an art, and to be assuming a structureless and conglomerate character, it is a privilege that we should have come into our midst a writer who is faithful to the principles that make for permanence, who never forgets the value of organic form and symmetry, the force of reserve, and the emphasis of understatement, even in his lighter works."5

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928, op. cit., p. 308.
2. Ibid, p. 223.
3. Ibid, p. 282.
4. Ibid, p. 76.
5. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1882-1928, op. cit., p. 159.

There would seem to be little doubt that Thomas Hardy was a conscious ironist. His ironical view of his own life and life around him, the recurrence of the word irony, and the concept of irony in his books, his statement that his philosophy is but tentative when actually it remained fundamentally the same to the end, and the ironists whom he admired:--all indicate that he knew himself to be of the school of ironic writers.

Irony took many forms in Hardy's work. In this essay the subject is presented under the following headings: verbal irony, the irony of the underdog or reformer, the irony of detachment, and the irony of necessity. Finally, there is an attempt to show the effect of irony on Hardy's work.

VERBAL IRONY

Not even the glance
 She threw askance
 Foretold to me, nor did the tune or rhyme,
 That the words bore
 A meaning more
 Than that they were a ditty of the time.¹

Verbal irony, like all irony, has at its root a contrast between appearance and actuality. The distinguishing mark is that this particular form, as its name signifies, is shaped in words; "it is, so to speak, language mocking itself."² Haakon Chevalier defines verbal irony as: "the

1. Winter words, p. 4.

2. Sedgewick, G.G., of Irony, especially in the Drama, Toronto, 1935
 p.12.

familiar device by which words are so used as to withhold a part of their literal meaning or to suggest in some other way an idea different from that expressed."¹

Since verbal irony suggests more than one meaning, it is related to all ambiguous language, but in verbal irony the secondary meaning has significance. The truth is left "to be understood from tone, gesture, or known circumstance."² Verbal irony is to be seen in much rhetoric. It is the basis of hyperbole and litotes, synecdoche, allegory, and personification as well as proverb and description can be employed to produce ironic effects.

This verbal irony may be either conscious or unconscious. "Irony emerges always when expression springs from incongruity, though it becomes conscious only when perceived."³ A conversation in A Laodicean between Captain de Stancy and his natural son Willy Dare shows the difference between conscious and unconscious irony admirably. Dare is the first speaker:-

"It will be a light night hereabouts, I think, this evening."

"A very dark one for me."

"Nevertheless, I think it will be a light night. Au revoir."⁴

Willy Dare is enjoying his superiority: he realizes the full import of his own and of his father's words. He knows

1. Chevalier, Haakon M., op. cit. p. 30.

2. Sedgewick, G. G., op. cit., p. 9.

3. Chevalier, Haakon M., op. cit. p. 81.

4. Hardy, Thomas, A Laodicean, New York, 1905, p. 491.

that his statement has two meanings; one, the country will be lighted up by the moon and, second, by the fire when he burns the De Stancy castle. He understands, too, the irony of his father's statement. Yes, it will be a "dark" night for De Stancy! The girl he wished to marry and her husband are returning to take possession of his ancestral home. The knowledge that the castle is to be destroyed gives the remark a deeper meaning. The De Stancy heirlooms and the De Stancy seat will not exist after tonight. Willy Dare is consciously ironic; he has complete control of the situation. Captain de Stancy is unconsciously ironic; he has not complete knowledge of what he has uttered.

Hardy's country folk are often unconsciously ironic. For example, Liddy, Bathsheba's maid, is unwittingly ironic when she repeats Troy's remarks concerning Fanny Robin's young man (who is Troy himself) to her mistress (who is Troy's wife.) "One day I just named it to him, and asked him if he knew Fanny's young man. He said, 'O yes, he knew the young man as well as he knew himself, and that there wasn't a man in the regiment he liked better.'" The two-faced weapon of irony is the more effective, the closer the statement comes to the person concerned!

Hardy's peasants are frequently unconsciously ironic, as in their apt remarks concerning Jude Fawley and in their truthful comments about Clym Yeobright. At the hair-cutting Clym's motives for remaining at home are discussed.

1. Far from the Madding Crowd, p. 328.

"'A man who is doing well elsewhere wouldn't bide here two or three weeks for nothing,' said Fairway. 'He's got some project in's head--depend upon that.'"

'Well, 'a can't keep a diment shop here,' said Sam. 'I don't see why he should have had them two heavy boxes home if he had not been going to bide; and what there is for him to do here the Lord in Heaven knows.'"¹

After Clym has told them that his intention is to start a school on the heath instead of carrying on his old business, they again make some observations.

"And Clym resumed his way across the heath.

'He'll never carry it out in the world,' said Fairway. 'In a few weeks he'll learn to see things otherwise.'

'Tis good-hearted of the young man,' said another. 'But, for my part, I think he had better mind his business.'"²

These people have a quiet, unchanging element in their natures and live close to reality even though they are unconscious of that nearness. They say elemental things without any effort even as Shakespeare's country folk do. Their ironic view of life and of knowledge is reflected in their proverbs and sayings. There is an expression of this in Interlopers at the Knap when Mr. Darton, on his way to his wife-to-be, (who, in the end, did not marry him), says: "Ay, call it my fate! Hanging and wiving go by destiny."³

The innkeeper in A Laodicean is responsible for a gem in proverbial remarks: "'Tis woman's nature to be false except to a man, and a man's nature to be true except

1. Hardy, Thomas, The Return of the Native, London, 1927, p. 200.
2. Ibid, p. 202.
3. Wessex Tales, p. 181.

to a woman,' said the landlord of Sleeping-Green.
'However, all's well that ends well, and I have something else to think of than newly married couples.'¹

Actually the landlord will soon be very interested in this one married couple! Matthew Moon in Far from the Madding Crowd utters an ironic truth about Bathsheba Everdene and Serjeant Troy in proverb form. "'Ah,' said Matthew Moon, 'she'll wish her cake dough if so be she's over intimate with that man.'"²

This kind of irony is said with an innocent face and with an equally innocent heart. It is often an exact statement of an event which is to come, but which, at the time of the speech, is not apparent to the speaker. For instance, in The Lady Penelope Lady Penelope says, in jest, and with no idea that the words would ever have their literal meaning: "'Have patience, have patience, you foolish men! Only bide your time quietly, and, in faith, I will marry you all in turn.'"³ Yet it so happens that what she says in jest, she carries out and marries the three of them in turn! Another example of this same strain is Eustacia Vye's hatred of Egdon Heath and her insistence that if she remains upon the heath it will cause her death.

The more educated and understanding characters make use of a type of conscious irony. These people use figures of speech--the metaphor, the simile--which contain the possibility of irony, for although they are used in a figurative sense they may be interpreted by a listener in

1. A Laodicean, p. 489.
2. Far from the Madding Crowd, p. 261.
3. A Group of Noble Dames, p. 208.

a literal one. Mrs. Yeobright talks in a figurative manner to Susan Nunsuch's little boy in The Return of the Native after she mistakenly believes herself turned away from Clym's door.

"Mrs. Yeobright spoke to him as one in a mesmeric sleep. 'Tis a long way home, my child, and we shall not get there till evening.'

'I shall,' said her small companion. 'I am going to play narnels afore supper, and we go to supper at six o'clock, because father comes home. Does your father come home at six, too?'

'No: he never comes; nor my son either, nor anybody.'

'What have made you so down? Have you seen a ooser?'

'I have seen what's worse--a woman's face looking at me through a window-pane.'

'Is that a bad sight?'

'Yes. It is always a bad sight to see a woman looking out at a weary wayfarer and not letting her in.'

'Once when I went to Throope Great Pond to catch effets I seed myself looking up at myself, and I was frightened and jumped back like anything.'

...'If they had only shown signs of meeting my advances half-way how well it might have been done! But there is no chance. Shut out! She must have set him against me. Can there be beautiful bodies without hearts inside? I think so. I would not have done it against a neighbor's cat on such a fiery day as this!'

'What is it you say?'

'Never again--never! Not even if they send for me!'

'You must be a very curious woman to talk like that.'

'O no, not at all,' she said, returning to the boy's prattle. 'Most people who grow up and have children talk as I do. When you grow up your mother will talk as I do too.'

'I hope she won't; because 'tis very bad to talk nonsense.'

'Yes, child; it is nonsense, I suppose. Are you not nearly spent with the heat?'

'Yes. But not so much as you be.'

'How do you know?'

'Your face is white and wet, and your head is hang-down-like.'

'Ah, I am exhausted from inside.'

'Why do you, everytime you take a step, go like this?' The child in speaking gave to his motion the jerk and limp of an invalid.

'Because I have a burden which is more than I can bear.'

1

Figurative language, which the little boy interprets literally, is used by Mrs. Yeobright to convey her disappointment and bitterness in a very difficult situation. Even though the child did not understand the full meaning of the words, they impressed him so strongly that six weeks later he could recall them.

Similarly, in Jude the Obscure, Sue makes use of symbolical language as she talks to her foster child about the misfortunes of the family and the arrival of a new baby. The youngster cannot, for all his precocity, grasp the secondary significance of the words, but clutches their actual, face value meaning and brings about a dreadfully ironic situation.

"The failure to find another lodging, and the lack of room in this house for his father, had made a deep impression on the boy--a brooding, undemonstrative horror seemed to have seized him. The silence was broken by his saying, 'Mother, what shall we do tomorrow?'

'I don't know,' said Sue, despondently. 'I am afraid this will trouble your father.'

'I wish father was quite well, and there had been room for him! Then it wouldn't matter so much! Poor father!'

'It wouldn't!'

'Can I do anything?'

'No! all is trouble, adversity, and suffering!'

'Father went away to give us children room, didn't he?'

'Partly.'

'It would be better out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?'

'It would almost, dear.'

'Tis because of us children, too, isn't it, that you can't get a good lodging?'

'Well, people do object to children sometimes.'

'Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have 'em?'

'Oh, because it is a law of nature.'

'But we don't ask to be born?'

'No, indeed.'

'And what makes it worse with me is that you are not my real mother, and you needn't have had me unless you liked. I oughtn't to have come to 'ee--that's the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born!'

'You couldn't help it, my dear.'

'I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about!'

Sue did not reply. She was doubtfully pondering how to treat this too reflective child.

She at last concluded that, so far as circumstances permitted, she would be honest and candid with one who entered into her difficulties like an aged friend.

'There is going to be another in our family soon,' she hesitatingly remarked.

'How?'

'There is going to be another baby.'

'What!' The boy jumped up wildly. 'O God, mother, you've never a-sent for another; and such trouble with what you've got!'

'Yes, I have, I am sorry to say,' murmured Sue, her eyes glistening with suspended tears.

The boy burst out weeping. 'Oh, you don't care, you don't care!' he cried, in bitter reproach. 'How ever could you, mother, be so wicked and cruel as this, when you needn't have done it till we was better off, and father well! To bring us all into more trouble! No room for us, and father a-forced to go away, and we turned out to-morrow; and yet you be going to have another of us soon!... 'Tis done o'purpose--'tis--'tis!' He walked up and down sobbing.

'Y-you must forgive me, little Jude!' she pleaded, her bosom heaving now as much as the boy's. 'I can't explain; I will when you are older. It does seem--as if I had done it on purpose, now we are in these difficulties. I can't explain, dear. But it--it is not quite on purpose; I can't help it.'

'Yes it is--it must be! For nobody would interfere with us, like that, unless you agreed! I won't forgive you, ever, ever! I'll never believe you care for me, or father, or any of us any more!'

He got up, and went away into the closet adjoining her room, in which a bed had been spread on the floor. There she heard him say, 'If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all.' "i.

After the child has killed himself and the two younger children, Sue explains the situation to Jude.

"Ah; but it was I who incited him, really, though I didn't know I was doing it. I talked to the child as one should only talk to people of mature age. I said the world was against us, that it was better to be out of life than in it at this price, and he took it literally. And I told him I was going to have another child. It upset him. Oh, how bitterly he upbraided me!"

'Why did you do it, Sue?'

'I can't tell. It was that I wanted to be truthful. I couldn't bear deceiving him as to the facts of life. And yet I wasn't truthful, for with a false delicacy I told him too obscurely. Why was I half wiser than my fellow-women, and not entirely wiser? Why didn't I tell him pleasant untruths, instead of half realities? It was my want of self-control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them.'"¹

The characters, also, employ hyperbolé with conscious ironic intent. Hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration, one remove from the truth, but is stated as the truth to create an impression upon the hearer. An example of this is to be found in the story of The Honourable Laura when the servant says to her mistress's husband, whom she does not recognize: "Service here is as bad as being in a nunnery."² Yet another instance is seen in A Laodicean.

"All is lost now," replied the captain grimly.

'O no; you have got me, and I am a treasure to any man.'"³

No one knows his utter worthlessness better than Willy Dare and yet he can calmly tell his father of his excellent worth.

1. Ibid, p. 427.

2. A Group of Noble Dames, p. 268.

3. A Laodicean, p. 490.

Truly he can exaggerate and produce irony!

Litotes, the opposite of hyperbole, is used to bring about irony. This figure of speech is a deliberate understatement of truth. It is a conscious assumption of plainness and simplicity. It expresses much less than is intended to be conveyed to the mind of the hearer and by so doing often causes the hearer to question that which he has heard expressed. Frequently the statement is couched in a negative manner. An instance in Interlopers at the Knap is: "Mrs. Hall's fortitude visibly broke down. She had been brought up not without refinement and was even more moved by such a collapse of genteel aims as this than a substantial dairyman's widow would in ordinary have been moved."¹

In The Return of the Native Eustacia Yeobright avails herself of this same figure of speech in her conversation with Wildeve. She holds her own worth very high, and yet in order to appear not to do so she speaks in negatives. "'The marriage is no misfortune in itself,' she said with some little petulance."² This is Eustacia's answer to Wildeve's suggestion that it is her fault if her marriage is a misfortune. A few seconds later when Wildeve intimates that Clym has never known sorrow such as he has in losing the woman he loved, Eustacia answers: "'He is not ungrateful for winning her.'"³ Eustacia is, actually, singing her own praises in an adroit manner!

1. Wessex Tales, p. 191.

2. The Return of the Native, p. 333.

3. The Return of the Native, p. 333.

The irony that flows from the use of the figure of speech known as litotes leads to the most important variety of conscious irony--Socratic irony. In this type the characters use irony as a method of deliberate deception. The speaker speaks in such a way that he is misunderstood and he does this with perfect consciousness of what he is doing. The essential of Socratic irony is the assumption of an air of complete innocence and the pretence of ignorance concerning the subject under discussion. Willy Dare gives an example of this type of irony when he speaks of the processed photo of Somerset to Paula Power and her friends.

"'I am very sorry,' began Dare in a low voice to Mr. Power. 'I fear I was to blame for thoughtlessness in not destroying it. But I thought it was rather funny that a man should permit such a thing to be done, and that the humour would redeem the offence.'"¹

The speaker knows only too well that he produced the picture to damn his father's rival. The joke is premeditated. Dare has had the picture faked for such a purpose. Oh no! he was not "thoughtless" in not having it destroyed. Furthermore he knows that Somerset has not given anyone the opportunity to take such a picture of him. This conscious ironist has no intention that the "humour" should "redeem the offence."

Occasionally someone makes use of Socratic irony to lighten his work. For instance, the boy in The Woodlanders sees an opportunity to save himself some labour by

1. A Laodicean, p. 366.

flattering Creedle Giles when they are preparing dinner.

Giles loves to talk: "'O yes, Ancient days, when there was battles, and famines, and hang-fairs, and other poms, seem to me as yesterday. Ah, many's the patriarch I've seed come and go in this parish! There, he's calling for more plates. Lord, why can't 'em turn their plates bottom upward for pudding, as we used to do in former days.'"¹ The lad knows how to make use of other peoples

weaknesses; by countenancing them he saves himself work.

The Greeks regarded a practiser of "Socratic" irony with disdain and as little better than a hypocrite. This type of irony is always superbly conscious, although others may not be so aware of it. If the true import of this type of irony were realized, the scathing wit of it, there might be more reprisals taken against its authors.

Thomas Hardy also employs conscious irony directly. This is the case, for instance, in his use of allegory. It is interesting that irony and allegory may be defined in exactly the same words: the description or narration of one subject conveyed through a secondary subject. In each case there is a hidden meaning which is left to be conjectured by the reader. In pure allegory the emphasis is placed upon the similarity of the two subjects. Irony, or allegory mixed with irony, or allegory with an ironical purpose, brings the two subjects together and allows them to clash in order to bring the double vision to the fore. The two-fold definition of irony and allegory is well illustrated in one of Hardy's poems.

1. The Woodlanders, p. 86.

Heiress and Architect

She sought the studios, beckoning to her side
 An arch-designer, for she planned to build.
 He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled
 In every intervolve of high and wide--
 Well fit to be her guide.

"Whatever it be,"
 Responded he,
 With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,
 "In true accord with prudent fashionings
 For such vicissitudes as living brings,
 And thwarting not the law of stable things,
 That will I do."

"Shape me," she said, "high halls with tracery
 And open ogive-work, that scent and hue
 Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in through,
 The note of birds, and singings of the sea,
 For these are much to me."

"An idle whim!"
 Broke from him
 Whom nought could warm to gallantries:
 "Cede all these buds and birds, the zephyr's call,
 And scents, and hues, and things that falter all,
 And choose as best the close and surly wall,
 For winters freeze."

"Then frame," she cried, "wide fronts of crystal glass,
 That I may show my laughter and my light--
 Light like the sun's by day, the stars' by night--
 Till rival heart-queens, envying, wail, 'Alas,
 Her glory!' as they pass.

"O maid misled!"
 He sternly said
 Whose facile foresight pierced her dire;
 "Where shall abide the soul, when, sick of glee,
 It shrinks, and hides, and prays no eye may see?
 Those house them best who house for secrecy,
 For you will tire."

"A little chamber, then, with swan and dove
 Ranged thickly, and enrailed with rare device
 Of reds and purples, for a Paradise
 Wherein my love may greet me, I my Love,
 When he shall know thereof?"

"This, too, is ill,"
 He answered still,
 The man who swayed her like a shade.
 "An hour will come when sight of such sweet nook
 Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,
 When brighter eyes have won away his look,
 For you will fade."

Then said she faintly: "O, contrive some way--
 Some narrow winding turret, quite mine own,
 To reach a loft where I may grieve alone!
 It is a slight thing; hence do not, I pray,
 This last dear fancy slay!"

"Such winding ways
 Fit not your days,"
 Said he, the man of measuring eye;
 "I must even fashion as the rule declares,
 To wit: Give space (since life ends unawares)
 To hale a confined corpse adown the stairs;
 For you will die."¹

In this poem there is the individual experience, the surface story but beneath it there is a secondary meaning. The heiress represents hopeful, idealistic humanity, while the architect personifies the neglect and indifference of the universe. The allegory becomes apparent: humanity's illusions and plans are shattered one after the other until humanity is completely disillusioned by the force that drives the universe. The irony is in this double view of the situation, in seeing the individual experience and, in addition, the wider application of the story.

Closely connected with the use of allegory is the employment of personification. This personification readily goes over into the figure of speech called ^{op}prosop~~o~~ia,

1. Collected Poems, p. 68.

which includes ordinary personification and which is much wider in its extensions. In the usual personification an inanimate object is given a proper name and life of a mechanical nature, but in the wider figure of prosopoeia there is no feeling that an inanimate thing is the basis of the character. For example, in the poem Hap written in 1866 'chance' and 'time' are personified.

--Crass casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan...
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.¹

In contrast to this mechanical life, there is a spirit and a real personality created in the wider figure of speech. For instance, past ages and particular localities are endowed with personalities and shown to exert an influence or to act as ironic spectators.

The figure has within it the possibilities of much irony and Thomas Hardy does not fail to make use of them. The irony is chiefly in the settings of the stories, for the backgrounds are given personalities and treated as human beings. Rainbarrow in The Return of the Native has its own individuality even as the Roman amphitheatre at Casterbridge has in The Mayor of Casterbridge. These backgrounds against which the author likes to project his real life characters in his "show" take on the aspect of unchanging spectators watching the all-important genus homo who comes and goes and leaves very little behind to show that he,

1. Ibid, p. 7.

as an individual, ever existed. The contrast between these two forms a type of irony, for man disregards nature and considers her, when he does consider her, of very little importance; while he himself, he believes, is supreme. The builders of Rainbarrow and of the Roman Amphitheatre are gone, and individually are nearly all long since forgotten; but the inanimate symbols of the races remain and influence and watch man even today.

The endowment of Nature with a personality transcends a mere figure of speech. Egdon Heath is an outstanding instance; Thomas Hardy endues it with life. The spirit of Egdon is ageless and seems to have existed from time immemorial and to stretch into the future to time everlasting. Nature and Egdon are but two manifestations of the spirit that is present in nearly all Thomas Hardy's work--the "It," "First Cause," or "Immanent Will;" which is always the same, the spirit of the unknown, the indifferent, brooding unthinkingly over the lives of men.

Finally, the distinctive and individual style of Hardy's descriptions can be attributed to his ironic tendency. Hardy could produce accurate descriptions in a scientific way as he proved by the account of the approaching storm and the reactions of the birds and animals in Far from the Madding Crowd. However, this was not the way in which Hardy liked to do his descriptions and therefore they are not his most inspired ones. He preferred to treat his inanimate backgrounds as he did his characters; that is, to give

the reader information, a little at a time and to allow him to see the setting under different circumstances. Egdon Heath gains its individuality, not through brilliant colouring, but on the contrary from the dark, dull colours that are used in its portrayal. Hardy's method, like Defoe's, was to suggest the direction that the reader's mind should follow rather than to describe each detail. For this reason, both men enjoyed depicting night scenes, as witness Hardy's pictures of Egdon by night and Defoe's of London by lantern light.

The preference for describing scenes at night allows the reader to fill in the details and colours for himself. There is irony inherent in such a style, for the reader believes that he has read more than he has since the lines of suggestion lead him to fill in a great deal for himself. The result of the reader's contribution is that life is given to large units of background and that the all-pervading, evasive spiritual quality, one of the unforgettable qualities of Hardy's books, is created.

IRONY OF THE "UNDER-DOG" OR THE REFORMER

"For--while I am quite aware that a thinker is not expected, and, indeed, is scarcely allowed, now more than heretofore, to state all that crosses his mind concerning existence in this universe, in his attempts to explain or excuse the presence of evil and the incongruity of penalizing the irresponsible--it must be obvious to open intelligences that, without denying the beauty and faithful service of certain venerable cults, such disallowance of 'obstinate

questionings' and 'blank misgivings' tends to a paralysed intellectual stalemate."¹

Each age contains a small group whose ideas are very advanced and foretell changes which will take place. A representative of this intellectual minority very often desires to correct the abuses he sees and to reform the world. The world, however, does not welcome or encourage a radical, for such a person would, it believes, destroy its cherished institutions. In order to protect itself against a reformer, the world has two courses; first, it abuses him; second, it ignores him. The first of these is unpleasant, but the second is deadly. A man with a passion for reforming the world would not enjoy abuse, but he has to be heard if he is to accomplish anything. As long as the intellectual reformer remains the "under-dog," that is, the reformer without a large following, he must adopt some means of indirect expression.

Since "irony...is the ideal indirect method of expression",² it is often chosen by the reformer to state his ideas. The under-dog is overwhelmed by the collective judgement of humanity and cannot present a straight forward case to the world, but must present his ideas in a round-about way. The irony he selects is a conscious doubleness of language and a serious acceptance and extension of arguments to show the errors implicit in them. In the duplicity of his language and argument, the undiscerning

1. Collected Poems, p. 526.

2. Chevalier, Haakon M., op. cit., p. 86.

a sweeping dramatic satire of the squirearchy and nobility, London society, the vulgarity of the middle class, modern Christianity, church restoration, and political and domestic morals in general, the author's views, in fact, being obviously those of a young man with a passion for reforming the world--those of many a young man before and after him; the tendency of the writing being socialistic, not to say revolutionary."¹

George Meredith, who was reader for Macmillan's at that time, advised the young author not to publish the book because it would so antagonize its readers that Hardy would be ignored for years. Hardy accepted this advice, finally, and from that time on adopted irony as his method of expressing his "passion for reforming the world."

Of his own age Hardy had this to say: "We call our age an age of Freedom. Yet Freedom, under an incubus of armaments, territorial ambitions smugly disguised as patriotism, superstitions, conventions of every sort, is of such stunted proportions in this her so-called time, that the human race is likely to be extinct before freedom arrives at maturity."²

Thomas Hardy believed that there was sufficient scope for a reformer!

The attacks that Hardy launched against class barriers were quite definite. On this score he entered in his notebook: "I find that my politics are neither Tory nor Radical. I may be called an Intrinsicist. I am against privilege derived from accident of any kind, and am therefore equally opposed to aristocratic privilege and democratic privilege. (By the latter I mean the arrogant assumption that the only labour is hand-labour--a worse arrogance than that of the aristocrat,--the taxing of the worthy to help those masses of the population who will not help themselves when they might,

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, p. 81.
2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, p. 268.

etc.) Opportunity should be equal for all, but those who will not avail themselves of it should be cared for merely--not be a burden to, nor the rulers over, those who do avail themselves thereof."¹

The problem of class distinction is discussed in the novel A Pair of Blue Eyes. In this book, Stephen Smith, an architect, is sent by his London firm to do some restoration work on a church. The clergyman, the Reverend Mr. Swancourt of excellent family, is unfortunately ill when the architect arrives, but his gentle daughter Elfride welcomes him warmly according to her father's orders. Stephen is accepted as a member of the family and regarded with great favour by both father and daughter; indeed he is considered as a future son-in-law and husband. Stephen tells Elfride of his parentage before he goes in to ask her father for her hand; Elfride is disturbed^{by} his news, but insists that it does not affect her love for him. While the young lover is in the rector's study waiting for one of the villagers to leave, he overhears that John Smith, a village stone-mason, has hurt his hand; whereupon, as soon as the narrator departs, the following drama takes place:--

"'Please excuse me this evening! I must leave.

John Smith is my father.'

The rector did not comprehend at first.

'What did you say?' he enquired.

'John Smith is my father,' said Stephen deliberately.

A surplus tinge of redness rose from Mr. Swancourt's neck, and came round over his face, the lines of his features became more firmly defined, and his lips seemed to get thinner. It was evident that a

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, p. 268.

series of little circumstances, hitherto unheeded, were now fitting themselves together, and forming a lucid picture in Mr. Swancourt's mind in such a manner as to render useless further explanation on Stephen's part.

'Indeed,' the rector said, in a voice dry and without inflection.

This being a word which depends entirely upon its tone for its meaning, Mr. Swancourt's enunciation was equivalent to no expression at all.

'I have to go now,' said Stephen, with an agitated bearing, and a movement as if he scarcely knew whether he ought to run off or stay longer. 'On my return, sir, will you kindly grant me a few minutes' private conversation?'

'Certainly. Though antecedently it does not seem possible that there can be anything of the nature of private business between us.'

Mr. Swancourt put on his straw hat, crossed the drawing-room, into which the moonlight was shining, and stepped out of the French window into the verandah. It required no further effort to perceive what, indeed, reasoning might have foretold as the natural colour of a mind whose pleasures were taken amid genealogies, good dinners, and patrician reminiscences, that Mr. Swancourt's prejudices were too strong for his generosity, and that Stephen's moments as his friend and equal were numbered, or had even now ceased to be.¹

Mr. Swancourt himself neatly sums up the situation when, a little later, he is talking to Elfride. "'You confuse future probabilities with present facts,--what the young man may be with what he is. We must look at what he is, not what an improbable degree of success in his profession may make him. The case is this: the son of a working-man in my parish who may or may not be able to buy me up--a youth who has not yet advanced so far into life as to have any income of his own deserving the name, and therefore of his father's degree as regards station--wants to be engaged to you. His family are living in precisely the same spot in England as yours, so throughout this county--which is the world to us--you would always be known as the wife of Jack Smith--the mason's son, and not under any circumstances as the wife of a London professional man. It is the drawback, not the compensating fact, that is talked of always.'²

1. Hardy, Thomas, A Pair of Blue Eyes, London, 1927, p. 87.
2. Ibid, p. 92.

The absurdities and incongruities which were evident to the author in the class system are expressed in the form of, and emphasized by, irony to show why the system should be regarded as worn out. The first of these ironies is the rector's reaction to Elfride's love for Stephen. He does not for one moment think of the girls' happiness, but only of the great blow to his and, of course incidentally, her pride if she should marry someone whom he considers not their equal. Then, secondly, is there really any difference in the social status of Elfride and Stephen? Elfride comes from a family which has very distant relations in the nobility, but she has been brought up in the country and has not received very many advantages. Stephen, although his people are working people, has been given the advantage of entering a profession and being trained in London. Their positions are fairly equal although no one in the story actually realizes the fact. Mr. Swancourt's hurt pride will not allow him to treat Stephen as he has done previously. Elfride has been uneasy herself about Stephen's station in life, but the outspoken opposition of her father firmly establishes him in her regard. Stephen's mother is the closest to realizing the fact, but she is not consistent. Mrs. Smith's view of the relative position of the pair is shown in the following quotations.

"'Every woman nowadays,' resumed Mrs. Smith, 'if she marry at all, must expect a father-in-law of a rank lower than her father. The men have gone up so, and the women have stood still. Every man you meet is more the dand than his father; and you are

just level with her.'"¹

However, before many minutes have passed Mrs. Smith says: "'I don't read the papers for nothing, and I know men all move up a stage by marriage. Men of her class, that is, parsons, marry squire's daughters; squires marry lords' daughters; lords marry dukes' daughters; dukes marry queens' daughters. All stages of gentlemen mate a stage higher; and the lowest stage of gentlewomen are left single, or marry out of their class.'"²

When Stephen, who believes Elfride above him, points out to his mother that she has just said that he is in the same class as Elfride and then that he is not, Mrs. Smith sums up the irony in one sentence: "... 'So you are in her class, but 'tis what her people would call marrying out of her class.'"²

Elfride poses a nice question to her father when she says: "'But he is the same man, papa; the same in every particular; and how can he be less fit for me than he was before?'"³ The rector has to cover his real reason in order to satisfy Elfride and as he does so another irony emerges. The man is still the same but the rector's view of him has changed. As Mr. Swancourt states it: "'He appeared a young man with well-to-do friends, and a little property but having neither, he is another man.'"³

There is another factor that has a bearing on the situation, which is, the certainty that all the county will know if Elfride marries Stephen. The irony lies in that, if Stephen's parents had lived away from Elfride's residence

1. Ibid, p. 99.
2. Ibid, p. 100.
3. Ibid, p. 90.

and had not been known, Stephen would have been welcomed as an eligible young man, whose "station-would have--been what--his profession makes it,--and not fixed by--his father's humble position--at all."¹

That class distinctions are not in keeping with Christian principles is also lightly touched upon. The Reverend Mr. Swancourt preaches the Christian virtues of humility, uprightness, generosity and Christian brotherhood from his pulpit, but when he is called upon to put them into practise in his own home, he cannot do so. Irony is contained in the clash of these two sets of ideas, the Christian principles and the social prejudices, which have both been ingrained in the rector. Since it is a matter touching himself, the social prejudices which, he believes, keep up his honour, triumph.

That a person should be put into a rigid class because his parents had a certain position in life is no more just than that a man's occupation should determine his social standing. Thomas Hardy showed this irony in The Return of the Native. The reddleman, Diggory Venn, whose parents owned a dairy farm, is not considered the equal of other middle-class country folk while he was covered with redde; but the moment that he gives up this colourful trade, he becomes again a man to be respected. There is the same irony in the situation of Clym Yeobright, the successful young diamond merchant, who returned to his native

1. Ibid, p. 91.

village where he is honoured and made a local hero; however, when he can no longer continue his former profession, he is slighted. Even his own mother feels a slight tinge of disdain; surely, surely, this man clad as a furze cutter is no son of hers! Has some metamorphosis taken place to account for this two-fold attitude? Should individuals be judged as a member of a class or of a profession? Thomas Hardy saw the virtues and evils of both judgments and ironically presented them to his readers to start them thinking.

The irony in the response of society to individuals and their actions is also indicated. The public is fickle; it follows a leader like a flock of sheep showing neither intelligence nor discernment. Wildeve, the unscrupulous keeper of the Quiet Woman, has an excellent reputation, while Clym Yeobright, the idealist, sinks quickly into a peasant-like person with little or no reputation. This neglect is striking in its contrast to the interest that was shown in Clym when he first returned home. The upper-class Eustacia, of course, rightfully enjoys the respect of the neighborhood, while humble little Thomasin is as rightfully taken entirely for granted. Henchard, the Mayor of Casterbridge, is honoured and respected just so long as he is the Mayor; but the moment he does not hold the position, he is ignored. Thomas Hardy showed in these instances that public opinion is not only inconstant, but has no discrimination. The author perceived that there is no, or very little, relation between what a person actually is and how his fellow-men

regard him.

Private and public morals are subjected to the searching light of double vision. Hardy summarized the whole problem in a very few words; there is "the irritating necessity of conforming to rules which in themselves have no virtue."¹ One example of his treatment of the subject is the position of Phillotson, the school-master in Jude the Obscure, and his young wife Sue. This couple live in the greatest esteem of the villagers for a considerable time after their marriage. Sue, however, is not happy and the two live apart from each other unknown to their neighbors. Finally, after he goes to his wife's room one night by mistake and she jumps through the window, the considerate husband decides to give her her freedom. The decision is reached after a great deal of thought and unhappiness on the Schoolmaster's part. The villagers are horrified and demand an explanation from the teacher for allowing his wife to go and live with another man. He explains that his wife was not happy and he could not make her still more unhappy by forcing her to stay when she did not wish to do so. Furthermore, he adds, it is none of his business what she does after she has left him. There is irony in the Schoolmaster's revolt against the conventions to allow his wife her freedom even though he loves her dearly and would like to make use of the conventions to bring her back. The representatives of society want the letter of the conventions carried out; they do not consider the humanitarianism of the

man's decision. As far as the villagers are concerned he is countenancing immorality and is not, therefore, a fit person to teach their children. Both Phillotson and the villagers are sufficiently followers of convention to believe that Sue is living with Jude as his wife; the greatest irony of all these is that she is not doing so.

Law also receives its share of criticism. Hardy did not need to be told of the necessity for law, but he knew also the suffering that it caused individuals. The law is devised for the protection of the majority of humanity, and so often the individual is sacrificed. The individual warrants a certain amount of recognition, for he is an important element in human society, especially to himself. In his two-fold view Hardy allowed the reader to see both sides of the question.

The marriage law is one that Thomas Hardy attacked continually. It is not the institution of marriage but the law that holds mismatched persons to their marriage vow to which he objects. Arabella and Jude are not compatible, but the letter of the law protects Arabella and makes Jude suffer. Hardy chose Sue Bridehead, the sensitive cousin of Jude, as the type of woman who would rebel against the marriage law, but, not being strong enough, would be forced back into the observance of it. When Sue, downcast, feels that she must return to Phillotson, Jude says to her: "'Such remorse is not for you, my sensitive plant, but for the wicked ones of the earth--who never feel it.'"¹ The degree to which

1. Jude the Obscure, p. 435.

the marriage law and the divorce situation had become a restricting force, is shown indirectly in The Woodlanders.

In The Woodlanders Grace Melbury has married Edred Fitzpiers and greatly regrets choosing him instead of Giles Winterborne. The girl's hopes have been raised about a divorce that her father is trying to get for her, when an interview between Grace and Giles takes place. "She looked up suddenly from his long embrace and passionate kiss, influenced by a sort of inspiration, 'O, I suppose,' she stammered, 'that I am really free? That this is right? Is there really a new law? Father cannot have been too sanguine in saying...'"¹ Of course the irony is that "father" has been "too sanguine!"

Hardy said ironically, accepting for the First Cause blame for something that society could change: The first cause worked automatically and not reflectively like a sage; that at the framing of the terrestrial conditions there seemed never to have been contemplated such a development of emotional perceptiveness among the creatures subject to those conditions as that reached by thinking and educated humanity."²

A bouquet of praise, truly, to be handed to "thinking and educated humanity."

Many are the faults to be found also in the educational system. Opportunity should be equal for any child who wishes to have an education. Society is afraid to allow the intelligent to fulfill their possibilities, and because of this foolish fear kills off many of its best products instead of nurturing them.³ Winterborne, the

1. The Woodlanders, p. 351.

2. Jude the Obscure, p. 431.

3. Child, Harold, Thomas Hardy, New York, 1916, p. 67.

underdog in The Woodlanders, asks: "'Won't money do anything if you've promising material to work upon? Why shouldn't a Hintock girl, taken early from home and put under proper instruction, become as finished as any other young lady if she's got brains and good looks to begin with?'"¹ He is stating ironically that good training will, given equal mentalities, make a villager as well educated as a duke's son.

Thomas Hardy re-iterated the same theory in regard to Marty South, another character in The Woodlanders. "Nothing," said Hardy, "but a cast of the die of destiny had decided that the girl should handle the tool; and the fingers which clasped the heavy ash haft might have skilfully guided the pencil or swept the string, had they only been set to do it in good time."²

The character in Jude the Obscure who received the severest setbacks in his attempt to become educated is Jude Fawley. He proves that he can learn, by the manner in which he masters Latin and Greek. Why, then, does he not reach college? Jude is tricked at every turn. When he tries to obtain grammar books from Vilbert, the quack-doctor, he is sorely disappointed. Later, when he tries to enter a college at Christminster, he is turned away.

Hardy remarked: "It was not till now, when he found himself actually on the spot of his enthusiasm, that Jude perceived how far away from the object of that enthusiasm he really was. Only a wall divided him from those happy young contemporaries of his with whom he shared a common mental life; men who had nothing to do from morning till night but to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Only a wall--but what a wall!"³

It was this impenetrable wall that had been raised around the Universities of 1860-1870 that Hardy was trying so hard

1. The Woodlanders, p. 140.
2. Ibid, p. 8.
3. Jude the Obscure, p. 102.

to break down.

Christianity receives its share of ironic treatment. Hardy realized the beauty of the church service and the help that the church gives to the weak, but he himself could not find any comfort in the church teachings and traditions.

His attitude is apparent in The Impercipient:

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.¹

In the same poem he continues:

Yet I would bear my shortcomings
With meet tranquility,
But for the charge that blessing things
I'd liefer not have be.
O, doth a bird deprived of wings
Go earth-bound wilfully!²

Thomas Hardy would have liked to believe, but his reason would not permit him. In regard to God, Hardy entered in his note-book: "I have been looking for God, 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him. As an external personality, of course--the only true meaning of the word."³

Thomas Hardy saw a unity in the views of the theist and the atheist; this unity, however, is not perceived by them. The theist and the atheist are, so to speak, opposite sides of the same coin. Hardy expressed this irony in the following passage: "It would be an amusing fact,

1. Collected Poems, p. 59.

2. Ibid, p. 60.

3. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, p. 293.

if it were not one that leads to such bitter strife, that the conception of a First Cause which the theist calls 'God,' and the conception of the same that the so-styled atheist calls 'no-God,' are nowadays almost exactly identical. So that only a minor literary question of terminology prevents their shaking hands in agreement, and dwelling together in unity ever after."¹

The ideals that the author kept before him were the essentials of Christianity--humanity, and true morality. The Christian Church, which is built to preserve the Christian ideals, does not exact, or always encourage, these qualities. Hardy recognized both sides of the question. For true Christians, like Clym Yeobright, he had the utmost respect; but, for men like Wildeve, self-termed Christians, he had the profoundest disdain. It is people like Arabella and Wildeve, who are definitely not Christian, who show the insincerety of some church-going. These people attend church only for their own purposes; the church, glad of material support, accepts them.

The people who try to fool themselves into believing that they are Christians, or who really do so, who go to church on Sundays and follow their own pursuits all week, are mentioned in The Distracted Preacher. Richard Stockdale, the curate, asks Lizzy the smuggler to come and hear his last sermon. Here is Hardy's comment on the situation: "Lizzy, who was a church-goer on Sunday mornings, frequently attended Stockdale's chapel in the evening with the rest of the double-minded..."²

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, p. 82.
2. Wessex Tales, p. 291.

Lizzy is double-minded not only in her divided attention to the churches, but in her attention to the church and to very worldly considerations as well. The ironies perceptible only to the discerning in a casual survey of a congregation are surely being pointed out clearly enough here!

The cruelties of Christian to fellow-Christian and to his animal companions are shown in almost every book that Hardy wrote. Animal suffering is found as a part of the background in The Woodlanders, Far from the Madding Crowd and Jude the Obscure. The man-made traps that torture the rabbits in the last named novel are no less cruel than the man-made traps that torture human beings. An instance of man's inhumanity to his fellow-men, drawn from Jude the Obscure, is Arabella's treatment of Jude on his deathbed. She leaves him alone to ask for water and to die by himself, while she goes out to enjoy herself. Truly a noble Christian she is, completely in accord with Christian principles! A direct statement of Hardy's ironic attitude to Christianity; and to its evils especially, is: "I almost think that people were less pitiless towards their fellow-creatures--animal and human--under the Roman Empire than they are now; so why does not Christianity throw up the sponge and say, I am beaten, and let another religion take its place." ¹ The reformer over-stated the case in true ironic fashion to try and bring about a change for the better.

Religion and morality have no necessary connection.

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, p. 192.

Sue, speaking of her University friend, says: "'He was the most irreligious man I ever knew, and the most moral. An intellect at Christminster is new wine in old bottles. The mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster itself will have to go. To be sure, at times one couldn't help having a sneaking liking for the traditions of the old faith, as preserved by a section of the thinkers there in touching and simple sincerity; but when I was in my saddest, rightest, mind I always felt,

O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbetted Gods!"¹

The faith held by a large proportion of the world's population is not keeping pace with world development; there is the irony. By bringing the fact to man's attention, Hardy was trying to reform and save Christianity before it became a worn-out and useless preserver of dogmatic superstitions.

Neither Christianity nor education has effaced the superstitions and traditions of Wessex, but they have

"hidden them away beneath a mantle of shamefacedness and pretended scepticism. This fact is well illustrated in The Mayor of Casterbridge by the conference that Henchard has with the conjuror and weather-prophet whose clients feign to consult him merely as a whim but who is consoled for the superficial irony of their manner towards him by their fundamental belief in his supernatural powers."²

Thomas Hardy recorded many of the folk superstitions. Several of these are found in Tess of the D'Urbervilles. As Tess and Clare are leaving after the marriage ceremony, the cock crows thrice. The members of the household, with foreboding in their hearts, try to explain the omen as a forecast of change in the weather. Tess hears

1. Jude the Obscure, p. 185.

2. Chew, Samuel C., Thomas Hardy, New York, 1929, p. 122.

the sound of the ghostly D'Urberville coach several times. This sound meant disaster to a descendant of the D'Urbervilles.

The country folk try in many ways to foretell the future. In The Woodlanders the young girls go out on Midsummer Eve to the woods and follow the directions in the witch's book to try to see their future husbands. Another method for looking into the future is used by Bathsheba Everdene in Far from the Madding Crowd. She uses a Bible and a key. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles Joan Durbeyfield has a witch's book in her possession but so great is her awe of it that each evening it is removed to the woodshed and left there for the duration of the night.

There is little need to point out the irony in Hardy's apparent acceptance of these superstitions. However, there is irony in his use of them to try and tell more enlightened folks that they accept customs that are just as outworn as the customs of the country folk.

The human race is bounded by superstitions in many shapes and forms. These superstitions, which are different for each group of people in the world--races, communities, classes, sects, professions, trades--are yet surprisingly similar in foundation when they are analysed. It was time, Hardy thought, that Humanity could say with Jude: "I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas: what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine--if, indeed, they ever discover it--at least, in our

time. 'For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?--and who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?'¹

Hardy believed that if he pointed out sufficient discrepancies, and ironies, people would develop more discernment and reform the world instead of merely accepting conventions and customs without thinking. That people could better their lot if they would is shown in the poem Thoughts at Midnight.

Mankind, you dismay me
 When shadows waylay me!--
 Not by your splendours
 Do you affray me,
 Not as pretenders
 To demonic keenness,
 Not by your meanness,
 Nor your ill-teachings,
 Nor your false preachings,
 Nor your banalities
 And immoralities,
 Nor by your daring
 Nor sinister bearing;
 But by your madnesses
 Capping cool badnesses,
 Acting like puppets
 Under Time's buffets;
 In superstitions
 And ambitions
 Moved by no wisdom,
 Far-sight, or system
 Led by sheer senselessness
 And prescienceless
 Into unreason
 And hideous self-treason....
 God, look he on you,
 Have mercy upon you!²

1. Jude the Obscure, p. 412.

2. Winter Words, p. 5.

THE IRONY OF DETACHMENT OR SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

"Have you much wondered, Moon,
 On your rounds,
 Self-wrapt, beyond Earth's bounds?"
 "Yea, I have wondered, often wondered
 At the sounds
 Reaching me of the human tune
 On my rounds."¹

In order to appreciate a situation, it is necessary to be withdrawn from it. Once away from a crowd a person becomes conscious of the whole crowd rather than of only himself. He is capable of clearer discernment than he was as a member of that group. As Hardy remarked: "London appears not to see itself. Each individual is conscious of himself, but nobody conscious of themselves collectively."² So it is in life. If a person joins in with his fellows he is usually conscious only of himself. The reason for the narrowness of his consciousness is that he can not fully realize what is going on around him because he is taking part in the events. However, when he steps from the turmoil of life and stands to one side, he becomes increasingly aware of what is happening.

Thomas Hardy detached himself from the activities of the world. More than once he referred to himself as a "gazer," a "seer," and a "watcher." He freed himself from the responsibilities of action to see what was taking

1. Collected Poems, p. 411.

2. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 271.

place in the world. The inactivity is, however, physical only. Intellectually Hardy grasped the advantage that can be derived from the position of observer, which is, that his inactivity frees him from responsibility while giving his mind free play.

From his peculiar habit of inactivity, Hardy developed an ability to see two sides of a question or of a situation, while at the same time realizing its essential unity. He did not try to reconcile these two sides; he believed that they were merely two sides of a unity and that they will eventually be regarded as such by the world at large. In this "double vision" is to be found the secret of much of Hardy's irony and especially of his irony of detachment.

Of double vision and Thomas Hardy, Harold Child says: "It is a peculiar gift; there is no author in whom it is so highly developed. If he sees the littleness, he also sees the greatness. Watching from infinity, he shows human life as futile and trivial. Down in the stress and turmoil, looking out from the very heart of some farmer or milkmaid, he shows human life heroically grand. There is no trace in his work of contempt for human will, endurance and passion. All may be futile; but all are engrossing to the interest, and all may compel admiration."¹

The first of the ironies that Hardy perceived from his point of vantage is the difference between the nobility of life, the grandeur of it from the personal point of view and the smallness of that same life in the whole plan of existence. Hardy was original in this recog-

1. Child, Harold, op. cit., p. 14.

niton of the insignificance of a man in the complete order of the universe. Man had, for too long a time, magnified his own importance until he actually believed in it. To dwarf man's belief in this importance and to make man realize his position on the earth and the earth's position among the other bodies of the universe was one of Hardy's purposes. In order to achieve this purpose Hardy portrayed the all-important person, man, against a background that is immensely large, ageless and desolate.

Man's importance diminishes when he has Egdon Heath for a background. Take, for instance, the reddleman and his cart as seen by Captain Vye: "At length he discerned, a long distance in front of him, a moving spot, which appeared to be a vehicle, and it proved to be going the same way as that in which he himself was journeying. It was the single atom of life that the scene contained, and it only served to render the general loneliness more evident."¹

In turn the reddleman watches Captain Vye continue on his way. "The reddleman watched his form as it diminished to a speck on the road and became absorbed in the thickening films of night."²

Egdon is but one representation of the powerful setting that overshadows man and makes his position viewed from a distance ironical. Surely puny man can not believe himself more powerful than Egdon Heath "a type of the power that governs the world--immemorially old, barren, heedless; and, in fact, though not by intention, in its inevitable influence upon the human heart, sinister."³

1. The Return of the Native, p. 9.

2. Ibid, p. 12.

3. Child, Harold, op. cit. p. 14.

value of human endeavour over unconscious nature. Hardy's comment on the secondary view was:

"An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand."¹

In Hardy's idea each person is surrounded by his own particular world and conscious of his own world alone. This private universe is built by all the experiences of life until it is quite distinct from that of any other person. As he said of Mrs. Yeobright:

"Persons with any weight of character carry, like planets, their atmospheres along with them in their orbits; and the matron who entered now upon the scene could, and usually did, bring her own tone into a company. Her normal manner among the heathfolk had that reticence which results from the consciousness of superior communicative power. But the effect of coming into society and light after lonely wandering in darkness is a sociability in the comer above its usual pitch, expressed in the features even more than in the words."²

Yet another instance of Hardy's belief that people are surrounded by a world of their own is found under the heading, "A service at St. Mary Abbots, Kensington...

Could these true scenes in which this congregation is living be brought into church bodily with the personages, there would be a churchful of jostling phantasmagorias crowded like a heap of soap bubbles, infinitely intersecting, but each seeing only his own. That bald-headed man is surrounded by the interior of the Stock Exchange; that girl by the jeweller's shop in which she purchased yesterday. Through this bizarre world of thought circulates the recitative of the parson--a thin solitary note without cadence or

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 153.
2. The Return of the Native, p. 35.

change of intensity--and getting lost like a bee in the clerestory."¹

People are limited by their own personalities, even though they do not realize it. This is another of the ironies that Hardy saw from his withdrawn position. No matter to what station of life a person belongs he is always restricted, unknown to himself, by unbreakable bonds. As Hardy observed:

"Some wear jewels and feathers, some wear rags. All are caged birds; the only difference lies in the size of the cage."²

Different circumstances bring forth different reactions from men, yet the same circumstance will bring the same reaction. In an entry in his notes Hardy said:

"Different purposes, different men. Those in the city for money-making are not the same men as they were when at home the previous evening. Nor are these the same as they were when lying awake in the small hours."³

Yet individuals do not recognize any change in themselves!

Everyone believes that his personality is the best and that no one else's can compare with his. Each person judges all others and uses as his measuring stick his own character. Ironically, it is the only way of evaluation that a person has. As Hardy remarked:

"People who to one's self are transient singularities are to themselves the permanent condition, the inevitable, the normal, the rest of mankind being to them the singularity. Think, that those (to us) strange transitory phenomena, their personalities,

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op., cit., p. 277.
2. Ibid, p. 224.
3. Ibid, P. 267.

are with them always, at their going to bed, at their uprising!"¹

An even greater irony is that a person can not even be himself. This fact is admirably shown in one of Napoleon's speeches during a moment of insight.

"Napoleon (with sudden despondency)
That which has worked will work!--since Lodi Bridge
The force I then felt move me moves me on
Whether I will or no; and oftentimes
Against my better mind...Why am I here?
--By laws imposed on me inexorably!
History makes use of me to weave her web
To her long while aforetime-figured mesh
And contemplated character; no more."²

Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead can not fulfil their natures. Jude and Sue are both haunted by the ideas which were instilled in them during their early childhood. They truly believe that they are not free agents and are really restricted by a superstition of their own making. Each believes that happiness can never come in marriage, and as a result it certainly does not. Another example of a person building a superstition for himself is the case of Eustacia Vye. She, probably because of the stories told about her own mother's elopement, decides that there is no happiness on Egdon for her.

The worlds of individuals are hard to penetrate. There is irony constantly in the misunderstandings caused by people not understanding another person's viewpoint. As Hardy remarked:

"Every error under the sun seems to arise from

1. Ibid, p. 271.

2. The Dynasts, p. 330.

thinking that you are right yourself because you are yourself, and other people wrong because they are not you."¹

Each person acts as an independent entity, considering no one else in his plans. Consider, for example, the unfortunate married life of Jude and Arabella Fawley. Neither make any attempt to consider the other. It is true that Jude tries to make a home at the beginning of his married life. His heart, however, is not in the attempt and he is glad of any excuse to release him from his bargain. Another example is the marriage of Clym and Eustacia Yeobright. Eustacia, once married, does not try to see her husband's side of the picture, but she only pursues her own ends with no consideration and no sympathy for her maimed, over-ambitious husband. To take another instance, does Angel Clare on his wedding night attempt to see poor Tess's side to the unhappy events preceeding her marriage, or to the unfortunate carelessness on her part that left him without information that she believes he possessed?

These are all the cases of man and wife, the cases of people who choose to live together and who should be, if any are, close to one another. Even children and their parents are not in very close harmony. Clym and his mother drift apart until they do not understand one another. If misunderstandings arise between two who are related by blood or who chose to live together, how much greater must

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 215.

be the gulfs in the relations of other people who meet in casual ways and transact their business.

Different planes of life also do not come into very close contact. Jude Fawley finds at Christminster that the life of a labouring man has no intercourse with a life of higher education. Similarly the divine and earthly planes of existence do not come in direct contact with one another. Hardy saw them working apparently unmindful of each other, like parallel lines that run even into infinity without meeting. The irony of this situation caused Hardy despair. If only he could have known that the divine either cared about or delighted in human misery, he would have felt much more satisfied. As he said:

"If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love 's loss is my hate's profiting.'"¹

The irony is twofold. First of all, much of the suffering man goes through in life, is caused either by himself or some other human being. Secondly, while man complains of the divine's indifference to man, man is similar to the unconscious first cause of which he complains so bitterly. As Hardy himself pointed out so well, man puts himself on a pedestal and views the sufferings of the animal kingdom from afar. In The Woodlanders the human action is carried on against a background of suffering

1. Collected Poems, p. 7.

animals. To this cruelty of steel traps, hunting and barbarism of the forest, man takes as aloof an attitude, on the average, as does the divine to man himself. In Far from the Madding Crowd the animals are described beautifully; their sufferings are, while not dwelt upon, shown as a terrible catastrophe; yet, mankind as a whole neither knows nor cares about them at all.

Double vision caused Hardy to see the irony of many things in the clash of "what things are and what they ought to be"¹ and also of the ambitions of man and the value of actual attainment. An instance is found in The Tale of Two Tragedies. In this story the two brothers work very hard to rise in the church, but are dragged down by a ne'er-do-well father. Finally, on the eve of their success, the father turns up again and falls into a ditch. The son does nothing to save him and he drowns. The brothers are successful in the church but their success brings them no satisfaction. They find their honours and position are an empty mockery of what they believed they would be.

Hardy analysed Jude the Obscure from this point of view of ironical contrasts. "The 'grimy' features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. The throwing of the pizzle, at the supreme moment of his young dream, is to sharply initiate this contrast. But I must have lamentably failed, as I feel I have, if this requires explanation and is not self-evident. The idea was meant to run all through the novel. It is, in fact, to be dis-

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, op. cit., p. 226.

covered in everybody's life, though it lies less on the surface perhaps than it does in my poor puppet's."¹

Then shortly after he continued:

"Of course the book is all contrasts--or was meant to be in its original conception. Alas, what a miserable accomplishment it is, when I compare it with what I meant to make it!--e.g. Sue and her heathen gods set against Jude's reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the Pagan, Sue the saint; marriage, no marriage; &c., &c."²

Hardy found a type of happiness in his withdrawal from active participation in events. He could see the ironies around him and portray them for his readers without having to decide that one side of the question was correct. He accepted both sides and believed that by standing aside from the world, a person could see and accept the two apparently clashing sides of a question. It was motion and decision that caused him unhappiness. As he said:

"It is the on-going--i.e. the 'becoming' of the world that produces its sadness. If the world stood still at a felicitous moment there would be no sadness in it. The sun and the moon standing still on Ajalon was not a catastrophe for Israel, but a type of Paradise."³

1. Ibid, p. 41.

2. Ibid, p. 42.

3. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, op. cit., p. 265.

THE IRONY OF NECESSITY

"What do you think of it, Moon,
 As you go?
 Is life much, or no?"
 "O, I think of it, often think of it
 As a show
 God ought surely to shut up soon
 As I go."¹

The irony of necessity is the irony in the arrangement and progression of happenings as seen by an observer. In other words, it deals with the "falling" of events. The bystander believes that certain results must be brought about and that nothing can change the proceedings or the conclusion. This type of irony consists of two chief subdivisions, which will be referred to as dramatic irony, and the irony of fate or circumstance.

Dramatic irony is one form of preparation for events in a drama. A story or play is a special world, complete in its rules and illusions and controlled by the author. This make-believe world must be perfectly consistent; nothing must happen in it to violate the onlooker's sense of rightness and fitness. One situation must have within it the seeds from which a succeeding situation will grow. In the present situation the bystander can see, if he has sufficient knowledge, the realities which will bring about quite a different state of affairs, yet he can not change the outcome. Dramatic irony is the passive pleasure that an onlooker gains in watching the development of the

1. Collected Poems, p. 410.

of the story. This onlooker has "the sense of an illusion under control of knowledge but beyond control of interference. The spectator sees Appearance and Reality as one and yet in conflict."¹

Thomas Hardy modelled his work in the form of drama, and therefore it lent itself to the use of dramatic devices. One of these, that Hardy used continually, is dramatic irony. There is an example of its use in The Return of the Native. Had Mrs. Yeobright been told that her successful young son, a diamond merchant home from Paris for a visit, would be working as a furze-cutter on the heath, and that she would be turned from his door to die alone before many months had passed, she would have raised her hands in horror. Yet that is what actually did happen.

There are a number of ironies in the first situation that point to the development of the second. The first irony is that Clym Yeobright is no longer a diamond merchant, for he has become dissatisfied with the trade and given up his position. Secondly, he has not come home for a visit, but he has returned home to stay. In addition, he has made plans to become a teacher. Lastly, while he appears of sound body, his eyes are not strong enough to stand the strain of the studying which he wishes to do. Those are the ironies, the clashes between reality and appearance, which make provision for the later situation.

How do these ironies prepare the way for what follows? Eustacia Vye, first of all, is attracted to Clym

1. Sedgewick, G. G., op. cit., p. 94.

because of the apparent glamour of his circumstances, and they are soon married. Eustacia realizes the irony later when she says:

"You deceived me--not by words, but by appearances, which are less seen through than words."¹

Eustacia is dissatisfied, when Clym is forced to cut furze because of his eyes, and renews her friendship with Wildeve. Clym's mother does not approve of Eustacia, and so mother and son become estranged. When Wildeve goes to Clym's house, Eustacia admits him and talks to him. Mrs. Yeobright, ironically, goes to her son's house on the same hot summer's day to try to become friends with her son and daughter-in-law. Now, when Mrs. Yeobright arrives at her son's house, Clym is asleep and Eustacia is talking to Wildeve. Eustacia hurries Wildeve out of the back door and believes that Clym has gone to admit his mother. However, Clym is still asleep. By the time Eustacia reaches the door, Mrs. Yeobright has gone, believing herself cast off by her son, to meet her fate upon the heath. The second situation has been made possible because of the ironies in the first situation.

Another type of dramatic irony is called "peripetia." In this type of irony a train of events set in motion to produce one definite result, produces the exact opposite. The story To Please his Wife² has an excellent example of this type of irony. Joanna Jolliffe is jealous

1. The Return of the Native, p. 389.

2. Hardy, Thomas, Life's Little Ironies, London, 1923.

of Emily Lester's good fortune and of the education that Emily's two sons will have. In order to have as much money as Emily, and to educate her sons as well as Emily's two, she sends her husband and two boys on a journey to Newfoundland. The conclusion of this venture is the exact opposite of the one that Joanna expects. The ship is lost and with it all the money the Jolliffe family has, as well as Shadrach Jolliffe, and the two boys, for whom the mother wanted the money. The journey which was to have brought the wherewithal to educate the sons, brings the loss of what means they already had as well as of the husband and sons.

Just as there are many different kinds of drama, so are there many kinds of dramatic irony. They range all the way from tragic irony to a mildly humorous type. Irony is found in all its degrees of intensity in Thomas Hardy's work.

The initial flaw in a protagonist's character, or "hamartia" as the Greeks called it, is the mainspring of tragedy and tragic irony. Usually there is a person who, to a superficial onlooker, appears to be perfect, but who will, under the stress of certain circumstances, break down. The flaw need not be a conscious error, or even a bad quality;

"nay, the tragic irony sometimes lies precisely herein, that owing to some inherent frailty or flaw, it may be human shortsightedness, it may be some error of blood or judgment--the very virtues of a man hurry him forward to his ruin."¹

1. Butcher, G. H., Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, London, 1902, p. 321.

An instance of the use of tragic irony is found in the life of Tess D'Urbeyfield in Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Tess appears to be a good, sound girl who will raise the level of her family through her assiduous care. The keynotes of her character are goodness, obedience, and trustworthiness. Tess works hard to help her mother in the house with her younger brothers and sisters. She also tries her best to carry part of her ne'er-do-well father's load in supporting the family. Then the parson, interested in local history, unearths the former glories of the D'Urberville name. Tess' mother hits upon the idea of claiming relationship with the more wealthy part of the "family" and she sends Tess to the grand house. The young girl carries her mission through to the best of her ability, although she dislikes it immensely. Ironically, the very characteristics which should have helped her to success in life--implicit goodness and obedience--bring her into a situation with which she is unable to deal.

Tess' tragic fault is that her goodness is passive. She is just, herself, and expects others to be just. She asks to be left to go her own way unmolested, to do her duty and leave others to do theirs, without interference from her. The farm people will allow her to work out her own salvation, but her supposed cousin cannot or will not do so. After he wrongs her, she will not defend herself. She accepts the harm that befalls her as she has accepted her father's drunkenness--meekly and unquestioningly.

Again, it is her passive goodness which leads her into trouble with Angel Clare. She can not bring herself to tell him the sad story of her life, but the honesty in her nature will not permit her to marry him without telling him her story. She writes him a letter, which is unfortunately misplaced, and so he does not know of the unhappiness in her life until after they are married. Then he turns against her, and she accepts the punishment meted out to her. The cousin finds Tess working on a farm and persuades her to live with him by telling her that Angel Clare will never return to her. When her long-separated husband does return to her, she turns upon her tormentor and kills him. Her passive goodness has led her into the intolerable situation, and the justness of her character forces her to kill the emotional "cousin" evangelist. The irony of the situation is that the very justness and fairness of her character, helped by her passive goodness, cause her downfall.

The ironical effect at the end of A Pair of Blue Eyes is, to say the least, grotesque and gruesome. Two men, Henry Knight and Stephen Smith, are on their way to Endelstow. The two have been friends, but are estranged by their love for the same girl, Elfride Swancourt. They are journeying together to ask Elfride the same question: Will you marry me? They notice a solemn coach on the train, but are so engrossed in their rivalry, that they do not trouble to find out what it signifies. The hideous grim humour of the irony is that, unknown to the men, Elfride's coffin is in

VII

"'It is wrong!' I maintained, 'to divide them,
Near forty years wed. '
'Very well, sir. We promise, then, they shall abide them
In one wing together,' they said."

VIII

Then I sank--knew 'twas quite a fordome thing
That misery should be
To the end!..To get freed of her there was the one
thing
Had made the change welcome to me.

IX

To go there was ending but badly;
'Twas shame and 'twas pain;
"But anyhow," thought I, "thereby I shall gladly
Get free of this forty years' chain."

X

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-hatches Weir.¹

Ironically the only consolation the poor old man has had in going to spend his last days in the workhouse is that he will be separated from his wife!

The irony of fate is concentrated dramatic irony extended to the "theatre of life." The author and the reader regard the spectacle of life itself. In dramatic irony the author has control of the show, but in the irony of fate the exhibition is controlled by a power which cannot be commanded by him. The author and the reader see life in a particular way; they observe it as a show that can not be changed. The irony of fate implies a deterministic view of life and a spectator who believes that he is sufficiently well-informed to see the working of the power behind the

1. Ibid, p. 195.

world and to see human activity as well. This irony is the poet's expression of his faith in the superiority of his own philosophy. It is closely linked with his philosophy of life. It may be regarded as his conceit in believing that he has discovered the true meaning of the universe, while other people are not intelligent or fortunate enough to perceive the truth.

The philosophy of life that Thomas Hardy developed and that he expressed in such mature fashion in The Dynasts lends itself to the use of the irony of fate. The basis is his belief in the essential unity of all things, animate and inanimate, through the fibres of the Immanent, "This viewless, voiceless Turner of the Wheel"¹ and his realization that the component parts of the unity regard themselves as individual units. These latter

".....dream
 Their motions free, their orderings supreme;
 Each life apart from each, with power to mete
 Its own day 's measures; balanced, self complete,
 Though they subsist but atoms of the One
 Labouring through all, divisible from none."²

"An ironic effect of truly overwhelming intensity is produced, in view of the irresistible workings of the Autonomous Will, by the descriptions of men's elaborate plannings, and determinations, and purposes. The actors in the historical drama consider themselves free indeed; yet they are only playthings in the hands of the Will. The speeches in the English Parliament, the political decisions of ministers and princes, the intricate web of mutual deception by lies, intrigues, treaties, and counter-treaties, spun out over the whole of Europe, individual and collective acts of heroism

1. The Dynasts, p. 2.

2. Ibid, p. 7.

on the battlefield, and similar manifestations of a supposedly free will on the part of man, able to influence the course of events,--what are they but the movings of the tissues of one universal Brain?"¹

Napoleon feels the working of the Will, and yet ironically, he believes that he can determine events.

Napoleon shows his determinative view in a speech to the Queen of Prussia.

"Know you, My Fair
That I--ay, I--in this deserve your pity.--
Some force within me, baffling mine intent,
Harries me onward, whether I will or no.
My star, my star is what's to blame--not I
It is unswervable!"²

Yet Napoleon, while he is conscious of this force, nevertheless ironically reserves a special place for himself in the world. He believes that he is influencing history, not that he is merely working out the web of the Immanent Will.

"What!--Is, then,
My scheme of years to be disdained and dashed
By this man's like, or wretched moral coward,
Whom you must needs foist on me as one fit
For full command in pregnant enterprise!"³

The Spirits themselves are no more free than man is. The Spirit of the Years reminds the boastful Spirit Sinister of the fact in these words, "Thinking thou-willst thou dost but indicate."⁴ The Spirit of the Years has to remind the Spirit of the Pities continually that no interference can

1. Brennecke, Ernest, Thomas Hardy's Universe, Boston, 1924, p. 102.

2. The Dynasts, p. 179.

3. Ibid, p. 57.

4. Ibid, p. 8.

have any result at all.

Ironical effects are also produced by the use of the cross-purposes of human actors. Napoleon plans against the English generals; Nelson plans against Napoleon; Napoleon plans against Alexander. There are countless antagonisms and cross-purposes in The Dynasts, but there is only one Will. That Will is unmindful (alike) of Napoleon, of Nelson, and of Alexander. The irony is that the Will is in every human being, and therefore Hardy sees "Appearance and Reality as one and yet in conflict."

Since there is a portion of the Will in every person, there follows another irony. That is, although a man believes he can change his character, he cannot--

"the action of a man may change, but...his spiritual nature, his character, remains what it always was."¹

The irony is brought out very clearly in Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Alec D'Urberville thinks that he has changed his nature through his conversion, but it is only his action that he has changed; his spiritual condition remains exactly what it had been before the conversion. Arabella of Jude the Obscure is another example of a person who cannot change her nature. Even though she changes her action and goes to church, she never comes anywhere near changing her animal-like nature.

Thomas Hardy, as well as Schopenhauer, "finds the

1. Brennecke, Ernest, op. cit. p. 107.

essential unity of freedom and necessity. It is a mistake to speak of absolute necessity; for the necessity of an event is always conditional upon its cause: only in its relation to this cause it is necessary, but with reference to everything else it is casual and a matter of chance. Neither is there any absolute chance. For even its queerest pranks will with advancing knowledge be recognized as necessary effects of a given cause, links in the chain of cause and effect, and only with reference to things which are not their cause do they bear the character of the casual. Necessity and chance, then, spring from one and the same root and are the two sides of one and the same thing."¹

The idea that "necessity and chance" are the reverse sides of the same coin is carried out in Hardy's work. He sees the great unity, the Immanent Will working out its pattern with human beings and nature as its motifs. The Will is unconscious and unmindful of man's and nature's sufferings in its blind designs. Each event has its cause, every human action is motivated by the person's character (the Will in him) or by circumstances (contrived by the Will), but the indifference of the Immanent Will allows any combination of events and circumstances. These chance happenings seem, at times, to be the intervention of a malicious intention, but actually are only the expression of the Will's indifference.

The fateful night of the sixth of November in The Return of the Native shows the irony of the culmination of the interweaving of a number of strands of the Immanent Will. The weather is fit for a scene of suffering. "It

1. Ibid, p. 89.

was a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend--the last plague of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsemane."¹

Eustacia decides to elope with Wildeve because a long train of circumstances has brought about her estrangement from Clym and she fears that there is no hope for a reconciliation with him. In addition, Wildeve has received a legacy and renewed his suit. Wildeve is governed in his decision by his love of Eustacia and Eustacia's and his own desire to leave the heath. The plans are arranged at a fire lighted by Charley, who desires to humour Eustacia. The fire on the preceeding Fifth of November had pleased Eustacia and he hopes that this one will. Clym, urged by Thomasin, writes to Eustacia and attempts to reconcile their differences. Eustacia's grandfather is thinking that it would have been better if Eustacia had not married Clym. Susan Nunsuch is preparing a waxen image to melt before the fire. She trusts that as the waxen image melts Eustacia's power over her child will end. Each of these happenings has its preparation; it is the culmination of a train of events. Even Diggory Venn's presence is not pure chance. He has business on Egdon Heath each year at this time; was he not present the previous year on the same date? But that all these trains of circumstance should terminate in the happenings of the Sixth of November is nothing more or less

1. The Return of the Native, p. 419.

than the Immanent Will's indifference to its individual parts. The irony is that the Will has caused each of these occurrences, and then accepts no responsibility for the union of them. Part of the Will is apparently working against the whole.

In the irony of fate or circumstance,

"we see human endeavour thwarted and human happiness destroyed by the action of circumstance, the expression, that is, of the indifferent power that rules the world, using it must be remembered, as its instruments, the passions, or stupidity, or timidity of human beings. Circumstance usually means Man."¹

This is expressed in a conversation between Jude and Sue.

"We must conform!" she said, mournfully. 'All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!'

'It is only against man and senseless circumstance,' said Jude."²

Many ironical effects are produced in Hardy's books by the juxtaposition of a certain background and human action. For instance, as Jude is watching Sue at the church service the musical accompaniment is definitely ironical.

"He had not long discovered the exact seat that she occupied when the chanting of the 119th Psalm, in which the choir was engaged, reached its second part, In quo corriget, the organ changing to a pathetic Gregorian tune as the singers gave forth:

'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?'

It was the very question that was engaging Jude's attention at this moment. What a wicked worthless fellow he had been to give vent as he had done to an animal passion for a woman, and allow it to lead to such disastrous consequences; then to think of putting an end to himself; then to go recklessly and get drunk. The great waves of pedal music tumbled round

1. Child, Harold, op. cit. p. 52.

2. Jude the Obscure, p. 432.

the choir, and, nursed on the supernatural as he had been, it is not wonderful that he could hardly believe that the psalm was not specially set by some regardful Providence for this moment of his first entry into the solemn building. And yet it was the ordinary psalm for the twenty-fourth evening of the month."¹

There is a similar irony after Little Father Time has hanged the children and himself.

"When the house was silent, and they could do nothing but await the coroner's inquest, a subdued, large, low voice spread into the air of the room from behind the heavy walls at the back.

'What is it?' said Sue, her spasmodic breathing suspended.

'The organ of the College Chapel. The organist practising, I suppose. It's the anthem from the seventy-third Psalm: Truly God is loving unto Israel.'²

The irony of Fate or Necessity in Hardy's work is summed up in his idea of tragedy. Tragedy, he says, is "the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE."³

SOME EFFECTS OF IRONY ON THOMAS HARDY'S WORK

Our Old Friend Dualism

All hail to him, the Protean! A tough old chap is he: Spinoza and the Monists cannot make him cease to be. We pound him with our "Truth, Sir, please!" and quite

appear to still him:

He laughs; holds Bergson up, and James; and swears we cannot kill him.

We argue them pragmatic cheats. "Aye," says he.

"They're deceiving:

But I must live; for flamens plead I am all that's worth believing."⁴

1. Ibid, p. 110.

2. Ibid, p. 425.

3. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892-1928, op. cit., p. 14.

4. Winter Words, p. 127.

The perception of irony stimulated Thomas Hardy to write some of his most beautiful poetry. The inspiration of one of his best poems In time of the Breaking of Nations! came from the discernment of irony. Mrs. Hardy says

"It was at this time and spot (1870, Cornwall) that Hardy was struck by the incident of the old horse harrowing the arable field in the valley below, which, when in far later years it was recalled to him by a still bloodier war, he made into a little poem of three verses..."¹

An analysis of the poem will disclose that its basis lies in an irony.

I

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will fade into night
Ere their story die.²

1915.
Hardy observed the incident during the Franco-Prussian War, but the poem did not take shape until the Great War recalled it to his mind. The World War intensified the irony that Hardy perceived in the difference between what most people believe to be the really great and what he believed it to be.

Hardy's theory of art is closely linked with his irony. The interweaving of the two is shown in the follow-

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-
2. Collected Poems, p. 511. 1891, p. 104.

owing quotation:

"There is enough poetry in what is left (in life) after all the false romance has been abstracted to make a sweet pattern: e.g. the poem by H. Coleridge:

"'She is not fair to outward view.'

"So, then, if Nature's defects must be looked in the face and transcribed, whence arises the ART in poetry and novel writing? which must certainly show art, or it becomes merely mechanical reporting. I think the art lies in making these defects the basis of a hitherto unperceived beauty, by irradiating them with 'the light that never was' on their surface, but is seen to be latent in them by the spiritual eye."¹

At another time Hardy said:

"Art is a disproportioning--(i.e. distorting, throwing out of proportion)--of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which, if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but would more probably be overlooked..."²

Thomas Hardy, like other Ironists,

"is impressed by the incongruity of things. He perceives the principles and rules and laws that apparently govern affairs natural and human, but he is all the more aware of their insufficiency...The Ironist accepts the chaos. He has no preconceived hierarchy of values to guide him in selection and rejection. All things are of equal value."³

Hence it follows that many events and other things that are usually regarded as of little importance are treated with respect and endowed with more importance than is usual.

Hardy's work, since he is an ironist, therefore

"accentuates the accidental, incomplete, and relative nature of the experience which it records."⁴

Since Hardy was preoccupied with irony, he left

1. Hardy, Florence Emily, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891, p. 151.
2. Ibid, p. 299.
3. Chevalier, Haakon M., op. cit., p. 183.
4. Ibid, p. 213.

the reader to make his own synthesis of his philosophy, even as he left the reader to gather the details of his descriptions and to fashion a picture from them. Hardy insisted repeatedly that he had not a harmonious system of philosophy, but nevertheless he believed that his impressions were valuable. The effort that a reader has to put forth when he reads Hardy's work gives it a magnetism that it would not otherwise possess. Each reader comes to have a sense of creation after reading his writing that draws him to read again and again. Or as Hardy himself stated the fact, there is an

"attentiveness usually engendered by understatement and reserve."¹

1. The Return of the Native, p. 12.

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