77-21,729

BAUMGAERTNER, Marcia Anne, 1947-
  AN APPROACH TO CHARACTERIZATION IN
  CHAUCER'S TROILUS AND CRISEYDE.

  The University of North Carolina at
  Greensboro, Ph.D., 1977
  Literature, medieval

Xerox University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

© 1977

MARCIA ANNE BAUMGAERTNER

AN APPROACH TO CHARACTERIZATION IN

CHAUCER'S Troilus and Criseyde

by

Marcia Anne Baumgaertner

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1977

Approved by

Dissertation Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation
Adviser

Committee Members

March 24, 1977
Date of Acceptance by Committee

ii

BAUMGAERTNER, MARCIA ANNE. An Approach to Characterization
in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. (1977) Directed by:
Dr. James I. Wimsatt. Pp. 534.

Criticism of Chaucer's characters in Troilus and Criseyde
has been profoundly marked by a controversy over the nature
of Chaucer's approach to poetics. On the one hand, there
are those critics who approach Chaucer from the modern
standpoint, seeking to find in him affinities with nineteenth-
century imitative realism. On the other hand, there are
those critics who approach Chaucer from a classical stand-
point, emphasizing the fixed nature of his poetic and its
didactic quality. Members of the first group often ignore the
controlling system of theological value which so often sur-
rounds and informs Chaucer's characters, while the second
group overemphasizes that system to the extent that Chaucer
is construed as having shunned the depiction of any subjective
feeling in characterization. It seems to me, however, that
Chaucer's characters, although controlled by a strong theolog-
ical framework, also evince psychological states of joy,
grief, and willing.   In fact, the theological tradition out
of which Chaucer writes allows--even directly facilitates--
the depiction of subjective feeling in characterization.

One of the aims of the dissertation is to determine the
nature of the realism of Chaucer's characters. Since those
characters spring from the artistic and cultural milieu which
informed the Middle Ages, the first part of this study deals
with the peculiar definitions of historical reality operative

during Chaucer's lifetime, and the specific influences such concepts may have had on the understanding of characterization held at the time. Comparative analysis is the method I adopt in this study, not only for purposes of clarity and accuracy but because vestiges of the Greco-Roman view of historical reality continue to exert strong influences on the basically Christian view of reality which dominates the Middle Ages.

Accordingly, in the first through the third chapters of the study, I demonstrate the major philosophical differences between the larger classical and the Christian perspectives on reality which result in differing approaches to the problem of characterization—especially in terms of the general view of history, the position taken on fate and free will, and the attitude toward comedy and comic figures. In the fourth chapter I deal with the same general contrast in terms of the approach taken to the problem of symbol and allegory in the exegetical tradition, with particular attention to the nature of the relation between the literal level of the text and its allegorical meaning. The fifth and sixth chapters provide an analysis of four major groups of literary theorists leading up to the Age of Chaucer from the standpoint of theoretical material supplied by the first part of the study. Analysis of the relevant material is carried on with an eye to isolating the philosophical and allegorical elements, both explicit and implicit, which have been shown to bear directly on the approach

to characterization taken by given aestheticians. Those theorists analyzed have been chosen as representative of the literary theorists of the early Christian period (Martianus Cappella and Cassiodorus on the classical side, Bede and Augustine on the Christian); the Neo-Platonic theorists of the twelfth century (including Alain de Lille, John of Salisbury and Hugh of St. Victor); the poetic theorists of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Matthew of Vendome and Geoffrey of Vinsauf); and those theorists and artists most immediately relevant to Chaucer (Dante and Boccaccio). Chapter 7 is an application of material gleaned from the background study of medieval characterization to Chaucer's _Troilus and Criseyde_ with the resulting conclusion (Chapter 8) that _Troilus and Criseyde_, although evincing some elements of the classical approach to characterization, is yet rooted more firmly in the Christian tradition which can be shown to inform Chaucer's characterization at all points.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rene Wellek takes "realism" in its widest and most
enduring sense to mean "fidelity to nature" and thus identi-
fies the concept of imitation as central to the concern of
critics dealing with the problem of reality.[1] Although all
art in the past has aimed at the imitation of reality, the
definitions of what true reality is and of what it means to
imitate it have varied widely throughout the ages. This
diversity in turn has had its effect on the formulation of
the concept of characterization in literary theory. Wellek
has noted, for example, that the concept of character "type"
is almost universal in realist theory and seems to have
associations, depending on its place in history, with either
or both concepts of prescriptive idealism and objective
social observation ("representationalism" in the most common
sense). It thus represents a formulation, he points out, of
the problem of universality and particularity[2] and is linked
directly to the problem of "eternal realism," the problem of
mimesis.

---

[1]Rene Wellek, "The Concept of Realism in Literary Schol-
arship," Concepts of Criticism, ed. Stephen G. Nichols, Jr.,
(New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 223.

[2]Wellek, p. 245.

The relation of universal to particular finds expression in the philosophies of all ages, but is especially prominent during the Middle Ages when it was considered the crucial issue for a scientific investigation of the world. Generally, the problem of universals is a description of the fact that in all our perceiving and thinking we find a two-fold content.[3] On the one hand, we perceive things, the separate items of existence; we see this chair, that book. On the other hand, every object we perceive also has a general content. The chair or book is also a chair, a book, part of a class or species. It is thus possible for us to abstract the common qualities of certain objects from their sensible bodies and deal with them as general entities.[4] During the Middle Ages, the discussion of the nature of man was generally formulated in these terms;[5] that is, any philosophy offering a definition of human personality dealt with the extent and nature of man's participation in the moral and

---

[3]Meyrick H. Carré, Realists and Nominalists (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 32.

[4]Carré, p. 33.

[5]See G. P. Klubertanz, The Philosophy of Human Nature (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953); F. C. Copleston, A History of Medieval Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Friedrich Heer, The Intellectual History of Europe, trans. Jonathan Steinberg (New York: World Publishing Co., 1966); Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, trans. A. H. C. Downer (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1940); Maurice de Wulf, History of Medieval Philosophy, trans. Ernest C. Messenger, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1926).

spiritual "universals" of existence and/or the extent to
which he could be defined as an "individual" being.

The discussion of the relative importance and relation
of the universal and the particular finds a literary formula-
tion in the critical controversy over the nature of Chaucerian
characterization. One side of the discussion emphasizes the
universality of Chaucer's characters, their "representative"
or "abstractive" value. Typical of this view is Robert M.
Jordan's statement that

> Chaucer's art...is historically very much closer to
> mimetic allegory than to modern realism, and for this
> reason his characters are generally to be read more
> as personified illustrations of broad abstract mean-
> ings than as self-limiting centers of interest.[6]

The other side of the controversy emphasizes the sense of
felt life in Chaucer's characters, what is defined by Scholes
and Kellogg as their "illustrative" quality, their capacity
to project an individual psychology.[7] Typical of this view
is Dryden's comment on Chaucer's genius for distinctly
individualized portraits:

> Not a single character escaped him. All his pilgrims
> are severally distinguished from each other and not
> only in their inclinations, but in their very physiog-
> nomies and persons.[8]

---

[6]Robert M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 99.

[7]Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, The Nature of Narra-
tive (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 91.

[8]John Dryden, "Preface to the Fables," in The Best of
Dryden , ed. Louis I. Bredvold (New York: Ronald Press Co.,
1933), p. 517.

The controversy over Chaucerian characterization can be seen as the result of two general ways of looking at medieval poetic. On the one hand, there are those critics who approach Chaucer from a classical standpoint, emphasizing the fixed nature of his poetic and its didactic quality. On the other hand, there are those critics who approach Chaucer from the modern standpoint, seeking to find in him affinities with 19th-century imitative realism. The former group tends to emphasize either Chaucer's dependence on the classical theoretical tradition which informs his art, making its final appeal to Chaucer's knowledge of classical poetics or to Chaucer's knowledge of the exegetical tradition (which, they claim, promotes prescriptive ideals which result in the same universalized figures fostered by classical rhetoric). This group stresses the aesthetic-intellectual distance between character and audience which they say Chaucer cultivates through his use of the rhetorical conventions; the other stresses the character's immediate emotional appeal.

D. W. Robertson offers perhaps the classic exposition of the first view along with some valuable contrasts with the second.[9] In the well-known _Preface to Chaucer,_ he has pointed

---

[9] D. W. Robertson, _A Preface to Chaucer_ (Princeton University Press, 1962); see also Christopher Gillie, _Character in English Literature_ (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), pp. 15-20; G. R. Owst, _Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 401-402; Ernst Curtius, _European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,_ trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), p. 205, and others. Reservations about Robertson's view are voiced in book reviews by: Robert Payne in _Comparative_

out some of the characteristics of the medieval view of art
which separate it from modern views. According to Robertson,
medieval man conceived of the world as an ordered hierarchy
where the world of the senses consisted of types and symbols
of the world of spirit. The real world was conceived of
as an ordered system of ideals to be reached through tra-
ditional wisdom. Literary expressions based on such a concept
tended to be explicit and to exalt discursive ideas as vehi-
cles of truth. Artistic ornament of any kind was viewed as
a covering or shell for the communicable truths hidden within
a work of art. In contrast, the modern view of art has
assumed an internal discord between the world of spirit and
sense which has led it to exalt poetry as the reconciler of
the two worlds by a process in which, according to Schlegel,

> the inner impressions of the senses are to be hallowed
> by a mysterious connection with higher feelings; and the
> soul, on the other hand embodies its forebodings, or
> indescribable intuitions of infinity in types and sym-
> bols borrowed from the visible world.[10]

Robertson points out that literary expressions based on these
attitudes will tend to be "suggestive rather than explicit"
in both technique and implication and will "subordinate dis-
cursive idea to mood, emotion and feeling" (Robertson, p. 31).

Literature 15 (summer, 1963), 269-71; R. T. Davies in MLR 59
(April, 1964), 255-257; David C. Fowler, MLQ 25 (March, 1961),
117-120; C. L. Wrenn, JEGP 62 (October, 1963), 794-801;
John Lawlor, RES 15 (November, 1964), 415-418.

[10]A. W. Schlegel in A Course of Lectures on Dramatic
Art and Literature, London, 1876, quoted by Robertson, p. 31.

According to Robertson, the modern perspective is based upon a tendency to see life as a dynamic tension between various polarities. A tension between opposites in the present era, he writes, is necessary to a "progression" or creation of any type.[11] This notion directly affects the modern understanding of the aesthetic process. Modern romantic criticism is based on the notion that "drama" should include only "a compendium of whatever is moving and progressive in human life,"[12] and should omit the trivial details of everyday life which would clog the dramatic movement. In the modern pattern, "rising" and "falling" action is what constitutes "plot" and Robertson defines them in turn as "our emotional involvement with the protagonist," and as an increase in inner tensions until the catastrophe, where the emotional expectations initiated by the narrative pattern are met either by tragic catharsis or by comic relief. The success of the narrative depends on the successful creation of emotional tension by the story line: it is said to be "profound" if it is emotionally moving; it is said to be "boring" if it fails to move, fails to produce the emotional tension and satisfaction required. Stories of this type, because they distill the dynamic movement of the dramatic pattern from life, to produce as pure a "fiction" as possible, concludes Robertson, are ideally suited to a theory of "art for art's

---

[11]Robertson, p. 12.

[12]Robertson, p. 45.

sake," i.e., to a theory of art which promotes the release of fictional emotions for their own sake.

In medieval literature on the other hand, the model of life is one of hierarchical stasis rather than one of dynamic tension, and Robertson characterizes its ends as intentionally didactic. Medieval man conceived of the universe in terms of the fundamental principle of an ordered hierarchy with God at the top and the various stages of spiritual order deriving from and presided over by Him. The relation between the sensual world and the invisible world was not one of opposition, but one of ordered subjection. One moves from the sensual to the spiritual by means of a natural ascent from the inferior realm of sense to the higher realm of spirit. This can be seen through the period in such works as Dante's Divine Comedy, St. Augustine's On Christian Doctrine and Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy.

The fundamental system of hierarchical value has been shown by Robertson and others to have had a deep influence on the aesthetic theories of the day.[13] Robertson in particular notes the effect on narrative structure, where in the medieval understanding he can find no evident use of the concepts of "rising" and "falling" action. Since the primary goal of the medieval view of narrative structure is not to produce vicarious emotion through the conflict of the will against opposing

---

[13]Robert M. Jordan's study, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, is perhaps the most notable study aside from Robertson.

forces, but instead to restate in poetic form an already-known theological or philosophical truth, the conception of emotional catharsis offered by the Greek theorists is finally untenable to the medieval artist. According to Robertson, the appeal made by medieval drama is thus ultimately to the intellect rather than to the emotions, and such emotion as there is, is rigidly controlled by preconceived and inorganic notions of formal convention.

In Robertson's view, the difference between the medieval and modern views of art not only affects narrative, but characterization as well. A dramatic mode, he points out, requires a free revelation of the inner feelings of the personae in will and action. Freytag, he writes, defines dramatic action as "the outpouring of the power of the will from deep feeling toward the outer world," or "the pouring in of stimuli from the outer world into the inner depths of the feeling."[14] The content of the drama as Freytag expresses it is "always a struggle with strong motions of the soul which the hero carries on against opposing powers."[15] Brunetière, too, describes the theater as "the spectacle of a will striving towards a goal and conscious of the means which it employs,"[16] and Robertson himself writes that "violent emotional states

[14]Robertson, p. 33.

[15]Robertson, p. 33.

[16]Robertson, p. 34.

resulting from a conflict between the will of the protago-

nist and obstacles of some kind seem to be necessary to our

sense of the dramatic."[17]   In Robertson's view, an identifi-

cation with the heroic qualities of one of the chief charac-

ters, or a recognition of "just that particular human condi-

tion" in the situation of one of the characters "in which we

find ourselves," is also necessary for an emotional partici-

pation in characterization. According to Robertson, medieval

literature is almost exclusively void of the dramatic content

described in stories like the 15th-century <u>Robyn Hood and</u>

<u>the Sheriff of Nottingham</u>, where Robyn overcomes a series of

obstacles in the best dramatic tradition, to win a specific

goal. Medieval characters, says Robertson, may be "exemplary

either of wise or unwise action," but their creators "do not

invite us to share their experiences."[18]   Again, Robertson

emphasizes what he sees as the didactic nature of medieval

characterization to the exclusion of any self-expression in

the psychological sense. Even where medieval man looked

inward, he concludes, it was not to find the roots of emo-

tion, but to find God. Expression of love is "not so much a

matter of asserting 'self' as a psychological entity as a mat-

ter of revealing a gift from above."[19]

---

[17]Robertson, p. 33.

[18]Robertson, p. 37.

[19]Robertson, p. 16.

As an example of the direction of his thought in this line, Robertson suggests that Chaucer's presentation of strong emotion is conventionalized or "rhetorized," and does not produce an effect appropriate to dramatic action as we have defined it above. He cites Chaucer's treatment of the idea of "dying for love" as an example of literary convention, emphasizing that the repeated association of strong emotions of love with the idea of death if the lover "have not his will" is a convention expressive of the behavior of the courtly lover. Such a convention is not calculated, Robertson asserts, to provoke a strong sympathetic response in the reader, but rather to stimulate thought;[20] in this case, thought about the fact that inordinate desire often ends in death. Thus the Troilus, writes Robertson, is not calculated to produce a dramatic effect.[21] He cites the lack of dramatic will in Troilus during the first half of Chaucer's story, the "dramatically inconsequential" dialogues of the second half, and Troilus' long meditation on free will as aspects of the poem which discourage the reader's sympathetic emotional participation in it.

Should we remain skeptical of this line of argument, unconvinced that Chaucer's characters can be so quickly deprived of their humanity and dramatic force by the reference

---

[20]Robertson, p. 46.

[21]Robertson, p. 47.

to Chaucer's use of rhetorical convention, Robertson clinches

his point by evoking the theological perspective out of which

Chaucer writes. He reminds us that although freedom of the

will was a major tenet of medieval orthodox philosophy, free-

dom from the order of Divine Providence was not:

> The goals that a protagonist set for himself were
> always seen against an implicit system of values which
> acted both as a comment on the goals themselves and on
> any emotional experience the protagonist might have in
> seeking them. This fact is probably in part respon-
> sible for a lack of interest in "strong motions of the
> soul" for their own sake in medieval literature. In
> spite of the conclusions of some modern critics, medie-
> val literary art did not develop the means of analyzing
> such phenomena. It is, as distinct from romantic or
> modern literary art, rigorously non-psychological.[22]

Dramatic or psychological action, in other words, is not

possible where the personae are stylized to represent various

abstractions in an objective scheme of moral values, and

where the conflicts explored by the artist are designed to

produce moral results, not necessarily a sympathetic partici-

pation in the feeling lives of the characters and their

psychological tensions.[23]

Robertson concludes his critique of the modern aesthetic

by suggesting that the cathartic or "hedonistic-aesthetic" pro-

cess justifies emotional participation in character on the

---

[22]Robertson, p. 34.

[23]Robertson bases his understanding of medieval aesthet-
ics on his theory that Augustinian theology and notions of
spiritual hierarchy thoroughly informed the medieval sense of
aesthetic value. Augustine, he writes, comments forcefully on
the "insanity" of feeling participation in the lives of fic-
tional characters and emphasizes almost exclusively the moral
value of medieval works of art.

basis of heroic "greatness," at the expense of ethical consid-
erations. This modern identification with characters of
questionable ethical conduct was caused in great part by the
breakdown of the medieval hierarchy of value to the extent
that good may conflict with good, as well as with evil. Thus
in Hegelian tragedy two forces which are essentially just
become wrongs, and the resulting breakdown of justice is
resolved by processes in the moral order itself.[24] The
tragic protagonist thus has ample moral justification for his
actions because he is faced with a set of circumstances which
"damn him if he does and damn him if he doesn't."

In the medieval system, according to Robertson, it would
have been very difficult to make opposing forces out of two
aspects of charity:

> The commonly accepted medieval system of values was
> not subject, except perhaps among the very unlearned,
> to the kind of initial fragmentation necessary to
> produce an Hegelian tragic situation.[25]

No one in the medieval system is above morality in the
tragic sense of a great protagonist; and the final outcome
of medieval tragedy is always the triumph of Divine Providence.

---

[24]Robertson, p. 43.

[25]Robertson, pp. 37-38. Robertson here enlarges on his
belief that though dramatic conflict is seen in some plays
in the Middle Ages, the audiences for whom these plays were
performed or read were "unsophisticated and unlearned." He
thus makes a rather rigid distinction between the medieval
"intellectual" audience and the "common" audience, and even
seems to suggest that intellectual audiences would have been
immune to the kind of dramatic action contained, for example,
in the medieval play Robyn Hood and the Sheriff of Notting-
ham. This I find hard to accept.

A medieval man falls into the order of justice because he
sins, and it is impossible in Robertson's view to sympathize
with this from any medieval standpoint. To be human after
Rousseau may have meant to develop the natural affections of
the human heart but to be human according to St. Augustine
meant to control the passions.

Thus Robertson bases his theory that the medieval char-
acter is more conducive to generalized type than to individ-
ualistic expression on the fundamental medieval system of hier-
archical value which affected the aesthetics of the period and
found its clearest spokesman in St. Augustine and the Scho-
lastic tradition. Robertson's analysis of character in Chaucer
is based on Chaucer's adherence to the conventional rhetori-
cal formulas, formulas which were designed to evoke a strong
intellectual-moral response which, if it does not nullify,
at least strongly counteracts any emotional response on the
part of the reader. He thus seeks to remove all traces of
romanticism from Chaucer's presentation of his characters to
fix their worth firmly in their value as "exempla," and not
in their capacity to invite our emotional identification with
their joys and sorrows.

Some critics, however, are not so ready to exclude all
possibility of emotional identification with Chaucer's char-
acters. The structure and characterization of Chaucer's
Troilus and Criseyde again offers these critics a focal point
for disagreement with Robertson's approach. The issue in

Troilus seems to center at one point on the religious con-

clusion of the poem and its relation to--or alienation from--

the characterizations in the rest of the poem. The Robert-

sonian school sees the conclusion as the essence of the

poem's moral message while the "modern school" sees it as an

affront to human sensibility. S. Nagarajan, for example, is

angered at interpretations of the Troilus which "seek to

justify the conclusion at the cost of our previous emotional

responses to the love described."[26] We sense an echo of Mr.

Nagarajan's objection to the conclusion in Dorothy Everett's

perspective on the poem. She denounces an integrated view of

the Epilog as the logical end of a movement from earthly to

heavenly love and asks:

> If this were all that Chaucer meant us to see in his
> poem, why does he expend so much of his powers in mak-
> ing the love of Troilus a beautiful thing, and what is
> the point of the long wooing?[27]

This implicit question reappears in Sanford Meech's study of
the poem[28] and in Gary Brennan's recent analysis.[29]

The preoccupation of these critics with the dramatic and

psychological appeal of the characters--especially in Chaucer's

---

[26]S. Nagarajan, "The Conclusion to Chaucer's Troilus,"
Essays in Criticism,13 (January, 1963), 1.

[27]Dorothy Everett, "Troilus and Criseyde," in Essays
on Middle English Literature, ed. Patricia M. Kean (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1959), 136-37.

[28]Sanford B. Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus (Syra-
cuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959),p. 15

[29]Gary Brenner, "Narrative Structure in Chaucer's Troilus
and Criseyde," Annuale Medievale, 6 (1969), 17.

Troilus and Criseyde--may not be entirely unmerited. It
seems to me, in fact, that Chaucer does allow a certain kind
of emotional participation in the lives of his characters,
and that his characters do evince psychological states of
joy, grief, and willing, though on a different basis than
that offered by most modern critics. This is not to say that
Robertson's emphasis on the controlling system of theological
value is wrong; it is simply to suggest that the Christian
aesthetic system he describes may also allow--even directly
facilitate--the depiction of subjective feeling in charac-
terization and allow room for a much more individualized
character than he envisions. I hope to demonstrate that the
medieval conception of structural order and the poetic tra-
dition out of which Chaucer writes provide room for a char-
acter who is more than a conventional type on the one hand
and more than a historical individual restricted to the
concretes of existence on the other. In fact, both Chaucer's
ties with the Christian poetic tradition and his particularly
Christian blend of matrix and motive enables him to broaden
the scope of his characters, making them not only the repre-
sentative types of a particular view of reality, but delight-
ful individuals as well.

One of the aims of this study is to determine the nature
of the realism of Chaucer's characters. Since those char-
acters spring from the artistic and cultural milieu which
informed the historical period we call the Middle Ages, one

of the first tasks we can set ourselves is that of determining the peculiar definition of historical reality operative at that time, and the specific influences such a concept may have had on the understanding of the literary concept of characterization held at the time. Wellek has suggested that such a study can have maximum accuracy only as it proceeds comparatively, distinguishing the particular concept of reality from the formulations which precede and follow it. Comparative analysis is the method I will adopt in this study, not only for the purposes of clarity and accuracy which Wellek suggests, but because vestiges of the Greco-Roman view of historical reality continue to exert strong influences on the basically Christian view of reality which dominates the Middle Ages. A thorough understanding of each is necessary for an understanding of their effects on Chaucerian characterization.

The first chapter of this dissertation will offer a general introduction to the problem of characterization in literature and offer a rationale for the specific study I propose. In the second and third chapters of this study I will attempt to demonstrate the major philosophical differences between the larger classical and Christian perspectives on reality which result in differing approaches to the problem of characterization--especially in terms of the general view of history, the position taken on fate and free will and the attitude toward comedy and comic figures. In the fourth chapter, I will deal with the same general contrast in terms of the approach taken

to the problem of symbol and allegory in the exegetical tradition, with particular attention to the nature of the relation between the literal level of the text and its allegorical meaning. The fifth and sixth chapters will provide an analysis of four major groups of literary theorists leading up to the Age of Chaucer from the standpoint of theoretical material supplied by the second, third, and fourth chapters. In other words, analysis of the relevant material will be carried on with an eye to isolating the philosophical and allegorical elements, both explicit and implicit, which have been shown to bear directly on the approach to characterization taken by given aestheticians. Those theorists analyzed have been chosen as representative of the literary theorists of the early Christian period (Martianus Capella and Cassiodorus on the one side, Bede and Augustine on the other); the Neo-Platonic theorists of the twelfth century (including Alain de Lille, John of Salisbury and Hugh of St. Victor); the poetic theorists of the later 12th and 13th centuries (Matthew of Vendome and Geoffrey of Vinsauf); and those theorists and artists most immediately relevant to Chaucer (Dante and Boccacio). The seventh chapter will be an application of the principles gleaned from earlier chapters to Chaucer's _Troilus and Criseyde_ for the purposes of determining the nature of Chaucerian realism and its resulting effect on characterization, and the final chapter will offer a summary of the findings of this study and a conclusion based on the evidence at hand.

CHAPTER II

THE GRECO-ROMAN VIEW OF HISTORY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE
LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTER

In the Greek mind there was a separation between what I
will call "historical" actuality--that is, history in the
sense of the recorded acts of men in time, sensory reality, and
the experience of men in the natural world; and what the
Greeks called the "eternal verities," the ideal forms which
existed independent of earthly history. R. G. Collingwood
has characterized the basic direction of Greek thought as
"anti-historical" because it was founded on the principle of
the separation of truth and history.[1] If only what is uni-
versal and unchanging can be known, then only moral and
spiritual truth can be known. History is basically a reposi-
tory of the inferior world of particularities and cannot be
defined as a serious science in the Greek sense. Only
poetry and philosophy, which abstract the eternal and knowable
from the substrata of transitory experience, can be ultimately
known, simply because they alone deal with the universals of
experience. Aristotle is the major proponent of the view
that poetry is a worthy vehicle for universal truth; in the
Poetics he writes that the function of the poet is to describe
the universal aspects of experience,

---

[1]R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clar-
endon Press, 1946), p. 20.

> ...not what has actually happened, but the kind of
> thing that might well happen--i.e., what is possible
> in the sense of being either plausible or inevitable...
> hence poetry is more highly serious than history, for
> poetry tends to express universals, history particu-
> lars.[2]

Plato is, of course, the major proponent of the view that philosophy is the best repository for the eternal verities. The separation of truth from the particulars of sensory existence that we see in both views leads to some serious restrictions on the definition and study of history, which is not viewed as a science, but as "an aggregate of perceptions."[3] Historical evidence is thus defined as a series of eyewitness reports of contemporary events, and historical method consists of collecting the reports. The historian's capacity for eliciting a coherent and accurate report through an almost legal line of tough questions is the test of his vocation.

This view obviously imposes a shortened perspective on the historian, whose critical endeavor is then limited to his source material, the length of a living memory. This meant that Greco-Roman historians could never aspire to write a factual history which went beyond the reports allowed by what men remembered in their immediate lifetimes. The idea of a universal overview of history which could offer a legitimate basis for historical analysis of the remote past was precluded

---

[2]Aristotle, "The Art of Poetry," in _Aristotle_, trans. Phillip Wheelwright (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1959), p. 302.

[3]Collingwood, p. 24.

by the restricted definition of "evidence," i.e., what had been seen by immediate eye-witnesses.

These facts were paralleled by a gradual shift in the understanding of the overall purpose of history. For the Hellenic Greeks greater optimism about the usefulness of education led Greek historians to think of their task as a matter of training men to avoid the mistakes of the past. From this perspective, history is a school for training statesmen and has the practical function of teaching the business of running a smooth government. In later Greek and early Roman thought the educative function of history remains, but the immediate goal is less ambitious. Polybius, an early Greek historian[4] no longer sees the writing of history as a means of controlling the external affairs of the state, but as a means of educating the inner man to accept the vicissitudes of fortune in life.[5] This view is common to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies, both of which promote knowledge of self as a retreat from a world which is basically disordered and chaotic. Such an outlook on history led gradually to a defeatism about the possibility of attaining accuracy in historical method and tended to reinforce the old split between history, the transitory world of chaotic circumstance, and "substance," the world of the eternal verities.

---

[4]See Collingwood, p. 35.

[5]Polybius, The Histories, trans. W. R. Paton, 2 vols. (London: Wm. Heinemann, 1922), I:7.

In sum, the Greek view of history was informed by a world
view which tended to define reality as what was intangible,
immutable, and therefore substantially real in the sense
just described. History referred to the realm of tangible
sense-objects, the world of particulars, and simply had not
the status of the substantive universals. Because it dealt
with the realm of sense-perception, that aspect of life sub-
ject to fortune and fate, it could not be deemed a science
in the Greek sense. History was unknowable because it was
mutable and constantly in flux. Consequently, the methodology
of history was suspect from the first since factual material
could only be trusted if it had the authority of an immediate
eye-witness report, and even then, such material belonged to
the inferior world of sense. Thus the writing of remote
history or of an overall or interpretive history which is
arrived at deductively from divine revelation and which
treats past, present and future events with equal importance
was essentially foreign to the Greek mind.[6] The only rationale
for the study of history became first the education of states-
men in governmental affairs and later and more pessimistically,
the education of the inner man to prepare for the inevitable
evils of fortune in life.

Rene Wellek, as we have noted, observes that what is
imitated, the conception of what is real in a given theory of

---

[6]See James V. Thompson, <u>History of Historical Writing</u>,
2 vols. (New York: MacMillan Co., 1942), I:24.

mimesis, determines to a large extent the nature of the literary representation of human character; i.e., whether a character will be closer to a concept of prescriptive idealism or to a concept of objective social observation. For the Greeks the emphasis can be seen to fall on the prescriptive end of the scale. Where history is seen as an unworthy subject for imitation, we might expect the emphasis in literary representation of character to fall on what the Greeks defined as substantive reality, and that such an emphasis might result in characters who exemplified universal rather than individually historical characteristics.

In fact, this tends to be the case, and it will be the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate the effects of the Greek view of history on the conception and representation of character both in Greek historical writing and in the imaginative literature of the period. After a general discussion of the relation of the Greek idea of reality to character representation, I will attempt to show the effect of such a world view more specifically on two literary theories of characterization extant in the period.

First, because of their tendency to put the substantive origin of all things outside of the immediate purview of history which focused only on the contemporary event, the Greeks saw the origins of human character as outside of history as well. The personae of history were viewed as a duality of universal character or innate nature--that part of

character which went beyond the limits of historical repre-
sentation--and "action," or the particularized doings of uni-
versal nature in history. The moral nature and physical
capacity of a given historical agent remains stationary at a
certain point for all time, because his true nature is a
function of his origins and not of his acts in life. No
matter what transitory actions a historical character per-
forms, his universal nature remains the same eternally. The
innate moral nature of a historical character never substan-
tially changes. As Collingwood puts it, "the idea of devel-
opment in a character is to the Graeco-Roman mind a metaphysi-
cal impossibility."[7]

The emphasis on substantive character over the actions
of the character in history leads to a character who may seem
to develop but whose actions can always be traced back to
that innate moral character, fixed before historical life.
History itself tends to become an expression of the actions
of "good" and "bad" characters and takes on decidedly didac-
tic overtones. Tacitus' report of the break-down of Tiberius
under the strain of empire serves as a clear example of this
kind of ethical rigidity in historical writing. The avowed
purpose of Tacitus' history is "to rescue virtue from oblivion,"
and to teach that "base words and deeds should have the fear

---

[7]Collingwood, p. 44.

[8]Tacitus, The Annals of Tacitus, ed. Henry Furneaux, 2 vols.
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I:27-28. Collingwood points
out the passage.

of posthumous infamy" (<u>Liber Tacitus</u>, III, Cap. 65:1).[9]   In

the text of the treatise the Greek attitude toward character

development becomes apparent.   Toward the end of Tiberius'

life Tacitus summarizes his personal history and reveals his

essential character:

> His character, again, has its separate epochs. There
> was a noble season in his life and fame while he lived
> a private citizen or a great official under Augustus;
> an inscrutable and disingenuous period of hypocritical
> virtues while Germanicus and Orusus remained; with his
> mother alive, he was still an amalgam of good and evil;
> so long as he loved or feared Sejanus, he was loathed
> for his cruelty, but his lust was veiled; finally, when
> the restraints of shame and fear were gone, and nothing
> remained but to follow his own bent, he plunged impar-
> tially into crime and into ignominy.[10]

Tacitus finds it impossible to treat Tiberius as a human

figure capable of development because his idea of history

will not allow the depiction of such a development.   When

Tiberius, who appears as a basically good ruler at the begin-

ning of his story, gradually reveals tyrannical characteris-

tics which were not evident at first, Tacitus assumes that

these characteristics must have been there from the beginning.

It is interesting that Tacitus foreshadows the very

qualities he mentions here a number of books earlier in the

<u>Annals</u> by repeating the gossip circulating around the declining

---

[9]Tacitus, I, 469. Furneaux notes that the moral purpose expressed by Livy is very similar: "thus it is that is so salutary and fruitful in historical study, that you see spec- imens of every type of character conspicuously displayed; and may hence take models for yourself and your country to imitate, or instances of what is vile in its beginning and issue to avoid." Livy, <u>Praef</u>. 10, cited by Furneaux in Tacitus, I, 28.

[10]Tacitus, <u>The Histories and The Annals</u>, trans. Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson, 3 vols. (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1937), III:245.

Augustus Ceasar concerning the character of the rising Tiber-

ius. Faced with the imminent death of Ceasar, Tacitus writes

that most of the people "merely exchanged gossip derogatory

to their future masters" and then imitates their complaints

about Tiberius:

> 'Tiberius Nero was mature in years and tried in war,
> but had the old, inbred arrogance of the Claudian fam-
> ily, and hints of cruelty, strive as he would to repress
> them, kept breaking out. He had been reared from the
> cradle in a regnant house; consulates and triumphs had
> been heaped on his youthful head: even during the
> years when he lived at Rhodes in ostensible retirement
> and actual exile, he had studied nothing save anger,
> hypocrisy, and secret lasciviousness. Add to the tale
> his mother with her feminine caprice....[11]

Thus Tacitus, by using the technique of repeating the "gos-

sip" of others, retains the objective distance required of

the historian while yet introducing several telling points

about Tiberius' character at the onset.

All this emphasizes the fact that Tiberius is revealed

to be a bad character because he was actually bad from the

first and simply hid the fact through hypocrisy. Collingwood

comments on the kind of technique used here and the presuppo-

sitions on which it is based:

> A 'character' is an agent, not an action; actions come
> and go, but the 'characters' (as we call them), the
> agents from which they proceed are substances and
> therefore eternal and unchanging. Features in the
> character of a Tiberius or a Nero which only appeared
> comparatively late in life must have been there all the
> time. A good man cannot become bad. A man who shows
> himself bad when old must have been equally bad when
> young and his vices concealed by hypocrisy. As the
> Greeks put it: 'The beginning will make the man'

---

[11]Tacitus, <u>The Histories and the Annals</u>, trans. Moore,
II, 249.

(Aristotle, <u>Nichomachean Ethics</u>, 1130a). Power does not alter a man's character; it only shows what kind of a man he already was.[12]

Because of the Greek tendency to separate history from true reality, which resided in philosophy and poetry, there was a resultant emphasis on the universalization of character. The moral ethos of a character was always emphasized over any manifestation of individuality which might occur.

The tendency toward a universalized representation of character in historical writing carried over into literature, where the concept of the innate moral ethos of a character, his universal substance, could be expressed with little or no attention to historical action. The emphasis on innate nature in character over character conceived of as process, as capable in a historical lifetime of substantive change, resulted in certain definite stylistic techniques. First, it encourages a rather transparent and straightforward presentation of character in literature, where the substance of a man's nature could be known and expressed as a universal. Eric Auerbach makes this point when he characterizes the Homeric style as a predisposition to "represent phenomena in a fully externalized form, visible and palpable in all their parts and completely fixed in their temporal and spatial relations."[13]

---

[12]Collingwood, p. 44; Eric Auerbach agrees, noting that in Homer, "Achilles and Hector are splendidly set forth, but have no development." <u>Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature</u> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 17).

[13]Auerbach, <u>Mimesis</u>, p. 6.

This tendency is true, writes Auerbach, even when psycholog-

ical processes are represented. Nothing remains unexpressed:

> With the utmost fullness, with an orderliness which
> even passion does not disturb, Homer's personages vent
> their inmost hearts in speech; what they do not say to
> others they speak in their own minds, so that the reader
> is informed of it.[14]

The fixedness and openness of the characters of Greek fiction

are matched by a parallel fixedness in time and location. The

procession of sensory phenomena takes place in what Auerbach

calls the foreground, in a local and temporal present.

The openness with which both the internal and external

make-up of a character is described leaves no chance for spec-

ulation about character motivation. The relations between

characters are also set forth simply and directly. Such a

rational approach to character motivation tends to remove the

rougher and more historically representational elements of

unmotivated or obscurely motivated vacillation and internal

conflict which are characteristic of other approaches to

characterization.

Homer's _Odyssey_ affords one example both of the fixed

nature of characterization in Greek thought and of the clar-

ity of relations between characters. At the beginning of the

Odyssey, Telemachus calls the men of Ithaca together concerning

the problem of his mother Penelope and her suitors. After

reviewing the situation, Telemachus bitterly tongue-lashes

his countrymen for urging his mother to marry and expresses

---

[14]Auerbach, _Mimesis_, p. 6.

his own frustration at not being able to come up to his

father's superior nature:

> ...and lo, our great wealth is wasted, for there is no
> man now alive such as Odysseus was, to keep ruin from
> the house. As for me I am in no wise strong like him
> to ward mine own; verily to the end of my days shall
> I be a weakling and all unskilled in prowess. Truly
> I would defend me if but strength were mine; for deeds
> past sufferance have been wrought, and now my house is
> wasted utterly beyond the pretense of right. Resent
> it in your own hearts and have regard to your neighbors
> who dwell around and tremble ye at the anger of the gods,
> lest haply they turn upon you in wrath at your evil
> deeds.[15]

In this passage Telemachus makes the motive for his anger

crystal-clear: the lack of support from his countrymen, who

have done him evil deeds in not supporting him and in

defaming his mother for not facing up to her circumstances.

Not only is his motive clear, but he analyzes his own char-

acter, fixing it at one frustrated point inferior to Odysseus

for all time.

This conception of character, as we have shown, results

from an almost unwitting preoccupation with the universal

aspects of characterization; there is practically no willing-

ness to descend into the everyday depths of history, to "take

seriously what is encountered there."[16]   Ultimately, there is

no desire to make historical forces concrete because there

is no real reason for taking historical reality as seriously

as the unchanging universals of which the Greeks were so

---

[15]Homer, The Odyssey, trans. S. H. Butcher and A. Lang
(New York: Modern Library, 1967), pp. 16-17.

[16]Collingwood, p. 45.

enamored. This results finally in a kind of rhetorical ethicism which fixes characters at a certain level of ethical goodness or badness, of high or low social standing, and does not allow them movement and development either within or across the categories.[17] It encourages rhetorical rather than realistic dialogue because it is more concerned with what is fitting and proper to a particular type of character than what that character might actually have said in a given situation.

There is perhaps a deeper reason for the Graeco-Roman tendency to exaggerate fixed ethical and social poles in characterization. The philosophies of the age, as we have shown, encouraged a view of historical actuality which emphasized its chaotic nature. Facing such a world, man is put in a defeatist position from the first unless he can find some way of controlling or ordering the chaos for the purposes finally of attaining eternal truth. Epicurean and Stoic philosophies offered only one solution to the problem of a disordered sensory reality: retreat from it. If man cannot conquer or control his world, then he must spend his energies keeping himself unstained by it. This becomes the main function of reason in such a system--to preserve a man from the uncontrollable world in which he exists. In Aristotle's view, it becomes the main function of art. As Collingwood points out, such an attitude toward education tends to encourage a new determinism in the understanding of man's control over the events of his human life:

---

[17]See Auerbach, _Mimesis_, p. 44; Collingwood, p. 45.

> Man finds himself no longer master of his fate in the
> sense that what he tries to do succeeds or fails in pro-
> portion to his own intelligence or lack of it; his fate
> is master of him, and the freedom of his will is shown
> not in controlling the outward events of his life but
> in controlling the inward temper in which he faces these
> events.[18]

Auerbach goes one step further in his insight that the fate

from which a man is really trying to escape in the Greek

view is his own nature. This is most evident in the struggle

of the protagonist in a Greek tragedy, where the protagonist

only gradually becomes aware of the destiny which has been

his from the beginning. Up to the point where he capitulates

to his destiny, he struggles against it, resisting it by

action and reason. In so doing, he is fighting against that

part of himself over which he has no control.

This causes, as Auerbach points out, an essential dis-

unity in the Greek tragic character--a disunity which has

much to do with the quality of historical realism attained

in the character. In Greek tragedy, men are represented as

so intensely involved in the struggle against themselves

that most vestiges of individual personality disappear.

Auerbach writes:

> Nothing remains but their age, sex, position in life,
> and the most general traits of their temperament; their
> actions, words, and gestures are wholly governed by the
> dramatic situation, that is, by the tactical requirements
> of their struggle.[19]

---

[18]Collingwood, p. 36.

[19]Eric Auerbach, <u>Dante: Poet of the Secular World</u>, trans.
Ralph Manheim (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929),
p. 3.

It is true that the individual at death is reunited with his
fate, but then he is already outside historical reality. In
actual history his personality is divided; man is set apart
from his fate even though it ultimately reveals itself to be
part of his original nature.

One of the bases for this view of man's nature can be
found in Plato's understanding of human evil. With all the
emphasis on the representation of the morally ideal man in
classical literature, one might expect a certain judgmentalism
in Plato's view of the nature of man and in his presentation
of character. In fact, the opposite is the case. Plato,
deeply affected by the substantive view of man's nature and
by his faith in human reason, has even greater sympathy
than we will see in Aristotle for the problem of human weak-
ness of the will, and goes so far as to suggest that there
is no such thing as voluntary evil. Instead, there is only
moral ignorance. In the Protagoras, for example, he defends
man's capacity for exercising right knowledge and argues
against those who would see man as a being governed by passions
beyond his control. After outlining the bleak view of human
nature painted by some Greek thinkers of his day, Socrates
asks Protagoras whether he agrees with those who think know-
ledge is "a slave dragged about by any force" or whether he
thinks that knowledge is "something noble, able to govern man"
and that "whoever learns what is good and what is bad will
never be swayed by anything to act otherwise than knowledge

bids, and that intelligence is a sufficient succour for man-
kind." Protagoras' reply reveals Plato's early faith in human
nature:

> My view, Socrates, is precisely what you express,
> and what is more it would be disgraceful for me above
> all men to assert that knowledge and wisdom were aught
> but the highest of all human things. (Protagoras 352B)[20]

However, in the Republic and in the still more pessi-
mistic Laws, Plato's faith in mortal comprehension and moral
capacity takes a decided turn. Speaking to the question of
the necessity of laws in the state, he writes:

> The reason thereof is this,--that no man's nature
> (phusis) is naturally able both to perceive what is
> of benefit to the civic life of men and perceiving it,
> to be alike able and willing to practice what is best...
> and secondly, even if a man fully grasps the truth of
> this as a principle of art, should he afterwards get
> control of the state and become an irresponsible auto-
> crat, he would never prove able to abide by this view
> and to continue always fostering the public interest
> in the state as the object of first importance, to which
> the private interest in the state is but secondary;
> rather, his mortal nature will always urge him on to
> grasping and self-interested action; irrationally
> avoiding pain and pursuing pleasure. (Laws, 905D)[21]

The shift from his earlier belief that human nature could
develop goodness through proper training to his belief that
human nature is inherently incapable of perfection seems to
be primarily a result of Plato's growing conviction that few
human beings are born with the intellectual or moral sub-
stance to attain eudamonia, the desired state of harmony with
the universals.

---

[20]Plato, Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus, trans.
W. R. M. Lamb (London: Wm. Heinemann, 1914), pp. 225-26.

[21]Plato, Laws, trans. R. G. Bury, 2 vols. (London: Wm.
Heinemann, 1926), II:370.

The problem in Plato's eyes seems to be less a question of intentional evil than of the imperfection endemic to human nature itself. As A. W. H. Adkins points out,[22] in the _Laws_, it is not only the licentious criminal who commits intentional crimes who is executed, but the man who has a basic intention to do good and be just and who yet fails to come up to standard because of an inherent weakness of nature.[23] Adkin's comment on this passage is illuminating:

> In the last resort, intentions are irrelevant: What matters is 'true' _agathon_ or _kakon_ conferred upon the polis or the individual, which is an objective matter and has no necessary connection with the individual's intentions. (Adkins, p. 168)

In the final analysis, then, a capacity for reason and passion are conferred on every human being by the gods in given measure. Plato's disillusionment with man seems more to reflect a great sorrow at the number of men who are born incapable of seeing the light than a sorrow over the voluntary wickedness of mankind. Man's capacity for attaining a knowledge of the good, the reflection of the universal image of man, is always emphasized over his capacity for voluntary evil. The results of this emphasis can be seen in Plato's treatment of the characters in his own _Dialogues_: in his sympathetic portrayal of the vain and sensual Alcibiades, in the tolerance evinced for the murderers of Socrates. It can also be seen

---

[22] A. W. H. Adkins, _From the Many to the One_ (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 168.

[23] Plato, _Laws_, II, 245f.

in Sophocles' play <u>Oedipus Rex</u>, where the only evident reason
for Oedipus' downfall is his ill-fated moral ignorance.[24]

Though Plato theoretically excludes any representation
of evil in the characters of literature, it seems that his
practice--and the practice of most of the Greek artists--is
to evidence great sympathy for that evil by presenting it as
the result of unavoidable ignorance, or of inherent moral
blindness. The effect of this is to heighten both man's innate
nobility and the tragedy of his sometimes defective, but unin-
tentionally defective nature. The emphasis here is once
again on the "substantive" aspect of man, on the fated nature
of his moral character which is fixed even before birth.

Aristotle at first seems to reject this notion of a
fixed human nature. He denounces Plato's idea, for example,
that "no one is voluntarily wicked," (<u>Protagoras</u> 352-353B)
presumably because he rejects the notion of a fixed nature
which determines the ethical state of a character. He makes
it clear in the <u>Nichomachean Ethics</u> that ignorance of the
universal principles of law is no excuse for wrongdoing, and
that men are even responsible to detect evil in what appears
good to them. (<u>N.E.</u> III, 5, 1114b, 1-10)   Virtue is cul-
tivated in fact, by habitually intending and then choosing

---

[24]One must observe, however, that the heavy burden of
guilt which hangs over Oedipus is never overridden by the ob-
vious emphasis on his moral ignorance. Sophocles seems to
grasp in some deep and unconscious fashion man's need for
expiation, despite the fact that Oedipus' own acts are
largely unintentional.

the "right" actions, the conduct which leads to a balanced and reasonable life. At one point in Ethics (II, 1, 1114b, 7-8) he even goes so far as to write that the choice of actions determines character:

> Some men become temperate and gentle; others profligate and irascible, by actually comporting themselves in one way or the other in relation to those passions. In a word, our moral dispositions are formed as a result of the corresponding activities.[25]

And yet, Aristotle always seems to have one foot in the Platonic camp. While he does not absolve men from moral responsibility, he does have some sympathy for ethical weakness. For example, he excuses moral failure in men who are unable to apply the universal law to the particular situation (N.E., VII, 3, 1147b, 35-5) and thus reveals that he has no real answer finally to the problem of why some men are incapable of choosing the good. Aristotle is able to explain that a morally weak man is morally weak because he has an excess of passion which overwhelms him and brings about an ignorance of his exercise of the particular good action, but he has no explanation for why one man has more or less passion than another. Thus he cannot finally explain why one man is a "morally weak man," another a "wicked man," another a "man of practical wisdom," and another a "philosopher." The Aristotelian explanation that "habitual actions determine virtue" leads us finally in a circle: why do some men habitually choose the good actions they intend and others have not the same power?

---

[25] Aristotle, The Nichomachean Ethics, trans. H. Rackham (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1934), p. 75.

Aristotle has no final answer to the question and avoids direct discussion of it. His view of man is paradoxical: he does not wish to absolve man from responsibility and yet he cannot ultimately explain why one man is good and another evil, and like Plato finally has no answer to the problem of the relation between human free will and fate. The most he can bring himself to say is that we are "partly" responsible for our states of character:

> If, then, as is said, our virtues are voluntary (and in fact we are in a sense ourselves partly the cause of our moral dispositions, and it is our having a certain character that makes us set up an end of a certain kind), it follows that our vices are voluntary also; they are voluntary in the same manner as our virtues. (N.E. III, 5, 1114b, 20-25)[26]

Man causes his own character, and yet he is born as a certain kind of person. Because of his emphasis on action, Aristotle can be said to judge man's conduct a bit more stringently than Plato, but judgment is always tempered and informed by his great sense of historical accident, of the uncontrollable forces in life which threaten the structure of the personality from without and within. Thus even in Aristotle there is a sense of fate, of the doomed state of historical man.

As we can see from the tension represented by Aristotle's view of man's responsibility and his fate, a side-effect of the problem of fated human nature is a softening of the idea of eternal judgment, a fact which has important ramifications

---

[26]Aristotle, Ethics, p. 153.

for the dramatic intensity achieved by a character conceived

within the Graeco-Roman weltanschaung. If men are destined

to one fate or another, eternal judgment cannot be viewed

too fixedly. The mind resists the idea of punishment for a

nature already fated before time to a certain moral capacity,

and as a result, various possibilities for a second chance

for man after death become a common part of religious thought.

In the Aeneid, for example, Virgil represents the possibility

of a regenerative process after death. In fact, though moral

responsibility is still part of the picture, sin itself is

seen more as a natural result of descent into the body than

an inherent propensity toward making the wrong moral choices.

Even though the taint is strong, writes Virgil, there is poten-

tial for a total cleansing:

> Yes, not even when the last flicker of fire has left us
> does evil, or the ills that flesh is heir to, quite
> relinquish our souls; it must be that many a taint
> grows deeply, mysteriously grained in their being
> from long contact with the body. Therefore the dead
> are disciplined in purgatory, and pay the penalty of
> old evil; some hang, stretched to the blast of vacuum
> winds; for others, the stain of sin is washed away in
> a vast whirlpool or cauterized with fire. Each of us
> finds in the next world his own level; a few of us are
> later released to wander at will through the broad
> Elysium, The Happy Fields; until, in the fullness of
> time, the ages have purged that ingrown stain, and
> nothing is left but pure ethereal sentience, and the
> spirit's eternal flame. (Aeneid, I, ll. 731-748)[27]

Thus in the Aeneid there is a possibility of salvation

after death, a purgation of the taint of earthly life after

---

[27]Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. C. Day Lewis (New York:
Doubleday and Co., 1952), p. 151.

some kind of punishment has been endured. The idea of rein-
carnation, also prominent in the Aeneid, has itself had asso-
ciations through the centuries with the idea of a second
chance.

The effect of raising possibilities for a kind of moral
rebirth after death is to reduce the dramatic force of
choices made in earthly life.[28]   If the choice of a right
way or a wrong way has less ultimate meaning for a given
human being, then the making of choices in history will have
less dramatic intensity. In Greek tragedy the drama of the
situation does not accrue from the making of a choice for
all eternity, it accrues from our sympathy with a character
who senses that he is bound by an ultimate fate and who at
each successive and deeper revelation of it uses all his human
powers--reason, emotion, will--to stave it off. The drama
comes not out of the choices which bring about the character's
downfall because those choices, although they seemed acci-
dental in the beginning, are shown to have been part of the
total fate of the character all along. The drama comes
rather out of the illusion of free will created by the seeming
 reversals of the fateful circumstances. Oedipus thinks he
has been exonerated when he hears that his old parents have
died, only to find that they are not his parents and that the
hideous possibility of incest and murder still shadows his
life. His choices dwindle into fate; his relief--and his

---

[28]See Auerbach, Dante, pp. 88-89.

sense of freedom--is always short-lived. It is in the very
scenes where Oedipus recognizes his true fate that the drama
achieves its most powerful effect. And it is only in the
plot, Aristotle points out, that these elements of recogni-
tion and reversal occur.[29] Thus freedom of the human will
is always secondary in Greek drama to the inevitability of
the action. Where plot is more important than character, we
might expect to see a strong movement toward cosmic abstrac-
tion in character, away from attention to historic detail.

The element of abstraction in characterization, the move-
ment away from individualized detail, is further reinforced
by the Greek ambivalence toward the nature of individual
existence in the after-life. For Plato, this ambivalence
arises out of his total understanding of the nature of bodied
existence in life.

In the Dialogues, Plato aims at discovering the essen-
tial nature of a subject--its universal identity. These
identities he sees as underlying reality and as having an
existence independent of the sensible world. They are, as
Plato sees them, more real than the changeable and often
confusing data of sense-experience. All the unchangeable
realities of the eternal world can be perceived through
reason, which perceives unity in the connections underlying
the various divisions of reality. In like manner, the human

---

[29]Aristotle, "The Art of Poetry," in Aristotle, trans.
Wheelwright, p. 298.

soul as Plato describes it in the Phaedo is akin to the universal realities, having pre-existed with them before descending into the changeable particularity of the body.[30] The soul is seen as eternal, immutable, ideally suited to apprehending the eternal verities, while the body is mortal, in process, suited to the inferior world of sense perception. The very definition of soul in Plato's terms, for example, demonstrates its self-perpetuating, eternal quality. The soul, he writes, can be defined as self-motion, "for every body that derives its motion from within itself has a soul, since that is indeed the soul's nature...this self-motion is the very definition of the soul."[31] In Book X of The Republic[32] the soul is described as "immortal," "indestructible," and "pure," but as encrusted in this life with the "thousand ills" of human existence, much as a sea-statue is encrusted with barnacles and shells. Again in the Phaedrus, Plato refers to the pre-existent state when the pure soul gazed on reality, "not disfigured by this so-called body that we carry about us, imprisoned like oysters in a shell."[33]

---

[30] Plato, Phaedo, trans. F. Church (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, Inc., 1951), p. 35. "So she thinks that she should live in this life and when she dies, she believes that she will go on to what is akin to and like herself, and be released from human ills."

[31] Plato, Phaedrus, trans. W. C. Helmbold and W. G. Rabinowitz (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 33.

[32] Plato, The Republic, trans. Benjamin F. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 389.

[33] Plato, Phaedrus, p. 28.

The soul apart from the body, however, is itself seen
in the _Phaedrus_ as a tri-unity of "appetite" or concupiscence,
mettle or "spirit," and reason.[34]   Plato describes the trio
and their proper hierarchy in the _Phaedrus_ by means of the
illustration of a charioteer (reason) who controls two
horses: the one good (spirit); the other, bad (appetite).
In order for the charioteer to control the horse of appetite
he must enlist the strength of the spirited horse on the side
of reason and forcefully control the concupiscent element of
the soul "which in each of us is the largest part of the soul
and by nature the most insatiable of gain."[35]   This analogy
seems to suggest that the soul is not the "pure unity" which
is suggested by the passage in the _Phaedo_, but that it has
an element which pulls it downward to the body even as the
rational principle draws it up toward the unchanging reali-
ties. Plato seems to be describing the universal experience
of a dualism at the center of personality. As Paul Elmer
More puts it:

> Sometimes our real personality seems to reside in that
> portion of our being which is divine and uncontaminated
> by the world, in the soul, that is to say, considered
> apart from the body and the contacts with phenomena,
> while at other times we are more conscious of a division
> of our being which opens down into the depths of perso-
> nality.[36]

---

[34] Plato, _Phaedrus_, pp. 28-29. The names given to the
three aspects of the soul are A. E. Taylor's in _Plato: The
Man and His Work_ (London: Methuen & Co., 1934), p. 307.

[35] Plato, _The Republic_, p. 160.

[36] Paul Elmer More, _The Religion of Plato_ (London:
Princeton University Press, 1921), pp. 55-56.

And yet, Plato, as we have pointed out, insists upon the
pure unity of the soul in other places, its intimate rela-
tion with the unchanging verities. Mr. More finds the
solution to the apparent contradiction here in Plato's under-
standing of unity in this passage, a unity which can finally
be defined as an ordering of all parts of the soul in a graded
hierarchy. There is, as he puts it, no longer a "hostile
division of the powers within the soul like to factions with-
in a city, but a measured harmony and the unity of subordina-
tion."[37] The "just man," like the "just society" appears
where this unity of subordination has been achieved.

One intuits, however, that Plato is not ultimately
comfortable with the hierarchy as it operates in the philos-
opher-lover, for as adamantly as he insists on a correctly
ordered soul in life, his final goal is always a completely
ideal reality to be achieved only after death, when the
concupiscent soul will have no body to inflame, when appetite
will disappear in the absence of bodily need. In fact, it is
clear that for Plato, to be truly human requires a complete
and final turning away from the world of sense-perception,
of particular and manifold objects to the world of unity per-
ceived only by reason and spirit:

> For to be a man, one must understand the content of
> a general term, leaving the field of manifold sense-
> perceptions and entering that in which the object

---

[37]More, p. 56. A. E. Taylor follows this view, suggest-
ing that we are encouraged by Plato to think of the soul as
"one organism." A. E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work
(London: Methuen and Co., 1949), p. 307.

of knowledge is unique and grasped only by reason-
ing.[38]

The process of "becoming human" in these terms is a process

of ascent toward the clear condition of vision experienced

in the pre-existent state, a condition of experiencing the

"content of the general." The process is achieved in only

those few philosopher-lovers who rightly order their souls on

earth, keeping the bodily passions under strict control

through the power of reason, and contemplating with greatest

concentration the eternal ideas. The soul of a philosopher,

writes Plato in the Phaedo, is constantly meditating on

"what is true and divine and real:"

> And will not a man attain to this pure thought most
> completely if he goes to each thing, as far as he can,
> with his mind alone, taking neither sight nor any other
> sense along with his reason in the process of thought
> to be an encumbrance? In every case he will pursue pure
> and absolute being with his pure intellect alone. He
> will be set free as far as possible from the eye and the
> ear and in short, from the whole body, because inter-
> course with the body troubles the soul and hinders
> her from gaining truth and wisdom. Is it not he who
> will act in the knowledge of real being, if any man
> will?[39]

Plato, then, consistently emphasizes the soul as the highest

and best part of man. When he does mention the tripartite

division of the soul in the Republic and the Phaedrus, allow-

ing for the expression of passion and emotion, he appears to

do so only in order to have an adequate and unified explanation

of the human personality in life. However, when Plato

---

[38]Plato, Phaedrus, p. 32.

[39]Plato, Phaedo, p. 11.

reiterates this tripartite division of soul in the _Timaeus_, there is no doubt which part of the soul is immortal and which is not. At an early point, he distinctly calls the two lower categories the "mortal form of soul" and places them in fixed places within the body.[40] Later on, he draws a distinction between those who devote themselves to the lower soul and its passions and who thus "will not fall short of being mortal," and those who devote themselves to the highest part of the soul ("learning and true thoughts") who will thus partake of immortality.[41]

While there is little argument among the critics that the rational part of the soul is for Plato the most akin to the eternal verities, there is a controversy over the nature of reason or mind as Plato defines it. What is the character of that rational part of the soul? Is it personal in some sense? Does it have individual existence of some kind after death, or is it simply a pure abstract of the concepts of justice and virtue which were developed by the individual during life in the body?

G. M. A. Grube explains that this highest part of the soul is the mind or intellect, the "capacity to apprehend general truth," and reminds us that the aim of the Platonic philosopher is always to exercise that capacity, to lose himself --his private opinions and bodily feelings--more and

---

[40] Plato, _Timaeus_, trans. R. G. Bury (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1929), p. 179.

[41] Plato, _Timaeus_, p. 247.

more in contemplation of the universals. The perfect Platonic psyche, in Grube's view, would remain imperfect in direct proportion to its unwillingness to give up its individuality. For Plato the idea of personal immortality is thus "not something to aim at, but something to outgrow."[42]

Robert William Hall, on the other hand, takes issue with an analysis of Plato which seeks to "de-personalize" the rational part of the soul after death.[43] He points out that while a case can be made for the fact that in the Republic justice and virtue in themselves are to be valued above all things, the concept of virtue has much more meaning when predicated on a concept of personal immortality; justice can have no meaning apart from ethical man: "The great eschatological myths in the Dialogues," he argues, "would lose their impact and significance if there were serious doubt of the survival of the individual's personality."[44]

In addition to Hall's point, other factors in Plato seem to suggest the idea of a personal or individualized mind of a certain type. One would expect, for example, that the expression of desire and passion in Plato's view would be alien to pure rationality, and yet in the Symposium the desire of the philosopher for immortality, for contemplation of the

---

[42]G. M. A. Grube, Plato's Thought (London: Methuen and Co., 1935), p. 148.

[43]Robert William Hall, Plato and the Individual (The Hague: Martinus Nizhoff, 1963), p. 162, n. 1.

[44]Hall, p. 145.

eternal forms, is seen in terms of the human individual's desire to beget physical life. Is the comparison between human passion and philosophic desire simply an unfortunate choice of metaphor, or is the personal analogy somehow necessary to the very understanding of philosophic love? The idea of personal existence of some kind seems to be at least partially supported by the characterization of God presented in the Laws, (905D) where Plato at least suggests the notion of a personal Providence by arguing against the heresy that God is indifferent to men's affairs and by presenting a deity to whom all human behavior is a matter of importance and concern.[45]

Other factors point in the opposite direction. A. E. Taylor, for example, reminds us that the concern for mankind evinced by Plato's god is not the same kind of care demonstrated by the Christian deity.[46] In Plato's view, God attends to the affairs of men by establishing what could be called a law of gravitation --that is, a man as he becomes better or worse is drawn into the company of other men of the same type, and receives the care and concern natural to the group in which he moves. In this schema, there is still not specific possibility left for the direct personal intervention of God in the affairs of men. In addition, Plato directly undercuts the notion of a personal deity in the Phaedrus.

---

[45]Plato, Laws, II, 370.

[46]A. E. Taylor, Platonism (New York: Longman's, Green & Co., 1927), p. 105.

In this work, God is made to conform to an impersonal defini-

tion of immortality, and Plato berates the human imagination

which would create a "souled" and "bodied" deity:

> This composite structure of body and soul joined
> together is called a living being and is further desig-
> nated as mortal. Immortal it is not on any reasonable
> supposition; in fact, it is our imagination, not our
> vision, not our adequate comprehension, that presents
> us with the notion of a god as an immortal living being,
> equipped with both soul and body, and with these, more-
> over, joined together for all time.[47]

The passage in the Phaedrus and the form of God's "care" as

designated in the Laws, suggest a somewhat less personal

vision of God than that presented, for comparison, in the

Christian view, where the deity becomes human and thus heir

to all human passions, sympathies, etc. Still, the human

desire which forms the underlying metaphor for Plato's

Symposium, and the conception of justice and the view of God

presented in his last work, the Laws, suggests a re-evaluation

of the rational conception of pure mind which informed the

early works. As Paul Shorey puts it, Plato "smuggles in

other attributes of mind involving also the proposition which

Matthew Arnold refused to affirm, 'that God is a being who

thinks and loves.'"[48] And yet, this love cannot have

the same historical content as love defined within the

Christian context, for Plato's god never has an individual

historical manifestation, is never openly identified with

earthly man by becoming an individual. The metaphor of human

---

[47]Plato, Phaedrus, pp. 28-29.

[48]Paul Shorey, Platonism: Ancient and Modern (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), p. 70.

desire used in the _Symposium_ to explain philosophic love was probably chosen less in praise of human emotion and of life in the body than for its aptness in expressing a cosmic desire for unity, and we are left with a philosophy which overwhelmingly supports the superiority of the universal, the homogenous, the general, the One, which has become synonymous with Plato's name.

What form the unbodied soul has when it achieves this unity is open to question--and there has been some scholarly controversy on this very point. The basic question seems to be whether the soul is historically personalized or individualized in some sense, as Hall, Hackforth, and others suggest, [49] or whether it is a kind of homogenous unity in which the universal part of the historical individual finally rejoins the eternal realities from which it sprang. Evidence--especially Plato's constant reference to the superiority of the universals and the soul's universal aspect along with his rejection of any historical image of God--seems to point away from an emphasis on individual existence in general and toward a vision of cosmic homogeneity. This vision then forms the background for what Plato considers the basic issue in mimesis--the representation of the real man. For Plato, such a representation must begin with an imitation of the

---

[49]See R. Hackforth, _Plato's Phaedrus_ (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), pp. 87-88: "There is nothing in the _Republic_, _Phaedrus_, _Timaeus_, and we might add the _Laws_ to deny the retention of individualized existence in favor of the absorption of the individual in a world soul."

universal, not the historically particular man, because he
conceives of character in terms of the ideal philosopher-
lover, whose very capacity for existence is tied up with his
ability to contemplate the eternal verities, to apprehend
the general.

Thus we see that Plato in his general understanding of
the nature of man and the nature of God, consistently reveals
an interest in the universal aspect of experience, a tendency
to move from the earthly realities of matter and action
toward the ideal reality beyond time. The embryonic Ideal
Man in history is a graded hierarchy of reason, spirit, and
appetite. Man in history is only good, only philosophically
successful to the extent that he orders his earthly life by
enlisting reason on the side of spirit to control appetite.
The ultimate goal of true manhood, however, is outside of
time, when the soul, having outgrown earthly appetite will
have no need to struggle against it. The true end of man is
finally to "leave the field of manifold sense-perception,"
and to "understand the content of a general term."[50] In
other words, the true definition of man for Plato is a state
of unhindered, rational communication with the universals.

In Aristotle, on the other hand, the notion of individual
human identity finds a more solid grounding in the natural
world. Aristotle begins his study of "What Is" with the
analysis of being or substance, a term which is used in

---

[50]Plato, _Phaedrus_, p. 32.

three senses to mean (1) form, or the aspect of a thing
which determines its shape and nature; (2) matter, or the
underlying substratum in which the development of the form
takes place; and (3) a combination of form and matter result-
ing in an individual thing (Metaphysics V, vii).[51]   Although
the   form   of an individual thing is more akin to the uni-
versal or the generic (Metaphysics III, v.),[52]   an individual
thing cannot exist apart from the sensible substrate which
it shapes, and which gives the form the unique   matter   of
its being. According to A. E. Taylor, Aristotle takes sub-
stance to mean "thing" in this primary "substantive" sense
rather than qualities or attributes of things, even though
these are often spoken of as a mode of being.[53]   Thus, while
  substance   can in Aristotle refer to general classes of
things (as when we say that Plato is a man),   substance   in
a primary sense means an absolutely individual thing (this
man, this horse), individual beings which undergo changes and
processes in quality and quantity (accidents) while remain-
ing essentially one thing.[54]   For example, Socrates can be
successively young and old while remaining permanently

---

[51]Aristotle, Metaphysics, ed. H. Tredennick (London:
Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1933), p. 239.

[52]Aristotle, Metaphysics, p. 137.

[53]A. E. Taylor, Aristotle (London: T. C. and E. C.
Jack, Ltd., 1919), p. 50.

[54]Aristotle, Metaphysics, p. 241.

Socrates. Taylor characterizes the existence of these individual substances in Aristotle as "the most fundamental condition of the existence of the universe, since they are the bearers of all qualities, the terms of all relations, and the agents and patients in all interaction."[55]

Aristotle's analysis of this substantial individuality follows two antitheses--the contrast between matter and form and the contrast between the potential and the actual. In the first place, an individual is made up of its form (eidos, forma) and the stuff of which it is made (materia), as a copper bowl is made of copper material and formed into the shape of a bowl. Also, "matter" can refer not only to the physical body, but to other incorporeal "raw materials," for example, the concept of "character" in men requires both a "matter" of native disposition and a "formation" of training and education.

In turn, this analysis of matter and form receives its dynamic formulation in the antithesis of the potential and the actual. All processes, writes Aristotle, can be analyzed in terms of a "matter" which has the potential of becoming a fully actualized "form." An oak seed, for example, has the potential to become a fully developed "actualized" adult oak. The individual thing in this sense can be regarded as "the actuality of which the undeveloped Matter was the potentiality."[56] Aristotle concerns himself not only with the definition

---

[55]Taylor, Aristotle, p. 51.

[56]Aristotle, Metaphysics, p. 57.

of individuality as a combination of form and matter and of
potentiality and actuality, but also with the initial forces
which cause the development of the individual to take place--
with the conditions which initiate the production of the indi-
vidual being. Aristotle identifies four causes: (1) the
matter or material cause of a thing, (2) the essence or for-
mal nature of a thing, the "law according to which it has
grown and developed," (3) the immediate starting-point of
the process, or the efficient cause, and (4) the final cause,
or the "purpose or good which is the end of every generative
process."[57] In terms of a biological process, the four
causes can be explained by the illustration of an oak tree,
which in order to grow, must have (1) a material cause, or
seed which contains within it the potential for development,
(2) a definite Law which causes it to develop into an oak
tree as distinguished from a birch or willow, (3) a parent
tree which produced the seed, (4) a final condition of matur-
ity or actualization when growth no longer takes place and the
individual tree is capable of generation itself. Thus organic
beings reproduce other organic beings of the same <u>kind</u>, that
is:

> The efficient cause produces as the end of its action,
> a second being having the same "form" as itself, though
> realized in different "matter" and numerically distinct
> from itself. Thus, the efficient cause (i.e., the par-
> ent) is a "form" realized in matter, and the "end" is
> the same "form" realized in other matter.[58]

---

[57]Aristotle, <u>Metaphysics</u>, p. 59.

[58]Aristotle, <u>Metaphysics</u>, p. 60.

It is obvious that in this schema both the form and the individual matter which bears the form are essential to the notion of individual being. The substrate of matter cannot be truly said to exist without the individuating principle of form, even as the form cannot find individual existence without the unique material substrate with which it combines. For Aristotle, neither the universal genus nor the underlying material substrate in themselves contain the necessary individuality to form an individual thing.

This element in Aristotle's thought opposes him to Plato, who, as we have seen, attributes to universals a substantial reality apart from particular matter, a fact which leads him to define true human nature as a static ideal beyond the sensible world. For Aristotle, on the other hand, particular movement or 'life is an essential part of individual identity. In fact, motion and activity find their dynamic origin in the interaction of form and matter. At one point in the _Meta-physics_ Aristotle criticizes the Platonists for supposing that it is possible for a man to exist without his parts, as a circle does without the bronze. This cannot be, writes Aristotle, because

> an animal is sensible and cannot be defined without motion, and hence not unless its parts are in some definite condition; for it is not the hand in _any_ condition that is a part of a man, but only when it can perform its function, and so has life in it. (_Metaphysics_, VII, xi, 9)[59]

---

[59]Aristotle, _Metaphysics_, p. 367.

It is no accident that for Aristotle the very model of
"what is" is life (bios), while in Plato mathematical symbol
is the representative metaphor for ultimate reality. In
Aristotle's view to speak of the universal abstract apart
from the particular concrete has no meaning. The universal
for him has no separate existence from the particular (Meta-
physics VII, xv, 5).[60]

Aristotle's insistence on an integrated view of life in
this sense appears again in his De Anima, where the substan-
tive categories of "form" and "matter" are applied specifi-
cally to the relationship of soul to body in the human being.
Every living body, writes Aristotle, which possesses life
(the capacity for self-sustenance, growth and decay) must be
"substance" in the earlier sense of a compound of form and
matter. The soul, following Aristotle's earlier definition
of "form" in the Metaphysics, is "substance" in the sense of
being the form of a natural body (material substance) which
potentially has life. As Aristotle puts it, the soul is
"substance expressed as the form" (On the Soul II, i).[61]
Following the earlier schema, Aristotle identifies the mat-
ter of the body as its "potentiality" and the soul as the
"actuality" of the body, the "final cause," that which enables
it to exist as a living individuality ("whereby we live and

---

[60]Aristotle, Metaphysics, p. 393.

[61]Aristotle, On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath,
ed. W. S. Hett (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935),
pp. 69-71.

feel and think in the most fundamental sense" (On the Soul II, ii).[62] As such, it is the origin of the faculties of nutrition, sensation, thought and movement and forms a unified whole with the body, whose materia is the instrument of the faculties of the soul just as the material eye is the instrument for the power of seeing (On the Soul, II, ii).[63] Aristotle never separates the functions or affections of the soul-- anger, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, love, hate--from the body (On the Soul I, i).[64] He thus appears to insist uniformly in both the Metaphysics and the De Anima on the inseparability of soul and body. Unlike Plato, he rejects the notion of a substantial reality apart from particular beings, grounding his theory of individuality in empirical reality--in a synthesis of the universal and the particular.

And yet, as much as Aristotle insists on the inseparability of soul and body in life, there is reason to suspect him of a slight reversion to Platonism when it comes to speculation about God, the afterlife, and the problem of evil.[65]

---

[62]Aristotle, On the Soul, p. 79.

[63]Aristotle, On the Soul, p. 71.

[64]Aristotle, On the Soul, p. 15.

[65]See Philip Wicksteed, "Introduction," Aristotle, Physics, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis Cornford, 2 vols. (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1929), I:Lxxii; Aristotle, The Metaphysics, p. xxxi; A. E. Taylor, Aristotle, p. 69; and Werner Jaeger, Aristotle, trans. Richard Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 352. Jaeger, for example, writes that Plotinus was one of the first to see the difficulty of Aristotle's reversion to the notion of an immaterial final cause, and summarizes his insight: "If matter is the principle of individuation, as Aristotle teaches here and

The problems raised by this speculation put some limits on his theory of individuality.

First, Aristotle does not seem to be able to escape from the notion of an ultimately immaterial Cause. The continuity of the processes of life, the interaction of form and matter in life presupposes an eternal Cause which maintains these processes. This eternal cause must of necessity be eternal and unchanging and therefore immaterial. Aristotle identifies this cause not as a composite of form and matter but as the final actuality, the pure form which initiates the world outside of which it stands. The world is not created from this pure form or actuality, but the matter of it is moved by its inherent desire for the ultimate good. Thus "god moves the universe by being its good."[66] Without Him, there can be no form, or soul. And yet primary matter, the stuff which God, who is a kind of dynamic force, forms into existence, is as much a condition of individual existence as God himself. Then too, God or the First Cause, is conceived of as essentially disinterested in the world he moves. There is no personal concern exhibited by this "Unmoved Mover," even in the limited sense in which we saw it in Plato's god.

elsewhere, either the movers of the spheres cannot be immaterial since they form a plurality of exemplars within a genus; or Aristotle refutes himself by retaining his doctrine of immortality, since this excludes individual multiplicity. In either event he falls into contradictions within the presuppositions of his own philosophy."

[66]Taylor, Aristotle, p. 68; Aristotle, De Physica, II, 267-425.

The primary activity of this deity is one of self-contempla-
tion--of "thinking of thought itself,"[67] an activity which is
self-continuous and self-pleasurable, entirely abstracted
from the world of human passion and desire. Insofar as man
participates in this kind of pure contemplative thinking he
is participating in the activity of God.

This notion of God as Immaterial Cause may provide the
only basis we can find in Aristotle for the soul's individual
immortality after death. W. D. Ross has pointed out that in
the De Anima there are hints that at least one faculty of
the soul--the reasoning faculty--has an immortality beyond
time (De Anima III, iv and v),[68] at least when it engages in
the self-contemplative thinking of which the Unmoved Mover
is the model. Whether this exists as the function of an
individual form or soul or as part of a generalized good,
Aristotle does not say.[69] If Aristotle's passionless concep-
tion of the deity as pure form gives us any clue the latter
choice seems more probable.

Thus Aristotle's definition of individuality as a com-
posite of form and matter, of soul and body, appears to make
no claims beyond the boundaries of physical existence. What
is left after the decay of the "matter" of the body is pure

---

[67]Taylor, Aristotle, p. 61. See also Jaeger, p. 346.

[68]Aristotle, On the Soul, p. 167; p. 177.

[69]W. D. Ross, Aristotle (London: Methuen and Co., 1930),
p. 132.

form with no substantial existence as an individual being.
The view of man that Aristotle's schema suggests is thus
man as a composite being of a form and a materia of poten-
tiality moving toward realization in actuality. God alone
is fully actualized with no unrealized potentiality in his
nature. Man as a composite, growing being moves on toward
what seems to be pure actualization or "form" (De Physica II,
viii, 199b).[70]

The lack of a detailed formulation of the nature of exis-
tence after death in the two greatest Greek philosophers con-
tributes to the general Greco-Roman tendency to represent
characters in the afterlife as veiled, ethereal. What re-
mains of the individual personalities is completely universal-
ized. Stripped of any accidental historical individuality,
they become only abstracted shadows of their former selves.
When Virgil's Aeneas meets Anchises in the Elysium fields,
for example,[71] Anchises exhibits only the qualities of a
universal type of a father--affection, solicitude, and joy
at seeing his son after a long separation. There is nothing
to identify Anchises individually except that we know he is
Aeneas' father. He is identified as morally superior
because he is found in the Elysium fields, the "Happy Place;"
but as we have already seen, the moral ranking is a
standard result of the prescriptive view of history formulated

[70]Aristotle, De Physica, II, 177n.

[71]Virgil, Aeneid, p. 150.

by Greek thinkers and only contributes to universalization of the character.

Virgil's Dido in the same work is represented as "a wild-eyed, passionate ghost,"[72] still in the throes of her hatred for Aeneas. She does not speak; all that is left is the one passionate element of her nature which caused her downfall--now universalized into a symbol of the eternal relation in the Greek view between nature and destiny. Aeneas' reaction to Dido is less romantic than it is compassionate. Virgil makes it clear that he pities Dido's fate; but he does not grieve over their former love: "None the less did Aeneas, hard hit by her piteous fate, weep after her from afar, as she went, with tears of compassion."[73] The effect of the emphasis on destiny is once again to universalize the portrait of both characters, abstracting the fated qualities of their natures from the comparative richness of the description of their love-affair in earthly life.

The characters in Homer's Odyssey exhibit the same emphasis on universalization, moral prescriptivism, and destiny. After his long delay with the sorceress Circe, Odysseus travels to Hades on Circe's orders to seek further counsel from the spirit of Teiresias. Once there, he sacrifices a black ram and the spirits of the dead begin to seek him out. The first to appear is Elpenor, one of Odysseus' companions only

---

[72] Aeneid, p. 143.

[73] Aeneid, p. 143.

recently killed on Circe's island. Elpenor gives Odysseus
a quick account of his death, stressing the fated destiny of
his life ("an evil doom of some god was my bane"),[74] and then
begs Odysseus for a proper burial. Elpenor's entire speech
reflects exactly the concerns of the universal type of a
faithful retainer--his loyalty to Odysseus, his cruel fate,
his ritualistic desire for burial lest he bring on the anger
of the gods. Even his parting wish only strengthens the
highly universalized impression we receive by reminding us
one last time of the essential nub of his character--his com-
radeship-at-arms: "fulfill me this and plant upon the barrow
mine oar, wherewith I rowed in the days of my life, while I
was yet among my fellows."[75]

Odysseus' encounter with his mother exhibits the same
kind of universalized character presentation. As in Aeneas'
meeting with Anchises in the Aeneid, the universal parental
qualities of affection, solicitude and grief over long sepa-
ration are evident. The mother recounts her death (caused
by Odysseus' long absence), and gives him news of his wife.
The most interesting aspect of her counsel is her account of
man's state after death--of the nature of his existence in
the afterlife:

> Ah me, my child, of all men most ill-fated, Persephone,
> the daughter of Zeus, doth in no wise deceive thee, but

---

[74]Homer, Odyssey, p. 164.

[75]Homer, Odyssey, p. 164.

> even on this wise it is with mortals when they die.
> For the sinews no more bind together the flesh and the
> bones, but the great force of burning fire abolishes
> these, so soon as the life hath left the white bones,
> and the spirit like a dream flies forth and hovers
> near. But haste with all thine heart toward the sun-
> light, and mark all this, that even hereafter thou may-
> est tell it to thy wife.[76]

The highly philosophical nature of this account of the body

and its destruction with the didactic overtones of the admo-

nition to Odysseus to leave the dark world and tell his wife

at the end heightens the dreadful aspect of this characteri-

zation and increases the effect of ethereality and impending

doom, besides giving explicit voice to the Greek split between

body and spirit.

In summary, then, the Greek understanding of reality is

controlled by philosophical and historical formulations which

encourage an emphasis on the universal, the prescriptive, and

the didactic in characterization. The Greek habit of separat-

ing substantive truth from historical actuality led to a uni-

versalized view of human character which discouraged the

representation of character development in literature and

tended to fix a character in time and space, to freeze him

at a particular ethical and social level. Because of the

prescriptive quality of the universalized man, it made char-

acterization, even historical characterization a natural

vehicle for didactic instruction. Also, the tendency to view

history as chaotic, as a repository of the accidental and the

---

[76]Homer, _Odyssey_, p. 168.

mutable, led to an essential disunity in the earthly repre-
sentation of characters, who though ultimately subject to the
Heraclitan axiom that a man's nature is his fate, yet become
aware of that law only gradually, and only through great
resistance to it. Human character is viewed almost as if it
were on a planned trajectory, a trajectory of which the human
agent is unaware until he recognizes its interrelation with
his deepest self at its completion. In addition, because
Greek philosophy discourages the notion of individualized
existence after death, characters depicted in the afterlife
are veiled and shadowy, symbolic apparitions of their former
affections and recognizable as individual personalities only
in virtue of the essential passions which governed their des-
tinies in life. Finally in both Aristotle and Plato we see
what might be called an optimism: a certain reluctance to
display real moral depravity in literature, a sympathy for
the fated nature of humanity, a belief in the ultimate (and
probably absolute and undifferentiated) union of the soul and
universal truth in death. Plato, even though disillusioned
with man's capacity to come up to an ideal, never actually
lost his faith in the capacity of education to activate the
will and produce good actions and character. Aristotle, on
the other hand, saw more clearly the powerlessness of good
intention in the face of man's passionate nature. Still,
neither Plato nor Aristotle in this respect develops the deep
recognition of the powerlessness of human will reached in the

Christian vision of man. Neither offers a solution to the
problem of the weakness of the will beyond the exhortation
to cultivate one's own power, the natural goodness one finds
within the human personality. In both Plato and Aristotle,
the view of human nature is always tinged with optimism, a
faint hope that if the conditions are exactly right, man will
be able, by the light of his own reason, to apprehend, to
will, and to do the good. That such idealism should be tinged
with the kind of disillusionment we noted in the later works
is perhaps not as shocking as we might suppose. C. S. Lewis
writes that cynicism and idealism in romantic literature
about women are "twin fruits on the same branch," and we may
profitably extend this bit of wisdom to the general Greek
attitude toward the nature of man.

All this tended to encourage the creation of highly
abstract and universalized characters in literature. Where
characters are individualized or historicized in any sense
it seems to be either in virtue of comic representation of
character or of the representation of moral lapses in the
specific sense just described. Individuality is
in fact defined less as a matter of personality--the
particular physical, emotional and spiritual constitution of
a given human being--than as human fault, the combination of
defects which reveal the desperate weakness of a soul trapped
in the sensual body, in the state of "potentiality," to use
the Aristotelian term. In botn Aristotle and Plato, evil is

always a necessary part of historical existence; the "good" is beyond history, more real, more substantive than history and therefore more worthy of imitation.

Two Classical Theories of Characterization

The universalized portrayal of character which is encouraged by the Greek view of history directly affects theoretical formulation of the rules governing literary characterization. Plato and Aristotle handle the subject from slightly different perspectives, but with overall conclusions which encourage a universal over a historically actual representation of character.

Scholars have long observed that Plato's theory of poetics is governed by a great anxiety about the moral effects of art based on his belief (1) that the artist is thrice removed from reality and (2) that he arouses the undesirable emotions and passions which it is the philosopher-lover's desire to escape.[77] In the Republic, Book III, for example, we find a denunciation of the passages in Homer which conjure up images of Hades or the afterlife on the grounds that such poetry causes a morbid fear of death.[78] The same suspicion of the bad moral effects of poetry crop up again in Book X of the Republic, where Plato distinguishes three levels of reality

---

[77] A. W. H. Adkins, From the Many to the One (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 160.

[78] Plato, Republic, p. 183.

and portrays the artist as imitator of the lowest type,
i.e., an imitator of the actual conditions of life in the
empirical world.[79] Illustrating this concept by means of the
now famous example of an artist painting a couch, he dis-
tinguishes between the "ideal" couch beyond the sensible
world and the particular couch of which it is an imperfect
manifestation. The artist, painting the imperfect couch, thus
produces in his work the "imitation of an imitation." Because
of Plato's firm insistence on the knowledge of things as they
are, i.e., knowledge of the imperfect actualities of exis-
tence, the artist as he presently exists is a man thrice-
removed from the truth and much closer to the base particu-
lars of historical existence than to the eternal realities.

It is interesting that although Plato saw philosophy and
not poetry as the ultimate repository of universal truth, he
was not averse to an "ideal" conception of poetry which would
have as its object the depiction of a strongly ideal yet his-
torical character. Imitation of the wise and strong histori-
cal character is allowed, but only on the grounds that wisdom
and strength are ideal realities and thus legitimate subjects
for imitation:

> If they (the guardians of the Republic) do imitate,
> they should imitate from childhood what is proper for
> their craft--men who are brave and temperate, pious,
> free and all things of that sort.[80]

---

[79] Plato, _Republic_, pp. 393-396.

[80] Plato, _Republic_, p. 193.

The problem is, according to Plato, that the wise and calm character, being "nearly always the same and self-composed,"[81] is very difficult to imitate. Not only that, but he will likely not be well-received, even if a poet succeeds in conveying him, because the goodness of his character will be inherently alien to the imperfect men to whom he is presented. Plato concludes that the imitative poet as he exists in the present world is therefore "not naturally suited to imitate this part of the soul," but is rather naturally predisposed to imitate the "resentful and complex" character which is popular with the multitude. Immediately following, Plato makes a direct linkage between the imitative poet and the inferior part of the soul; and accuses the imitative poet of corrupting even the decent people with very few exceptions.[82] He specifies the direct moral effects of poetry as "fostering and strengthening" the inferior part of the soul; what is unreasoning and idle, and the friend of cowardice.[83]

Thus the representation of character allowed by Plato's aesthetic has strong affinities with the Greek tendency to separate the eternal verities from historical actuality. The creation in history of literary characters on Plato's terms is practically impossible. If it were possible, the characters would be of such a wise and calm disposition that they

---

[81] Plato, Republic, p. 405.

[82] Plato, Republic, p. 405.

[83] Plato, Republic, p. 406.

would not incite the emotional participation from which imitation of worldly character derives its appeal. But this is not possible, at least within historical life on this earth. In Plato's ideal theory of mimesis, there is no room for any imitation apart from imitation of an ideal which is separate from bodily life as it is experienced on earth. Since this kind of imitation is not possible on earth, poet-imitators will be sent out of the Republic.[84]

Only one tiny loophole is left for an artistic representation of character which is less than the ideal. A good man, Plato writes, will normally be eager to imitate a good man acting firmly and sensibly. He will not be so willing to imitate misfortune, passion, or drunkenness because "he resents modelling and fitting himself into the shapes of the worse."[85] This disdain for the imperfect will be uniformly true, "unless," says Socrates, "it be just a bit of fun."[86] The rules which govern the "fun" are based on a strict control over the kind of defect in character which can be comically represented. Plato makes a distinction, for example, in the Philebus, 48-50 between vice when it occurs in the ideal man and vice when it occurs in the morally weak.[87] The

[84]Plato, Republic, p. 196.

[85]Plato, Republic, p. 194.

[86]Plato, Republic, p. 194.

[87]Plato, Philebus, trans. Harold N. Fowler (London: William Heinemann and Sons, 1914), pp. 333-339.

first, he writes, may harm others, but the second is merely laughable. As Mary A. Grant points out in her essay on ancient Greek theories of the ridiculous,[88] the writer of a pure comic genre, according to Plato, would be ridiculing only persons of a consistently weak moral nature, whose defects are themselves only slight. In so doing, Plato tends to fix the ethical standing of the comic character at a certain level of moral weakness which is laughable precisely because it is not harmful enough to be labelled morally destructive. Thus where we might most expect to see a theory allowing for an individualized view of character in the sense of a character who shares a realistic quota of human fault of both the serious and the less serious variety, we find instead a carefully delineated ethical type of a definitely fixed sort. Plato's view of comic character follows the general classical tendency toward ethical fixity even in the representation of low or mean characters.

Ultimately, of course, Plato is not comfortable with the depiction of comic characters in any sense. In the Laws VII, 816-817,[89] Plato writes that the virtuous man must of necessity come into contact with the shameful persons and thoughts which produce comedy, because serious thought cannot be comprehended without its contrasting opposite. Still, the

---

[88] Mary A. Grant, The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1924), p. 19.

[89] Plato, Laws, I, 97-99.

virtuous man is never allowed to take an active interest
in the subjects of comedy, because he is too close to real
moral evil. No matter how innocuous a particular character
fault may be, the threat of real evil looms just beyond it,
and Plato cannot be entirely free from anxiety in its pres-
ence. Thus he insists in the Laws that "slaves and hired
strangers act our comedies for us."[90] The serious citizen
of the Republic cannot allow himself a model which is other
than perfection itself.

Thus Plato's theory of mimesis has ultimate moral impli-
cations for the artist. The action of mimesis can be applied
to any successive level of reality--beginning with the highest
kind of mimesis, imitating the eternal ideas, and moving
successively down the scale to the imitation of an image of
the virtues to the imitation of the sensible world, itself
nothing more than a shadow of the highest reality. He who
imitates the image farthest from the original and absolute
Ideal is farthest from the truth. The poet, or imitator of
an image of the truth, must bow to the philosopher-lover who
has a more direct access to reality, and the status of art
falls automatically below that of philosophy.

Even the criteria for what is considered good art are
determined by this standard of transcendent truth. The most
beautiful art-object will not be the one which most perfectly

----

[90]Plato, Laws, I, 97-99.

represents the world of sense, but the one which most per-
fectly mirrors the unchanging world of eternal verities. The
most poets can do in a general sense is to tell stories and
create characters which will encourage the virtues of the
ideal philosopher-lover. As Plato puts it in Book X of the
Republic (600E):

> We may take it, then, that all the poetic company from
> Homer onwards are imitators of images of virtue and
> whatever they put in their poems, but do not lay hold
> on truth.[91]

The notion of poetic character for Plato is necessarily sub-
ordinate to the formation of the moral character of the
philosopher-lover, the real aim of the Platonic world-view.
While there are hints of a personalized view of the rational
soul beyond the sensible world, as I have shown, this "per-
sonality" or "individuality" is of a different and rarer
order than that exhibited by the human being in the process
of historical life, where the possibility for evil passions
and affections are built into the tri-partite "soul" of bodily
existence. The separation between the two views of character,
the "real" and the "shadow" human being, widens in Plato's
later years and gives rise to a duality in both its good and
evil aspects for an ideal portrayal of character whose ulti-
mate end is the moral edification of the audience to which it
appeals.

In his theory of mimesis, Aristotle allows only a bit
more room for the representation of "historical" character.

---

[91]Plato, Republic, p. 400.

Consistent with his general philosophical orientation, Aristotle's aesthetic is built on the proposition that the products of the poetic art are a combination of form and matter which are given existence through the soul of the artist which shapes and forms the material of poems to a certain end or actuality. Thus Aristotle writes: From art proceed the things of which the form is in the soul of the artist" (Metaphysics VII, vii, 5).[92] Art has an artificial origin in the soul of the artist which is different from the moving principle or form which is inherent in the matter of a natural form such as a tree. The form which gives shape to poetic matter arises in man's instinct for imitation, and can be defined as an imitation or a likeness of human nature. "Likeness" in the Aristotelian sense as defined by Elder Olson implies a "similarity of form between things different in number, species, or genres."[93] Thus poems are different in matter from the human reality they imitate, but similar in form. The form of a poem shapes the materia, i.e., the objects of imitation. The end of such a process is the final form of the imitation, and it is not, as in the Nichomachean Ethics, the initiation of a specific human activity, but in "products which persist beyond the

---

[92]Aristotle, The Metaphysics, p. 239.

[93]Elder Olson, Aristotle's Poetics and English Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. xvi.

actions which produce them."[94]   Poetics is what Aristotle

would call a productive science--it aims at producing a

finished product, a formal "actuality."   This is why Aris-

totle sees an inherent kinship between the process of artis-

tic production and the self-contemplative activity of the

Immaterial Cause.

Aristotle is primarily concerned in the Poetics with

reasoning back from the desired end-product to the means which

were employed in making it.   And the "end" to be achieved, in

Aristotle's terms, is always the imitation of some pattern

of human experience--either things "as they were or are, or

things as they are said and seem to be, or things as they

should be" (Poetics XXV, 1460b).[95]   The controlling principle

of Aristotle's thought is the principle of imitation, and

imitation can be of things either particular or general.

Bywater's translation of Chapter 9 of the Poetics clarifies

the point.   Speaking to this very subject Aristotle writes:

> And if he (the poet) should come to take a subject from
> actual history, he is none the less a poet for that;
> since some historic occurrences may very well be in the
> probable and possible order of things; and it is in
> virtue of that that he is their 'maker.'[96]

---

[94]R. S. Crane, The Languages of Criticism and the
Structure of Poetry (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1953), p. 43.

[95]Aristotle, Poetics, in Aristotle, Poetics; Longinus,
On the Sublime; Demetrius, on Style, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe
(London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1932), p. 101.

[96]Aristotle, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry, ed. W. Ham-
ilton Fyfe, trans. Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press,
1963), p. 27.

Imitation can be of things either particular or general, either historical or ideal.

But even when Aristotle writes that the imitation of things historical and particular is allowed, he makes it clear that they are regarded and treated as dramatic material—that is, within the context of the controlling dynamis of the art-product:

> From all this it is manifest that the poet (which is to say, the maker), must be primarily a maker of plots rather than of verses, for he is a poet by virtue of the representing (mimesis) that he does, and the object he represents is actions. Even though he should happen to take a subject from history, he is none the less a poet on that account, for there is nothing to prevent certain historical events from being plausible and (dramatically) possible, and it is in relation to this aspect of them that he is their proper maker, or poet.[97]

Thus a particularized or historical view of character is never Aristotle's primary intention in the creation of an art-form. His first purpose in the Poetics is always an artistic imitation of the universally "probable and inevitable" actions of men, just as his first concern in the development of virtue is the exercise of virtuous action. It follows that for him, plot is the most important principle of the Poetics simply because it has to do with the universalized actions of men, and therefore serves as the organizing principle, the soul or dynamis of the particular art-form (Poetics VI, 1450b).[98] Character and thought, in turn, are

---

[97] Aristotle, "The Art of Poetry," in Aristotle, trans. Wheelwright, pp. 302-303.

[98] Aristotle, Poetics, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe, p. 27.

the raw material of the plot, the objects of imitation, even as diction and music are the means of imitation and dramatic and theatrical technique are the manner. Character and thought, diction and music and theatrical technique thus form a hierarchy of the material substance of tragedy, all of which are subsidiary to the shaping spirit of plot, the dynamis, or soul of the work of art.

Eric Auerbach has noted that this conception of the nature of mimesis is directly related to Aristotle's understanding of history. Aristotle, as we have shown, sees history or actuality as a chaotic jumble of raw material which must be shaped into something more ordered, rational, manageable. Man, a rational being, is the agent of this ordering. For Aristotle, chaos is external to man; man himself is rational and has the responsibility of ordering the historical actuality which surrounds him. Art in these terms is a correction of actual events, an order imposed on chaos, a "happening superior to actual happening."[99] Auerbach sees a significance in this for the Aristotelian concept of dramatic unity. If the "order" imposed on the raw material of drama is essentially an order of incident or action, then the dramatic unity of a piece of art resides in the plot, and not in the characters:

> This is why Aristotle opposes the universality of poetry to the particularity of history...and expressly bases the unity of tragedy not on the hero, who can be

---

[99]Auerbach, Dante, p. 7.

assailed with disparate events, but on the rationalized
fable which he declares can be independent of the
character.[100]

For Aristotle, the unity of a work of art is not in the

representation of character, but in the plot, the _dynamis_,

or soul of a work of art, that which allies it most closely

with the universals. This is so because the material of

character' in the making of an art-product can be histori-

cal, i.e., subject to the imperfection and evil which nat-

urally arises in the struggle of the individual soul toward

potentiality.

It is significant that Aristotle distinguishes in

Poetics VI between the "errors and frailities" of human nature

and its "vices and depravities." Evil in the latter sense

seems to refer to the intentional evil of consciously bad

conduct, while evil in the former sense seems to refer

back to the imperfections which can occur in the struggle

of the individual soul toward potentiality, the accidents

which seem to arise in the very scheme of the process of

growth toward actuality. Proper tragic character must exhibit

exclusively the first type of evil. The poet must choose, in

other words, a character in whom the accidental frailities

of human nature and not acts of intentional evil are seen as

the cause of misfortune. This insures a sympathetic audience

response and discourages ethical judgments of the protagonist

which could undermine the tragic effect.

---

[100] Auerbach, _Dante_, pp. 8-9.

In a similar way, the comic character must be morally inferior, "not in the sense of being thoroughly evil," (*Poetics* V),[101] but only in the sense of illustrating the laughable foibles of human nature:

> Comedy, as we have said, is a presentation of men who are morally inferior--not in the sense of being thoroughly evil, but only in the sense of being ludicrous. For the ludicrous is a sub-division of the morally ugly, consisting in some defect or ugliness which does not produce actual harm and hence causes no pain to the beholder as a comic mask is ugly and distorted without causing pain....[102]

Despite an apparently more relaxed attitude toward the representation of comic character, Aristotle follows Plato rather closely in his own analysis. He too, for example, carefully delineates the exact ethical type of figure which produces comic effect and comments on the close relation of comic defect and moral evil. The recognition of the subterranean connection between comic fault and substantive evil causes both Aristotle and Plato--especially Plato--to be somewhat chary of comic representation except within strict bounds. This comes from a basic Greek reluctance to display characters who are less than consistently noble. Even where a noble character is represented as hampered by a tragic flaw, such a defect, as we have shown earlier, is less the result of willful incorrigibility than of fate, and it is most definitely not laughable. From the strict bounds placed on the

---

[101]Aristotle, "The Art of Poetry," in *Aristotle*, trans. Wheelwright, pp. 295-296.

[102]Aristotle, "The Art of Poetry," in *Aristotle*, trans. Wheelwright, pp. 295-296.

kind of evil allowed in the representation of both tragic and comic character in Greek aesthetic theory, we may draw the conclusion that the Greek attitude toward comic characterization tends to follow the Greek attitude toward tragic characterization. Both kinds of character study portray one absolute level of ethical behavior. The absolutism of the comic figure in classical terms, his incapacity for growth and development, may be the one element which most clearly demonstrates the Greek tendency to fix characters into universalized types of various ethical ranks, a fact which obviously discourages historical individuality in characterization and encourages a fated notion of character.

The fateful aspect in Aristotle's analysis of character representation may be a partial result of his treatment of evil in general. Because of the primacy of actuality to potentiality in Aristotle's system, he finally rejects the existence of evil principles in the sphere of the "Unmoved Mover."[103] If the eternal is not potential, but only actual, it can have no element of evil, because "evil cannot exist apart from things"(Metaphysics X, ix, 3).[104] Evil can only exist in individual beings, and it exists only in a particular

---

[103]Aristotle, Metaphysics, p. 465. Tredennick notes: "Aristotle reasons that actuality is a separate substantial existence, and is prior as a state to potentiality. Potentiality is prior to evil in the moral scale, thus, whatever has a separate substantial existence is prior to evil."

[104]Aristotle, Metaphysics, p. 465.

sense. W. D. Ross explains the definition Aristotle gives
to evil and its moral implications for man:

> Evil, in other words, is not a necessary feature of
> the universe, but a by-product of the world-process,
> something that casually emerges in the course of indi-
> vidual things to reach the perfection that is open to
> them, and thus to approximate as nearly as they can to
> the divine life, to 'become immortal as far as they
> can.' That they to a large extent fail is due to mat-
> ter or necessity, but this is not an evil principle but
> a principle indifferent to good and evil.[105]

In this view, man's responsibility for the evil in his nature

is de-emphasized. Evil simply arises from matter because

matter itself is of necessity a potentiality of the oppo-
sites of good and evil (Physics, I, ix).[106] Goodness of

character, like evil, is part of individual man's necessary

potential. To be virtuous or to be evil in Aristotle's view

is simply to develop by good acts or evil acts the material

capacity for good or for ill inherent in all men.

G. R. G. Mure writes that in Aristotle's schema, man

controls his conduct up to a certain point, but he can never

completely control or analyze the given "materia" of his own

being, and therefore cannot entirely determine his actions

whether they be good or bad:

> Moral conduct is a man's making of himself, and the
> stuff he fashions is never wholly his own creation.
> The line dividing a self which perpetually expands and
> contracts in a social and material medium, from circum-
> stances which we choose to regard as external to it,

---

[105]W. D. Ross, Aristotle (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd.,
1933), p. 178.

[106]Aristotle, Physics, I, 93.

> can never finally distinguish within the active life
> that commands our attention as a whole the agents of our
> own contribution, for which moral praise is due, from
> the gifts of fortune--or, if we prefer it, from the
> grace of God.[107]

Because Aristotle allows for the imitation of the individual,
and because evil is a given "materia" or individual existence
in his view, the representation of inferior beings in an
art-product is allowable. But the representation of evil is
kept within very strict bounds. It is never allowed such
free reign in a given character that he degenerates to the
point of true moral depravity, or "sin" in the Christian
sense. What is emphasized instead is the "accidental" nature
of evil, its fateful aspect.

Consequently, Aristotle's specific discussion of the
elements involved in constructing a character in the
Poetics IX reveal a proportion of moral goodness and indi-
vidual frailty weighted on the side of the ideal, of the
universalized good. As several critics have pointed out,
character in the Poetics VI does not carry the sense of
dramatis personae, but rather the sense of the moral ethos
of a dramatic agent, the typically "good" qualities a tragic
agent must have.[108] Even where Aristotle leaves room for a
particularized or historical representation of character,

---

[107]G. R. G. Mure, Aristotle (New York: Oxford Univer-
sity Press, 1964), p. 145.

[108]See Elder Olson "Introduction," p. xix; also Lane
Cooper, Aristotle and the Art of Poetry (New York: Harcourt,
Brace and World, 1913), p. 22.

however, he defines character primarily in terms of a broad idealism, or what he calls a "moral ethos." This becomes clear when he enumerates the elements involved in the depiction of "moral character" in the personages of tragedy:

    (1)   The agent or personality should express moral purpose through his words and actions.

    (2)   The agent must be "true to type," that is, the poet should have a sense of propriety and not, for example, ascribe a quality of unscrupulous cleverness of or valour to a woman.

    (3)   The character must be "true to life," (and Aristotle sharpens this by adding, "This is different from being good or true to type").

    (4)   The character must be consistent throughout (Poetics, XV, 1454a).[109]

Although all the elements have to do with the artistic qualities proper to the elevated "type" of the tragic character, the third item in the list stands out most sharply and seems to allow room for the presentation of unique personal qualities which would "individualize" the character and make it "true to life."

The commentators vary in their interpretation of what Aristotle actually means by "true to life." G. M. A. Grube interprets the passage to mean "like life"--and suggests that Aristotle might also mean "like the prototype of legend" in the particular sense of the imitation of historical figures.[110] Cooper and Butcher refrain from comment on this passage

---

[109]Aristotle, Poetics, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe, p. 55.

[110]G. M. A. Grube, Aristotle on Poetry and Style (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), p. 29.

although Butcher's comment on the important _Poetics_ IX, 1451b describing the universal nature of poetry--that the aim of poetry is "to represent the universal through the particular; to give a concrete and living embodiment of a universal truth," suggests that he, too, might interpret the passage to refer to the individualized representation of character.

Crane, on the other hand, is more careful to emphasize the universal aspect of Aristotelian characterization. He describes the phrase "true to life" to mean that the poet must choose signs of the characteristics intended which will convey the effect that the person speaking or acting is a "possible human being of a certain type,"[111] and that a character is "like life" in the sense of being an analogue or a complement to life. He thus follows Aristotle's earlier dictum about the more universal nature of poetry (_Poetics_ IX, 1451b) when Aristotle defines the "universal" as how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act according to the law of probability or necessity.[112]

There is perhaps some truth in the idea that Aristotle may allow for an even freer more overtly "historical" inter-pretation of his own phrase "true to life," but what we probably see in the third item of the list in the _Poetics_, XV, is a practical directive which naturally results from a

[111]Crane, p. 73; Fyfe concurs in Aristotle, _Poetics_, ed. Fyfe, p. 54, n.c.

[112]Aristotle, _Poetics_, ed. Fyfe, p. 35.

theory of mimesis which leaves room for the accidental rep-
resentation of what is. Aristotle's comments on character
are generally governed by his definition of mimesis as the
imitation of probable human action, and thus in his theory
universalized or typical elements of characterization take
precedence over individualized representation. The possi-
bility of producing a sense of historically actual life in
a character arises only out of Aristotle's provision for an
"accidental imitation" of real life. He cannot be said to
support a theory of individualistic characterization which is
formulated for the express purpose of exciting emotional sym-
pathy for that personality. It is true that an emotional
response is within the legitimate limits of the theory pre-
scribed by Aristotle, but is there only as the natural end-
product of our participation in the dramatic form of the work
of art as it unfolds. Audience identification with a par-
ticular personality is never as important as the form of the
plot. Where such identification occurs, it is viewed only
as a by-product of the real end of the poetic process, which
is the creation of an aesthetic object; an artistic actuality.
The representation of character must finally be "better than
life." Aristotle puts it succinctly:

> Returning to the subject of character portrayal, we may
> remark that since tragedy is a representation of men
> better than ordinary, the example of good portrait
> painters should be followed. Their method is to produce
> a likeness of a man's distinctive features and beautify
> him at the same time.[113]

---

[113] Aristotle, "The Art of Poetry," in _Aristotle_, trans.
Wheelwright, pp. 310-311.

Here we have an interesting combination of what is particular with what is universal. Aristotle does not disregard the historical likeness, and yet he is ultimately concerned with its beautification. Though his artistic theory begins with the imitation of the natural world, it openly ends in contemplation of the ideal.

Thus in both Plato and Aristotle we see theories of mimesis which encourage the depiction of ideal types over historically actual characters. In Plato, the ideal is avowedly more prescriptive, with an emphasis on the exemplary type of the philosopher-king. In Aristotle the depiction of the historical occurs only as an accidental by-product of the mimetic process whose main objective is always the imitation of a universally ideal action. In neither Plato nor Aristotle do we see specific allowance for the depiction of mean or comic characters within the scope of serious mimetic art. The sublime or grand style is reserved for depicting a character who is consistently illuminated, who expresses a moral purpose, and whose speech and manner is appropriate to his elevated station as protagonist of a serious piece of art. In Aristotle, concern with the elements of plot--with the production of smooth, uninterrupted connections between events, with the creation of a total dramatic action--takes precedence over concern with characterization. As a result, the elements of historical development of character and of the individual psychology of character receive less attention.

Although ancient aesthetic philosophers could not escape some
acknowledgement of historical imitation, they yet emphasized
to a far greater degree the production of an art-object which
could stand apart from history, which had an order and an
aesthetic unity which history could never hope to attain,
and which took its final shape from the ideal realities
beyond time.

We can find variations of this same basic view in the
poetics of the Latin classical ages as well. Early in the
Ars Poetica, for example, Horace restates the classical doc-
trine of propriety: "Let each style keep the becoming place
allotted to it."[114] Emphasizing the need for self-consistency
in the depiction of a literary character, he advises the
dramatist who brings a certain character back to the stage
to portray the qualities which have been essential to the
character's destined nature from the beginning:

> If haply when you write, you bring back to the stage
> the honouring of Achilles, let him be impatient, pas-
> sionate, ruthless, fierce; let him claim that laws
> are not for him, let him ever make appeal to the
> sword.[115]

Horace's emphasis is on the typical aspects of Achilles'
character; the idea of a possible change or development in
Achilles' nature is remote from his perspective on charac-
terization.

---

[114]Horace, Ars Poetica, in Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica,
trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd.,
1936), p. 459.

[115]Horace, Ars Poetica, p. 261.

Horace also roots the creation of character in a recognition of the various ages of man—which he proceeds to describe in detail, emphasizing the need for careful attention to the type of character appropriate to each age.[116] Attention to the suitability of characters to their age and station in life, in fact, seems to be what Horace means by a representation of real life:

> Your matter the Socratic pages can set forth, and when matter is in hand, words will not be loath to follow. He who has learned what he owes his country and his friends, what love is due a parent, a brother and a guest, what is imposed on senator and judge, what is the function of a general sent to war, he surely knows how to give each character his fitting part. I would advise one who has learned the imitative art to look to life and manners for a model and draw from thence living words.[117]

---

[116] "If you want an approving hearer,...you must note the manners of each age and give a befitting tone to shifting nature and their years. The child, who by now can utter words and set firm step upon the ground, delights to play with his mates, flies into a passion, and as lightly puts it aside, and changes every hour. The beardless youth, freed at last from his tutor, finds joy in horses and hounds and the grass of the running campus, soft as wax for molding to evil, peevish with his counsellors, slow to make needful provision, lavish of money, spirited, of strong desires, but swift to change his fancies. With altered desires, the aged spirit of the man seeks wealth and friends, becomes a slave to ambition, and is fearful of having done what soon it will be eager to change. Many ills encompass an old man, whether because he seeks gain, and then miserably holds aloof from his store and fears to use it, or because in all that he does, he lacks fire and courage, is dilatory and slow to form hopes, is sluggish and greedy of a longer life, peevish, surly, given to praising the days he spent as a boy, and to reproving and condemning the young. Many blessings the advancing years bring with them, many, as they retire, they take away. So, lest haply we assign a youth the part of age, or a boy that of manhood, we shall ever linger over traits that are joined and fitted to the age." Horace, Ars Poetica, pp. 464-65.

[117] Horace, Ars Poetica, p. 477.

Here we see that the ability to create an appropriate
character is rooted in the poet's own capacity to perceive
the universal moral code--i.e., what is morally correct,
appropriate, and suitable for an ideal character of any
age. Thus Horace follows in the classical aesthetic mode of
characterization first introduced by Plato and refined by
Aristotle, an aesthetic which promotes a typical or uni-
versalized character presentation, and which gives its ulti-
mate allegiance to the universal ideals.

Cicero, writing in the century preceding Christ's
birth (c.80 B.C.), also exhibits the classical concern for
communication of a moral ideal and for the appropriateness
of style to subject matter. A clear emphasis on poetic pro-
priety in characterization can be found in Cicero's De Offi-
ciis, section 28:

> Now we say that the poets observe propriety when every
> word or action is in accord with each individual char-
> acter. For example, if Aeneas of Minos said: 'Let
> them hate, if only they fear,' or 'the father is him-
> self his children's tomb,' that would seem improper
> because we are told that they were just men. But when
> Atreus speaks those lines, they call forth applause[118]
> for the sentiment is in keeping with the character.

The Ad C. Herennium Libri, a very influential work for the
Middle Ages, whose authorship is usually attributed to Cicero
or one of his disciples,[119] also contains forceful negative

---

[118]Cicero, De Officiis, trans. Walter Miller (London:
Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1951), p. 101.

[119]See Harry Caplan's "Introduction" to Cicero, Ad C.
Herennium Libri; De Ratione Dicendi, trans. Harry Caplan
(London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1954), p. xxvf.

examples of characters whose personal attributes are not con-
sistently developed with their moral characters and social
station.[120]

The word "propriety" itself seems to have a moral conno-
tation, and in fact Cicero in the De Officiis directly asso-
ciates it with moral rectitude and uses it as one of the
primary characteristics of the moral man. The ability to
observe poetic propriety in a work of art is thus related
directly to the poet's innate moral character and has much
to do with his capacity for perceiving what is seemly and
 fitting for a given occasion. This is exactly what we see
in Horace and only reinforces what we have been saying all
along--that observance of classical form and of the distinc-
tions between styles is of essential importance to the class-
ical author, and goes back ultimately to his attachment to
the Platonic ideals.

The distinctions on which Cicero bases his stylistic
classifications are in themselves helpful for understanding
his theory of characterization. It is significant, for exam-
ple, that Cicero associates the type of narrative which has
the most direct appeal to character with the low or comic
mode.[121] Cicero allows for the development of the comic form
under the narrative type "argumentum" which is distinguished

---

[120]See Cicero, Ad C. Herennium, p. 381.

[121]See Cicero, De Inventione, trans. H. M. Hubell (Lon-
don: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1949), p. 56, n. c.

from both "fabula" (a narrative in which the events are not true and have no verisimilitude), and a "historia" (an account of actual occurrences remote from the recollection of our own age"). "Argumentum" as Cicero defines it is "a fictitious narrative which could have occurred"--i.e., a narrative of verisimilitude. It is of two types--either "concerned with events or persons;" the second type, which gives attention to the conversations and mental attitudes of the characters, follows the fundamental comic pattern:

> This form of narrative should possess great vivacity, resulting from the fluctuations of fortune, contrast of characters, severity, gentleness, hope, fear, suspicion, desire, dissimulation, delusion, pity, sudden change of fortune, unexpected disaster, sudden pleasure, and a happy ending to the story.[122]

The association of the comic form with a particular attention to and emphasis upon character delineation and verisimilitude receives further reinforcement in a passage defining "verisimilitude" only a few pages later:

> The narrative will be plausible if it seems to appear in real life; if the proper qualities of the character are maintained, if reasons for their actions are plain, if there seems to have been ability to do the deed, if it can be shown that the time was opportune, the space sufficient, and the place suitable for the events about to be narrated, if the story fits with the nature of the actors in it, the habits or ordinary people and the beliefs of the audience. Verisimilitude can be secured by following these principles.[123]

Here Cicero links the narrative form (argumentum) which gives the greater attention to verisimilitude and character

---

[122]Cicero, De Inventione, p. 56.

[123]Cicero, De Inventione, p. 61.

portrayal with lower or comic-romantic characterization--
with the imitation of the actions of ordinary folk. The kind
of categorization we observe here is consistent with the
classical tendency to place a realistic or historical rep-
resentation of character at the bottom of the list of possible
approaches to character.

The treatment of the morally inferior character in Cicero
also follows in the traditional Aristotelian mode. Cicero,
like Aristotle, often equates individuality with the depic-
tion of particularized vices or faults of character. He
makes a careful point of the control which must be exercised
by the poet in representing these individual vices:

> Everybody, however, must resolutely hold fast to his
> own peculiar gifts, in so far as they are peculiar only
> and not vicious, in order that propriety, which is the
> object of our inquiry, may the more easily be secured.[124]

The fatality evident in the Greek view of character and
closely allied with the classical understanding of propriety
can also be observed in this same treatise. Cicero, writing
on the given nature which is bestowed on each man at birth,
advises against the pursuance of a moral career which is
better or nobler than the fixed nature one has been given:
"For it is of no avail to fight against one's own nature or
to aim at what is impossible of attainment."[125] Here we see
the classical emphasis on man's fated nature--his fixed

---

[124]Cicero, De Officiis, p. 104.

[125]Cicero, De Officiis, p. 115.

destiny before birth and his consequent incapacity for sub-

stantial change in life.

Cicero's <u>Orator</u>, the latest of his rhetorical works,

is important to the rhetorical tradition because it contains

Cicero's classification of the three oratorical styles and

exhibits the classical tendency to move away from particulars

and toward universals in discussion.[126]   Interesting, too, is

the distinction Cicero makes between kinds of comedy when he

describes the plain or "attic" style. A good orator will use

both humour and wit; humour in a "graceful and charming nar-

rative," and wit in "hurling the shafts of ridicule."[127]

---

[126]See Cicero, <u>Orator</u>, trans. H. M. Hubell (London: Wm.
Heinemann, Ltd., 1939), p. 311f., for a discussion of the Pla-
tonic ideal and its usefulness for rhetoric. Cicero's treat-
ment of the three styles is as follows: "There are in all
three oratorical styles; in each of which certain men have
been successful, but very few have attained our ideal of
being equally successful in all. The orators of the <u>grandil-
oquent</u> style, if I may use an old word, showed splendid power
of thought and majesty of diction; they were forceful, versa-
tile, copious and grave, trained and equipped to arouse and
sway the emotions; some attained their effect by a rough,
severe, harsh, style, without regular construction or rounded
periods; others used a smooth, ordered sentence-structure
with a periodic cadence. At the other extreme were the ora-
tors who were <u>plain</u> to the point, explaining everything and
making every point clear rather than impressive, using a re-
fined, concise style stripped of ornament. Within this class
some were adroit but unpolished and intentionally resembled
untrained and unskilful speakers, others had the same dryness
of style, but were neater, elegant, even brilliant, and to a
slight degree ornate. Between these two there is a mean and
I may say <u>tempered</u> style, which uses neither the intellectual
appeal of the latter class nor the fiery force of the former;
akin to both, excelling in neither, sharing in both, or to tell
the truth, sharing in neither, this style keeps the proverbial
'even tenor of its way,' bringing nothing except ease and
uniformity, or at most adding a few posies as in a garland,
and diversifying the whole speech without simple ornaments
of thought and diction." (Cicero, <u>Orator</u>, p. 319f.)

[127]Cicero, <u>Orator</u>, p. 369.

Following in the Aristotelian tradition, Cicero puts careful limits on the kind of ridicule allowed in a "plain" speech. Low farce is not permitted, nor "barbs aimed at misfortune, nor ridicule of a crime, lest laughter take the place of loathing."[128] Comedy of either sort is plainly banned from the two more elevated styles, i.e., the "grandiloquent" and the "tempered" styles, a fact which illustrates once again Cicero's strong attachment to the classical ideal.

We find the same type of restriction put on comic rhetoric in Quintillian, a rhetor of the 1st century A.D. (born c. 35 A.D.). In Book IV of the Institutes of Oratory (II, 6, iii), Quintillian makes the Ciceronian distinction between wit and humour and carefully limits the extent of sarcasm allowed. He writes that an orator should "take care that his remarks do not end in exciting serious enmity or the necessity for a grovelling apology," and that an orator of good character will

> see that everything he says is consistent with his
> dignity and the respectability of his character,
> for we pay too dear for the laugh we raise if it
> is at the cost of our own integrity.[129]

The rhetorical restrictions placed on comedy appear in some passages in Quintillian to stem from an older, more Platonic concern for the corruptive influence of comedy.

---

[128]Cicero, Orator, p. 369.

[129]Quintillian, Institutio Oratoria, trans. H. E. Butler, 2 vols. (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1933), II:457.

Earlier in the Institutes, for example, (I, i, ix), Quintillian writes that the comic orator or actor must not "ape the vices of the drunkard or copy the cringing manners of a slave, or learn to express the emotions of love, avarice, or fear," lest "he corrupt his mind, for repeated imitation passes into habit."[130]

Although Quintillian does not treat characterization directly in the Institutes, his treatise still reflects the classical concern for propriety of style and character, and for the resultant restrictions on comedy and comic representation which we find in Cicero, Horace, and Aristotle. Taken together, these Latin rhetoricians represent a continuation and reinforcement of the basic tradition of characterization which we have more thoroughly analyzed in the case of Aristotle and Plato. The basic characteristics of this tradition involve a careful classification of character types with their respectively appropriate styles, a strong expression of moral purpose, especially in the high or tragic character, and a careful restriction, where it is allowed at all, on comic representation of character. Behind these basic characteristics, as we have pointed out earlier, is a world-view which emphasizes stoic aloofness from history and which places the highest art in the universals outside history even as it defines the ideal man as one indifferent to historical

---

[130]Quintillian, Institutio Oratoria, I, 183-185.

circumstance. (See Cicero's description of the ideal man, De Officiis, p. 69.) Such a view of history and its effect on mimetic theory contrasts sharply with the view which sprang up with the advent of Christianity only a few centuries later.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE
LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTER

R. G. Collingwood describes the introduction of Chris-
tianity as the motive force behind a first-century revolution
in the leading ideas of Greco-Roman historiography.[1] Because
an understanding of the foundations of Christian thought is
necessary for comprehension of the reasons behind a Christian
presentation of character, I will attempt in this chapter
to outline some of the basic differences between the Greco-
Roman and Judeo-Christian views of reality and their result-
ing effects on characterization.

The Judeo-Christian view of history contrasts with the
classical view in at least three major areas: the attitude
toward the relation of truth and history, the understanding
of the nature of historical study, and the characterization
of the purposes of recorded history. Classical thought
tended to assume that there was a fundamental separation
between history, the changeable, mutable facts of everyday
existence, and substantive reality, the unchanging world
of the universals. Substantive reality could alone serve
as the object of scientific scrutiny in the Greco-Roman
sense because it alone was eternal, unchanging, and capable

---

[1]R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clar-
endon Press, 1946), p. 46.

of abstraction from transitory event. This philosophical
conception led, as we have observed, to some serious restric-
tions on the definition and study of history, which can be
viewed in the Greco-Roman sense only as an aggregate of per-
ceptions. Historical evidence could only be trusted if the
data collected were the result of a first-hand experience.
Not only did this pure "eyewitness" methodology restrict the
facts which could be gathered, but it also limited the scope
of the interpretation given such facts. Histories were
confined to one nation, one culture, one limited time period.
As a result, a universal view of history which encompassed
all nations and peoples from the beginning of time was impos-
sible.

In the Judeo-Christian view, all this changes. First,
history, the world of changeable reality which the classical
philosophers so carefully separated from "truth," becomes
the receptacle, indeed, even the embodiment of truth. Christ,
the source of meaning in Christian thought, is the Word made
flesh, the God who enters history and gives it a significance
and a unity impossible in the Greco-Roman tradition. History
becomes important because it is the medium through which God
reveals Himself to man. Morton Bloomfield comments on the
emphasis given to history by Christianity:

> Christianity emphasizes the importance of history
> because it is based on revelation, wherein the time-
> less melts into time and dignifies it. It believes
> that profound qualitative changes essential to human
> salvation have occurred and will occur in history.[2]

---

[2]Morton Bloomfield, "Chaucer's Sense of History," _JEGP_ 51
(July 1951), 301.

The revelation of God to man in the life, death and resur-
rection of Jesus Christ became the cornerstone of the Chris-
tian view of history.

The importance given to the historical life of Christ
is of course a direct result of the Christian analysis of
the problem of earthly evil. In the classical view evil was
regarded as accidental, a by-product of the process of human
maturation. Aristotle, we remember, defined evil as an acci-
dent of man's movement from potentiality to actuality. In
the Christian view, however, evil is no longer regarded as
an accidental missing of the mark, but as a defect intrinsic
to man's basic nature, as an inevitable result of man's fall
from grace. The fall itself was an historical event; the
entire human race is unavoidably in the same predicament as
a consequence of Adam's willful--and historical--disobedience.
The fall is also all-inclusive; the possibility of hitting
the mark (a possibility allowed to the privileged few in
Greek philosophy), does not naturally exist in the Christian
view. The problem of sin is a universal fact which requires
a universal solution. It was the establishment of the basic
unity of mankind in the sinful state of nature which brought
about the need for a universal solution to the problem of
history and which laid the grounds for a universal theory of
history. In a passage from The Renaissance of the Twelfth
Century, C. H. Haskins recognizes that although a conception
of the basic unity of mankind was suggested by the geographical

breadth of the Alexandrine and Roman empires, classical phi-

losophers were unable to formulate an internal rationale

for it:

> Indeed a universal history in the full sense had not
> been possible before the triumph of Christianity, for,
> while the worldwide supremacy of Rome might suggest
> general history in an external fashion, a sense of
> the fundamental unity of mankind was necessary to a
> really vital conception of universal history.[3]

The formulation of a universal theory of history depended

upon the formulation of a theory which defined man in terms

of his fundamental and all-inclusive weakness.

Besides making possible a universal theory of history,

Christianity also lent a new respectability to historical

fact and to the methodology of historical study. History

had been viewed as cyclical; i.e., human events were seen as

recurring in predictable cycles during successive historical

ages. Although the occurrence of the particular event was

itself random and mutable, and therefore unknowable, the

universal truth which could be abstracted from the study of

various changeable events never changed; and the most basic

of the universal laws governing history was that events would

re-occur in their basic outline in the future.[4]

---

[3]C. H. Haskins, _The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century_
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 227.

[4]The Romans were forced to modify this concept because
of their belief that Rome was the ideal civilization, the
culmination of what had been best in all nations up to the
time of Roman domination. However, their understanding of his-
tory remained essentially cyclical in its conception, and
without awareness of a comprehensive providential scheme
which worked independent of their own national sense of mani-
fest destiny. As Jaroslav Pelikan puts it, "The fall of all

Christianity presented a different outlook on history altogether. History was not cyclical but linear, and historical events were thus unrepeatable. The linear notion of history sprang from the basic Christian belief that the Christ-event is utterly incapable of imitation. The incarnation, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus Christ, planned "before the foundations of the earth," gave each event in earthly history a structure and a center which added to their individual significance. Just as meaning accrues to each individual action when the total outcome of a drama is known, so meaning accrues to each event in history when it is placed within a pattern which defines it. As Ernest Tuveson has pointed out, the real significance of a particular event cannot be truly known until it is given meaning through a holistic pattern:

> The true nature of an event, even so great a one as the downfall of an empire, cannot be ascertained without knowing all that has gone before and without some idea of what is to come; the whole drama must be seen as it unfolds, and each suceeding event makes the action clearer, exactly as each action in a play; and history, like the play, has a crisis, a denouement, and an end. Its theme is moral--and to understand it, there must be an interpretation.[5]

---

previous civilizations did not necessarily indicate the fall of the Roman civilization, if Rome remained true to her traditional ideals." J. Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), I:37.

[5]Ernest Lee Tuveson, Milennium and Utopia (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1942), p. 4.

Some early church historians followed a slightly different

logic in their criticism of the cyclical idea. Celsus, an

early second-century critic of Christianity, reiterates one

popular Christian rebuttal to the classical position before

attacking it; if cyclical historians are right, goes the

Christian argument, then:

> ...it is inevitable that Moses will always come out of
> Egypt with the people of the Jews, and Jesus will come
> again to visit this life and will do the same things he
> has done, not just once, but an infinite number of times
> according to the cycles.[6]

Augustine, too, wholly rejects the pagan notion of a repetitive

pattern in history. The City of God contains a fervent denun-

ciation of the cyclical view of history and reveals Augustine's

recognition of the depth of the issue:

> Far be it from the true faith that by these words of
> Solomon (Ecc. 1--"There is nothing new under the sun.")
> we should believe are meant those cycles by which they
> (i.e., philosophi mundi huius) suppose that the same
> revolutions of times and of temporal things are repeated
> so that, as one might say, just as in this age the
> philosopher Plato sat in the city of Athens and in the
> school called Academy teaching his pupils, so also
> through countless ages of the past at intervals which
> however great are nevertheless certain, both the same
> Plato and the same city and the same school and the
> same pupils have been repeated, as they are destined to
> be repeated through countless ages of the future. God
> forbid, I say, that we should swallow such nonsense!
> Christ died once and for all for our sins: semel mortuus
> est Christus pro nostris peccatis.[7]

[6]Celsus 4:67 in Die Griechischen Christlichen Schrift-
steller, der ersten drie Jahrhunderte (Berlin, 1891), quoted
by Jaroslav Pelikan, The Christian Tradition: A History of
the Development of Doctrine, I, 2 vols. (Chicago: Univ. of
Chicago Press, 1971), I:37-38.

[7]St. Augustine, The City of God, Book XII, Chapter 14,
as translated and quoted by C. N. Cochrane in Christianity

Augustine and other Christian writers ultimately took their

basic position in this matter from the Scripture, which makes

a continual point of the uniqueness of the Christ-sacrifice

and its distinct separation from the Old Testament practice

of an on-going sacrifice. One of the clearest of these

scriptures is Hebrews 9:24-28:

> For Jesus is not entered into the holies made with
> hands, the patterns of the true: but into heaven
> itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God
> for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often,
> as the high priest entereth into the holies, every year
> with the blood of others: For then he ought to have
> suffered often from the beginning of the world: but
> now once at the end of ages, he hath appeared for the
> destruction of sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And
> as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after
> this the judgment: So also Christ was offered once to
> exhaust the sins of many; the second time he shall
> appear without sin to them that expect him unto salva-
> tion.[8]

Thus the notion of a cyclical pattern in history was rejected

out of hand by Christian theologians, and in its place was

substituted a comprehensive interpretation of history which

found its center in the historical actions of Jesus Christ,

and which was bounded at the beginning by the Creation, and

at the end by the Second Coming. All history was seen as

either leading up to or away from the Christ-event.

---

and Classical Culture (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 484.
For the complete text see St. Augustine, The City of God,
Books VIII-XVI, trans. Gerald C. Walsh, S. J. and Grace Mon-
ahan, O.S.U. in The Writings of St. Augustine, 18 vols. (Wash-
ington: Cath. Univ. of America Press, 1952), VII:267-269.

[8]The Holy Bible. Douay Version (Baltimore: John Murphy
Co., 1914). Hereafter all references to Holy Scripture in
this chapter will be taken from this version.

The results of such a comprehensive interpretation of history on historical methodology were immediate and far-reaching. First, if history were unrepeatable, then each historical event had a unique character which could not be designated "universal truth" and abstracted from historical particulars for study. Instead, the new conception necessitated scrutiny of particular events; and even events which had taken place in remote history were subject to historical investigation in both the empirical and the interpretative sense. Thus the methodology of the historian was broadened from an exclusive reliance on eyewitness report to include a new respect for the passing-on of secondary commentary and secondary empirical evidence. Second, Christians divided all history into sections using the major events of the Christian faith as markers. Thus history is divided into two major sections--before and after Christ, and into smaller periods designated by main events of Jewish history, for example, the Age of the Patriarchs, the Exodus, the Age of Judges, the Age of Kings, etc. This habit, combined with the new importance of the singular historical event in general, fostered a tendency to further sub-divide history into epochs or periods which are marked off by historical events of significant magnitude to be designated "epoch-making." The modern tendency to describe history in terms of "epochs" or ages is actually a result of the new Christian emphasis on the particular historical event.[9]

---

[9] R. G. Collingwood, <u>The Idea of History</u>, p. 52.

One of the earliest examples both of the emphasis on the
central importance of the Christ-event and of the respect
given historical fact in general is the Ecclesiastical History
of Eusebius, one of the most widely read of early church his-
torians. Eusebius is the first Christian historian to estab-
lish the linear chronology of the Christian church and to
make an attempt to synchronize it with secular history. In
his major work, the histories of Greece and Rome are organized
not by Greek and Roman chronology (the dates of the Olympiads,
for example, or of Roman consuls), but by the central event
of Christian history. Epochs are seen only in relation to
that event, making possible what has now become standard
historical procedure--the practice of looking at the long-term
consequences of a thing rather than its immediate results.
True to the Christian interpretation, he begins with "no
other than the first dispensation of God touching our Saviour
and Lord Jesus the Christ,"[10] and develops this theme, out-
lining the prophecies of Christ's birth and describing his
ministry on earth, his death and resurrection. Eusebius
intertwines these events with extra-Biblical material on
Herod, Pilate, and other Roman leaders, narrating stories of
how Tiberius Caesar received the news of Jesus' Resurrection,
the manner in which Herod died, and even non-Scriptural anec-
dotes about Christ and "letters" from Jesus to his followers.

---

[10]Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History, trans. Kirsopp
Lake. 2 vols. (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1926), I:7.

Throughout, Eusebius relies heavily upon secondary sources, demonstrating the new acceptability of second-hand accounts made possible by a universal view of history which necessitates the historical study of the remote past.

Jaroslav Pelikan notes the new emphasis on historical data, the new reliance upon particular fact in the universal interpretation of history. He mentions Eusebius' response to those who were attempting to propagate the faith solely by dialectical argument:

> To redress this balance, Eusebius composed historical works, first a Chronicle and then his Ecclesiastical History, both of which attempt to prove, by historical facts rather than by mere dialectical argument that Christianity and Christ possessed great antiquity and that the history of Christianity was a universal history.[11]

Eusebius' own respect for history becomes apparent in his awareness of the revolutionary character of his works:

> To work at this subject I consider especially necessary, because I am not aware that any ecclesiastical writer has until now paid attention to this kind of writing; and I hope that its high value will be evident to those who are convinced of the importance of a knowledge of history.[12]

The respectful attitude toward historical fact demonstrated by this passage contrasts vividly with the Greek antipathy toward historical "proof," and it is made possible by a historical interpretation in which the central event is a marriage of the eternal and the mutable, the Divine Incarnation.

---

[11]Pelikan, I, 40.

[12]Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, I, 11.

The universal view of history promoted by the Christian
faith also puts an entirely new light on the purpose of his-
tory. From the classical perspective, history was the busi-
ness of narrating the affairs and purposes of men. Because
the observations of history focused on the contemporary event,
history appeared in a flat perspective, with no meaning beyond
the immediate meaning of the events narrated. Where universal
meanings were given to history, such meanings were normally
based on geographical considerations rather than on the con-
cept of a divinely revealed plan.[13] The classical historian
was thus generally interested far more in the immediate out-
come of an event than in its long-term effects on future
ages. What was important to the classical historian in
describing the outcome of a battle, for example, was who won.
The far-reaching effects of the battle on the flow of history
was not a major consideration because there was no objective
standard of purpose, besides national identity, against which
the immediate outcome of the battle could be measured. His-
torical events, observed in piecemeal fashion, appeared chaotic
to the early historian who often saw the study of history,
as we have pointed out, mainly as a protection against the
mistakes of the past. When even that rationale was weakened

---

[13]James W. Thompson has pointed out that the idea of a
geographically-based "universal" history in this sense origi-
nated with the enormous conquests of Alexander the Great, and
became an established form of historiography in the First
Century, B.C. Examples of this genre include the Greek his-
tories of Alexander Polyhistor, Diodorus Sicilius, and Nich-
olas of Damascus, as well as the Latin historian Pompeius
Trogus. See Thompson, A History of Historical Writing, 2 vols.
(New York: MacMillan, 1942), I:103.

by the sheer variety and volume of historical event, the
study of history was characterized only as an aid to per-
sonal knowledge of self--a knowledge which was seen as a
legitimate retreat from a basically disordered and chaotic
flow of events.

For the Christian historian, on the other hand, history's
purposes are not centered in the individual perception of an
event, but in a providential plan which originates outside
history. A historian narrating a battle is no longer so
much interested in the immediate outcome of the fight as he
is in the fact that whatever the outcome, the acts of God
are being worked out in history within the pre-ordained
framework. The historian narrates everything from the know-
ledge that the sovereign will of God is being carried out
through and sometimes despite the plans and purposes of men.
Always in the back of his mind there is the great theological
division--before and after Christ. As Collingwood puts it:
"History, as the will of God, orders itself and does not
depend for its orderliness on the human agent's will to order
it."[14] The Christian idea of an objective plan behind and
controlling history finds its clearest rationale in the con-
cept of revelation. It is Christ, the revealed Word of God
who reveals or discovers the meaning of past history to man,
and also what God is going to do in the future. A Christian

---

[14]Collingwood, p. 53.

historian knows what is going to happen because it has been revealed to him in the words of Christ.

We might note here that the strong eschatological message of Christian history has led some scholars to criticize it for what they deem an over-emphasis on the providential working of God to the down-grading of human initiative. The danger of eschatological prediction, says James T. Shotwell, for example, is that it tends to bend the facts to fit the plan:

> ...Whenever a theologian of any religion has attempted to justify the ways of God to man, he has the history rearranged so that its artificial character may convince the reader that it was actually planned...we come upon this especially in the work of the Christian historians....[15]

R. G. Collingwood also finds the Christian idea of history weighted far too heavily on the side of Providential control and sees the main result as a lack of emphasis on historical fact. Christian historians, he writes:

> ...did not want an accurate and scientific study of the facts of history; what they wanted was an accurate and scientific study of the divine attributes, a theology based securely on the double foundation of faith and reason, which should enable them to determine a priori what must have happened and what must be going to happen in the historical process.[16]

Shotwell is disdainful of interpretative history in this sense and even actively hostile to it. He writes later on:

---

[15] James T. Shotwell, An Introduction to the History of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), p. 98n.

[16] Collingwood, p. 56.

> If we went back to the medieval conception of history
> with all its error we should be exemplifying and has-
> tening that downfall of civilization which some histor-
> ians are perhaps prematurely, proclaiming.[17]

Although Shotwell and Collingwood rightly criticize
what has no doubt come to represent a certain kind of his-
torical emphasis in Christendom, they have not accurately
described the essential Christian position. Arguing from
another perspective, C. N. Cochrane rejects any analysis of
the Christian view of history which would seek to characterize
it as derogatory toward the individual's substantial power to
change and order history. He finds the definitive conception
of Christian historiography in Augustine, whose balance of
human initiative and divine necessity has since become the
traditional Christian position.

Augustine begins his analysis of Biblical history with
the problem of Scriptural interpretation. Rejecting the
rigid literalism of some Christian factions, Augustine yet
never drifts into a purely allegorical or spiritualized
interpretation of Scripture. He opts instead for a middle
road in which he proclaims a thorough-going acceptance of the
historical facts of Scripture without insisting that the
scientific nature of these facts in any way establishes their
truth-value. Augustine believes, for example, in a future
in which the conversion of the Jews, the rise of the Anti-
Christ, and the Second Coming will inevitably occur because

---

[17]Collingwood, p. 56.

Scripture has predicted these events, but he never allows

for the use of Scripture as a kind of "cosmic almanac" as

Cochrane puts it, to predict exactly when and how events

would occur. He writes in The City of God:

> Of course, what we believe is the simple fact that
> all these things are to be: but how and in what
> sequence the events are to occur we must leave to
> future experience, which alone can teach these truths
> so much better than human intelligence can at present
> understand.[18]

For Augustine, Scripture is both a repository of historical

fact and a repository of value. Paradoxically, the value-

judgments of Scripture rest on the authority of a revelation

which occurs in history. Thus both science and spiritual

discernment must come into play in any interpretation of

Scripture. A historical fact such as,

> And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the
> city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the City of David,
> which is called Bethlehem because he was of the
> house and family of David, (Luke 2:4)

is subject to verification through scientific methods, but

the value of that fact, its meaning in history, can only be

determined through reference to an a priori authority which

establishes its value.[19]

For Augustine, then, the interpretation of historical

fact is inextricably bound up in the definition and origin

---

[18] Augustine, The City of God, ed. Vernon J. Bourke,
trans. Gerald G. Walsh, Demetrius Zema, Grace Monohan,
and Daniel J. Honan (New York: Image Books, 1958), p. 492.

[19] See Cochrane, p. 477.

of value in the universe. Faith and understanding or

reason work together, and although faith is clearly super-

ior to reason in the hierarchy of Christian authority, one

cannot operate without the other in the tangible world in

which the historian exists. Augustine's paradoxical attitude

toward the whole subject can be seen in one of his letters:

> The prophet says with reason, 'If you will not believe,
> you will not understand.' (Is. 7:9). Thereby he
> undoubtedly makes a distinction between these two
> things and advises us to believe first so as to be
> able to understand whatever we believe.[20]

For St. Augustine, prophetic or apocalyptic history in the

Christian sense is a matter of a physical or historical con-

tent which is governed by a providential plan. Concurrently,

the understanding of prophetic history must finally be a

matter of both faith and reason. Christian insight, or

sapientia, is a necessary prerequisite for apprehending the

facts of history.[21]

The idea of sapientia in itself has important implica-

tions for the Christian interpretation of history. First,

in the Christian view, fortune or chance has no real

place except as a handmaiden to a providential plan, which,

however obscure, is surely and certainly working its way out

in history. What is perceived as chance or 'fortune' from

the classical standpoint becomes in the Christian view a

---

[20]St. Augustine, "Letter 120" in The Writings of St.
Augustine, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parson, S.N.D., 18 vols.
(New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1953), X:149.

[21]Cochrane, p. 477.

matter of paradoxical truth, and thus all events finally
show traces of the controlling hand of God. Second, there
is an optimistic end to the plan of God for those individuals
who recognize and believe it. In contrast to the pagan
philosophers, Augustine saw no ultimate fatality in matter,
for he believed in the Resurrection of the body. The paradox
of this fact is of course that man may choose to accept or
reject a belief in the Resurrection as he will. And the
ultimate paradox is that only through the graciousness of
Providence--only through God's love--is free will made possi-
ble. Augustine goes so far as to suggest in his essay on
Free Choice of the Will (On Free Choice of the Will, III, 3)
that "this power [free choice] will be mine all the more cer-
tainly because of the infallible foreknowledge of him who
foreknew that I would have it."[22]

We will leave the topic of the relation of free will and
Divine Necessity for a later and more thorough discussion.
What is important here is the Christian notion that history
is controlled by a providence which is different in kind
from the irrational forces or the combination of circumstance
and human endeavor presented by pagan philosophy. This prov-
idence is seen in the Christian view as ultimately benevo-
lent. Nature is not perceived as governed by a fixed set of
physical laws, but as subject to the Divine Logos which gives

---

[22]St. Augustine, The Free Choice of the Will in The
Teacher: The Free Choice of the Will, Grace and Free Will,
trans. Robert P. Russell (Washington: Catholic University of
America Press, 1968), p. 173.

meaning to all history by breaking into the heretofore necessary laws of sin and death. Thus the Judeo-Christian view of history represents a radical departure from the classical perspective. The perception of the total unity of the human race in sin makes possible the expression of a universalized plan of salvation for mankind which involves all history. The concept of the Incarnated Logos, of the divine spirit which enters history and affects in a particular way the course of human events, gives rise to a new respect for historical facts and their result. However, the new respect for epoch-making event is offset, as critics have pointed out, by a Christian tendency to over-literalize historical facts and to lose critical objectivity in the process. Augustine gives the most balanced explanation of the mainstream Christian position on the subject, maintaining that the historical facts of Scripture should be subject to scientific verification, but that final judgments made on the meaning of Scripture cannot be exclusively scientific, since scripture is primarily a repository of spiritual value and must ultimately be comprehended only as it is apprehended by faith.

The purpose of history in the Christian view is just this apprehension of the universal plan of salvation on an individual level. Although history is a cosmic concern, the main thrust of Christianity has always been toward the individual man. God saves individuals, not whole races, and he

deals with men personally rather than collectively. The
personal character of the Christian philosophy shows up in
Christian histories, where the purpose of history is no
longer primarily directed toward the formation of the "eth-
ical man" as it was in classical history, but with the effect
of the message of salvation on the life of individuals.
Eusebius, in Book I of the Ecclesiastical History, for exam-
ple, states that his purpose in writing is to chronicle not
only the history of the Jewish nation and the heresies which
beset the early church, but also and primarily to describe

> the character of those who for its (the gospel's) sake,
> passed from time to time through the contest of blood
> and torture; furthermore the martyrdoms of our own time,
> and the gracious and favouring help of our Saviour in
> them all. (I. i, 2-5).[23]

We remember, too, the record of the effect of the gospel
preached by Paulinus on Edwin of Northumbria as chronicled
by Bede in the Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum, and
the autobiographical history of St. Augustine's encounter
with the Christian message in the Confessions. In each of
these instances, the historian is not primarily concerned
with ethical goodness or evil, in man, but with the immense
change occurring in the lives of individual men as a result
of their encounter with Christ.

Christian respect for the plan of salvation as it is
and will be worked out in history had a definitive influence
on the literary representation of character during the

---

[23]Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History, I, 7-9.

centuries which followed. Earlier in this study, we noted that the Greeks placed the substantive origins of character outside the immediate purview of history and emphasized those origins over the character's actions in history. As a result, the moral and physic 1 capacity of an individual was seen as essentially stationary throughout life. If development seemed to occur, the movement was only apparent, not actual, and the assumption was that the character would, despite his seeming changes, reveal his true nature at some future point.

By contrast, in the Christian view of the origins of man, there is no split between action and nature. The Platonic doctrine of the pre-existent and immortal soul is rejected by main-line Christianity, where each soul is seen as a unique part of the total man, freshly created at each individual conception. Tertullian quarrels with the Greeks on this issue and insists on the simultaneous origin of soul and body. Calling on the argument of the dual nature of the soul propounded by Stoic philosophers, he defends the Christian position on the union of body and spirit in man:

> Zeno, defining the soul as a spirit that is generated with the body, argues in the following fashion. Anything that by its departure, causes a living being to die is a body. But, on the departure of this spirit which is generated with the body, the living being dies. Therefore, this spirit which is generated with the body is a body. But, this spirit of which we speak is the soul. Hence, we must conclude that the soul is corporeal.[24]

---

[24]Tertullian, "On the Soul," in <u>Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix: Octavius</u>, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, O.S.A., Sister Emily Joseph Daly, C.S.J., and Edwin A. Quain, S.J., (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), p. 188.

The orthodox Christian view of the subject of the immortality of the soul is stated in its definitive form by St. Ambrose in his treatise on the Resurrection (On the Passing Away of His Brother Satyrus--De excessu fratris sui Satyri). Ambrose separated the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul from the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and solidified Christian thought on the point. As Pelikan puts it: "Resurrection meant the conferral upon the body of that deathless life which the soul already possessed."[25]

It should be noted that there were some major challenges to this view, (notably in the writings of Origen, who propounded the old Platonic notion of the pre-existent soul and who did not believe in a literal resurrection of the body); however, this line of thinking was repudiated by the orthodox church all along and formally condemned in the sixth century at the Second Council of Constantinople (A.D. 553).[26]

The result of the unified Christian conception of man offered by the Christian world-view was the possible depiction of substantial change in a character within history. Whereas in the classical view, man was seen as originally composed of a "good" or "evil" character, the Christian view held out the possibility of movement from an active life of evil actions to a life of good through a conversion experience. It should be emphasized that the categories of good and

---

[25]Pelikan, I, 52.

[26]Pelikan, I, 277.

evil as I have used them here are not rigidly ethical in definition. The Christian conversion experience leads to the creation of a new man, but it is not simply a new ethical nature which has been implanted, but a new spiritual creature which has been born. The life of the spiritual man is not carried on primarily by means of a conscious adherence to moral law, but by means of faith in Christ, who represents the only perfect fulfillment of the moral law. St. Paul makes salvation by vicarious participation in the righteousness of Christ the essential ingredient of Christianity:

> What shall we say, then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. (Romans 6:1-5)

Thus conversion may be defined as the recognition that power for an ethical life comes only through a conscious acceptance of the spirit of Christ, which empowers the believer for life in the world. The moral life is not primarily a matter of exercising the virtues but of being what one has become through Christ. Thomas Merton, the famed 20th-century Trappist, includes an excellent description of this central Christian concept in his devotional treatise, Life and Holiness:

> Christian holiness is not a mere matter of ethical perfection. It includes every virtue, but is evidently more than all virtues together. Sanctity is

not constituted only by good words or even by moral
heroism, but first of all by ontological union with
God 'in Christ.' Indeed, to understand the New Testa-
ment teaching on holiness of life we have to understand
the meaning of this expression of St. Paul's. The
moral teaching of the epistles always follows upon
and elucidates a doctrinal exposition of the meaning of
our 'life in Christ.' St. John also made it quite clear
that all spiritual fruit in our life comes from union
with Christ, integration in his Mystical Body as a branch
is united with the vine and integrated in it (John 15:
1-11). This of course does not by any means reduce
virtues and good works to insignificance: but these
always remain secondary to our 'new being.' According
to the scholastic maxim, actio sequitur esse, action
is in accordance with the being that acts.[27]

In literary terms, this understanding of conversion makes

possible the representation of "lower" characters in serious

as well as comic narrative. Where there is the possibility

of a genuine spiritual rebirth, there is the possibility of

substantial development of character, a development which

takes place without destruction of the unique personality

of the individual. In fact, the unique individuality of a

given character may even be said to develop as the life of

the character progresses. The explicitly Christian or

New Testament understanding of the conversion experience

(which involves a substantial development in character) is

prefigured in Old Testament representations of the pattern

of judgment-repentance-mercy-regeneration, the dialectic of

interaction between God and man. Thus in the Old Testament,

David is represented in the humblest of circumstances--even

sinful and debased circumstances--and yet retains the nobility

---

[27]Thomas Merton, Life and Holiness (New York: Image
Books, 1964), p. 57.

of his position as Judah's King, the ancestral forerunner of
Christ himself, expressly because of his experience with the
essential pattern of God's judgment and mercy.

It is in fact the particularity of the Biblical narrative
in regard to the utter depths of David's debasement in the
affair with Bathsheba which strikes us so forcefully, and
which so radically separates the Biblical view of character-
presentation from the classical view. The Biblical account
not only presents all the distasteful facts leading up to
David's sin--his inattention to duty, his lust, his callous
disregard of Uriah--but seems constructed to focus on the
kind of detail which illumines the darkest corners of David's
mind during this period. One such detail comes particularly
to mind. A few days after David has given Joab the order to
send Uriah into the forefront of the battle, Joab receives
word that Uriah has been killed and sends for a messenger to
tell David the news. Preparing the messenger for what he
knows will be the king's furious response to the bad news of
the death of his best warriors, Joab tells the messenger to
relay the message of Uriah's death:

> And he charged the messenger, saying: When thou hast
> told all the words of the battle to the king, If thou
> see him to be angry, and he shall say: Why did you
> approach so near to the wall to fight? knew you not
> the many darts are thrown from above off the wall?
> Who killed Abimelech the son of Jerobaal? did not a
> woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the
> wall and slew him in Thebes? Why did you go near the
> wall? Thou shalt say: Thy servant Urias the Hethite
> is also slain. (II Kings 11:19-21)

The messenger, following Joab's advice, later gives David a
quick account of the warfare and without a breath relates the
news of Uriah's death. David's reaction is a classic study
in hypocrisy:

> Then said David to the messenger, Thus shalt thou
> say to Joab, Let not this thing discourage thee for
> various is the event of war; and sometimes one, sometimes
> another is consumed by the sword. (II Kings 11:25a)

The contrast between the glimpse given us of David's normal
reaction to bad news through Joab's dramatic projection of
that reaction and David's actual response speaks loudly of
David's secret joy over the obliteration of any obstacle to
the satisfaction of his desire. Not another word is spoken
concerning the brutal death of Uriah, one of his best and
most loyal retainers. It is this kind of devastating por-
trayal of intentional evil which is unthinkable in the classi-
cal view. Oedipus' sin, although repugnant, is unknowing
and blind; it is the result of forces beyond his control.
But David's actions are deliberate, conscious; they reveal
nothing but the blackest and most despicable intent to get
and to possess what is not his own and to destroy everything
in his path on the way to obtaining it.

The fact that this low point in David's development can
be portrayed with such candor is the result of the Biblical
understanding of man as capable of great good or great evil,
depending on the quality of his disposition toward God at any
particular time in life. Despite the depravity of David's
actions at this point, there always remains the possibility

of an about-face on his part, of repentance resulting from
chastisement and mercy. The emphasis here is on the per-
sonal relationship of God with David and David with God.
The relationship is a living thing, it is subject to process
and even great extremes of change. It is significant that
such a change, not only in David, but in God himself, is
recorded almost immediately after David's terrible grief over
the just death of Bathsheba's child. Once God has chastened
David, He once again reaches out in love to touch the very
relationship which caused the trouble:

> And David comforted Bethsabee his wife, and went in
> unto her, and slept with her: and she bore a son, and
> he called his name Solomon, and the Lord loved him.
> (II Kings 12:24)

Sin, repentance, renewal, rebirth is seen to be a part of
the Judeo-Christian pattern of characterization from the
beginning. From the experience of this pattern, the individ-
ual develops.

Not only can there be great extremes of good and evil
portrayed in a given character in the Biblical view, and of
extreme states of exalted happiness and profound despair,
but there is allowance for the representation of great
extremes of social position as well. David as shepherd-boy
becomes the powerful king and prototype of the Christ born
in a humble stall in Bethlehem. Peter, James and John are
fishermen. Christ calls a tax collector as his disciple and
feasts with sinners and prostitutes. This contrasts sharply

with the classical tendency to separate the social classes
and to match grand or sublime action only with the aristo-
cratic character. From the classical perspective, the
depiction of Christ's interaction with the lower parts of
society would seem grossly inappropriate.

Again, what makes this mixture of sublimity and humility
ultimately possible is the Judeo-Christian emphasis on the
Incarnation, on the entrance of the sublime into historical
reality. And of course the Incarnation is part of a larger
plan which embraces all of history. It is in fact that total
plan which forms the framework into which the Scriptural char-
acters fit, and which makes possible their biographical indi-
viduality. From the classical perspective we noticed that
horizontal continuity characterized the Iliad and the Odyssey—
a continuous connection between stories which is almost
seamless. In the Scriptures, on the other hand, the stories
have little horizontal connection, but a great deal of verti-
cal connection, that is, the life of each of the great Bibli-
cal figures reflects one moment in God's on-going formation
of the world to his purpose.[28] Specifically, the life of
each great figure is a microcosm of such formation. God
deals with each man by sending joy, trials, and suffering
into his life at will until that man is conformed to the full
image of godly individuality. The very extremes through
which the characters move during the process of formation

---

[28]See Eric Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of
Reality in Western Literature (Princeton: Princeton Uni-
versity Press, 1953), p. 17.

gives them their intense life, their intimate connection

with historical reality. As Eric Auerbach puts it:

> The reader deeply feels how the extent of the pendulum
> swing is connected with the intensity of the personal
> history--precisely the most extreme circumstances in
> which we are immeasurably forsaken and in despair, or
> immeasurably joyous and exalted, give us, if we survive
> them, a personal stamp which is recognized as the pro-
> duct of a rich existence, a rich development.[29]

It is this very development, continues Auerbach, which often

gives the Old Testament stories "even when legendary" a his-

torical character.

A more literal combination of the humble and the sublime

is not the only result of the Christian interpretation of

history. Stylistically, too, there are great differences

between the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian presentation of

character. We noted in chapter one of this study that the

Greek narrative style was characterized by a certain palpa-

bility, a certain outwardness of presentation, including

fully externalized description, a uniform illumination of

character, an extensive and carefully rhetorical expression

of character thought and feeling, open character motivation

and explicit relations between characters. All this was

paralleled by a Greco-Roman tendency to place all events in

what Auerbach calls the "foreground"--in a local and temporal

present, and to extemporize the meaning of such events to

such a degree that they lose much natural psychological ten-

sion. These characteristics, as we noted, tended to reinforce

---

[29]Auerbach, _Mimesis_, p. 18.

the production of universal type-characters rather than of
historically individualized characters.

In contrast, the Biblical style of narrative presenta-
tion is characterized by a certain obscurity and mystery--
by a closed quality which has great suggestive power. In the
episode from the life of David with which we just dealt, for
example, the relations between the characters are not pre-
sented for us in a fully delineated fashion. The story of
David's lust is presented in the sparest manner. There is
not a superfluous detail, and little or no time spent on
description of personal emotion. Discourse is direct and
concrete. David's conversation is not the conscious effort
of a polished rhetorician intended for didactic or splendid
effect. It is the natural speech of a man caught in a com-
promising act, and only serves to reveal the depths to which
David has fallen.[30] As a result, the passions, the jealousy,
possessiveness, and murderous intent demonstrated by David
grip us with a psychological intensity not to be realized in
a reading of the Odyssey or the Iliad.

The very abruptness and sketchiness of the narrative of
David's fall into sin is a result, as we have pointed out,
of the Biblical emphasis on the vertical, on the relation of
the individual's life to the pattern of God's work in the
world. Where the overall pattern of history has great impor-
tance and meaning, there is a tendency to skip over the parts

---

[30]Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 45.

of the narrative which do not relate to the central theme
and to emphasize those which do. The very existence of the
unexpressed actions and emotions which are going on in the
interstices of the expressed events yields a suggestive and
imaginative power far above what is produced from a fully
externalized description of action.

This objective suggestiveness can be observed espe-
cially in the narration of emotionally charged situations.
It is evident, for instance, in the section where David dis-
poses of Uriah by means of his chief general, Joab. We
remember that it is by implicit contrast with Joab's remark-
ably specific projection of David's reaction to the bad news
of the battle and his admonition to the messenger that we
get a real picture of David's motives when he actually re-
ceives the message. The technique is circuitous, indirect,
and yet a devastating commentary on the state of David's
intentions at that point in his development results.

The imaginative suggestiveness of the Davidic narrative
which arises from the Biblical emphasis on the vertical con-
nection of the individual and God is matched by great dra-
matic suspense, but it is once again a different and more
personal order of suspense than that generated by the classi-
cal view. Whereas the Greco-Roman epics leaned more exclus-
ively on an allegorical-exemplary mode of expression, (that
is, on the presentation of ideal characters who are sepa-
rated radically from lower, more debased character types),

the Biblical view permits the expression of historical reality--even sinful reality--as part of the universal plan of salvation.   The consequent allowance for substantial changes in character and personality (from a sinful condition or a condition of willful escape from the will of God to voluntary acceptance of the Divine will or vice versa) constitutes a major divergence from the classical pattern. Such a focus on individual development creates a different kind of suspense than that generated by the classical view of man. Whereas in the classical view, suspense is generated mostly by means of the plot, in the Christian view the suspense is more personally connected to the character of the individual. While we wonder what will happen to Hector in his fight with Achilles, our attention in the story of David is spotlighted on the inner changes which take place in his moral character. Another way of putting it is that we are never so concerned about a potential change in Hector's essentially good character, as we are about his active life and what that represents for the national destiny of Greece. The Biblical narrative of David, on the other hand, focuses on the changes in his character, and thus the suspense is generated from a different quarter. This is not to say that action or plot is unimportant in the Christian representation of reality; it is simply to say that these elements are usually subordinated to a more evident concern for the potential character-development of the individual.

The Davidic narrative and each event in it also gains meaning and intensity through its connection with the total plan of Israeli history. David is the king of the Covenant, the recipient of the promise given him at his kingly annointing, a promise which God ratifies again and again throughout his life. The covenant is always in the same basic form and is renewed at crucial points in David's individual history. One such point occurs in II Samuel 7, where Nathan the prophet has a vision concerning the future of David's Kingdom and tells David that if he and his offspring remain faithful to God, they will be established forever; in fact, there is even a promise of mercy if his progeny should fall away:

> And when thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt
> sleep with thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after
> thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I
> will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house
> to my name, and I will establish the throne of his
> kingdom for ever. I will be to him a father, and he
> shall be to me a son: and if he commit any iniquity,
> I will correct him with the rod of men, and with the
> stripes of the children of men. But my mercy I will
> not take away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom
> I removed from before my face. And thy house shall be
> faithful, and thy kingdom for ever before thy face,
> and thy throne shall be firm for ever. (II Kings 7:
> 12-16)

The same promise is repeated in Psalms 89:20-37, and 132:11 and 12, and reaffirmed with Solomon in I Kings 6:11, and in I Kings 9:4, as it had formerly been renewed with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and all the patriarchs before David. This promise, with its planned inclusion of future generations and its promise of mercy even in the face of sin, forms the background against which the Biblical characters

live out their lives. It is important because it demonstrates
that the Judeo-Christian pattern of sin-mercy, and of a redemp-
tive lineage is not without grounds in the Old Testament.
When the Fathers pick out Messianic prophecies in Isaish or
in the Davidic narrative for purposes of showing foreshadow-
ings of Christ, their interpretation is not wholly an
unrelated imposition on earlier material, but arises very
naturally from themes and even specific prophecies intrinsic
to Jewish history.

It is this background, the historical framework out of
which the Old Testament characters arise, which gives their
lives such purpose and significance. All that is done by
each character is done toward the fulfillment of a single
goal--the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. In the
New Testament and through Christ, the meaning of the Kingdom
of God on earth takes on even more revolutionary spiritual
implications; but if at the time of David these implications
are not clear, they are certainly pre-figured in God's con-
tract relationship with the nation of Israel. David's con-
stant reference to the universal plan of God gives his indi-
vidual life a meaning and significance it could not have
in itself.

In the New Testament, when Christ comes "from the House
of David," the purpose of history is fulfilled, and the
Judeo-Christian view of characterization takes on its defin-
itive form. Whereas David interacted with God through the

mouths of the prophets and in the inner mind of his spirit,
the disciples interacted with Christ face-to-face. It is
the significance of these face to face encounters with a
historical Jesus which forms the basis of New Testament
characterization and which exemplifies the most essential
element of a specifically Christian understanding of charac-
terization.

In these encounters, it is clearly evident that Jesus
himself saw a man's reaction to his person and call as the
crux of character. His meeting with the rich young ruler of
Mark 10 is the definitive example of this, and also gives us
another basis for comparison with classical characterization.
As Luke records the incident, Jesus is questioned by a young
man just as he is setting out toward Jerusalem for the last
time. The ruler addresses Jesus as "Good Master" and Jesus
is quick to react to this ethical flattery. "Why do you
call me Good?" he replies, "No one is good but God alone."
Jesus then gives the expected moral directive--"Follow the
ten commandments"--and lists them. The man answers that he
has kept the commandments from his youth. The Scriptural
account of Jesus' reply cannot be paraphrased:

> And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him:
> One thing is wanting unto thee: go, sell whatsoever
> thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have
> treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. (Mark 10:21)

The stark and yet loving penetration of this statement, its
absolute claim on the man's life, its insight into the real
conflict area of the man's heart, reveal with clarity the

seriousness of the decision Christ requires of every man.
The poignancy of this particular rich man's unwillingness
to respond ("At that saying his countenance fell, and he
went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions"--Mark 10:22)
is further highlighted by contrast with other incidents where
the same claim is made and the response is utterly different:

> And when he was passing by, he saw Levi the son of
> Alpheus sitting at the receipt of custom; and he
> saith to him: Follow me. And rising up, he fol-
> lowed him. (Mark 2:14)

While the claim of God is powerfully evident in the Old Tes-
tament, the dramatic reality achieved in these New Testament
encounters has a historical validity which is ummatched
anywhere in the sacred writings by virtue of the actual
presence of Jesus. His claim is absolute and individual;
it becomes the central focus for characterization in the
Christian view of history.

The influence of the Biblical view of characterization
is found in early Christian literature as well. Eusebius,
for example, re-relates the story of the beheading of the
apostle James at the court of Herod first told by Clement of
Alexandria. When James testifies, his prison attendant is so
moved at hearing him witness to the faith that he confesses
to being a Christian himself. Eusebius relates this charged
moment very succinctly, but it is evident that the guard's
decision to stand for Christ is the element in Clement's
story he considers worthy of the emotion portrayed:

> So they were both led away together; and on the way
> he asked for forgiveness for himself from James. And
> James looked at him for a moment and said, 'Peace be
> to you,' and kissed him. So both were beheaded at
> the same time.[31]

Thus it is not the nobility of a given character or the
innate good or evil of his nature which is emphasized in the
Christian view, but spiritual decision: the act of choosing
or not choosing sacrificial identification with Christ.

The same emphasis on decision is evident in Bede's char-
acterization of Edwin of Northumbria, who was one of the first
early British rulers to be converted to Christianity. It is
obvious that Bede's first concern is with Edwin's possible
Christian influence over a large section of Britain, and
his narrative of that conversion takes full advantage of the
dramatic possibilities inherent in such a situation.

Edwin's first encounter with Christianity occurs when
he marries Ethelberga, the daughter of the Christian King,
Ethelbert. In order to obtain her, Edwin must make certain
religious concessions—he must allow his wife to practice
her faith freely, he must allow her to maintain a Christian
Chaplain, etc.—to all of which he readily agrees. Bede
records the first sign of his openness to the new faith at
this point:

> He (Edwin) also professed himself willing to accept
> the religion of Christ if on examination, his adviser
> decided that it appeared more holy and acceptable to
> God than their own.[32]

---

[31]Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History, I, p. 12.

[32]Bede, A History of the English Church and People, trans.
Leo Sherley-Price (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 115.

Edwin does not accept the faith immediately, however, even after he is preserved from the poisoned dagger of an assassin and after he wins a victory through the prayers of Paulinus the Chaplain over the West Saxons. In fact, Bede chooses this point in the narrative to increase suspense by including a glimpse of the King's inner state of mind:

> But he (Edwin) wished first to receive a full course of instruction in the Faith from the venerable Paulinus, and to discuss his proper course with those of his counsellors on whose wisdom he placed most reliance. For the King was by nature a wise and prudent man, and often sat alone in vilest converse with himself for long periods, turning over in his inmost heart what he should do and which religion he should follow.[33]

Bede then relates further attempts by various influential Christians in Edwin's life to persuade him to the faith. Pope Gregory writes a personal letter to Edwin entreating him to give up idol-worship; immediately after, he writes to Ethelberga, the Queen, exhorting her to teach her husband the commandments of God and to "melt the coldness of his heart" through spiritual encouragement.

The final incident leading up to the King's conversion involves a vision the King once had while in exile during the early years of his youth. Pursued by Ethelfrid, a neighboring king, Edwin flees over most of Britain and finally takes refuge at the court of Redwald, an old friend. When Redwald is bribed by Ethelfrid to kill Edwin, and finally agrees to the murder, Edwin hears about it and refusing to escape, waits

---

[33]Bede, p. 117.

for his death. While Edwin waits, a stranger approaches and

asks him three questions about his situation: If he were

saved from destruction what reward would he give to his

benefactor? If his benefactor then promises him kingship,

great power and victory over his enemies, how would he show

his gratitude? After Edwin assures the stranger of his ample

gratitude for both promises the stranger asks a third ques-

tion which again directly hints at Edwin's coming conversion:

> If the man who can truthfully foretell such good for-
> tune can also give you better and wiser guidance for
> your life and salvation than anything known to our par-
> ents and kinsfolk, will you promise to obey him and
> follow his salutary advice?[34]

After asking this question and receiving Edwin's promise of

submission to such guidance, the stranger lays his hand on

Edwin's head and tells him that when he experiences this same

sign (the laying-on of hands) he should remember the vision

and his promise. Bede then relates the story of Edwin's

deliverance from death as a result of a change of heart in

Redwald (who is persuaded by his wife that loyalty to friends

is a more precious possession than gold), and his subsequent

rise to power.

Bringing the story up to date with the recounting of

this earlier vision, Bede then relates the final incident in

Edwin's conversion. In the midst of one of his philosophical

reveries, the king is approached by Paulinus, who has received

the sign of Edwin's vision through a spiritual insight of

----

[34]Bede, pp. 124-25.

his own. Laying his hand on the King's head, he reminds the King of his promise. Even at this point, it requires the further reasonable counsel of one of the king's chief henchmen to fully persuade him in a passage which has become famous in English literature:

> Your Majesty, when we compare the present life of man on earth with that time of which we have no knowledge, it seems to me like the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting-hall where you are sitting at dinner on a winter's day with your thanes and counsellors. In the midst there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside, the storms of winter rain or snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. Even so man appears on earth for a little while, but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it.[35]

After such a sustained dramatic build-up, Bede's narration of the King's response seems almost anti-climactic:

> In short, the king granted blessed Paulinus full permission to preach, renounced idolatry, and professed his acceptance of the faith of Christ.[36]

All this only serves to reveal once again the Christian emphasis on spiritual decision in characterization, and on the great potential for drama which is inherent in the Christian view of reality. Bede, as we see here, generally shows a much greater literary flair than Eusebius for exploiting the dramatic possibilities leading up to conversion.

_____

[35] Bede, p. 127.

[36] Bede, p. 127.

It is in fact the emphasis placed on decision in the Christian world-view which reveals an even more profound contrast with the classical view of characterization. We recall that in the classical analysis of man there was no satisfactory answer to the problem of a fated innate nature. Plato, we remember, could never finally condemn man for the evil in his nature because of his sympathy for the fact that few human beings are born with the intellectual or moral substance to attain Eudaimonia, the desired state of harmony with the universals (see Chapter II). The capacity for reason and passion, he suggests, is conferred on every individual by the gods in given measure. Aristotle's answer seems at first paradoxical--he does not wish to absolve man entirely from responsibility for his actions, and yet he cannot ultimately explain why one man is good and another evil. Finally, his sense of the power of accident in the life of historical man results in an emphasis on the fated nature of man.

The result of the Greek emphasis on a fixed view of human nature, as we have seen, is first, a softening of the idea of eternal judgement, and second, a reduction of the dramatic force of important choices made in the life of a given character. Then, too, we recall that Aristotle's sense of the power of accident helped to foster the defeatist notion of an uncontrollable disorder intrinsic to historical reality. This in itself tends to encourage the sense of determinism which generally governs the Greek understanding of man.

The result of all this, as we pointed out, is an essential disunity in the Greek literary character, who finds his true nobility in fighting all his life against what is actually his destiny—what is most truly himself. Thus there is an essential disunity of character within history. It is true that the individual is reunited with his own deepest self at the instant of death, but we are not at all sure what form this individuality takes in the afterlife, or whether it exists at all. In any case, within history, within the physical life of the body, the individual's personality is divided, his character split by the power of an unwished-for destiny.

Although the Christian writer struggles, too, against the tyrannical presence of accident and fate in the universe, he ultimately resolves the problem through a belief in the freedom of man to determine his own destiny. This belief is based originally on Scriptural grounds, but the philosophical basis for such grounds have been expanded and developed by two of the greatest Christian apologists, St. Augustine (A.D. 354-450) and St. Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225-1274).

St. Augustine approached the problem of free will from the presupposition that free will is something good because it comes from God. The question follows that if free will is good, and if it comes from God, then why can men abuse it? Augustine answers that simply because something can be used for evil, it is not necessarily intrinsically evil. For example, the fact that the body possesses eyes and hands does not

mean they must be used for evil. The faculties themselves

are neutral. How, then, does the possibility of evil in man

arise? Although the possibility of evil can be said to be

due to God, writes Augustine, the actuality is solely man's

responsibility.[37]   Man has a capacity to be evil, but he

does not have to be evil. He can go contrary to the will of

God because the soul can voluntarily choose the lesser over

the higher good. Since man can will to want and desire the

good, it follows that he does not have it because he does

not will it. The mind which wills the true good cannot be

forced to be a "slave of passion." Augustine concludes:

> Whatever, therefore, is the equal of mind, or superior
> to it, will not make it a slave to lust because of its
> own justice, provided the mind is in control and is
> strong in virtue. On the other hand, anything inferior
> to the mind cannot do so because of its own weakness,
> as we have learned from what we already agreed upon.
> We are faced with the conclusion, then, that nothing
> else can make the mind the companion of evil desire than
> its own will and free choice.[38]

To the objection that the soul is driven by natural impulses

over which it has no control, Augustine replies that impulses

do not exist apart from the soul, but that they arise from the

movement of the soul toward this good or that evil. If such

is the case, then the soul makes its own impulses, and if it

capitulates to evil, it does so willingly. To the further

---

[37]See Roy W. Battenhouse, ed., A Companion to the Study
of St. Augustine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955),
pp. 115-124, for a short characterization of Augustine's
argument.

[38]St. Augustine, The Free Choice of the Will, p. 93.

objection that if God may be said to have caused the possibility of evil, then it necessarily follows that he is the author of actual evil as well, Augustine answers that foreknowledge does not imply causation.[39]   "There is a distinction," as David E. Roberts puts it, "between events that happen by necessity and those that happen through human will, and unless God's foreknowledge apprehends this distinction, he is not omniscient."[40]   Thus Augustine makes a strong case for human free agency based on a careful understanding of the relation between God's permissiveness and His foreknowledge.

For Augustine, human sin is not the result of a positive cause, but of a negative unwillingness to will the good. Even though all men have weaknesses and problems as a result of the fall, no man is fated to sin,

> Since, despite their ignorance and difficulty, He [God] has not withdrawn from them the freedom to ask and seek and strive, but is ready to give to those who ask, to show the way to those who seek, and to open to those who knock.[41]

Thus God's condemnation of mankind is a just condemnation, for man falls through his own free will. It is only after the fall that man is unable to reverse his condition without the grace of God. As Augustine puts it, "Any excuse that men

---

[39] St. Augustine, *Free Choice of the Will*, p. 172.

[40] David E. Roberts, "The Earliest Writings," in Battenhouse, p. 119.

[41] St. Augustine, *Free Choice of the Will*, pp. 217-218.

are wont to allege on grounds of ignorance is taken away
from those who know the commandments of God."[42]

But by the same token, Augustine refuses to acknowledge
a defense of free will in man which leaves no place for God's
help in leading a good life. He does not sidestep the Pauline
analysis of Romans 7:16 ("For I know that there dwelleth not
in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For
to will, is present with me; but to accomplish that which is
good, I find not."), but acknowledges the need for man to seek
the grace which helps in overcoming the law of sin and death:
"Man's free will is not enough unless he is given the victory
by the Lord in answer to his prayer that he be not led into
temptation."[43] The pattern presented by the Christian under-
standing is typically a both/and combination of two extremes:
on the one hand is the irrefutable fact of man's free will and
God's just condemnation for his wilfully sinful acts; on the
other hand there is the paradoxical fact of grace, in which man
recognizes his depravity and yet seeks God's help in overcom-
ing it.

The extremes of judgment/grace evidenced in this kind
of a model are a part of the Biblical understanding of man's
relation with God from the beginning. In Leviticus 6, for
example, we find a stringent denunciation of sin even when
it is a result of moral ignorance.

---

[42]St. Augustine, Grace and Free Will, p. 255.

[43]St. Augustine, Grace and Free Will, p. 261.

> If any one sin through ignorance, and do one of those
> things which by the law of the Lord are forbidden, and
> being guilty of sin, understands his iniquity, He
> shall offer of the flocks a ram without blemish to the
> priest, according to the measure and estimation of the
> sin: and the priest shall pray for him, because he
> did it ignorantly: and it shall be forgiven him,
> Because by mistake he trespassed against the Lord.
> (Leviticus 5:17-19)

Augustine clearly recognizes the paradox he is handling.

Among the many passages in his essay on grace and free will

which reveal his understanding of the problem, perhaps the

simplest is in Chapter 5:

> When God says: 'Turn to me....and I will turn to you,'
> (Zach. 1:3), the one part, namely that we turn to Him,
> apparently pertains to the will, while the other,
> namely, that He Himself will also turn to us, refers
> to His grace.[44]

At the end of this particular section, Augustine muses that

it is all finally a mystery--and if we are tempted to dis-

pute with God over the problem of evil, the fate of an unbap-

tized baby, or any other prickly theological issue, we

should remember to walk only according to the light we have

received: "...and God will disclose to you this mystery also,

if not in this life, at least in the next, for 'there is noth-

ing concealed that will not be disclosed.'"[45] For Augustine,

it was useless to imagine a perfect world in which the will

is exercised in accordance with a right desire for the good.

It is better, he writes, to see the world as it actually is,

as the best of all possible worlds, and to see everything

---

[44]St. Augustine, <u>Grace and Free Will</u>, p. 261.

[45]St. Augustine, <u>Grace and Free Will</u>, pp. 306-307.

contributing to a providential end, than to suggest that God
might have done it differently.[46]

St. Thomas' explanation of the doctrine of free will has
much in common with the Augustinian argument. St. Thomas,
too, founds the notion of free will on man's freedom to
strive after an ultimate good. The highest good is God; in
seeking Him, man may be sidetracked by various incomplete
"goods."[47] Thus Aquinas' definition of what constitutes a
"good" or a "bad" action follows Augustine's very closely--
a good action is one which fosters attainment of the final
good, and a bad action is one which is incompatible with
this attainment.

From this point on, Aquinas' arguments closely parallel
the paradoxical line of thought already set forth by St. Augus-
tine. In the Summa Theologica I., Q. 6 art. 4, St. Thomas
follows the Augustinian emphasis on the freedom of the will,
making a distinction between the immediate act of willing and
the "act of the will commanded by it." He insists that though
the "commanded act of the will" may be corrupted, the pure
or immediate act of willing cannot be violated by compulsion:
"...it is contrary to the nature of the will's own act that
it should be subject to compulsion or violence."[48]

---

[46]St. Augustine, The Free Choice of the Will, p. 160.

[47]See F. C. Copleston's full explanation of this aspect
of Aquinas' theology in A History of Medieval Philosophy
(New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 188-189.

[48]St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica" in Introduction to St.
Thomas Aquinas, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Modern Library,
1948), p. 486.

On the other hand, in his understanding of grace, St.
Thomas insists with Augustine that "without grace men do
nothing good when they think or will or love or act" (Summa
Theologica II, Q. 109, art. 2).[49] He explains that when
natural man was in an uncorrupted state he naturally pre-
ferred the love of God above all other things. In the fallen
state, however, he is sick, and like a sick man is able to
perform some constructive acts but unable to fulfill his true
potential. He therefore needs the "help of grace healing
his nature to raise his eyes to the ultimate good" (Summa
Theologica II, Q. 109, art 3).[50]

If man, then, is incapable in his corrupted nature of
fulfilling his true potential, how much is left for him to
do at all? Can he even prepare himself for the reception
of grace? Here St. Thomas, like St. Augustine, can only
restate the paradox of free agency in man, the extent to
which free will is actually free to seek God on its own. His
comment on John 15:5 (where Christ declares that without
him, man can do nothing) demonstrates his double vision of

---

[49] St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," ed. Pegis, p. 655.
St. Thomas and St. Augustine are sometimes compared on the
issue of grace, with St. Thomas characterized as the champion
of the doctrine of utter depravity, and Augustine as the
champion of an unfallen free will in man. It is easy to see
how such a characterization occurs, because there is a
decided emphasis in each apologist on the side with which
they are often identified. On careful reading of both phi-
losophers, however, it can be demonstrated that they are
remarkably similar in their paradoxical view of the problem
of grace and free will.

[50] St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," ed. Pegis, p. 655.

the issue: "Hence when a man is said to do what is in him to do, this is said to be in his power according as he is moved by God" (Summa Theologica, II, Q. 109, art. 6).[51] St. Thomas thus finally places the responsibility for freedom of the will on the movement of God's grace within the individual. And yet, while God "predestines" grace to be accessible to all hearts "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), the human agent can refuse the grace without which he can do nothing. Thus the grace of God has a certain necessity, but it is "not a necessity of coercion," as St. Thomas puts it, but of "infallibility" (Summa Theologica II, Q. 112, art. 3).[52] That is, if God's grace is not rejected when it is presented, it will infallibly come to fruition in the individual. St. Thomas does not end this particular discussion of the problem of grace with an acknowledgement of the final obscurity of the doctrine of divine grace, but the paradoxical nature of his lengthy discussions on the subject seem to indicate the same deep recognition of ultimate mystery which is expressed in Augustine.

Boethius, who forms the philosophical bridge between the early Christian era and the Middle Ages, has perhaps the clearest explanation of Christian concept of freedom, and a statement of his position offers a good summary of the

---

[51] St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," ed. Pegis, p. 663.

[52] St. Thomas, "Summa Theologica," ed. Pegis, p. 676.

Christian view at this point. The message of the Consolation

of Philosophy is that in order to be truly free, a man must

submit his will to the divine will, accepting the earthly

destiny which is his. In other words, man's liberty is found

in voluntary enslavement to the perfect Will of God.[53]

Etienne Gilson has an illuminating comment on this tradi-

tional Christian idea:

> Will is free only brcause man is endowed with a reason
> capable of knowing and choosing. The better a man
> uses his reason, the freer he is. God and the superior
> intellectible substances enjoy a knowledge so perfect
> that their judgment is infallible; their liberty is
> therefore perfect. As to man, his soul is all the
> freer as it patterns itself on divine thought; it is
> less free when it turns away from God to the knowledge
> of sensible things, and still less so when it allows
> itself to be governed by the passions of the body it
> animates. To will what God wills, and love what he
> loves, is the highest form of liberty; it is therefore
> happiness.[54]

For Boethius, as for St. Thomas and St. Augustine,

liberty cannot be viewed in isolation from the hierarchy of

Divine Love within which it is defined. True freedom is not

only a matter of free willing, but of freely willing to "love

God and to serve Him forever." Such willing, paradoxically,

is not possible in a fallen state without the grace of God.

As we pointed out earlier, however, although man cannot

attain a love of God without grace, he is capable of refusing

grace and thus of cutting himself off from ultimate happiness.

---

[53]See Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Rich-
ard Green (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), pp. 91-96.

[54]Etienne Gilson, A History of Christian Philosophy in
the Middle Ages (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 102.

Judgment is an irrefutable fact in all the patristic fathers,
and the possibility of eternal damnation a substantial fact.
The scriptural declaration: "And as it is appointed unto all
men once to die and after this the judgment;" (Hebrews 9:27)
echoes in a wrathful pronouncement near the end of Augustine's
City of God (Book 19, Chapter 28):

> The doom in store for those who are not of the City of
> God is an unending wretchedness that is called 'the
> second death,' because neither the soul, cut off from
> the life of God, nor the body, pounded by perpetual
> pain, can there be said to live at all. And what will
> make that second death so hard to bear is that there
> will be no death to end it.[55]

Here, unlike descriptions of judgment in classical legend,
there is no loophole, however small, for a second chance at
life. Once the choice has been made in life it becomes a
man's destiny for eternity.

The fact of free will with its awesome alternatives
gives the individual a tremendous freedom and power in the
Christian view of man--a power not nearly so evident in the
classical vision, where a character's ultimate destiny is seen
to be a latent part of his innate nature from the beginning.
We have seen that the very dramatic quality of Greek tragedy
springs from the illusion of free will in a character created
by the seeming reversals of the fateful circumstances govern-
ing his life. In the Christian view of man this dramatic
quality is no illusion, but a reality--the choices the indi-
vidual makes in regard to the true good have a substantial

---

[55]St. Augustine, City of God, ed. Bourke, p. 482.

effect on his life in the present and on his life after death.
Unlike the characters of Greek legend, Biblical characters
are not carried along by an external destiny, but rather
decide their own destiny in life.

The Christian insistence on the existence of free will
in man makes possible the presentation of a unified portrayal
of personality in history. Man no longer fights against
what he unconsciously senses to be his real character,
his real fate, until capitulation at death, but he con-
sciously takes his destiny in hand, and in the midst of the
conflicts of life, decides the character and the fate which
will fill out his life on earth and his life in eternity.
Man's actions in history thus become important to a degree
unimaginable in the Greco-Roman mind, because man works out
his destiny in history, in the throes of the conflicting in-
fluences of good and evil. Thus, as Auerbach puts it:

> The drama of earthly life takes on a painful, immod-
> erate, and utterly unclassical intensity, because it
> is at once a wrestling with evil and the foundation
> of God's judgment to come.[56]

Perhaps nowhere in the New Testament does the intensity
of the struggle of decision show up more strongly than in the
Biblical account of Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus in John 3.
The scriptural narrative is characteristically suggestive;
the barest details of the circumstances of the encounter are
given. Nicodemus is briefly described as a Pharisee and a

---

[56]Eric Auerbach, Dante: Poet of the Secular World,
trans. Ralph Manheim (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1929), p. 14.

"ruler of the Jews." He comes to Jesus at night expressing wonderment at the miraculous signs Christ performs, and commenting that such signs can only be from God. Jesus responds by focusing the conversation on his own position as intermediary between heaven and earth and on his authority to speak of heavenly things, as one sent from heaven (John 3:11-13), and as one who testifies through the quality of his earthly actions that what he says is true (John 3: 16-21). All this is done with a characteristically objective quality, a capacity for simply stating the facts, for putting the onus of response directly on the recipient of the message. After assuring Nicodemus of the ultimately benevolent purposes of God in sending His Son ("For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him"), Jesus makes explicit the alternatives set before man: "He who believes in him is not judged; but he that doth not believe is already judged, because he believes not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (v. 18). After this straightforward declaration of the content of God's judgment on the unbeliever, Jesus concludes by enlarging on the basic moral problem which keeps them from experiencing the light of grace: ("And this is the judgment, because the light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil", John 3:19).

Jesus' conversation is pointed without being overwhelming; powerfully explicit, yet without the didacticism which

characterizes most religious discussion. He does not accuse Nicodemus personally of the moral darkness which keeps a man from the light, but simply points up the fact that this is usually the major barrier. We can only assume that the message, in combination with the fact that Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night, under cover of the very darkness which gives Christ's brief comments such metaphorical power, will have a profound effect on Nicodemus. The suggestive power of the situation and Christ's insight into the basic moral conflict in Nicodemus' soul, recalls the tension preceding the unvoiced decision of the rich young ruler.

We are not told Nicodemus' response, but a later incident gives us an inkling of the internal conflict he experiences as a result of Jesus' words. The account comes four chapters later in John 7. Jesus has come to Jerusalem for the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles and has been preaching openly once again concerning his mission as one sent from God to perform the deeds of light which prove his authority and his origin in the Father—basically the same message as He had given to Nicodemus earlier in his ministry. The Pharisees, Nicodemus among them, send officers to arrest Jesus, but by the scriptural account they are so impressed with his authority ("Never did man speak like this man," John 7:46) that they leave him undisturbed and come back to the Jewish leaders empty-handed.

Miffed at this challenge to their own authority, the Pharisees tongue-lash the officers for being led astray by

the fickle-minded hero-worship of a crowd and for wavering

in their allegiance to traditional Jewish authority:

> The Pharisees therefore answered them: Are you also
> seduced? Hath any one of the rulers believed in him,
> or of the Pharisees? But this multitude, that knoweth
> not the law, are accursed. (John 7:47-49)

Nicodemus, who has remained silent throughout this exchange,

and who has evidently continued to keep his own encounter

with Jesus a secret, is obviously galvanized by the pointed

question: "Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees

believed in him?" Stung by the powerful message of Jesus'

earlier challenge, he attempts an indirect defense of Jesus

by raising a legal point: "Does our law judge a man without

first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?"

(John 7:51). But this defense, feeble as it is, reflects

only Nicodemus' continued personal conflict with the person

of Jesus. One intuits that he does believe, that he is

secretly and profoundly attached to the person of Christ, but

is by the same token without the moral courage or conviction

to openly testify to that fact. He cannot speak, and his

half-hearted attempt at bringing some justice to bear on the

situation is put down mightily by the biting sarcasm of the

other Pharisees:

> They answered, and said to him: Art thou also a Galilean?
> Search the scriptures, and see, that out of Galilee a
> prophet riseth not. (John 7:52)[57]

---

[57]Oxford Bible Scholars characterize the tone of this
verse as "Sarcasm, expressing the contempt of Jerusalem aris-
tocrats for Galilean peasants." Note on John 7:52 in the
Oxford Annotated Bible (New York: Oxford University Press,
1965), p. 1296.

My reading of these two incidents is, of course, an interpretation of what the scripture presents as bald narrative fact. But the facts do speak, and the characterization of Nicodemus which arises from the bare report given in Scripture is of a different order from that found in classical portraits. Nicodemus is a man who knows the truth about Jesus ("No One can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him", John 3:2), and who is yet without the moral courage to acknowledge Jesus before men. Afraid to reveal his own real attraction to Jesus and his own conflict over Christ's claim to absolute authority, he consistently hides his struggle. What remains with us in regard to the character of Nicodemus is an impression of great internal conflict-- great respect for the raw authority of Christ's claims struggling against great fear at the thought of identification with a Galilean peasant who at the time was undermining the very foundations of his own culture, a great attraction to Jesus on the one hand countermanded by fear and doubt on the other. Above all, we are left with an impression of profound moral failure once we realize that Nicodemus is not going to reveal his respect for and perhaps even belief in Christ, once we realize he is not even going to reveal his struggle. The quality of secrecy in Nicodemus, his inability at the moment to make an open confession of his inner mind, is reinforced by the omnipresent physical metaphor of night, concealment, and darkness with which he is so effectively associated.

And yet, in the scriptural account there is no suggestion of external judgment made on Nicodemus. We are not even told his final choice. What we do know is that he is in great conflict over it. The incidents are related with such Spartan purity that they raise our consciousness of his conflict to an almost unbearable intensity. This is the Biblical method of characterization—a decision for or against the person of Christ or the love of God placed in high relief, abruptness, suggestiveness, use of direct discourse, preoccupation with internal conflict and choice, great suspense—and looming behind it all, a claim to the universalized interpretation of history which lends such intensity to the particular historical moment.

We see at least some of these characteristically Biblical elements in St. Augustine's description of his own encounter with Christ in the Eighth Book of the <u>Confessions</u>. It is significant that Augustine prefaces the now-famous description of his conversion with a long discussion of the conflict in his divided will. The following passage is only a short excerpt from a tortured monologue which runs for several pages:

> As for me, when I deliberated upon serving the Lord my God, as I had long planned to do, it was I myself who willed and I myself who did not will it. It was I myself. I neither willed it completely nor did I refrain completely from willing it. Therefore I was at war within myself, and I was laid waste by myself.[58]

---

[58]St. Augustine, <u>The Confessions of St. Augustine</u> (New York: Image Books, 1960), pp. 197-98.

Augustine goes on to describe the gradual strengthening of his will both through preliminary trials and encouraging visions of future spiritual joy. In this conflict we see the general Christian preoccupation with decision and with the tension and psychological suspense which accompanies it. Just before his final capitulation to the Divine Will, Augustine relates a deep experience of contrition, the same emotion so clearly evidenced by David immediately before his own restoration to favor with God. Like the narrator of the Davidic story, Augustine never avoids fairly open descriptions of his early "drunkenness, rioting and impurities,"[59] and thus demonstrates once again in his own developing character the Christian pattern of sin-repentance-mercy-renewal, the Christian willingness to reveal both the debased and exalted aspects of individual character. Augustine also makes it clear that he sees his own experience in the context of the Judeo-Christian perspective--he makes constant reference to Creation (Book 13: Chapters 19-24),[60] to his link with Adam and sin (Book 8: Chapter 10),[61] to various events in Christ's life (Book 13, Chapter 19),[62] to the fact of God's control over all of history (Book 11, Chapters 9-11).[63]

---

[59]St. Augustine, Confessions, p. 202.

[60]St. Augustine, Confessions, pp. 350-355.

[61]St. Augustine, Confessions, p. 198.

[62]St. Augustine, Confessions, p. 350.

[63]St. Augustine, Confessions, pp. 284-286.

While large similarities exist between the elements of Scriptural characterization and the Augustinian approach, there is fundamental contrast in the mode of presentation stemming from the difference between the objective nature of Scriptural revelation and the subjective nature of an individual response to that revelation. Augustine's personal account of his conversion is deeply moving, but has not the existential majesty of the Scriptural record. His account is necessarily personal, emotional. While the narrator of David's story describes great extremes of emotion, the account itself lacks the deep outpouring of inner emotion which we see in Augustine. The Scriptural record is bare, factual, concise to the point of starkness. But, as Auerbach has pointed out, it is that very starkness which gives it such power--which has the power to draw out, in fact, the kind of psychological response we see in Augustine. One might even say that Scripture forms the objective truth for which Augustine is the subjective mirror. This of course is the problem of comparing any piece of Christian literature with the Scripture. When it is done, one is really comparing what are properly responses to the standard of truth with the standard itself. Nevertheless, the major elements which have been demonstrated an intrinsic part of a specifically Christian presentation are there--most especially the emphasis on conflict and choice, the willingness to present human character in both its good and evil aspects and the emphasis

on individual salvation within the total scope of the Divine
plan of history.

The characteristics we perceive here only lend emphasis
to our earlier observation that Christianity encourages a new
respect for earthly history, for a conception of reality
which allows depiction of the divine in the human, of the
sublime in the humble. In contrast with the classical ten-
dency to formulate philosophies of escape from the chaotic
world of experience, Christian philosophers exhort man to
total immersion in earthly destiny following the example of
Christ, who in utter humility subjected himself to earthly
happening. According to Augustine, salvation itself depends
on such an attitude of humility. In the essay on free will
he described the fate of the proud man:

> Since they have not sought God through the lowly
> entrance of humility, which the Lord Jesus Christ has
> shown us in His own life, and have been unforgiving
> and proud during life, they will be placed on his left
> side where He will say to them: 'Depart into ever-
> lasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his
> angels' (Matthew 25:41).[64]

The result of the Christian emphasis on man's recogni-
tion of his limitations, on his call to total immersion in
earthly happening, on his responsibility to choose the love
of God over the love of lesser goods, is not only an intensi-
fication of man's awareness of the value and drama of his-
torical life, but an intensification of his awareness of his

---

[64]St. Augustine, <u>Free Choice of the Will</u>, p. 192.

rational individuality, his capacity for free choice. In
addition, the breakdown of the classical barrier between
universal truth and historical reality allows for depiction
of characters who can be at some points in their personal
histories weak, sinful, even ridiculous, and at other points
noble and praiseworthy. Once Christian philosophers began
to comprehend the great paradox of sin and mercy, of exalta-
tion through humiliation and suffering, they opened up the
possibility of depicting a character who was at once saint
and sinner; who could act in sin and be renewed through
repentance; who could undergo the severest earthly humilia-
tion and suffering and yet be exalted beyond earthly measure.

In all this, the classical distinctions between the
vulgar and the sublime, between the comic and the tragic,
between high society and low disappear, and what is left is
an emphasis on the fully historical man, one capable of
development and of great extremes of emotion and behavior.
This fluctuation can perhaps be most clearly seen in the New
Testament character of Simon Peter, who was born a fisherman
and died an apostle and who, in the course of his development,
demonstrates the wildest extremes of foolishness and profound
insight. On the one hand, Peter is the impulsive and uncon-
scious braggart, swearing loyalty to a Christ who knew his
weakness, and later miserably despairing over his betrayal
of the one he loved best; on the other hand he is the clear-
headed warrior of faith depicted in the Acts, preaching the

gospel and exercising his responsibility for the early church with great authority and faith.

In sum, the Christian understanding of history is seen to encourage a new concern for the development of particular individuals within the scope of a well-defined interpretation of history. Maurice de Wulf reminds us once again that the real basis for the new emphasis on the individual is the Christian understanding of personal salvation:

> ...Christianity places upon each soul purchased by Christ's sacrifice an inestimable worth, and it furnished the poor and the rich and the great and the small with the same standard of value.[65]

Though the Biblical definition of salvation remained the foundation for the value attached to personhood in Christendom, the Fathers of the Church enlarged and expanded upon the concept until it became one of the great themes of feudal society.[66] The general discussion of the worth of the individual received further definition in the many and thorough treatments of the issue of individual existence in the afterlife to be found in the Fathers.

In the following section of this study, I will discuss first the general definition of the individual which is traditionally popular during the medieval period and second, the concept of personal immortality which rounds out the Christian notion of personality.

---

[65]Maurice de Wulf, _Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages_ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1922), p. 34.

[66]De Wulf, pp. 34-56.

It was Boethius who articulated the first real statement
of the principle of individuation in the Middle Ages. In its
general outlines, Boethius' philosophical approach to the
problem follows in the Aristotelian tradition. First, he
demonstrates that general concepts cannot be substances
(i.e., the concepts of "genera" and "species" are common to
groups of individuals and thus cannot themselves be indi-
viduals).[67] Second, he points out that it does no harm to
draw abstract notions about man and animals (such as "genera"
and "species") from concrete individuals.[68] He then concludes
that "universals subsist in connection with sensible things,
but we know them separate from bodies." Thus Boethius devised
a way of talking about universals and individuals without
separating them from each other in a given concrete instance.[69]

Boethius' definition of the human person follows on his
explanation of the problem of universals and particulars. A
person, though he may participate in the general species of
man and in one or more sub-species, is primarily an individual
substance:

> Wherefore if Person belongs to substances alone, and
> these rational, and if every nature is a substance,
> existing not in universals, but in individuals, we
> have found the definition of person: viz: 'the

[67]Boethius, The Theological Tractates, trans. H. F.
Steward and E. K. Rand (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd.,
1918), pp. 85-86.

[68]Boethius, p. 87.

[69]See E. Gilson, A History of Christian Philosophy in
the Middle Ages (New York: Random House, 1955), pp. 98-99.

individual substance of rational nature'...essences
indeed can have potential existence in universals,
but they have particular substantial existence in
particulars alone. For it is from particulars that
our comprehension of universals is taken.[70]

Here the Greek pattern of using the universal to interpret

the particular is reversed. In the Christian view, the con-

crete, the individual is what is real, and "substance" no

longer refers to universal truth, but to historical reality.[71]

The same emphasis on historical reality is continued in

Aquinas, whose definition of individuality is heavily influ-

enced by Boethian notions. St. Thomas, however, spends more

time elaborating the content of the essential quality of

"rationality" which is identified by Boethius:

...in a more special and perfect way, the particular
and the individual are found in the rational substances
which have dominion over their own actions; and which
are not only made to act, like others, but which can
act of themselves, for actions belong to singulars.
Therefore also the individuals of rational nature have
a special name even among other substances, and this
name is person (Summa Theologica I, 29, art. 1).[72]

In this passage, St. Thomas associates rationality directly

with the concept of free choice, suggesting that one of the

essential qualities of the individual personality is the

capacity for rational choice. In his commentary on the

Thomistic passage just quoted Gilson notes that the concept

---

[70]Boethius, pp. 85-86.

[71]Boethius' understanding of substantial reality is
reinforced by his explanation of the dual nature of Christ,
who was historically God/Man in a single person. (Boethius,
p. 118)

[72]St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, trans. Fathers of the
English Dominican Province, 2 vols. (New York: Benziger,
1947), I:156.

of personality has its roots in the patristic understanding

of rational individuality as free agency:

> The essence of personality is one with that of liberty;
> on the other hand, liberty has its root in rationality
> and since it is this very rationality that lies at
> the basis of the subsistence of the soul, and the sub-
> sistence, therefore of the man, it follows that, in us,
> the principle of individuality and the principle of
> personality come back in the end to the same thing.[73]

In the Thomistic view, God is the most perfect "person,"

because He is the most perfectly rational, and therefore per-

fectly free, Being. Man, created by God, takes his value

from God. A given human personality has worth because it is

created in the image of God and contains within itself the

capacity for accepting or rejecting the transforming power

of God's love. As Gilson points out:

> Christian personalism...has its roots in the meta-
> physic of the Exodus; we are persons because we are
> the work of a person; we participate in his personal-
> ity even as, being good, we participate in his per-
> fection; being causes, in His creative power; being
> prudent, in His providence, and, in a word, as being
> in His Being.[74]

Individuation, then, depends primarily on man's capacity for

free choice, a choice which is rooted in every rational being

and which derives ultimately from the Trinitarian Person of

the Godhead.

A proper assessment of the place of the human body in

the idea of personality is equally important to the Christian

---

[73]Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 201-202.

[74]Gilson, p. 205.

definition of individuality. It is the physical body which
enables the separate existence on which the expression of
love depends. Boethius was the first to suggest that sub-
stantial existence was not found in forms, but in sensible
objects,[75] and Aquinas develops this thought, working out a
description of the interaction of mind and body and of body
and soul which expresses the indivisibility of matter and
spirit in the human personality. Unlike the Platonists,
St. Thomas believed that man was neither a pure intelligence
(like an angel) nor a "spirit in a corpse," but rather an
"organic composite of mind and body."[76] Because man's general
knowledge is incomplete without reference to particulars,[77]
the mind's knowledge must be rooted in the physical world.
The body and its sensory apparatus are thus necessarily a
part of thought and thus bound up with mind. As Carré puts
it, "the mind expresses itself in sensation as well as thought
...thus men's minds are individualized because bodies are nec-
essarily a part of particular existence."[78]

---

[75]Meyrick H. Carré, Realists and Nominalists (London:
Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 39.

[76]St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, trans. Fathers of the
English Dominican Province, I, p. 77; see Chapters 79-100,
St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, trans. English
Dominican Fathers, 2 vols. (New York: Benziger Brothers,
1924), II:244; also Anton C. Pegis, "Introduction" in
Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas, ed. Pegis (New York:
Modern Library, 196), p. xxiii.

[77]St. Thomas, Summa Contra Gentiles, II, 201.

[78]Carré, p. 79.

Here one can see a definite contrast with the Classicism which preceded Thomas. In extreme Platonist thought, the mind is separate in essence from sensory experience, and it is separate not only in the sense that it is capable of abstraction from sensory experience, but in the sense that it contains, in and of itself, ideas which are prior to sensory experience.[79] In the Christian view the things of the spirit can only be known through sensible bodies. The relation of mind, soul and body is wholly integrated into "one living, sensing, feeling, desiring, willing and thinking organism,"[80] and the supreme revelation of God to man is made in the flesh.

At first, this notion of the indivisibility of body and spirit may seem incompatible with a theory of personal immortality, since it follows that if soul and body are one, then when the body dies, the soul must pass out of existence also. But St. Thomas solves this by arguing that the soul when separated from the body by death continues on as immortal but not in a natural state, since it is by definition the form of a body.[81] Thus there can be no complete human person without a body. Aquinas' insistence on the final indivisibility of soul and body is most clearly evident in his explanation

[79]Carré, p. 80.

[80]F. C. Copleston, p. 188.

[81]See Chapters LXXX and LXXXI in St. Thomas, _Summa Contra Gentiles_, II, 228-229.

of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. Replying

to those who interpret the resurrection as a purely spiritual

phenomena he writes:

> On the contrary, Augustine says: 'The one death of
> our Saviour namely, that of the body, saved us from
> our two deaths, that is of the soul and the body'....
> Hence Christ's death is said to have destroyed in us
> both the death of the soul, caused by sin, according
> to Romans 4:25: 'He was delivered up (namely unto
> death) for our sins:' and the death of the body, con-
> sisting in the separation of the soul, according to
> I Cor. 15:54: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'
> (Summa Theologica II, Q. 51, art. 3)[82]

The final form of redemption according to St. Thomas is a

form which includes the reunion of the incorruptible soul

and the resurrected body. Thus the doctrine of the insepa-

rability of sense and spirit in life and in the resurrected

afterlife is seen to be an integral part of the Christian

conception of human personality.

The same insistence on the immortality of the human

personality in its totality is paralleled in St. Augustine.

Augustine was greatly influenced by the Platonic notion that

man is a "soul that uses a body,"[83] but we find it necessary

to argue that he never took this literally, but rather, with

Etienne Gilson, as a "forcible expression of the transcendent

superiority of the soul over the body."[84] The soul, although

---

[82]St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, II, 2297-2298.

[83]See Anton C. Pegis, "Introduction," in Introduction
to St. Thomas Aquinas, p. xxi; also E. Gilson, History of
Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, p. 74.

[84]Gilson, pp. 20 and 74; St. Augustine writes in his
essay on The Immortality of the Soul, that "...The soul is
affected prior to the body by those highest and eternal

superior to the body because immortal, remained in indissol-

uble union with it in life, as can be seen in Augustine's

description of this union:

> The entire soul is present at one and the same time,
> in the single parts, and it experiences sensation as
> a whole at one and the same time, in the single
> parts.[85]

While he insisted on the inseparability of the hierarchy of

soul and body in life and thus consistently rejected gnostic

dualism, Augustine yet saw the same problem St. Thomas would

deal with some 700 years later. If the union of soul and

body is indissoluble, then why does the body die and the soul

live on? Augustine's answer is that the Fall of Man has

defaced the union of soul and body, making it imperfect in

life. The body of man has, as a result of the Fall, become a

prison from which man desires to escape.[86] But it is not the

fact of the body which is the evil principle operative after

the all, but the fact that man now takes his desires and

---

principles, and by the same token, the soul is more greatly
affected in proportion to the superiority over the body.
This nearness is not one in space, but in the order of
nature. In this order, then, it is understood that a form
is given by the highest being through the soul to the
body--the form whereby the latter exists, in so far as it
does exist. Hence the body subsists through the soul and
exists by the very fact that it is animated...." St.
Augustine, The Immortality of the Soul in The Immortality
of the Soul. The Magnitude of the Soul. On Music. The
Advantage of Believing. Faith in Things Unseen, in The
Writings of St. Augustine, trans. Ludwig Schopp. 18 vols.
(New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1947); II:43.

[85]St. Augustine, The Immortality of the Soul in The
Writings of St. Augustine, II, 47.

[86]St. Augustine, Free Choice of the Will, pp. 212-214.

ideals from the body, reversing the proper hierarchy. As
Gilson puts it: "It is that error, not the body, which is
the soul's tomb and the evil from which it has to be lib-
erated."[87]

The Fall of Man as here described, can only be recti-
fied in Augustine's eyes, by a progressive and conscious
turning of the soul upward toward heavenly things. He
describes degrees of the soul's power--animation, sensation,
art, virtue, tranquility, approach and contemplation--and
refers to the first three as "The soul's power in the body,"
the next two as "the soul's power in itself," and the last
two as "the soul's power before God."[88] Thus the soul passes
through three stages--matter, spirit, and God, in a progres-
sive ascent towards the truth. It would seem by this descrip-
tion of the process of gradual purification that Augustine is
happy to leave behind all connection with the physical body.
But while describing what seems a suspiciously Platonic
movement, he writes movingly about the resurrection of the
body:

> We shall also see that this corporeal nature, in obed-
> ience to the divine law, undergoes so many changes and
> vicissitudes that we may hold even the resurrection of
> the body to be so certain that the rising of the sun,
> after it has gone down, is not more certain to us.[89]

---

[87]Gilson, <u>History of Christian Philosophy</u>, p. 78.

[88]Ludwig Schopp, "Introduction" to <u>The Magnitude of the
Soul</u> in <u>The Writings of St. Augustine</u>, II, 59-149.

[89]St. Augustine, <u>The Magnitude of the Soul</u>, in <u>The
Writings of St. Augustine</u>, II, 143.

It is only as the soul ascends to the truth that it sees the

certainty of a bodily resurrection.[90]   Later, Augustine does

venture to say that these new bodies, whatever their sub-

stance, will be something very different from what we per-

ceive as bodies now.[91]   Finally he refuses dogmatism on the

subject:

> On these matters, I confess that I have not yet read
> anything which I think satisfactory either to learn
> or teach....it will be better for us to assert which
> we do not doubt--that the inner man will see God, as
> it alone is now able to see charity....[92]

Thus Augustine does not espouse a Platonic doctrine of

absorption into the One, but instead firmly reiterates his

belief in the Christian principle of bodily individuation

even after death. The accent is not so much on an escape

from the body or from the "tyranny of the Many," as Plato

saw it, but on an escape from the old nature of man, that

corrupted nature which must die in all its aspects--physical,

---

[90]Augustine is explicitly careful not to go beyond the
bounds of Christian tradition in ascribing a purely "spirit-
ual" content to the term "body." In his Letters he writes:
"But we must take thought not to venture into what is con-
trary to custom by saying that through the glory of resur-
rection the body puts off not only its mortal and corrup-
tible state, but even the very state of being a body and
becomes a spirit." St. Augustine, Letters 131-164, in
The Writings of St. Augustine, trans. Sister Wilfrid Par-
sons S.N.D., 18 vols. (New York, Fathers of the Church, Inc.,
1953), XI:219.

[91]St. Augustine, Letters 131-164 in The Writings of
St. Augustine, XI, 223-224.

[92]St. Augustine, Letters 131-164 in The Writings of
St. Augustine, XI, 236-237.

mental and spiritual--before it can be transformed into the "newness of life" made possible through Christ's death and Resurrection.

It is on this basis that Augustine formulates his theology of personal immortality. Man in life is to be dying to his old self in order to be formed in the total and individual image of Christ, who came in the body. Thus Augustine's interpretation of I John 3:2, "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him; because we shall see him as he is," testifies to his belief in a physical rebirth based on the acts accomplished by the Word made Flesh:

> Hence it is clear that the full likeness of God will then be realized in the image of God when it shall receive the full vision of Him. And yet it is possible to see in these words of John the Apostle a reference to the immortality of the body. For in this, too, we shall be like God, but only the Son, because He Alone in the Trinity took a body, in which He died, rose again, and which he brought to higher things.[93]

Human nature for Augustine is most human when it has been redeemed in all aspects of its humanity, when it has been conformed completely to the image of God: "And when this nature, the most excellent in created things, is justified

---

[93]St. Augustine, The Trinity in Writings of St. Augustine, trans. Stephen McKenna C.S.S.R. 18 vols. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 445-446; see also Augustine, "Letter 118" in Letters 83-130, The Writings of St. Augustine, trans. Sister Wilfrid Parsons, S.N.D. 18 vols. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1953), XVIII:275f.

from its impiety by its own creator, it is transferred from
a deformed form into a beautiful form."[94]

Augustine's theology of the individual is seen to be
consistent with both Aquinas and Boethius in its essential
drift. In Boethius, a philosophical basis for a theory of
individuals is presented; in Augustine and Aquinas the scrip-
tural bases of that theory are explored and illumined. In
all three, the emphasis falls on man as an individual person,
capable of a relationship with his Creator based on rational
choice and love. Man's essential nature is seen as "excel-
lent above all creation," but defaced by sin. Still, his
original image is capable of transformation by grace into an
individual reflection of the image of God.

The importance of the concept of individual existence,
of person in this redeemed sense, forms the basis for the
Christian view of man and society operative during the Middle
Ages. For Aristotle, as Maurice de Wulf points out, the state
was an end in itself to which the individual was subordinated,
and the primary function of education was to create a good
citizen. For the Christian philosopher, on the other hand,
the prime duty of education is to make men aware of their
worth as persons in the sense just described, to impress on
them their privileges and responsibilities as transformed
souls.

---

[94]St. Augustine, The Trinity, in Writings of St. Augus-
tine, XVIII, 418.

This emphasis on the importance of the individual in
society occurs throughout the major literature of the medieval
period. In the De Civitate Dei I2, 21, 1,[95] Augustine makes
the ethical growth of the individual man the essential ingred-
ient for both personal happiness and the furtherance of the
goal of human destiny.[96] St. Thomas echoes Augustine in the
De Regimine Principium (lib. I, cap. 14) that "The end of the
group is necessarily the end of each individual who composes
the group."[97] Dante also reiterates the subordination of
state to individual in a famous passage from the De Monarchia:

> Wherefore it is also evident that although consul or
> King may be lord of others with respect to means of
> governing they are servants with respect to the end of
> governing; and without doubt the monarch must be held
> the chief servant of all.[98]

The constant emphasis on the importance of the individual
throughout the philosophical works which directly influence
the Middle Ages has led Maurice De Wulf to comment on a cur-
rent tendency to characterize the Medieval period as defi-
cient in a recognition of the true worth of the individual:

---

[95]St. Augustine, The City of God: Books VIII-XVI,
in The Writings of St. Augustine, VII:282-288.

[96]L. Schopp, "Introduction" to The Happy Life, in
The Happy Life. Answer to Skeptics. Divine Providence and the
Problem of Evil. Soliloquies in The Writings of St. Augustine,
trans. Denis J. Kavanagh, Ludwig Schopp, Robert P. Russell, and
Thomas Gilligan, 18 vols. (New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1948), I:21.

[97]Quoted by Maurice De Wulf in Philosophy and Civiliza-
tion in the Middle Ages, p. 227.

[98]Dante Alighieri, De Monarchia, trans. Aurelia Henry
(Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1904), p. 46.

> Nothing is more false than the judgment which finds
> credit among so many historians, that one must await
> the Renaissance to see human personality appraised at
> its true worth. There are few philosophers who have
> accentuated the metaphysical, the psychological, and
> the moral and the social value of the individual so
> much as did the Scholastics. And just as the 13th
> Century is a century of striking personalities, it is
> also a century of discussions on all the problems which
> the questions of personality raises.[99]

Thus we see that an insistence on the integration of the individual both before and after life is a cornerstone of Christian thought. Given that fact, what specific influence does it have on the presentation of character in the period?

One area in which the Christian emphasis on the integrated individual appears is the literary representation of characters after death. We remember that Homer and Virgil tended to represent characters in the afterlife as veiled, ethereal, stripped of any accidental historical individuality. Anchises exhibits the typical characteristics of a universal father; Dido remains a fixed symbol of her passionate nature; Elpenor embodies the type of the faithful retainer whose destiny was fated from the beginning.

In contrast, the afterlife characters in the greatest of the Christian epics, Dante's _Divine Comedy_, not only seem vitally aware of the moment in which they created their own destiny, but demonstrate personalities of far greater individuality. This is not to say that Dante does not use his characters as universalized examples of a particular sin or virtue he might want to bring to our attention, but that in

---

[99]De Wulf, _Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages_, p. 277.

addition to the typical aspect of characterization there

is a much greater expression of personality, as well as a

great awareness of human free agency.

The narrative of Dante's encounter with Francesda da

Rimini and her lover Paolo illustrates both aspects of char-

acterization. In the Inferno after being introduced by

Virgil to a number of medieval and classical figures guilty

of the sin of lust, Dante expresses a wish to speak to a pair

whom he sees drifting on the wind. Virgil tells him to summon

the two "by the love which impels them." When the pair ap-

pears, it is Francesca who does all the talking. Hailing

Dante as "benign" and "gracious" for visiting "us who stained

the earth with blood," (Canto V, l. 90),[100] she returns his

courtesies with a formally gracious remark which, however,

bears the mark of the damned:

> If the King of the Universe were friendly to us/ we
> would pray to Him for your peace/ since you pity our
> perverse evil. (Inf. V, 91-93)

Francesca then explains that she was in effect caught by

the adulterous love which caused her death, an explanation

which initiates an outburst of pity from Dante.

In even this first part of the encounter two contrasts

with the Greek view of characterization are evident. First,

the irrefutable fact that Francesca is damned without possi-

bility of salvation or of any "second chance" comes through

---

[100]Dante, Ailighieri, The Divine Comedy, trans. H. R.
Huse (New York: Rinehart Press, 1954), pp. 28-32. Here-
after all line references will be taken from the same edition.

in the conditional tone of her initial rejoinder to Dante--
"If the King of Heaven were friendly...we would pray for
your peace" (italics mine). There is no question of Frances-
ca's state or of her chances for redemption, a fact which
reflects the orthodox Christian view of judgment. Second,
Francesca's initial explanation of her fall into love is
marked by a typically classical rationale which emphasizes
the fated nature of her acquiescence:

> Love that exempts no one beloved from loving caught
> me so strongly with his charm that, as you see, it
> still does not leave me. (Inf. V, ll. 102-104)

Here it is clear that Francesca avoids mention of her own
responsibility in the matter of her sin, putting the blame
rather on the overpowering strength of the feeling of
romantic love.

The end of the encounter, when Dante delicately asks
about the immediate cause and occasion of Francesca's sin,
reveals the new self-consciousness evident in Christian
characterization and the Christian tendency to highlight one
historical action, an action which can fill out eternity.
Francesca, drawn out completely by Dante's compassion, tells
Dante that she and her lover had been reading a novel about
Lancelot's love for Guinevere, and suddenly overcome with
passion, submit to their feelings for one another. The poig-
nancy of the story, the description of mounting desire, and
afterwards the weeping Paolo and Dante's profoundly sympathetic
reaction (overwhelmed with pity, he faints) all serve to give

this part of the encounter great dramatic intensity. It is an intensity further enhanced by the Christian conception of the awesome responsibility put on human beings in historical life.

To those critics who are tempted (as for example H. R. Huse seems tempted in his gloss on the passage in Inf. V, pp. 28-32), to have too much sympathy for Francesca and Paolo, a sympathy which would contermand the Christian view of divine retribution and put the blame less on Francesca and Paolo than on the overpowering nature of the circumstances which led to their capitulation, we must point out Dante's own controlled frame of reference and the subtle personal touches which make his outwardly charming portrait of Francesca slightly suspicious. We remember that at the beginning of Canto V, when Dante moves into the second ring of Hell, he learns from Virgil that carnal sinners are condemned "who subject their reason to desire" (Inf. V, ll. 37-39). This initial lesson forms the general background for Dante's later encounters with the shades who are guilty of lust, and we may take it as setting the tone for Dante's encounter with Paolo and Francesca.

In this light, Francesca reveals a character which is less than sterling. Mark Musa points out that despite her charm, she shows a certain self-centeredness, reflected first in the self-conscious hunger for appreciation exhibited in her gratitude for the Pilgrim's expression of compassion, in

her equally self-conscious mention of her birthplace and in

her almost too anxious desire to present herself with the

ladylike composure she possessed in life.[101]   Then, too, we

remember Virgil's comment when Dante wishes to speak with

the two lovers--that one affectionate entreaty will "impel

them" to come--thus suggesting the power which inordinate

desire--in this case desire for the slightest show of affec-

tion--still possesses over them.   Musa also suggests that

Francesca's constant reference to her inseparable bond with

Paolo is indicative of one aspect of their divine punishment,

and not as some critics have suggested, a glowing declaration

of the triumph of love over hell.   Inseparable togetherness,

Musa points out, could be "the bitterest aspect of their

punishment."[102]

Thus it is clear that Dante puts some subtle restrictions

on his characterization of Francesca to make us indirectly

wary of her plenteous charm.   It is not a directly didactic

lesson which we learn--the character of Francesca is too rich,

---

[101]Mark Musa, _Advent at the Gates: Dante's Comedy_
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), pp. 21-27.
We might point out that though self-consciousness may be a
part of what is revealed in Francesca's mention of her
birthplace, the obvious reason for her reference to Ravenna
is that it is the place "where the Po descends with all its
tributaries to find peace"--the peace which is forbidden to
those overcome with desire--thus forming an ironic contrast
with her would-be prayer for Dante's peace only six lines
earlier.

[102]Musa, p. 32.

in some respects too admirable for that--but it is a lesson
nonetheless, a lesson woven into the encounter through the
personality of Francesca herself. Perhaps not only Dante the
Pilgrim but Dante the Poet was a little entranced by the
courtly charm of his own story. As Marianne Shapiro puts it,
Dante seems at the same time to "reject the morality" of the
chivalrous ideal in this story, and to "embrace its aes-
thetic possibilities."[103] We might suggest in addition
that part of Dante's fascination with the story of Francesca
and Paolo is the individual personality of Francesca herself--
her femininity, her graciousness, her refined unwillingness
to repent, in other words, Christian concern for the redemp-
tion of an utterly unique personality. In any case, the
Christian view of history, the Christian emphasis on the indi-
vidual can be seen to inform this particular Dantesque
encounter on all levels.

The character of Francesca is not the only example of
the influence of the Christian view of history on Dante's
Comedy. Eric Auerbach has pointed out the individuality
of the characterization of Farinata degli Uberti and Guido
Cavalcanti, and ties them directly to the Christian view of
man. One, Farinata, confronts Dante with immense disdain,
"as if he had scorn for Hell" (Inf., X, 1. 36). Cavalcanti,
on the other hand, weeps and looks around anxiously for his

---

[103]Marianne Shapiro, Woman Earthly and Divine in the
Comedy of Dante (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky,
1975), p. 81.

son, whom he believes to have suffered his own fate (Inf. X, 11. 52-72). The two figures, Auerbach points out, each accept damnation in a wholly individual way, and yet both are "fixed" in judgment, with no chance of further development.[104] Paradoxically, however, it is that very fixity which intensifies the meaning of the choice they made in earthly life, and which focuses our attention once again on the most essential attribute of human individuality in the Christian view—man's free agency before God. While the characters in the Inferno are now fixed in judgment, they at one time freely chose what has become their destiny, and while their personalities are now stunted and deformed as a result, they reveal traces of their earlier, fully human stature. The characters of Cavalcanti and Farinata are fixed in judgment, but their individual forms are not destroyed. They were created after the image of God and vestiges of that image still remain.

In summary, then, the Christian understanding of reality is controlled by a universal interpretation of history which allows for a combination of earthly reality with spiritual truth, the beauty of personality defaced but not entirely obliterated by the judgment of Hell. Because of the concept of original sin, the Christian understanding of the fall of man, no man, unless redeemed in the specifically Christian sense, can serve as a universal prescriptive ideal. In the

---

[104]Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 192.

Christian view, men are creatures who develop and who at a

given point in their history make a decision for or against

the person of Christ which determines their own condition

in eternity. Thus it is more difficult to use a given his-

torical man as an ideal in the classical sense, for one indi-

vidual will have experienced extremes of sinfulness and good-

ness at varying points in his history. Such a character

offers an uneven exemplum at best.

A Christian view of character will focus the attention

of the reader less on the character-as-ideal than on the

character as an example of God's interaction with men in a

living relationship, with the underlying purpose of encourag-

ing such interaction in the reader's life. Christ himself is

not presented primarily as a classical ideal in the scrip-

ture, but as the great Lover of men's souls, with whom there

is the possibility of spiritual union in earthly life. A

truly Christian characterization will not tend toward overt

moralization, toward presentation of an ethical ideal,

but toward such a presentation of character as will encourage

an encounter with the living Christ. Dante, in the incident

with Paolo and Francesca, uses the technique of presenting

characters who are damned because they put human love before

the Love of God, and thus choose their own doom. But the

presentation is not overtly didactic. In fact, Dante seems

to go to great pains to create a character in Francesca who,

though damned, is capable of projecting great human charm and

beauty. Her appeal is partly an illusion, as we have pointed out, but it is also partly a result of the Christian belief that man is made individually in the image of God, and that this image is not totally effaced, even in Hell. Dante's characterization, though a powerful admonishment to the reader, is yet marked with the stamp of divine love. The characters are both universal symbols of perverted love and concrete personalities in whom we recognize the end result of a forfeiture of real liberty--the liberty as stated and restated by the Fathers, to love God and serve Him forever. It was Francesca's refusal to seek the truest freedom in life which has led to her present situation. It is through her present situation that Dante appeals to us to take note of our own salvation. The heavy emphasis on human responsibility and Dante's attempt to confront the reader with his own need for decision become evident through its cosmic setting-- a setting which, though within Dante's artistic vision, is yet presented as historical, as an inevitable future fact. The drama which arises from this set of affairs springs both from the Christian analysis of the essence of personality as rational choice, and from the universal Christian conception of history. The possibility of a fully realized personality after death and the possibility of a real judgment, of an eternally fixed location in heaven or hell, puts a great deal of importance on the choices made in this life. The choices a man makes, in fact, determine his eternal end, and create life-situations of unsurpassed drama.

When the same set of historical presuppositions become part of the substrata of a work of art, the characters take on a comparable dramatic intensity.[105]   This intensity is enhanced by the fact that each character's choice and resultant fate is a part of the total working of universal history, of the total destiny of the world.   As Collingwood has pointed out, the Greek response to earthly happening after Aristotle tended to be totally rationalistic.   Historical reality was viewed as a matter of evil and escape was possible only insofar as one participated in what could be ordered and controlled.   The need to order, to create something which could be controlled, is the real reason for Aristotle's separation of art and history.   History is chaos in Aristotle's eyes; there is no ultimate goal, no universal plan.   Art, on the other hand, and in particular, the movement of the plot, can be ordered and harmonized, can be patterned and controlled by the human creator.   Thus it is given a superior place in Aristotle's hierarchy of value, a place closer to the dispassionate harmony of the eternal verities.

In Christianity, however, the emphasis is on the individual character.   A man is seen as part of a total plan which he may not perceive as ordered but in which he is nevertheless called to participate.   He meets this circumstance not by escaping history or by trying to order it or to rise above it through art, but by immersing himself in it and making

---

[105]Auerbach, _Dante_, p. 132.

the choices which determine his destiny. He is not left alone

in the process--he has the objective light of Revelation in

the Scriptures and the inner light of the Spirit--but his

choices are often made in the teeth of terrifyingly adverse

circumstances which offer no assurance of an ultimate good.

The difference between the death of Christ and the death
of Socrates[106] is the classic illustration of this contrast.

Socrates dies in dignity, surrounded by friends, secure in

his convictions, serenely accepting the death which he chooses.

Christ dies a bloody, excruciating death, surrounded mostly

by enemies and crying out despairingly at one point, "My

God, my god, why hast thou forsaken me?" Auerbach comments:

> The story of Christ is more than the parousia of the
> logos. In it, the idea is subjected to the problematic
> character and desperate injustice of earthly happen-
> ing.[107]

Only in the Christian view is a thorough melding of the change

and decay of history and the immutability of the Divine made

possible because only in Christianity has the Word become

flesh. For the first time the door is open for creation

of a literary character who can be portrayed in less than

classical dignity, who can be at once saint and sinner. Peter

begins a fisherman and ends the Rock of Christ's church. Noah

makes a covenant with God and later lies naked and drunk in

his tent. David commits adultery and is restored to God's

---

[106]Auerbach, _Dante_, p. 12.

[107]Auerbach, _Dante_, p. 13.

grace. The unpredictability of the state of such men greatly
intensifies the potential dramatic suspense which envelops
their stories.

This representation of character reality is a far cry
from that careful selectivity and categorization, the more
static view of characterization, which marks the Greek per-
spective. In the one, God is the controller of destiny and
the interaction between the human and the divine will is the
essence of the dramatic situation. In the other, interaction
with the Divine is not excluded, but, as W. P. Ker puts it,
"the Olympian background is secondary." In the one, there is
a rough, psychologically suggestive presentation of character
growing out of an emphasis on the unpredictable and existen-
tial quality of human choice; in the other there is a smooth,
psychologically externalized presentation of character with
few motivational surprises and a consequent emphasis on fate.
In the one there is a definitive description of individual
afterlife, including two widely divergent possible destinies;
in the other, the emphasis is less on the difference between
wrath and beatitude after earthly life than on the stark dif-
ference between life and death itself.

These basic differences in character representation
spring from a basic difference in historical perspective.
In the Christian view, a character cannot be abstracted from
the universal objective plan of history revealed in Christ
and demanding a human decision with the possibility of

108

salvation or damnation;   in the Greek view, a character

has an immediate historical location, but it is not part of

a definitive historical pattern. The characters have no

ultimate say about their own destinies and no definitive

assurance of an individual afterlife; there is less chance

for portrayal of character development because of the empha-

sis on the fated essence of the pre-existent soul and because

of a tendency to avoid the depiction of debased characters

in other than a comic role. Accident, not Divine love, is

the motive force behind historical reality. Characters tend

consequently to be flattened, universalized, not without

drama, but without the intensely personal kind of drama

exacted by the Christian view of reality.

108See Adolph Harnack, _History of Dogma_, V (New York:
Russell and Russell, 1958), 12, on this point.

CHAPTER IV

CLASSICAL AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES ON FIGURATIVE
EXPRESSION IN THE EXEGETICAL TRADITION AND THEIR
RELATION TO LITERARY CHARACTERIZATION

In the preceding chapter, an attempt was made to demonstrate the consistent emphasis on historical individuality which forms the basis for the Judeo-Christian view of man and society in the Middle Ages. We saw that the Judeo-Christian definition of man is grounded in an understanding of reality as a combination of the earthly and the divine within a total historical plan which finds its fulfillment in the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Throughout we saw how various elements of that view--including the mixture of the humble and the sublime, the pattern of repentance/faith, the emphasis on character development and the act of decision, and the view of individual judgment and the afterlife--influenced the presentation of character in both Old and New Testaments and in well-known Christian literature of the patristic and medieval periods.

There is yet another facet of characterization, closely related to the philosophical elements dealt with in Chapters II and III, which is important to a thorough grasp of the differences between the classical view of characterization and the Christian view--the question of figurative expression and how it is apprehended by each world-view. In fact, it may be that the differences between the two views of reality

are most clearly defined in terms of that aspect of charac-
terization which has to do with the approach each takes to
the problem of symbol and allegory.

In the centuries directly preceding the Middle Ages,
the distinction between the two major perspectives on figu-
rative expression is most clearly manifested in a theological
disagreement over the nature of the literal text of the Bible.
The exegetical tradition thus represents an important source
for a discussion of the problem of medieval symbology. In
its simplest form, the exegetical argument revolves around
the basic issue of the nature of Biblical Revelation: should
the historical record of the Old and New Testaments be seen
purely as a material springboard into the elevated realm of
moral and spiritual truth, or should it be seen as having
worth as a material reality, which also serves as a symbolic
allegory of future historical and spiritual event (specifi-
cally, as De Lubac puts it, of "the advent of the kingdom of
God both within and beyond history")? This issue became a
focal point for Biblical exegesis; and exploration of the
arguments presented on either side will provide insights
directly relevant to an understanding of the poetic tradi-
tions which in the Middle Ages make possible the creation of
either a "historically realistic" or a "typical" character
in the literature of the period.

Although there is little disagreement among scholars
over the fact of exegetical influence in the Middle Ages, (the
sheer authority of the medieval church insured its influence

on all aspects of medieval literature), the exact nature

and extent of that influence--and of its actual connection

with aesthetic theory--is often in dispute. E. Talbot

Donaldson, for example, sees no important connection between

the patristic exegetes and literary theory in the period,

and although he admits some exegetical leanings in Dante and

St. Thomas, his general attitude is that the Fathers of the

Church were "less expert at devising rules for poets than

they were at devising rules for Christians."[1] On a level

more specific to our study in this chapter, C. S. Lewis

writes that "the exegetical tradition is less important for

the understanding of secular allegory than is sometimes sup-

posed."[2]

On the other hand, Robert Hollander takes issue with

this attitude, commenting that Lewis' statement in this pas-

sage is "one of the few badly thought-out moments in his

imposing corpus of criticism."[3] R. E. Kaske, in accord with

Hollander's general objection to the position taken by Lewis

insists on the relevance of the exegetical tradition to almost

[1] E. Talbot Donaldson, "Patristic Exegesis in the Crit-
icism of Medieval Literature: the Opposition," in Critical
Approaches to Medieval Literature, ed. Dorothy Bethurum
(New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 3.

[2] C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love (London: Oxford Univ.
Press, 1936), p. 48, n. 2.

[3] Robert Hollander, Allegory in Dante's Commedia (Prince-
ton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 61.

all aspects of medieval thought.[4] Kaske cites Chaucer's and

Langland's frequent references to the general apparatus of

Biblical commentary, and reminds us of "the thousands of

exegetical allusions in medieval art, homiletic literature

and medieval liturgy." Moreover, Kaske sees a definite but

"indirect" exegetical influence on medieval poetic theory,

an observation to which Charles Donahue gives assent in his

analysis of the issue.[5] Finally, B. G. Koonce points up the

direct relevance of the exegetical tradition to our own study

in this chapter, warning against scholarly disregard for this

type of study:

> Although one must be cautious in applying scriptural-
> exegetical meanings to the imagery of secular poetry,
> to ignore them is to overlook a key--sometimes the only
> one--unlocking the hidden content of poetic symbols.[6]

Following Kaske, Hollander, Donahue, and Koonce, I see

every reason to consider the exegetical tradition important

to a study of the kind which will be attempted in this chap-

ter. While the direct influence of the exegetical influence

(except in the case of Dante) is arguable, the indirect

influence of the exegetical tradition on all sides must be

assumed.

---

[4]See R. E. Kaske, "Patristic Exegesis: The Defense,"
in Bethurum, pp. 27-60. See also Beryl Smalley, The Study
of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Notre Dame: University of
Notre Dame Press, 1964), and English Friars and Antiquity in
the Early XIVth Century (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961).

[5]Charles Donahue, "Summation: Patristic Exegesis," in
Bethurum, pp. 61-82.

[6]B. G. Koonce, Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame:
Symbolism in the House of Fame (Princeton: Princeton Uni-
versity Press, 1966), p. 7.

Although I cannot attempt in this chapter to define the
exact nature and scope of exegetical influence on medieval
literature, it will be useful to mark the presence or ab-
sence of some of the philosophical elements which were iden-
tified earlier as fostering either a "historically realistic"
or "typicalized" variety of characterization. In addition
to providing philosophical material which informs either one
or the other view of characterization up to the time of
Chaucer, exegetical commentary provides an essential body of
material for focusing on the problem of figurative expression
in the Middle Ages--an issue which can be demonstrated to be
of great relevance to an understanding of characterization
during the period.

That two major kinds of exegesis exist, and that they
have affinities with either a Christian-sacramental or Clas-
sical conception of reality seems to be a rather common notion
in contemporary scholarship on the issue. Charles Donahue,
for example, identifies what he terms the "Greek-allegorical
tradition of exegesis," and the "sacramental" or Hebraic-
Christian practice of typological exegesis, thus seeing the
two traditions of exegesis as a direct expression of two
definite philosophical orientations.[7]   Eric Auerbach in the
essay "Figura" in <u>Scenes from the Drama of European Literature</u>
also identifies the Christian sacramental view of reality

---

[7]Charles Donahue, "Summation: Patristic Exegesis,"
Bethurum, p. 64.

directly with the figural or sacramental method of
orthodox exegesis, and the Greek-Platonic view with strict
allegorical exegesis:

> We may say roughly that the figural method in Europe
> goes back to Christian influences, while the allegorical
> method derives from ancient pagan sources, and also that
> the one is applied primarily to Christian, the other
> to ancient material. Nor shall we be going too far
> afield in terming the figural view the predominantly
> Christian-medieval one, while the allegorical view,
> modelled on pagan or not inwardly Christianized authors
> of late antiquity, tends to appear where ancient,
> pagan, or strongly secular influences are dominant.[8]

Donahue and Auerbach are supported in this analysis of the
major streams of the exegetical tradition by Henri de Lubac,[9]
Jean Daniélou,[10] and H. F. Dunbar.[11]

---

[8] Eric Auerbach, "Figura," in <u>Scenes from the Drama
of European Literature</u>, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York:
Meridian Books, 1959), p. 63.

[9] Henri de Lubac, <u>Exégèse Médievale: Les Quatre Sens
de l'Ecriture</u>, 2 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959), I, seconde
partie: 140.

[10] Jean Daniélou, <u>Les Figures du Christ dans l'Ancien
Testament</u> (Paris: Beauchesnes et ses fils, 1950), p. 52;
also <u>Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture</u>, trans. John Baker,
2 vols. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), II:255.

[11] H. F. Dunbar, <u>Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its
Consummation in the Divine Comedy</u> (New York: Russell and
Russell, 1861), pp. 6-7. It is significant that other impor-
tant literary critics, including John Ruskin and Robert Worth
Frank, see the general literary distinction in figurative
method specifically pointed out by Danielou, De Lubac and
Dunbar, running throughout literary history. However, these
critics do not have nearly as profound a grasp of the root
cause of the distinction as do the aforementioned critics.
Ruskin, for example, distinguishes sharply between symbol
and what he calls "personification," disparaging "personifica-
tion" on the grounds that it is "far less noble" than sym-
bolism:

Basically, the difference between the two traditions involves a distinction between the sacramental view of symbol which finds its incarnational meaning in Christ and its historical referent in the Scriptural narrative and which manifests itself in medieval exegesis in an emphasis on the historical-literal level of the text, and a classical or Greek view of symbol, in which the symbol serves as the abstract sign for an intellectual system which has no fixed objective content, and which manifests itself in a disregard for the literal-historical level of the text.

This distinction between a symbol-allegory and a pure allegory of personification may be what is behind Dante's classification in the Convivio when he distinguishes between the "allegory of the theologians" and the "allegory of the poets."[12] While the allegory of the poets is defined by

> Symbolism is the setting forth of a great truth by an imperfect and inferior sign, while Personification, the bestowing of a human or living form upon an abstract idea...is in most cases a mere recreation of the fancy. (John Ruskin, cited by Bertrand H. Bronson in "Personification Reconsidered," ELH 14 (Sept., 1957), 166).

The insinuation here is that allegory is an expression inferior to, even rather bloodless when compared with symbolism. Robert W. Frank applies the same basic distinction made by Ruskin to a discussion of allegory and character per se. He describes two types of allegory, one which he identifies as "personification allegory" in which "characters and details are abstraction and have only one meaning," and one which he calls "symbol-allegory," in which "characters and significant details are concrete and have a second meaning." (Robert W. Frank, "The Art of Reading Medieval Personification-Allegory," ELH 20 (Dec., 1953), 237).

[12]Dante, Convivio, trans. William Walrond Jackson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), pp. 73-74.

Dante as "a truth hidden under a beautiful fiction," the

allegory of the theologians is an allegory based solidly

on historical fact.[13]

Some critics, of course, see no distinction between the

Greek exegetical tradition and the Christian. Edwin Hatch,

for example, makes no distinction between the two schools

of allegory we distinguish here, and sees all Christian

exegesis as a simple continuation of the Greek allegorical

tradition: "The earliest methods of Christian exegesis were

a continuation of the methods which were common at the time

to both Greek and Greco-Judean writers...."[14] J. W. H. Atkins

also seems to see no need to distinguish between kinds of exe-

gesis.[15] Though both Hatch and Atkins make valuable contri-

butions to any study of the exegetical tradition on a general

level, their analysis fails by not taking into account the

profound distinction in the kinds of influence exerted by

the exegetical tradition noted by De Lubac, Auerbach, and

Danielou.

The distinction made by these critics can be seen to

be directly relevant to characterization. Where the historical

---

[13]See Dante, "Letter to Can Grande,"trans. Charles
Singleton in Dante Studies, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1957), I:86-87.

[14]Edwin Hatch, The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages
upon the Christian Church (London: William Norgate, 1890),
p. 66.

[15]J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The
Medieval Phase (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943),
passim.

basis of a piece of literature is de-emphasized or ignored,
the imitation of concrete historical details or character
portrayal will tend to disappear or become only minimal
adjuncts to the portrayal by personification of an abstract
idea. In other words, the allegorist who has an intellec-
tually abstract idea to get across must not, in the words of
Robert Hollander, "be caught and drawn by a world that offers
him the occasion for mimesis," but must instead "reduce his
subject matter to its intellectual framework."[16]

The process of creating a literary character by deduc-
tion from a pre-existing idea or philosophical system of a
predominately rationalistic nature is basically what we are
defining here as the Greek or classical view of figurative
expression. It springs from the Platonic conception of
mimesis which has as its first object the eternal world of
ideals and thus tends to foster a universalized, non-realistic
presentation of character. On the other hand, in the Judeo-
Christian view the created world is not only a fit and proper
subject of imitation, but actually constitutes in itself a
physical manifestation of truth. From the true Judeo-
Christian perspective, the representation of dramatically
realistic character in literature finds its legitimate
rationale in the Christian understanding of the nature of
the material universe and the purpose of history.

---

[16]Robert Hollander, _Allegory in Dante's Commedia_, p. 5.

Of course, the fact that we distinguish here between two basic kinds of figurative expression (and consequently two basic approaches to characterization) does not mean that a given artist or theologian cannot legitimately employ both in his own literary productions. Charles Singleton has noted that Dante's characterization of Beatrice in the _Vita Nuova_ is an entirely more "historical" portrayal than his representation of Lady Philosophy in the _Convivio_, and even speculates that Dante was well aware of the nature and theological implications of the difference.[17] Referring to the _Convivio_, Dante himself writes:

> Theologians, indeed, do not apprehend this sense in the same fashion as poets, but inasmuch as my intention is to follow here the custom of poets, I will take the allegorical sense after the manner which poets use.[18]

Singleton suggests that Dante abandons the _Convivio_ precisely because he recognizes that the figure of Lady Philosophy has not the foundation in history which is necessary for indicating to men the way of salvation:

> . . . a disembodied Lady Philosophy is not a _machina_ which can bear the weight of lifting man to God, because, in her, man finds no part of his own weight. Lady Philosophy did not, does not, will not, exist in the flesh. As she is constructed in the _Convivio_, she comes to stand for Sapientia, for created Sapientia standing in analogy to uncreated Sapientia which is the Word. Even so, she is without flesh. And only Word made flesh can lift man to God. If the allegory of a Christian poet

---

[17]Singleton, _Dante Studies_, I, 92-93.

[18]Dante, _Convivio_, p. 73.

of rectitude is to support any weight, it will be grounded in the flesh, which means grounded in history-- and will lift up from there.[19]

If Singleton is correct in this analysis, then Dante not only consciously employs two different kinds of allegory in his own work, but places the second type of allegory--that is, an allegory grounded in the historical and physical universe (the allegory of the theologians)--far above the allegory of the poets. This is not to say that Dante disparages the allegory of the poets, the "beautiful lie" of the Convivio, but that his first allegiance is always to a figurative expression which is grounded in particular reality. Like Augustine, he finds much truth in the Platonic conception of reality, but "that the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us I did not find there" (Confessions VII, ix).[20]

In light of all these considerations, the material treated in this chapter should (1) reinforce the contrast between the Greek/classical and Judeao-Christian views of reality in terms of the philosophical ideas espoused by each view; (2) offer an overview of their manifestation in the exegetical tradition from the Homeric Age up to the time of Chaucer; and (3) show the specific relevance of the contin- uing contrast between the two views to the understanding of figurative expression (and thus to the understanding of

[19]Singleton, Dante Studies, I,93.

[20]St. Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960), p. 169; Single- ton, Dante Studies, I,93. I am indebted to Singleton for pointing out this reference.

characterization) demonstrated by each. Such a discussion should contribute significantly to a study of the aesthetic theories directly affecting Chaucer which will be the subject of the following chapter.

The early Greek exegetical tradition differs from the Judeo-Christian on several counts. First, as Felix Buffière points out, the Greek tradition is marked by a general tendency to regard the narrative level of the allegory, the actual literary "word" of the story, as a fantasy which serves as a metaphor for cosmological, divine, or moral truth:

> . . .a l'extérieur se déroule, fastasmagorique, une aventure divine ou humaine; mais l'intérieure cache le drame de notre destinée, la forme de l'univers ou le visage réel de la divinité.[21]

Second, the classical allegorical tradition as a whole shows a definite movement from physical or cosmological interpretations of myth toward interpretations which have a moral and philosophical bent. Geffchen, for example, points out that the earliest manifestation of the Greek gods was a direct identification of the god with his earthly form: Haephistos is both god and fire; Scamander is both god and stream.[22] Later, there is movement toward a genuinely allegorical approach with the development of an analogous correspondence

---

[21]Felix Buffière, Les Mythes d'Homère et la Pensée Grecque (Paris: Societé d'Edition, Les Belles Lettres, 1956), p. 44.

[22]Joseph P. Geffchen, "Allegory, Allegorical Interpretation," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, 13 vols. (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1913), I, 327; see also Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition; Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art (New York: Harper and Row, 1953).

rather than a direct identification between the literary text and the physical elements which it represented. Thus elaborate physical cosmologies, explanations of the natural order, sprang up around the corpus of Homeric myth. Geffchen comments on this kind of allegorizing, naming Theagenes of Rhegium (b. 525 B.C.), and Metrodorus of Lampsac (b. 430 B.C.) (both disciples of Heraclitus, Parmenides and Anaxagoras) as the most "physical" of the early allegorists.[23]

The specific method of many early physicalists is often to scrutinize one section of Homeric myth, developing an allegorical explanation from one strong image contained in that section. One of the favorite vehicles of the early allegorists, for example, is the story of Hera in Homer's Illiad (XV, 18f). For being disobedient to Zeus, Hera is chained by her son Haephistos, and suspended in space with an anvil tied to each foot. In both Cornutus' Theologia Graeca, Chapter 17, and in The Life and Poetry of Homer (Pseudo-Plutarch), this particular myth is explained as an allegory of the four elements. The two anvils are the two heaviest elements, water and earth, which are held in place by the air (Hera) which supports them. Zeus, who gave the command to suspend Hera, represents the ether or purer air which is above Hera. The golden chain around Hera's hands, placed there by Haephistos, the god of fire, represents fire, or the junction of air and ether.[24]

---

[23]Geffchen, p. 327.

[24]Buffière, pp. 115-116.

It is not surprising that Plato objected to these

physical allegories strenuously, and under his influence,

and the influence of the Stoics, Greek allegorical interpre-

tations took a much more philosophical and moralistic turn.[25]

It is worth noting that an "ethical" interpretation of Homer

was not an entirely new phenomenon, and Geffchen points out

that Theagenes of Rhegium, the earliest known allegorist,

interprets the battle of the gods in the twentieth book of

the _Iliad_ on two levels: the one purely physical, the other,

ethical. Thus the movement toward the ethical realm of

interpretation should probably be characterized more as a

new emphasis on the ethical side than as a new kind of

interpretation altogether.[26]

The emphasis on moral interpretation in the tradition

of Greek exegesis extends, writes Buffière, from Antisthenes

to Proclus and is greatly influenced by the Aristotelian

School, which tended to reduce gods and goddesses into con-

cepts of either vice or virtue for purposes of moral instruc-

tion.[27] Later, Neoplatonist exegetes of the Third Century

follow in the same mold and produce elaborate moral and philo-

sophical systems from Homeric material. One of the most

---

[25]Seznec, p. 90.

[26]Buffière, p. 116.

[27]Buffière, pp. 585-86.

famous examples of this kind of exegesis is <u>The Cave of the Nymphs</u> by Porphyry, who was probably heavily influenced by Numenius, Cronius and especially Plotinus, other well-known Neoplatonists. Porphyry, according to Buffière, treats Homer only as "a pretext," an occasion to expound the beliefs of Plato and Pythagoras on the Platonic theory of the genera-tion of souls.[28] In Pythagoras' interpretation, the <u>Cave of the Nymphs</u> is a mythical explanation of the eternal cir-cuit of souls between earth and heaven. Porphyry's inter-pretation follows this general bent. On the narrative level, the grotto is full of amphorae, craters, rich garments and fabrics of every description, and clouds of bees, which fly in and out of the amphorae. The grotto has two entran-ces--one north, for humans, and one in the middle, the entrance for the gods, which man is forbidden to use.

Porphyry uses this description as the basis for his allegorical commentary. For him, the grotto is a "fantasy of Homer's imagination." The corners of the grotto, where the shape of the cave is obscured in darkness, is seen as symbolic of the dark powers of the spiritual world where the distinction between form and matter becomes obscure. (This in itself, notes Buffière, is based on the Aristotelian dis-tinction between matter and form and even resembles the cave of the <u>Republic</u>, where Plato himself makes the grotto an allegory for the earthly world and for the "dark materiality"

---

[28]Buffière, p. 420.

of the sublunary world.)[29] The nymphs of the grotto are
the divinities who seek regeneration in the world; the bees
who fly in and out of the amphorae are souls also--incarnated
souls who want to return to their proper spiritual home.
Although they participate in the carnal pleasures of the
physical earth, they finally demonstrate their desire to go
back to their true country.   It is evident that this kind
of allegorizing shows definite Platonic overtones, and illus-
trates in both its form and its philosophic content the Greek
tendency toward abstraction, toward movement away from the
concrete, and historical to the proper home of universal
truth.

The myth of Circe in Homer's Odyssey has also been a
favorite subject of Neoplatonic exegesis and in the commen-
taries of Eustathius, Porphyrus, Numenius, and Cronius it
becomes an allegory of the soul as prisoner of the body.
This idea, Buffière points out, is a Pythagorean common-
place which is echoed again in the commentaries on the
story of the union of the etheral Aphrodite with the bloody
and brutal Ares.[30]

It is interesting to note that in many of the Neopla-
tonic commentators there are historical-literal interpreta-
tions of the same myths which receive the moral-philosophical
treatment.   The early Peripatetic philosophers saw the given

---

[29]Buffière, p. 428.

[30]Buffière, p. 33.

literary facts of the _Iliad_ and the _Odyssey_ as essentially
historical.[31]   However, the literal-historical tendency is
gradually displaced by the tendency to regard the word of
the text only as a vehicle for philosophical truth. Some-
times this movement can be seen in the work of single commen-
tators. Cronius, for example, first sees Homer's grotto as
a literal place, and later resorts to a pure moral allegory
because of his new conviction that the details of the grotto
are "too bizarre" not to suggest some supernatural influ-
ence.[32]   There is a similar movement in the writings of Por-
phyry, who at first takes the description of souls entering
the bodies of beasts as literal fact and later revises his
interpretation, renouncing the early literalistic version
and adding a purely philosophical interpretation of his own.[33]
The movement from physical interpretations to moral, from a
historical regard for the text to an emphasis on moral or
philosophic meanings of what comes more and more to be
regarded as a fantasy, is seen to be characteristic of
early Greek exegesis.

The movement away from a historical view of the text
was also encouraged by the problems of morality which the
literal level presented. Commentators from the early begin-
nings of the Greek exegetical tradition spent a great deal

---

[31]Buffière, p. 585.

[32]Buffière, p. 420.

[33]Buffière, p. 519.

of time trying to excuse the conduct both of the great war-
heroes of Homeric legend and of particular gods and god-
desses. How could the Homeric characters function as moral
exempla if their actions were patently immoral according to
the literal text? Out of this question grew the tradition
of an elaborate moral allegory whose primary purpose was to
give a sound moral commentary explaining the only "apparent"
sins of the Homeric characters. Jean Seznec mentions
Sallust, a friend of the Emperor Julian and a defender of
the allegorical method who in his treatise On the Gods and
the World, selects the divine tales with the most obscene
surface morality and gives them "pious, philosophical" expla-
nations.[34] Many Greek commentators, in fact, use the expres-
sion "healing" to refer to their allegorical explications.
Buffière comments:

> La préoccupation apologétique qui anime souvent les
> allégoristes se reflête dan l'expression "guérison,"
> d'Homère; L'exégèse de Métrodore, le disciple d'Anaxa-
> gore, avait ce but, nous dit Diogène Laerce: "guérir
> les fables homériques en leur ôtant tout ce qui de
> l'abord, peut sembler immoral, par transposition dans
> le champ d'allégorie."[35]

Thus many Greek exegetes saw their task as one of healing
the immoral Homeric fables with allegory.

The primary examples of this kind of allegorizing center
around the person of Ulysses in Homer's Odyssey. Ulysses is
generally regarded as a type of the ideal man. As such, it

---

[34]Seznec, p. 84.

[35]Buffière, p. 51.

becomes necessary in the eyes of the commentator to defend him from all attacks--especially from those who saw his constant prevarication as a moral fault. Anthisthenes, one early Neoplatonic exegete, is among Ulysses' staunchest defenders. He writes that Homer never meant to put Ulysses in a bad light by making him appear a liar, and explains that Ulysses' dissembling is only a matter of his being expert at changing his conversational tone in order to better communicate with his hearers.[36] Ulysses is also much excused on the grounds of his intelligence and piety. In an early retranscription of Aristotle, one commentator makes an effort to defend Ulysses from charges of having mocked Poseidon by inferring that Poseidon was unable to heal Polyphemous' eye. Ulysses, writes the Scoliast, did not say Poseidon could not heal; he said he would not heal, and these are two separate things. Also, he goes on, the Cyclops was a brute who deserved Ulysses' correction.[37]

In the Circe episode, Ulysses is defended from attacks of immorality primarily by allegorists who see the incident as an allegory of the soul which is unwittingly encased in carnal flesh (Circe) before realizing and seeking its true home in universal wisdom and truth (Penelope).[38] In addition, the whole Circe episode is seen by commentators as a

----

[36]Antisthenes, in G. Dindorf, Scholia Graeca in Homeric Odysseum (London: Oxonii, 1855), cited by Buffière, pp. 368-69.

[37]Antisthenes, cited by Buffière, 371.

[38]Buffière, p. 591.

movement from a preoccupation with science to a preoccupation with philosophy. Thus Ulysses becomes a representative of the individual soul's retreat from the confusion of the exterior world into the calm eternality of the inner life. "Circe" is always seen as a necessary first step in the process of movement toward man's true home, and therefore what might be construed as a fault on Ulysses part has a logical rationale.

Thus the treatment of sin or immorality in serious Greek exegetical literature is seen to be consistent with the Greek understanding of moral evil presented in the first chapter of this dissertation. In the earlier chapter we saw that the Greek view of reality promotes a fated view of human nature which ultimately discourages the depiction of moral depravity. The emphasis in Greek literature is generally on an ideal man who furnishes an abstract example of moral good. In the Greek exegetical tradition we find the same emphasis. It is not that infractions of the moral law in the Homeric heroes are completely ignored (commentators, for example, did recognize that Ulysses himself sees his own faults--cf. Oddyssey XVIII, l. 138), but that every effort is made to reduce the power of such infractions to tarnish the larger-than-life character who is presented. Buffière points out that even where there is actual recognition of moral weakness, there is still a specific attempt made to elevate the hero. In the Life and Poetry of Homer, for example, the author writes that Hector, in facing the battle-lines

trembles, but trembles <u>less</u> than his own men.[39]   In the
Greek view, the hero is always one notch higher than the
purely human; his weaknesses are generally either ignored
or elaborately explained in rationalistic terms.

Thus the early Greek allegorical tradition is marked
by some familiar characteristics, all of which are seen to
be factors in encouraging the ideal type which is so basic
to the original philosophic tradition; (1) a tendency to see
the literal level of the text as a fantasy which serves
only as a metaphor for physical or philosophic truth; and the
related assumption that interpretation of the spiritual mean-
ing is an activity for higher and more spiritually advanced
exegetes; (2) a consequent drift away from physical interpre-
tations of the earliest allegorists to the moral and rational-
istic allegory of later centuries; (3) a tendency to see
allegory as a means for obscuring or excusing moral weakness
in heroic character. Thus the early Greek exegetical tradi-
tion may be said to contain elements which reflect the
larger philosophical perspective of the Greeks and which con-
sequently encourage the presentation of universalized or
 typical characters in the sense we have defined it in this
study.

Although we do not have the space to deal with it in
depth, the classical Latin approach to allegorical interpre-
tation exhibits many of the same characteristics we have

_____

[39]Buffière, p. 309.

shown to be intrinsic to Greek exegesis. We will take only

two examples.

In the Ars Poetica, Horace includes an allegorical inter-

pretation of the Orpheus story: "While men still roamed the

woods, Orpheus, the holy prophet of the gods, made them shrink

from bloodshed and brutal living; hence the fable that he

tamed tigers and ravening lions."[40] In Horace's interpreta-

tion, Orpheus becomes a heroic "prophet of the gods" who has

the moral function of controlling evil violence. It is clear

from even this short passage that Horace interprets the

Orpheus myth didactically and idealistically, drawing an

isolated moral lesson from a story whose outer form is less

important for Horace than the inner lesson which it contains.

We find a similar illustration of this kind of allegori-

zation in Cicero's De Officiis, Book III. Cicero takes the

Platonic allegory of a man in a certain kingdom who finds a

ring on a dead man's finger which has the power of making

him visible and invisible. Using it, he debauches the queen,

murders her, and gains the kingdom. Cicero interprets the

story allegorically to mean that a wise man would not cover

up "anything that savours of greed or of injustice, of lust

or of intemperance."[41] He goes on to criticize "certain phi-

losophers" who tend to make too much of the fact that Plato's

---

[40]Horace, Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1936), p. 479f.

[41]Cicero, De Officiis, trans. Walter Miller (London: Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., 1951), p. 305.

story is fictitious or imaginary. Cicero writes scornfully:
"As if he (Plato) affirmed that it was actually true or even
possible!" Immediately after, he denounces the same philoso-
phers for insisting that the literal level of the story be
historically "possible," when what is really important is the
moral lesson to be learned.[42] Thus the Latin approach to
allegorical exegesis can be seen to conform in its outlines
to some basic elements in the tradition of Greek exegesis--
in particular, a de-emphasis on the literal level of the text
and a related stress on the moral truth of which the text
is a discardable sign.

Charles O. Bigg has pointed out that the Neoplatonic
exegetical tradition through Peripateticism and Stoicism
directly influenced the school of allegory flourishing at
Alexandria, Egypt, in the first and second centuries.[43] This
highly influential center of Jewish and Christian learning
produced the Jewish exegete Philo, who later greatly influ-
enced the Christian Alexandrines, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa,
and Athanasius and later the work of St. Ambrose and Hilary
of Poitiers. A short survey of Philo's allegorical method
and of two of the important Christian Platonists who were
influenced by him will reveal many of the same characteris-
tics demonstrated by the earlier Greek exegetical tradition,

---

[42]Cicero, De Officiis, pp. 306-7.

[43]Charles O. Bigg, The Christian Platonists of Alexan-
dria (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 29.

besides providing a necessary background for one major stream

of allegory which flourished during Chaucer's day.

Philo, the most famous of the great early figures asso-

ciated with Alexandria, affords a good example of the Greek

tendency to regard the literal text only as a convenient,

but ultimately discardable vehicle for the transmission of

abstract moral truth. He regarded the literal level of

Scripture as inadequate to the task of communicating the

nature of God, and this led him to write voluminously on the

reasons why God gave such a poor representation of himself in

Scripture.[44] Philo's predisposition toward a movement away

from the literal text, to a totally "spiritualized" view of

Scripture, can be clearly observed in his exposition of

Exodus 22 and 23. He writes:

> What is the meaning of the word 'Ye shall not with bad-
> ness mistreat the widow and the orphan?' The word
> 'mistreat' is used properly in some cases and improp-
> erly in others. It is used properly in reference to
> deeds of badness which are peculiar to the soul and
> improperly in others, in which harm is done to posses-
> sions and bodies. Accordingly, Scripture did not men-
> tion the latter evils, as not being great misfortunes
> at all, but knowing the harm of badness overturns entire
> lives from their foundations, it <u>first</u> says that one
> should not be to anyone a teacher of folly or licen-
> tiousness.[45]

Here Philo almost completely disregards the literal level of

meaning, except as a vehicle for the "real" or underlying

truth and substitutes in its place his own allegorical

---

[44]Geffchen, p. 329.

[45]Philo Judeaus, <u>Questions and Answers on Exodus</u>, trans.
Ralph Marcus (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 39.

interpretation of "mistreatment." On the basis of the Scrip-
tural injunction not to mistreat widows, he builds a justi-
fication for the building of schools for the moral education
of the young.

Philo's interpretation of Genesis 21, the Biblical rec-
ord of the conflict between Abraham's two wives, Sara and
Hagar, reveals again his preoccupation with moral education
and provides a further illumination of his separation of the
literal text and its spiritual meaning. For Philo, Hagar in
her flight from Sarai and Abraham is the type not only for
secular culture and education, but also for those who wish
to escape the "stern and gloomy life of the virtue-seekers"
and to stay in that

> life which is as yet unable to hold the heights of
> the generic and imperishable, still clinging to the
> particular and specific region in which the lower is
> preferred to the higher.[46]

The symbol for those preliminary studies which are rooted
in secularism and sense-perception is the "Sophist Ishmael,"
son of Hagar. Sarah, whose change of name from "Sarai" to
"Sarah" represents in Philo's mind a change from a state of
personal sovereignty and virtue to a state of universal
sovereignty and virtue, becomes the type for those who have
left secular culture to seek the imperishable--for those who
have "ceased from the manner of women," "died to the pas-
sions," and gone on to the "generic form of happiness."[47]

---

[46]Philo Judeaus, Philo on the Cherubim, trans. F. A. Col-
son and G. H. Whitaker, 2 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's
Sons, 1929), II:112.

[47]Philo Judeaus, Philo on the Cherubim, II:13.

The symbol for this life of happiness is Isaac, "whose heart is in the pursuit of no childish sports, but those which are divine." In a similar manner in the treatise "Questions and Answers on Exodus,"[48] Philo draws a parallel between marriage and the movement of the soul. He characterizes the minds of men as being in a state of "womanly corruption in marriage" while they are yet resting with sense-perception and passion. But, he goes on, when souls become divinely inspired, from being women, they become virgins, throwing off the womanly corruptions which are found in sense-perception and passion and following after and pursuing the genuine and unmated virgin, the veritable wisdom of God.

In the Philoan interpretation a radical distinction is made between secular education and philosophy, body and spirit. What is emphasized is the importance of the passage for the reader's ongoing journey from sense-perception and passion to the life of the mind; the types "Sarah" and "Hagar" have been completely allegorized into identifiable philosophies. The focus of our attention is obviously to center on Philo's doctrine of the soul's gradual disentanglement from sense and its movement toward spirit and idea. Thus the conception of allegory in Philo is rooted in the Platonic understanding of salvation as a movement from the bondage of sense-perception to the freedom of intellectual apprehension.

---

[48]Philo Judeaus, Questions and Answers on Exodus, p. 38.

Clement, member of the later Christian "School of Alexandria," demonstrates the strong Hellenic influence which stems directly from Philo. In Clement, an interesting mixture of Greek and specifically typological allegory can be seen in Clement's explanation of the Old Testament King who saw Isaac "playing" with his wife Rebecca, and who as a result confronts Isaac with the fact that she is his wife, and not just the "sister" she has been introduced to be. Clement takes this story as an allegory of "a wisdom above this world looking down upon the mystery signified by such childlike playing." He goes on to exult over the moral and spiritual lessons to be learned from the allegory:

> Rebecca means 'submission.' O, what prudent playing!
> Rejoicing joined to submission with a king as audience
> The Spirit exults in such merry-making in Christ,
> attended with submissiveness. This is in truth child-
> likeness.[49]

Given the context of the verse, which suggests that Isaac's "playing" with his wife has a more sexual connotation than Clement wishes to recognize, the interpretation he gives offers a good example of a highly Platonized allegory which yet contains a good deal of Christian content. The Hellenistic overtones of this exegesis are reinforced by a comment which immediately follows the passage, in which Clement draws a parallel between the same Biblical story and Greek allegorism:

---

[49]Clement of Alexandria, _Christ the Educator_, trans. Simon P. Wood (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), p. 22.

> Heraclitus tells us that his Zeus, too, indulges in such
> a pastime. Indeed, what occupation is more becoming a
> wise and perfect man than to play and rejoice at the
> celebration of a solemn religious festival with sub-
> missive reception and performance of what is holy?[50]

The combination of Christian content and Greek moral allegory
is a striking characteristic of the Alexandrines, who con-
stantly demonstrate, according to Bigg, a predisposition
toward making "reason the judge of revelation."[51]

In fact, the Christian understanding of salvation by
vicarious participation in the suffering and death of Christ
is often partially obscured by later Alexandrines, who lean
toward a rationalistic conception of virtue. Clement, for
example, defines virtue as "a disposition of soul attuned
to the dictate of reason in the whole course of life," and
comes close to identifying Christ himself with the reasonable
mind:

> Now if it is in its relationship with reason that dis-
> obedience is the origin of sin, is it not necessarily
> true that obedience to reason or the Word which is
> what we call Faith, is the very substance of what
> is called a person's duty?[52]

Clement retains the Christian perspective by later assuring
us that he means man's duty is to cultivate a will which is
"in conformity and united through his life with Christ and
God and properly directed to eternal life," but illustrates
the whole proposition with the ancient Greek metaphor of the

---

[50]Clement, _Christ the Educator_, p. 22.

[51]Bigg, p. 80.

[52]Clement, _Christ the Educator_, p. 89.

stallion horse, whose "passion" is uncontrolled by the "reason" of virtue.

A rationalistic conception of virtue can quickly lead to hierarchies of beliefs in which some men are deemed more moral and virtuous than others. This exactly what we see in Clement, who follows the Philonian tendency to divide the mortal life of the believer into two parts: (1) the life of the ordinary believer, which is marked by faith, fear, hope and obedience to moral law and discipline, and (2) the life of the "true seeker," characterized by a life of love, righteousness, knowledge, serene and reasonable convictions and spontaneous moral activity, where the life of the believer and of Christ are so united that the Will of God and the believer's will do not conflict. As Clement puts it, a kind of elemental moral purity is necessary to the "higher" kind of insight.[53] From the orthodox Christian perspective on the working of grace in the believer, of course, this doctrine has overtones of heresy.

The Greek emphasis on moral purity in Clement appears also in his understanding of sin and judgment, which he tends to view, along with other Alexandrines, from a rather sanguine perspective. Bigg makes the point that though the Alexandrines believed that evil could become second nature, so that demons could be deemed incapable of repentance, they

[53]Bigg, pp. 118-119.

[54]
refused to fix the point of irremediable damnation. Clem-

ent himself refused to believe in an active evil--that is,

he considered evil to be manifested not in false motives or

beliefs, but in evil acts. He thus did not believe in orig-

inal sin in the orthodox sense.[55] Both Clement's method of

exegetical interpretation and his desire to interpret the

wrath of God in a more tolerant light than it appears in

Scripture can be seen in the following commentary on Deu-

teronomy 32:23-25, (I will spend my arrows among them. They

shall be consumed with famine and by the bite of birds, and

the bending of their back shall be incurable; I will send

the teeth of beasts upon them, with the fury of creature

that trail upon the ground. Without, the sword shall destroy

their children and there shall be fear in the storehouse):

> Really then, the Divinity is not angry as some suppose,
> but when He makes so many threats He is only making
> an appeal and showing mankind the things that are to
> be accomplished. Such a procedure is surely good,
> for it instills fear to keep away from sin.[56]

The emphasis of this passage is clearly on the mercy of God

and demonstrates a trait which is to be found in at least

two other early exegetes. Gregory of Nanzanian regarded the

question of the possibility of salvation after death as

open,[57] and Gregory of Nyssa, a revered fourth-century church

leader openly attests to it:

------

[54]Bigg, p. 112.

[55]Bigg, p. 112.

[56]Clement, <u>Christ the Educator</u>, p. 61.

[57]Bigg, p. 344.

> For Him (God) the one goal is this the perfection of
> the universe through each man individually, the ful-
> fillment of our nature.[58]

Charles Bigg notes that this same idea is also proclaimed

in Gregory's Oration on I Cor. 15:28,[59] and Father Daniélou

in Les Figures du Christ dans l'ancien Testament also comments

generally on the Alexandrine belief in a final purification

of the entire human race.

The sympathetic tolerance of human nature demonstrated

by this kind of exegesis, its preoccupation with God's mercy

over His judgment, demonstrates the typical Alexandrine char-

acteristics of a retreat from emphasis on the depravity of

man and a centering on his capacity for moral growth. The

redemption which Christ accomplished is seen not so much as

a restitution for man's original position before the Fall,

but as the gateway to the possibility of a new moral right-

eousness in life greater than anything Adam could ever have

known.[60] Harnack comments:

> Clement cannot imagine that Christian faith, as found
> in tradition, can of itself produce the union of intel-
> lectual independence and devotion to God which he
> regards as moral perfection.[61]

---

[58] St. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Soul and Resurrec-
tion," in Ascetical Works, trans. Virginia Woods Callahan
(Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1967),
p. 267.

[59] Bigg, p. 344.

[60] Bigg, p. 60.

[61] Adolph Harnack, History of Dogma, trans. Neil Buchanan,
6 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1958), II:325.

According to Harnack, Clement is too much of a Greek philos-
opher to promote a doctrine of salvation apart from intel-
lectual striving, and believes that the goal of moral perfec-
tion is reached only "through knowledge."

In Origen, the most influential of all the Alexandrines,
we do not find an emphasis on the possibility of human per-
fection through knowledge alone. Origen's view on the nature
of the relationship between God's grace and man's contribu-
tion on first observation is a balanced one, reminiscent of
St. Augustine:

> It is then neither in our power to make progress apart
> from the knowledge of God, nor does the knowledge of
> God compel us to do so unless we ourselves contribute
> something towards the good result....nor does the power
> of God by itself fashion a man for honour or dishonour,
> but God finds a ground of difference in our will, as
> it inclines to be better or worse.[62]

However, even in this passage we find seeds of the platonic
doctrine of the pre-existence of souls, a doctrine which
promoted the idea that souls were generated with either an
"honourable" or a "dishonourable" inclination from the
first.[63] Forced by the "predestined" quality of this belief
into a defense of the mercy of God, who creates both types
of soul, Origen puts a great deal of energy into the doctrine
of the "all-in-all," which implies the salvation of the entire
human race and lifts the notion of eternal judgment out of
the picture altogether:

---

[62]Origen, On First Principles, trans. G. W. Butterworth
with an Introduction by Henri de Lubac (New York: Harper
and Row, 1966), p. 210.

[63]Origen, On First Principles, p. 206.

> And He will be all things in each person in such a
> way that everything which the rational mind, when pur-
> ified from all the dregs of its vices and utterly
> cleared from every cloud of wickedness can feel or
> understand or think, will be all God and that the
> mind will no longer be conscious of anything besides
> or other than God, but will think God and see God and
> hold God and God will be the mode and measure of
> every movement and in this way God will be all to
> it.[64]

Thus Origen himself did not admit complete depravity in
human nature, and even leaves room in his theology for
volitional repentance after death. In the On First Prin-
ciples I. 6. 3 and II. 6. 6, for example, he leaves the
salvability of evil spirits an open question, and later on
is forced into admitting at least the theoretical possibil-
ity of the devil's salvation.[65] Charles Bigg writes that
Origen is finally careful to state that although evil spirits
will not be judged they will be burnt up in the fire of puri-
fication and thus will never reach the state of "bodily resur-
rection" which those in the Kingdom of God attain.[66] However,
Origen seems to make a point of the continued existence of
the devil and death in the next life, though "the hostile
will which proceeded not from God but from itself will come
to an end."[67]

---

[64] Origen, On First Principles, p. 248.

[65] Origen, On First Principles, pp. 56-7; pp. 251-252.
For an excellent discussion of the controversy surrounding
this Origenian doctrine, see Henri de Lubac, "Introduction"
to Origen, On First Principles, pp. xxxix-xl.

[66] Bigg, p. 344.

[67] Origen, On First Principles, p. 250.

Thus in Origen, as with the other Alexandrines, there is
tendency to take the doctrine of sin and the consequent
wrath of God rather less seriously than those further within
the orthodox mainstream.

The consistent emphasis on God's mercy over His wrath
is matched in Origen by another discernibly "Alexandrine"
quality—an inclination to view the historical level of
Scripture with some suspicion. There is no doubt that Ori-
gen of all the Alexandrines viewed the literal level of the
text as historical fact where it obviously records an event,
as for example the carrying of Joseph's body to the Promised
Land during the Exodus, or the existence of Solomon's temple.[68]
But Origen's acceptance of the literal level is carefully
controlled by the metaphor which governs his scriptural
exegesis. He divides the three-fold sense of Scripture into
the "flesh" of Scripture, or the obvious meaning of the lit-
eral test, the "soul" of Scripture, or the moral sense, and
the spiritual sense of Scripture, "which has a shadow of
things to come."[69] Some passages of Scripture have no "body,"
but only a moral or spiritual sense, (such as the 10 Command-
ments, or the commands of Jesus), some have only a historical
sense (such as the existence of the city of Jerusalem) and
some have both (The Exodus prefigures Christ).

---

[68]Origen, On First Principles, p. 294.

[69]Origen, On First Principles, p. 276.

There is obviously a graded hierarchy here, with the spiritual sense receiving the most attention and worth. This is borne out by the fact that Origen connects the three types of believers.[70] The literal is specifically for the simple believer, who can know "only the obvious;" the second or moral level is for the man "who has made some progress" and the third or spiritual level is for the "perfect" man, who is "like those mentioned by the apostle, who seeks "the wisdom that hath been hidden."[71] Origen's hierarchy shows a much greater regard for the spiritual and moral sides of the texts than for the literal level. His admonition to the reader is to search the literal text for rational impossibility and then to look beyond to the spiritual connotation:

> At other times even impossibilities are recorded in the law for the sake of the more skillful and inquiring readers, in order that these, by giving themselves to the toil of examining what is written, may gain a sound conviction of the necessity of seeking in such instances a meaning worthy of God.[72]

Origen's explanation of the story of creation, for example, leaves hardly any room for historicity --even historicity of a certain kind--and it is worthwhile to quote him in full:

> Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first and the second day, and the evening and the morning existed without the moon and stars? And that the first day, if we may so call it, was even without

[70]Origen, On First Principles, p. 276.

[71]Origen, On First Principles, p. 276.

[72]Origen, On First Principles, p. 287.

> a heaven? And who is so silly as to believe that God,
> after the manner of a farmer, planted a paradise east-
> ward in Eden, and set in it a visible and palpable
> tree of life, of such a sort that anyone who tasted
> its fruit with his bodily teeth would gain life and
> again that one could partake of good and evil by
> masticating the fruit taken from the tree of that
> name? And when God is said to 'walk in the Paradise
> in the cool of the day,' and Adam to hide himself
> behind a tree, I do not think anyone will doubt that
> these are figurative expressions which indicate cer-
> tain mysteries through a semblance of history, and not
> through actual events.[73]

What concerns us here is not that Origen exhorts the reader

to a certain freedom in interpreting the literal level of

the Scripture. In fact, his explanation of how to read the

Scripture makes much practical sense. The problem is a

too-strict delineation of the realm of historico-literal

truth from the realm of spiritual interpretation which goes

with it. This is hard to pinpoint, but, as we pointed out

earlier, it manifests itself primarily in Origen's Platonic

tendency to radically separate the historical from the spir-

itual, to have such a strong reaction to the "literal impos-

sibilities" of the text that it drives him to seek explana-

tions which are of a purely spiritual character. As Father

Daniélou points out,[74] for Origen the primary function of

the Holy Spirit is to reveal the mysteries of Scripture in

their unveiled and uncorrupted purity, which means going

beyond the body of the text to the spiritual meaning. The

---

[73] Origen, On First Principles, p. 288.

[74] Jean Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Cul-
ture, p. 287.

results of this method of interpreting Scripture, writes

Daniélou, are two-fold: First, the Bible (as the book which

contains the mysteries of God) becomes more important than

the historical reality of incidents it relates; and second,

the institutions, events, and people of Old Testament history

do not function as literal types of other institutions, events

and people to follow, but they become "symbols of an invis-

ible reality, which can just as easily be past or present

or future."[75]   Thus the firm linear-historical base of Chris-

tianity is transformed into a Neo-platonic understanding of

symbol, what Daniélou calls "Hellenized gnosis."[76]

Daniélou also comments on Origen's habit of opposing

spirit and body as it contrasts with the orthodox Pauline

view which sees flesh as transformed rather than repudiated

by the spirit. He comments that in St. Paul, the Greek

phrase $\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \pi\nu\epsilon\mathring{\acute{v}}\nu\acute{\alpha}$ (that which is given life of the spirit)

is contrasted with $\kappa\alpha\tau\grave{\alpha}\ o\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\alpha$ (that which is dead to the

spirit); that is, the phrase "carnal" does not refer strictly

to the body, but to "that which is left to its own lost and

sinful state, whether this be the body or the soul."[77]   In

Origen, however, the body is characterized as definitely of

a lower order than the intelligible world of the spirit.

_____

[75]Daniélou, p. 287.

[76]Daniélou, p. 287.

[77]Daniélou, p. 288; see also St. Augustine, On Chris-
tian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robertson (New York: Bobbs-
Merrill Co., 1958), p. 21.

Danielou comments:

> This is a Platonist conception which came into exe-
> gesis with Philo and the Gnostics, and is the medium
> whereby gnosis became linked to Scripture and in the
> end came to be regarded as its true meaning.[78]

Thus Origen, although his inclusion of the typological method

of exegesis puts him within the Christian tradition, still

demonstrates strong Greek influences which affect his regard

for the historical factuality of Scripture and consequently

his understanding of symbol and allegory.[79]

This, in fact, is true of all the Alexandrines. Charles

Bigg has speculated that the Alexandrine inability to ground

its exegesis in historical reality may simply be a conse-

quence of the fact that the Christian idea of historical

development had not yet had time to sink in.[80] It may also

be the result, Father Danielou points out, of the pervasive

influence of Gnosticism in the first and second centuries, a

philosophy which crept into allegorical exegesis through the

influence of Philo and Marcion.[81] It will prove valuable to

digress for a moment to sketch the broad outlines of this

movement, which is of great importance in the history of

exegesis.

---

[78]Danielou, p. 288.

[79]John Austin Baker comments on Origen's method of
allegorical exegesis, writing that in his works allegory
becomes a method of using scripture to change the already
existing outline of the Gospel message. John A. Baker,
"Postscript," in Danielou's Gospel Message and Hellenistic
Culture, p. 504.

[80]Bigg, p. 186.

[81]Danielou, p. 197.

Gnosticism is based on a dualistic theory of the universe which grew out of the gnostic inability to accept traditional explanations of the problem of suffering and evil.[82] Bigg writes that the Gnostics created the theory of dualism out of the argument that if Adam had been created perfect, he would not have sinned; but since he did sin, God must have created imperfection; to do this, He Himself, or part of Him, must have been imperfect.[83] The idea that God is in some sense the author of evil is discussed and refuted by Ireneaus, another important early Christian exegete in the Five Books Against Heresies.[84] As a result of this reasoning, the Gnostics posited two gods in the universe; one, the demi-urge, which ruled the evil or negative forces in the world, and one, God, who ruled the forces of good.

The understanding of the nature of Christ is directly affected by this Gnostic dualism. Irenaeus points out that the Valentinian Gnostics believed in two Christs, one the son of God, and one the son of the demi-urge. Christ the son of God is a pure spirit who rules the spiritual world of the Pleroma; Christ the son of the demi-urge is the historical or material body who was born of Mary.[85] In the Gnostic

---

[82]Bigg, p. 56.

[83]Bigg, p. 110.

[84]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, trans. John Keble (London: James Parker and Co., 1872), pp. 103-104.

[85]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, pp. 21-22.

scheme, Christ is stripped of all humanity and is seen less
as Redeemer than as Enlightener. Individual salvation is
viewed in terms of initiation into a knowledge of the divine
element which constitutes true selfhood. Such initiation
occurs by a process of intellectualization in which the
spirits of the blessed gradually lose all matter and pass
into the Pleroma, or invisible heaven.[86] The actual means
of this process is self-knowledge. In the Gnostic view,
knowing God is knowing self, and everything--including crea-
tion and all cosmic processes is centered in the individual
gnosis, the inner revelation of self-hood. R. M. Grant quotes
Monomius, an early Gnostic, on this point:

> Abandon the search for God and the creation and other
> matters of a similar sort. Look for him by taking
> yourself as the starting-point. Learn who it is within
> you who makes everything his own and says, "My god, my
> mind, my thought, my soul, my body. Learn the sources
> of sorrow, joy, love, hate. Learn how it happens that
> one watches without willing, rests without willing,
> becomes angry without willing, loves without willing.
> If you carefully investigate these matters you will
> find them in yourself.[87]

---

[86]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, p. 21.
Ireneaus explains Valentinian Gnosticism: "Next, that
all spiritual persons putting off their animal souls and
becoming intellectual spirits, are to enter within the
Pleroma, incomprehensibly and invisibly, and to be assigned
as the Brides to the Angels which are about the savior; and
the Demi-urge also, for his part is to pass into the region
of his mother, Wisdom, that is, in the intermediate state;
that the souls also of the righteous will themselves be
refreshed in the place of the Middle State; for that nothing
animal finds place within the Pleroma."

[87]Monomius in Hippolytus, Ref. VIII, 15, 1-2, cited by
R. M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity (New York:
Columbia University Press, 1966), p. 9.

There are two things of note about this passage; one Grant refers to as its "passionate subjectivity,"[88] and the second is its emphasis on contemplation or self-knowledge. The final product of this contemplation is a man undisturbed by passions and immune to worldly confusion, the man whom Adolph Harnack characterizes as "free from the world and master of himself, who lives in God and prepares himself for eternity."[89]

The basic Gnostic doctrine of the demi-urge and the emphasis on subjective revelation as the highest spiritual state colored Gnostic exegesis of Scripture. Because of the often wrathful characterization of God presented in the Old Testament, and because of their belief in the ultimately merciful character of the deity, Gnostics saw the Old Testament as a product of the demi-urge and criticized it for its cruelty and vengefulness, its "code of imperfect and

---

[88]Grant points out that one of the problems in defining exactly what Gnosticism is, arises from this very subjectivity, which caused a proliferation of Gnostic mythologies and sects. He compiles a list of various Gnostic sects, naming Valentinians, Marcionites, Basilidians, Peratokoi, Phrygians, Docetists, Haimatitoi, Canites, Ophites, Simonians, and Entychites. The variety of beliefs and practices is evident. It is interesting to note that St. Ireneuaus felt the same frustration in his own attempt to define Gnosticism. He writes: "But whereas they differ from each other both in doctrine and in the mode of teaching, and those who are more recently among them, affect daily to find something new, and to bear fruit such as no one every thought of; it is hard to write out all their opinions." Grant, p. 9.

[89]Harnack, History of Dogma, I, 232-233.

and transient morality."[90] This led them to exalt the New

Testament as being the only part of Scripture worthy of

serious discussion, simply because it fit more easily into

the radical Gnostic understanding of the character of God,

and because it could be made to conform with the radically

spiritual allegorizing of Gnostic exegesis.

Marcion, though characterized by both Harnack and Barnes

as "no Gnostic in the strict sense," yet exhibits such heavy

Gnostic influence to serve as a good example of the main

doctrinal heresies of Gnosticism.[91] The root of Marcion

Gnosticism, according to Harnack, can be found in Marcion's

exclusive reliance upon a Paulinian conception of the Gospel.

Through a highly subjective and selective use of the Pauline

Epistles, Marcion constructed a theology which excluded the

Old Testament as "opposed to, and a backsliding from, the

truth."[92] Marcion thus rejected all prophetic interpretation

of the Old Testament and placed it in sharp contrast to the

New Testament in his major work. This antithesis of the Old

and the New Covenants fostered the dualism which is so evi-

dent in other Gnostic writings. Marcion saw the New Testament

Jesus as merciful and loving, and the God of the Old Testament

---

[90]Bigg, p. 57.

[91]See Timothy David Barnes, Tertullian: A Historical
and Literary Study (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 124;
Harnack, History of Dogma, I, 266.

[92]Harnack, History of Dogma, I, 268.

as "a being who united in himself the whole gradation of attributes from justice to malevolence, from obstinacy to inconsistency."[93] The dualism evident here is matched by his belief that the pure and good God of the Spirit delivers only the souls of the redeemed, not the bodies, and the related proposition that Jesus did not assume flesh, but only took on an apparent body which manifested no signs of normal physical development. Marcion's disbelief in the doctrine of the Incarnation, his rejection of matter as evil, and his radical separation of the Old and New Testaments on the basis of his belief in two separate creators forms an adequate summary of the essential Gnostic perspective.

The radically spiritual nature of Gnosticism and its commitment only to a carefully selective and allegorized use of the Old Testament led Gnostic philosophers to disparage the earliest historical records of the Hebrews and to characterize spiritual progression mainly as a movement away from the sensual Demi-urge (represented by the Old Testament record) and toward the higher way of spiritual ecstasy enjoined by the New. Suspicion of the Old Testament and of any system based on what they regarded as the uncertain grounds of history led the Gnostics to see the Scriptures only as a series of abstract signs of their own system of philosophy. An example of this type of allegory and of the intricate mythology which it spawns can be found in Ireneaus' description

---

[93]Harnack, *History of Dogma*, I, 270.

of the relation between the world of the demi-urge and the

real or spiritual world of the Pleroma. Christ, say the

Gnostics, only suffered in the body of the demi-urge:

> It remains that what suffered, according to them, was
> the animal Christ, and he who by the Economy was mys-
> teriously framed, that his mother might exhibit by him
> the pattern of the Christ who is above, of him who was
> extended upon the Cross, and who gave to Achamoth her
> essential form. For all things here, they say, are
> types of the things there.[94]

Thus the correspondence between the Christ of the Demi-urge

and the true spiritual Christ is purely a matter of analogy;

there is no sacramental or symbolical view of allegory

here. The relationship between the sign and the spiritual

reality is parallel but separate and the historical pattern

is presented as clearly inferior to the heavenly truth it

represents.

This view of symbol and its function forms a clear con-

trast with the historical-figural approach taken by orthodox

Christian exegetes, as Daniélou has observed:

> The correspondences which this [The Gnostic] approach
> sought to establish were no longer those between the
> various stages of the history of salvation, but those
> between the visible and invisible worlds--indeed on
> this basis the New Testament itself was to become of
> value simply as an allegory.[95]

This theory of vertical correspondence between the visible

and invisible worlds is very far from the orthodox Christian

---

[94]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, p. 22.

[95]Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture,
p. 221; Henri de Lubac makes a similar point: "Mais [l'allé-
gorie Philonienne] n'y aurait encore la qu'un parallélisme
de méthode, fondé sur la présomption d'une certaine analogie
de structure." Exégèse Médievale, II, seconde partie, 174.

view, where historical types of the Old Testament become
the essential foundation for the fulfillment of history rep-
resented in Christ. In the Gnostic view, a privately
defined system of knowledge and a predisposition toward the
higher contemplative life become the means of salvation;
in the orthodox Christian view, salvation is achieved only
through the objective revelation of Christ contained in the
New Testament record and prefigured in the testimony of the
Old Testament prophets. As Daniélou puts it, Clement, Ori-
gen, Ambrose, and Gregory of Nyssa are representatives of a
line not of orthodox Bibliocal typology, (that is, of the
Scriptural system of types whereby one historical event is
destined to establish hope in another historical event),
but of "Une philosophie de l'homme exprimée d'une manière
allégorique."[96]

The Gnostic idea that the Old Testament, because of its
sensual historical base and its representation of the
cruelty of God was inferior to the New and not a valuable
part of the Christian theory of salvation, pervaded the
ancient world, influencing such important figures as Philo,
Origen, and Clement.[97] Thus we may speculate that at least
part of the Alexandrine preoccupation with a highly spirit-
ualized allegory may be a result of Gnostic influences coming

---

[96]Daniélou, _Les Figures du Christ dans l'Ancien Tes-
tament_, p. 45.

[97]"Introduction," to Daniélou, _Les Figures du Christ
dans l'Ancien Testament_, p. xii.

through Philonic exegesis. Whatever the case, the School of Alexandria, with its inclination to move beyond the literal text into a world of spiritual meaning, with its tolerant view of human evil and Divine judgment, its emphasis on the mystical rather than the redemptive function of Christ, and its tendency to make moral good a prerequisite for salvation, reflects some of the basic perspectives of the Greek-Platonic view of reality. Though the Christian Platonists of the second and third centuries demonstrate much orthodox doctrine, that doctrine is Hellenized, profoundly and openly in the case of Clement, less obviously but just as certainly in the case of Origen.

In addition, the Alexandrine School promotes an exegesis which is decidedly Philonic in nature, that is, it is an allegorical approach which makes use of the literal text primarily as a springboard into an upper-story moral truth or system of truths which is seen as separate from historical reality. Thus it finally encourages a definition of reality which inclines toward the abstract and spiritual over the concrete and historical.

It is not difficult to see that the basic elements of Alexandrine doctrine would not encourage a historical representation of character in the true Biblical sense outlined in Chapter III. The lesser regard for the body of the literal text and the Platonic understanding of symbol alone would tend to reduce the importance given historical detail

in the Christian view, and Platonic emphasis on moral virtue
would tend to encourage the creation of ideal rather than
 historically real characters in the Biblical sense. More-
over, the sympathetic view of judgment also lessens the
chances for creation of true dramatic suspense in the Chris-
tian view. Thus in the Alexandrine school of exegesis we
do not find an environment conducive to the dramatic presen-
tation of historically real characters.

In contrast, the earliest Christian exegetes, Justin,
Ireneaus, Tertullian, Hippolytus and later John Chrysostome,
are much closer to the mainstream of orthodox Christian tra-
dition. Their method is concrete and Hebraic; their use of
allegory historical-sacramental rather than Platonic. Doc-
trinally, the orthodox exegetes form a clear contrast with
the Alexandrine School. In fact, most of the earliest exe-
getes write with the specific purpose of clarifying their
differences with the Gnostic view of reality which so heavily
influenced the Alexandrine School. The writing of Justin,
Ireneaus, Tertullian and St. John of Chrysostome, if they
were not written specifically against the Marcionites or Val-
entinians, all contain direct refutations of some Gnostic
heresy. The contrast with the Alexandrine School is most
clear on the doctrinal issues of judgment and sin, free will
and grace, and Christology. The early Christian expression
of these issues forms a necessary background for the orthodox
understanding of allegory and symbol.

The doctrine of original sin in the earliest Christian exegetes reveals a fundamental contrast with later Alexandrine doctrine. Whereas the Alexandrines de-emphasize the notion of original sin and judgment through their preoccupation with the "spiritual" Christ of mercy represented in the New Testament, and through their belief in the salvability of all mankind, orthodox Christian exegetes present a much stricter view of human nature and eternal judgment.

Tertullian, (155-220 A.D.) for example, sees Hell both as a temporary "repository" for souls of evil men before the Resurrection of the dead, and as a permanent place of punishment after the Last Judgment, "when the body also will pay or be paid in full."[98] His belief in eternal punishment, not simply in a short time of fiery "purification" appears in the image of a volcano which "burns, but continues to exist,"[99] and which visibly foreshadows the eternal state of the evil man. St. John Chrysostome also uses a visible metaphor to express his orthodox conception of Doomsday, referring to the earthly tribunal "where judges both punish the wicked and honor the just publicly," as an image of the next world where the wicked will "have greater shame," and the good "more brilliant glory."[100] Ireneaus, writing about

---

[98]Tertullian, _Apologetical Works,_ in _Tertullian: Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix Octavius,_ trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, Sister Emily Joseph Daly and Edwin A. Quain (Washington: Catholic Univ. of Am. Press, 1962), p. 293.

[99]Tertullian, _Apologetical Works,_ p. 99.

[100]John Chrysostome, _Commentary on St. John the Apostle and Evangelist,_ trans. Sister Thomas Acquinas Goggin, 2 vols. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1960), I:459.

180 A.D., exhibits the same belief in eternal punishment and
decidedly emphasizes the union of body and spirit at the
Last Judgment and in eternity:

> And therefore, when the number is complete which He
> hath foreordained within himself, all who are enrolled
> for life will arise with their very own bodies, with
> their very own souls also and their very own spirits,
> wherein they have pleased God. But those who deserve
> punishment will go away into the same, having also
> themselves their own souls and their own bodies, where-
> in they fell from the grace of God.[101]

This passage also illustrates the fact that in the orthodox
Christian tradition there is a close relationship between
eternal judgment and the doctrine of grace and free will.
If heaven and hell truly exist, then man must choose in life
which destiny will be his. The existence of a heaven and
hell implies that real choices must be made in life.

The early fathers reiterate the importance of free will
throughout their writings. St. Ireneaus, for example, stres-
ses the original freedom of the rational mind in a passage
which utilizes the Biblical image of wheat and chaff:

> But the wheat and the chaff, being inanimate and irra-
> tional, were naturally made such, whereas man, being
> rational and therein like unto God, created free in
> will and in his own power, is the cause unto himself
> why he should become in one case wheat and in another
> chaff.[102]

We find the same emphasis in St. John Chrysostome, who writes
that "evil men are destroyed by their own wickedness alone."[103]

---

[101] St. Ireneaus, *Five Books Against Heresies*, p. 198.

[102] St. Ireneaus, *Five Books Against Heresies*, p. 317.

[103] St. John Chrysostome, *Commentary*, I, 81.

Again, arguing against those who say it is impossible not to

sin he writes more emphatically still, "Free will is com-
pletely responsible for everything."[104]   Later, St. John even

directly refutes the entire notion of fate on the grounds of

the existence of free will and a final resurrection and

judgment writing that "If there is a resurrection and a judg-

ment, there is no such thing as fate, even if some contend and

endlessly put forth vigorous arguments that there is."[105]

Paradoxically, however, neither John nor Ireneaus see

free will as operative apart from the mysterious working of

grace. Grace is an element in the orthodox Christian doc-

trine of free will which keeps it distinct from all relig-

ions where willed morality is the means of salvation. God's

love in bringing man back to repentance is always placed

before man's capacity to keep the moral law, and this results

in a new dignity for the common man, whose character is

judged by his capacity for faith rather than his moral or

social standing. John Chrysostome shows himself well aware

of the variety of men who will constitute the Kingdom of God,

and makes it clear that character in the sense of moral up-

rightness has nothing to do with redemption:

> What would be comparable to this loving kindness? A
> King who has been made of the same clay as we does not
> deem it fitting to enroll in the royal army his fellows,
> men who share the same human nature with him, if they
> are slaves, though often they are superior to him in

---

[104]St. John Chrysostome, Commentary on St. John, I, 313.

[105]St. John Chrysostome, Commentary on St. John, I, 459.

character; but the only-begotten son of God has not considered it unworthy to enroll in the number of his family tax-collectors, and charlatans and slaves and persons less honorable than all these, and even the unsound in body with countless infirmities--Such is the power of faith in Him, such the greatness of His Grace.[106]

The stress in this passage on the grace of God as it is simply received, and not as it is merited, forms a decided contrast with the Alexandrine tendency to make salvation dependent on overt moral action.

While the early Fathers stress the importance of unmerited grace in their understanding of redemption, and while they inclusively demonstrate adherence to the doctrine of original sin, none of them seem to take this doctrine to mean that man is without any trace of the divine image. In the writings of Tertullian, for example, sin is both the result of a hereditary evil passed down from generation to generation, and of the machinations of the devil in historical life. Even though this evil is hereditary, it is not seen as originally intrinsic to human nature, but as a "corruptive" influence which does not, even in the sinful state, completely obliterate the human nature it defaces: "There is some good in the soul, the remains of that original, divine, and genuine good which is its proper nature. That which comes from God is overshadowed, but not wholly extinguished."[107] This understanding of sin as a blight on an essentially good

_____

[106]St. John Chrysostome, Commentary on St. John, I, 100.

[107]Tertullian, Apologetical Works, p. 273.

creation also influences Tertullian's view of the body.

Unlike the Alexandrines, Tertullian retains no tinge of the

Gnostic tendency to attribute evil to the body and good

only to the spirit. He sees redemption in terms of a "wed-

ding" between the regenerated spirit of man and his body,

which is "no longer the slave of the soul, but the servant

of the spirit."[108] Redemption is thus a restoration, through

Christ's triumph over evil, of the spirit, soul, and body of

man back to the kind of godly union which was man's condition

before the Fall.

The theme of the restoration of the "blessed marriage"

of body and spirit runs throughout the orthodox exegetical

tradition and forms the basis for a major and continuing

contrast with Alexandrine exegesis. In Ireneaus, Tertullian

and St. John, this understanding of the "restored" unity of

body and spirit is based on the unified nature of Christ,

who was both God and also fully man. St. John Chrysostome,

for example, refutes the Marcionite notion that Christ had

no infancy, and no real physical development in Homiles 3,

6, and 66 of his Commentary on St. John.[109] Ireneaus, too,

contrasts Gnostic disbelief in the Incarnation with the ortho-

dox view, arguing that if Christ is not true man, his suffering

and death is without meaning.[110] Tertullian's insistence on

---

[108]Tertullian, Apologetical Works, p. 273.

[109]St. John Chrysostome, Commentary on St. John, I,
33-35 and 72; II, 33.

[110]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, p. 231: See
also p. 294: "And it comes to this, whether one say that He

the Incarnation of Christ, who was born "as one who is man

and god united," is perhaps the most explicit of all: "The

flesh, provided with a soul is nourished, matures, speaks,
teaches, acts and _is_ Christ."[111]

Tertullian's belief in Christ's bodily incarnation lays

the foundation for his later insistence on a proper respect

for bodily sensation and for the general relation of body and

spirit in man.[112] At one point he makes bodily sensation the

crux of his interpretation of Christ's life and ministry.

Speaking to the problem of the Gnostic separation of sense

and spirit he writes:

> On this pernicious principle Marcion denied that Christ
> had a real body and was but a phantom or ghost. No,
> His Apostles really and truly perceived him with their
> senses. They saw and heard him at the transfiguration;
> they tasted the wine changed from water at Cana in Gali-
> lee. Thomas believed when he touched the wound in His
> side. Finally, listen to the words of St. John: 'What
> our hands have handled of the Word of life.' The witness
> of St. John is false if we cannot believe the testimony
> of our eyes, our ears, and our hands.[113]

The effect of this emphasis on the union of matter and

spirit is felt in one of the most important issues of Biblical

---

appeared but in shew as man not being man; or that he was
made a Man, taking to him nothing from mankind. For if he
received not from man the substance of flesh, He was nei-
ther made Man, nor the Son of Man: and if He was not made
the same that we were, He did no great thing in that He suf-
fered and endured.

[111]Tertullian, _Apologetical Works_, p. 64.

[112]Tertullian, _Apologetical Works_, p. 215.

[113]Tertullian, _Apologetical Works_, p. 218.

exegesis--the nature of the relation between the Old and New
Testaments.

In fact, belief in Christ's Incarnation becomes the
basis for the orthodox exegesis of Scripture and for the
orthodox understanding of the nature of symbol and allegory.
Whereas the Gnostics had seen the Old Testament as the
inadequate and undependable "flesh" of revelation for which
the New Testament was the totally exalted and dependable
"spirit," Ireneaus, Tertullian and St. John see a profound
union between the two testaments based on their unified con-
ception of the godhead. The Old and New Testaments are not
controlled respectively by the material "demi-urge" and the
truly spiritual "God of mercy," but they are inextricably
connected, each finding its fulfillment in the other. In
the Five Books Against Heresies Ireneaus offers a clear state-
ment of the orthodox view:

> Since undoubtedly there is one God, who as He guided
> the patriarchs along His own providential ways, so He
> justified the circumcision by faith and the uncir-
> cumcision by faith. For as in those who came first
> we were prefigured and foretold, so they in their turn
> are completely drawn out in us; i.e., in the Church,
> and receive the reward for their labors.[114]

In this passage we see the clear and necessary relation of
the Old Testament to the New. The Old Testament is a figure
of the New; it is there to give us a physical picture of the
fulfilled reality of the New. In one other place Ireneaus

---

[114]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, p. 379.

compares the Old Testament to a seed which is now being "har-
vested" under the New Dispensation.[115]

John of Chrysostome sees the relationship in much the
same way. Following Paul, he compares the Old Testament story
of the healing which proceeded from the brass serpent with
the healing brought through Christ, ("In the former the
uplifted serpent healed the bites of serpents; in the latter
the crucified Jesus healed the wounds inflicted by the
spiritual dragon"), and later shows the Old Testament tem-
ples to be a type of the New Church, just as the Old Testa-
ment figure of Isaac is a type of Christ.[116]   In the Adversus
Marcionem IV, Tertullian also insists that the Old and New
Testaments were inspired by God and that there is a necessary
relation between them. His explanation of one specific aspect
of that relation reveals a clear grasp of the nature of Old
Testament law and its relation to the New. Speaking to an
incident in the New Testament where the Pharisees confront
Jesus with the fact that Old Testament law allowed divorce,
Tertullian reveals his clear grasp of the relation of Old
and New Testaments as first outlined by Christ. Jesus solves
the problem of the laxness of the Old Testament moral law by
answering that permission for divorce had not been the ideal
from beginning, but Moses had permitted it as a result of the
hardness of their hearts. Because Christ came to take away

---

[115]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, p. 383.

[116]St. John Chrysostome, Commentary on St. John, I,
255-256.

that hardness and to put in "a heart of flesh," he naturally

would replace the original ideal and not allow divorce except

in the case of adultery.[117]   Thus Tertullian synthesizes Old

and New Testaments, insisting that any inconsistency between

the ideals represented in each is a result of man's sin rather

than God's original plan.

As further fuel for his argument, Tertullian goes on in

the Fourth Book of the Adversus Marcionem to cite examples

of fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, which he uses as con-

clusive proof of the divinity and mission of Jesus Christ.

Ireneaus and Chrysostome follow suit, Chrysostome in his

summary of the meaning of recapitulation and of fulfillment

of prophecy in Christ,[118]   and Ireneaus in his restatement of

the significance of the patriarchs and prophets.[119]

The early orthodox exegetes, in fact, put the prophetic

relation of Old and New Testaments at the center of their

message. This focus on prophecy and fulfillment is not

---

[117]This part of the Adversus is retold by John, Bishop
of Lincoln, in The Ecclesiastical History of the Second and
Third Centuries Illustrated from the Writings of Tertullian
(London: Francis and John Rivington, 1845), pp. 472-473.

[118]Chrysostome, Commentary on St. John, I, p. 138--
"Anticipating the dispensation which was going to be fulfilled
in the New Testament, the types sketched it in outline, like
patterns, and Christ, when He came, executed the design."

[119]Ireneaus, Five Books Against Heresies, p. 377, "And
so far indeed He was by his Patriarchs and prophets prefig-
uring and foretelling things future, exercising beforehand
His part in God's ordained ways, and training his heritage
to obey God and to be strangers in the world and to follow
his word and fore-signify what is to come. For with God,
nothing is void or without significancy."

without Biblical rationale. The wide attention given to Old

Testament prophecy and its fulfillment in the New is given

its original authority in the teaching of Christ, who made

the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy the heart of his

message to humankind. In Mark 12:10-11; Matt. 12:19; 12:34-35;

and 21:42; John 7:38; and 13:18, Jesus constantly interprets

his own mission in terms of Old Testament Scripture. Perhaps

the most dramatic example of this is found in Luke 4:18f.,

where Jesus at the very onset of his ministry reads a pro-

phetic passage from Isaish 61,[120] then closes the roll, hands

it to the minister, and says "This day is fulfilled this

scripture in your ears."[121] J. Daniélou comments on Christ's

use of Messianic prophecy, writing that the backbone of

Christian proof during the first three centuries was: "Christ's

presentation of himself as the realization of the eschatologi-

cal event proclaimed by the prophets and adumbrated by the

institutions of the Old Covenant."[122]

Of course, the actual exegetical practice of contrast-

ing the Old and New Testaments was begun by St. Paul, whose

---

[120]"The spirit of the lord is upon me, wherefore he hath annointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath s nt me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliv- erance to the captives and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward."

[121]Holy Bible: Douay version (Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1914). Hereafter all citations in this chapter refer to the same edition.

[122]Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p. 198. See also H. F. Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought, etc., p. 201.

typological explanation of Galatians 4 became the primary model for later orthodox Christian exegetes. The respective analysis of the Galatians passage, and its Old Testament counterpart in Genesis 21, in fact, offers us a chance to contrast Alexandrine allegorization with the "figural" or typological understanding of allegory. We remember that Philo Judeaus' interpretation of Genesis 21 revealed his preoccupation with moral education, provided an example of his tendency to separate the physical and the spiritual, and in general demonstrated the Platonic idea of salvation as a gradual disentanglement from the senses and a movement toward the world of universal truth. In this view, the spiritual meaning of events is stressed without reference to a larger historical context which has its center of meaning in Christ.

The Pauline interpretation takes on a completely different character. In Galatians 4 Hagar and Sarai are not types of "body" and "spirit," as they were in Philo, but of two covenents--one the covenant of the Old Mosaic Law and the other the covenant of the New Law--Grace in Christ:

> Which things are said by an allegory. For these are
> the two testaments. The one from Mount Sina, engender-
> into bondage; which is Agar, for Sina is a mountain in
> Arabia, which hath affinity to that Jerusalem which
> now is, and is in bondage with her children. But that
> Jerusalem which is above is free: which is our
> mother. (Galatians 4:24)

It is important in this study that we understand the meaning of the word "allegory" in the Pauline sense. The passage just quoted follows a long section on "sonship" under the New Covenant. We were under the Old Law, Paul

writes, "as children under tutors and governors." The Old
Covenant exercises its control externally by imposing
restraints on man's nature; but under the redemption wrought
by Christ we receive "the full adoption of sons,"--an inward
Spirit which is engendered in us and controls from within:
"And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His
Son into your hearts crying: Abba, Father," (Galatians 4:6).
In other words, through Christ's redemptive act, we receive
not only the state of redemption but the "power to become the
sons of God" as well. Essential to this understanding is the
fact that the redemption effected by Christ originates in
God. It is not the conscious, self-willed journey of a mind
from a reliance on sense perception to the realm of spirit,
but it is a salvation begun in the spiritual promise of God
and fleshed out in human history. The human mind of Abraham
and the barren Sarah plot to fulfill the promise which God
had given them nearly ten years before and produce a child
not "after the spirit" but "of the flesh." The spiritual
promise of God produces a "child of the spirit" born nat-
urally, but conceived, initiated by an act which transcends
physical law as we know it. Hagar is thus a type of "mother"
for those who would go back to a reliance on outward form--
to a tutor-student relationship rather than a father-son
relationship.

In my view, the comparison with Philo at this point is
a striking one. In Philo, the soul itself journeys from a

realm of secular education where the sense-perceptions
are his tutor to the realm of spiritual education, where
Philosophy is his teacher. Even though the tutor itself
is replaced by one qualitatively higher, the relationship is
still one of master to pupil. In Paul the entire metaphor of
relationship changes to a new plane--from teacher-student to
father-son. Also, significantly enough, the head of the rela-
tionship is not "Philosophy"--a collection of abstract ideals,
but a person--God, who is now Father by virtue of the Spirit
of His Son in our hearts. Thus Paul asks--and the rhetoric
is revealing: "But now, after that you have known God, or
rather are known by God, how turn you again to the weak and
needy elements which you desire to serve again?" (Galatians 4:9)
In the liaison of Hagar and Abraham we thus find the type of
the Old Law--the endeavor to fulfill God's ideal through
worldly elements (cf. Gal. 4:3). In the literal and yet
miraculous liaison of Abraham and his aging wife we find the
type for a New Law--the fulfillment of God's ideal through
the "Spirit of God's Son" which lives in the believer and
allows him to participate in a new ideal altogether--a per-
sonal relationship with God, a relationship established by
virtue of Christ's death and resurrection. Paul insists upon
the historicity of both the prefiguration and the fulfilled
event, stressing in particular the bodily Resurrection of
Jesus in time:

> And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is in vain
> for you are yet in your sins. Then they also which are
> fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life

> only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most
> miserable. (I Cor. 15:17-19)

The center of the Pauline interpretation of Old Testament

history is the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. "Allegory" is

defined not in the sense of the Old Greek ὑπόνοια

("undermeaning"), the incorporeal meaning underlying the sur-

face fiction, but in the sense of one literal event itself

prefiguring the incarnated person of Christ, another literal

event in history. Thus "allegory" as understood by Paul has

an incarnational value; the words of allegory represent

literal facts which are themselves prefigurations of the

historical Incarnation.

The early church Fathers follow in the Pauline tradi-

tion. Ireneaus, we note, has the same 'substantial view of

prophecy. Not only does he see Old Testament events as

actual events which prefigure other actual events in the New;

but New Testament prophecy, such as the prophecy of human

renewal in Revelation 21:5 and 6, also points to actual his-

torical events in the future. Ireneaus has a very substan-

tial view of this eschatological prophecy: "For since men are

real, the renewal of them must be real; yea, and it must not

go out into things which are not, but go forward in things

which are."[123] Ireneaus evidently wishes to be clear about

the actual historicity both of the events which have taken

place and of the events which will occur for purposes of

_____

[123]Ireneaus, <u>Five Books Against Heresies</u>, p. 536.

counteracting Gnostic and Platonic tendencies to over-

spiritualize Scripture.

Tertullian also rejects the Gnostic tendency to build

an abstract philosophical system from the discarded literal

body of the text, and to take the spiritualized construct

as the truth. In the same vein he scornfully comments on

the results of this kind of interpretation:

> No wonder, then, if the talents of the philosophers
> have distorted the Old Testament. Men of their breed
> have even adulterated this new little dispensation of
> ours with their own ideas to match the opinions of
> the philosophers and from the one way they have split
> many bypaths and blind alleys.[124]

Both Tertullian and Ireneaus objected strenuously to the kind

of allegorization which resulted in a private system of

mythology. No allegory, they felt, could be genuine unless

submitted to the objective revelation of Scripture.

Allegorizing is to be conducted only along the lines

which Scripture itself allows and what it allows is a kind

of allegorization which is based, as both De Lubac and

Daniélou have shown, on Christ's attention to and Pauline

exegesis of, Old Testament prophecy. This kind of allegory

is rooted in the unified person of Christ. It is not meant

to demonstrate a mere correspondence between Old and New

Testaments, or a connection between an abstract spiritual

intelligence and the life of the individual Christian, but

it is rather a kind of spiritual élan, which animates the

---

[124]Tertullian, Apologetical Works, p. 116.

whole of the Biblical message. It is an allegorical exegesis

"dans la foi," a means of interpretation which finds its
[125]
expression in the Incarnation.

Tertullian seems to grasp the allegorical spirit which

we define here. In the Apologetical Works, he points out

the improper use of allegory in support of a philosophical

system of abstract thought:

> Can't you catch a gleam there of the heretical teach-
> ing of the Gnostics and the Valentinians? This is where
> they get their distinction between the bodily senses
> and the intellect which they use in their interpreta-
> tion of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins
> (Matt. 25:1-13). Thus the five foolish virgins are said
> to be the senses, who are foolish because so easily
> deceived, while the wise virgins typify the intellect,
> which can perceive the secret and supernal truth hidden
> in the fulness of God. Here then, is the source of all
> their heretical ideas, and their aeons and genealogies.
> Thus they divide sensation from intelligence sepa-
> rating it from its spiritual source and again, they
> separate sense and knowledge from its animal source,
> since that cannot in any way perceive what is spiritual.[126]

Thus Tertullian suggests that an improper use of allegory is

ultimately an outgrowth of the Greek habit of separating

sensation and spirit, body and soul. His conclusion is

two-fold: (1) Intellect is not superior to sense because the

instrument through which a thing exists is not inferior to

the thing itself. (2) Intellect must not be considered to

be separate from the senses because the agent by which a

thing exists is united to it.

---

[125]De Lubac, Exégèse Médiévale, I, première partie, 355.

[126]Tertullian, Apologetical Works, p. 220; Danielou writes
that Hippolytus of Rome, another well-known fourth-century
exegete, also objects to the Gnostic allegorism "which searches
for symbols of its own at every turn." Cited by Daniélou,
Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p. 261.

In this analysis, Tertullian exhibits exactly the spirit which DeLubac describes as the élan vital of Scripture. At base, typology, "the demonstration of the figure of future events in the events of the past"[127] is a sacramental view of reality based on the significance of the union of historical events in the Old and New Testaments and ultimately on the significance of the union of God and Man in Christ. As Daniélou puts it, when we deal with typology, with the "allegory of the theologians" in this sense we are "in a different world of thought concerned more with the theology of history than with exegesis of the text."[128]

St. Augustine follows Tertullian, Ireneaus and Chrysostome in his insistence upon the historical reality of Scripture and upon the typological character of Old Testament events. In The Trinity, xv, ix, 5, he writes:

> But where the apostle speaks of the allegory, he finds it not in the words, but in the deed; for he pointed out that by the two sons of Abraham, the one by a slave girl and the other by a free woman, that he was not speaking figuratively, but of something that also took place....[129]

Here following in the orthodox tradition, Augustine emphasizes the historical factuality of the Scriptural account as

---

[127]Daniélou, Les Figures du Christ dans l'Ancien Testament, p. 4.

[128]Daniélou, Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture, p. 204.

[129]St. Augustine, The Trinity, trans. Stephen McKenna, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), pp. 471-72.

necessary to proper exegesis. This is borne out again in the
Sermons, 2, 6, where Augustine admonishes readers of the
Scripture to believe what is read "to have actually taken
place," lest they run the risk of "building in the air."[130]

Earlier we saw that in Tertullian, Ireneaus, and Chrysos-
tome, a concern for preservation of the literal level of the
text was an important factor in their understanding of
the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Both
levels were regarded as historically true and as forming a
unified and consistent whole, the Old Testament creating the
historical pattern or figure which was then historically
fulfilled in Christ. Augustine exhibits the same under-
standing:

> For we are all aware that the Old Testament contains
> promises of temporal things, and that is why it is
> called the Old Testament; and that the promise of
> eternal life, and the kingdom of Heaven belongs to the
> New Testament: but that in these temporal figures
> there was the promise of future things, which were to
> be fulfilled in us, on whom the ends of the world are
> come, is no fantasy of mine, but the interpretation
> of the apostles.... (Against Faust, 4, 2)[131]

Here we see a tri-faceted view of allegory: first, the Law
of the Old Testament is an unfulfilled type for the work of
Christ; second, the Incarnation and work of Christ is both
the fulfillment of the Old Law and a typological promise of
the end of history, and the Last Judgment; third, the future

---

[130]St. Augustine, Sermons, cited by Auerbach, "Figura,"
in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, p. 39.

[131]St. Augustine, Against Faust, cited by Auerbach,
"Figura," in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature,
p. 41.

occurrence of these events is the final fulfillment of the promise which Jesus left.

Although Augustine bases his theory of allegory on this tri-partite view of typology he includes a fourth level of ethical interpretation, which superficially resembles the Greek method. This he delineates in De Genesi ad Litteram i, i:

> In all the holy books there are those things which are to be looked for which are indicated as having to do with eternity, those which foretell future events, and those which command or advise what we are to do.[132]

This fourth sense of allegory, or the tropological sense, in combination with the literal text, the events to which the text points, and the future events to which those events point, constitute an extremely popular approach to the exegesis of Scripture in following generations.[133] Thus Augustine, although insisting on a historical interpretation of Scripture, and on the necessity of seeing Old Testament events as a prefiguration of those of the New, nevertheless incorporates a non-historical sense into his schema which resembles the old ethical interpretations given by the Greek allegorists. It should be remembered, however, that Augustine's ethical injunctions grow out of and are rooted in the

---

[132]St. Augustine, De Genesi ad Litteram, cited by Auerbach, "Figura," in Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, p. 42.

[133]See G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), pp. 56-109, for an excellent discussion of the use of the four-fold method with examples.

facts of Biblical history. Thus the two lines of allegory which we are tracing remain distinct.

Nearly six centuries later, Thomas Acquinas reiterates Augustine's four-fold view of allegory, adding a more complete explanation of the functioning of the ethical portion of the allegory. For Acquinas, too, the literal sense is not the text of Scripture, but the event which is figured by the text. It is worthwhile to quote him in full:

> The author of Holy Writ is God in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do) but also by things themselves. So whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification. Therefore that first signification whereby words signify things belongs to the first sense, the historical or literal. That signification whereby things signified by words have themselves also a signification is called the spiritual sense, which is based on the literal, and presupposes it. Now this spiritual sense has a three-fold division. For, as the Apostle says (Heb. 10:1) the Old Law is a figure of the New Law, and Dionysius says (Cael. Hier. i) the New Law itself is a type of what we ought to do. Therefore, so far as the things of the Old Law signify the things of the New Law, there is the allegorical sense; so far as the things done in Christ or so far as the things which signify Christ, are types of what we ought to do, there is the moral sense; But so far as they signify what relates to eternal glory there is the anagogical sense.[134]

Here Aquinas once again defines allegory as the connection between the Old Testament event signified by the literal text, and its relation to the prefigured historical event of the New Testament--more explicitly, the life, death and Resurrection of Christ and his future coming. It is only

---

[134]St. Thomas Acquinas, Summa Theologica, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2 vols. (New York: Benziger Bros., Inc., 1947), I:7,

when allegory is thus grounded in the saving act of Christ
that it becomes moral. Joseph Bryant understands this to
mean that Christians are not bound by the Old Law, which has
been fulfilled by Christ, but are instead under obligation
only to the allegory of the New Law, which is the "figure"
for Christian action. He concludes: "This is simply another
way to saying that Christians live by Christ and reject utterly
the attempt either to live directly by ultimate truth or by
any other symbol of it."[135]

Thus St. Thomas goes directly back to Early Christian
and Augustinian doctrines, drawing out in explicit detail the
composite tradition of symbol-allegory and reiterating once
again its basic incarnational difference--even in ethical
application--from the tradition of Greek interpretation.

At this point, a reassessment and some illustrations are
in order. We have, in the course of this chapter, distin-
guished the symbolic or sacramental view of allegory which
is found in the orthodox Christian tradition of exegesis
from the tradition of Greek/Platonic exegesis which is begun
in the early allegorical treatment of Homer and Virgil and
which is characterized by a sanguine view of sin and judgment
(demonstrated in the recurrent doctrine of the "salvability
of all mankind"), a de-emphasis on the concept of free will,
and a dualistic view of the nature of Christ. We have seen

---

[135]Joseph Bryant, Hippolyta's View (Knoxville: Univ.
of Kentucky Press, 1961), p. 8.

that this tradition was carried on in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd
centuries by the Alexandrine tradition of exegesis which was
in turn greatly influenced by Gnostic doctrines which rein-
force the Classical separation of body and sense and promote
a doctrine of salvation which is based more on the believer's
capacity for mystical experience and moral action than on the
saving grace of Christ.

These beliefs generally go hand in hand with a radically
subjective view of the content of faith and result in an alle-
gorical method which begins with an abstract intellectual sys-
tem and views the fictive vehicle only as a means of indi-
cating that system. When applied to the process of character
presentation this method results in a "personification alle-
gory" in which the material reality of the literal figure is
completely subservient to the intellectual system which dom-
inates it. As H. F. Dunbar puts it, "where the whole inte-
rest is in a definite and preconceived abstraction, the
validity of the letter is in reality of no material impor-
tance."[136] Thus historical realistic detail and individua-
lized, developing personalities will not be of primary con-
cern in the creation of a character formed in the spirit of
Greek exegesis.

The Romance of the Rose, which lies squarely within the
tradition of secular personification-allegory springing from
early Greek exegesis and continuing up through Statius,

---

[136]Dunbar, Symbolism in Medieval Thought, etc., p. 280.

Prudentius, Fulgentius and the School of Chartres, offers

scores of illustrations of this kind of characterization.

In the figure of Jean de Meun's Famine, for example, we

find a classic model of personification-allegory. Famine

is described as "long and lean, weak and hollow;" her eyes

are "hard and hollow," her face "pale," her lips "dry," and

her cheeks "soiled with dirt." She "tears out the very

grass with cutting nails, with hard teeth," but "finds the

grass very sparse." She is "Poverty's chambermaid," and

the "mistress and nurse" of Larceny" (The Romance of the

Rose, 11. 10163-10187).[137]

The allegory here is transparently clear--Famine is

the universal type of human want and the Dreamer is to avoid

her by not being slothful. There is no energy spent on the

individualized personal detail which would give the charac-

ter of Famine personal substance. Famine is not one hungry

person individually brought to life; she is an abstract

caricature of all hungry people. She serves Jean as a useful

vehicle for the concept of Hunger but she is not herself a

flesh-and-blood character of personal proportions. What is

important for Jean de Meun is the intellectual and moral

framework of his allegory--he has no reason, as Hollander

puts it, for being "caught and drawn by a world that offers

---

[137]Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance
of the Rose, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1971), p. 181.

him the occasion for mimesis;"[138] he is concerned far more

with the moral lesson which is behind his characterization--

that Poverty will lead man to Hunger if he is idle (lines

10187-10205).[139] Thus his characters, created in the spirit

of personification-allegory, will not require the degree of

concreteness on the literal level exacted by the orthodox

view of allegory, because the emphasis is not on the mater-

iality of the symbol itself, but on the abstract lesson

which it conveys.

Fulgentius, an African bishop of the Alexandrine school

(d. 532), offers an even more obvious example of this ten-

dency toward abstract idealism in characterization. In the

Prologue to the Mythologies, Book I, Fulgentius carries on a

conversation with the mythological figure Calliope, the epic

Muse. Calliope, approaching the just-awakened Fulgentius,

is clearly described as a supernatural being; her god-like

aloofness from the mortal Fulgentius is reflected in her

scornful mien and her unwillingness to melt his human gaze:

> Her maidenly temper advanced towards me, a riot of
> flowers, bedecked with copious ivy, determined in
> aspect and with a heavy bundle of insults in her mouth,
> her ironic eye darting with such penetrating sharpness
> that it showed even the deeply concealed thoughts of
> her mind at the writings of a drunken reveler. The
> two sides of the Muse balanced one another, for on her
> more stately right side, aided by a certain majesticity,
> she had displayed pearls of starry whiteness over the
> top of her exalted brow; a moon-shaped crescent, its

---

[138] Hollander, Allegory in Dante's Comedia, p. 5.

[139] Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, p. 181.

points studded with rare gems, held in place her white-
tipped diadem, and, covered in an azure robe, she twirled
a hollow globe of glass tapering down to a small piece
of bone. My eyesight was so stirred by the exalted
contemplation of this heavenly vision when, tall as she
was and penetrating in her gaze, she had scarcely pushed
her thumb at the door. With a delicate withdrawal of
one side my elusive companion avoided my human gaze
by a half-concealing veil. Her silvery hair gleamed
white as snow, and the frown on her much wrinkled brow
betokened that she had learnt something distasteful to
her. Her entrance was slow and awesome in its weighty
deliberation.[140]

When Calliope speaks, Fulgentius learns that her scorn is

for poets who fall into sentimental laments, overblown ora-

tory and comedy, thus failing to reach "the golden eloquence

of Plato and the syllogistic brevity of Aristotle." She

exhorts Fulgentius to take in what the Muses will tell him

and then allow himself to rise above his mortal sphere to the

realm of pure philosophy:

Now, therefore, once you have absorbed the message in
your mind, unlock its recesses and allow what you
assimilate to enter your ear-tubes. But let fade the
whole mortal nature which is yours, so that the full
span of what is concentrated to strict philosophical
proportions may take up residence in those recesses.[141]

Not only are the classical Greek overtones of this passage

unmistakable--the attitude toward comedy; the homage paid to

Aristotle and Plato--but the allegory--and the meaning of

the allegorical figure of Calliope--are transparently clear.

The "flesh-and-blood", or historically realistic, aspect of

the characterization of Calliope is deliberately obscured;

---

[140]Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, "The Mythologies," in
Fulgentius the Mythographer, trans. Leslie George Whitehead
(Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), p. 47.

[141]Fulgentius, Fulgentius the Mythographer, p. 47.

she is made to seem larger than life, to take on the epic proportions of the genre she symbolizes, to be the agent of a philosophical truth.

We can see this same tendency toward universalization in the character of Lady Philosophy in Boethius, whose description and function are very similar to those of Fulgentius' Calliope. In both figures, historically realistic detail is de-emphasized in favor of the creation of an idealized type-figure who functions as the symbol of an intellectual system which the student-dreamer is to assimilate. The allegorical method in each instance is a case, as Frank puts it, of "this for that," of this type-figure as a sign for that specific system of truth-- a system which usually has at least some Platonic content.

In the orthodox Christian view of allegorical exegesis we have an entirely different emphasis. The Christian view of allegory has its original roots in the understanding of Old Testament prophecy/New Testament fulfillment first expressed by Christ and formally applied by St. Paul. We have traced this line of exegesis through the orthodox tradition of the first, second, third and fourth centuries as it is expressed in Irenaeus, Tertullian, Chrysostome, and St. Augustine, and how it reappears through the influence of St. Augustine in St. Thomas Aquinas. We have seen

that the orthodox approach to exegesis is grounded in a
world-view which emphasizes human free will, and promotes
a strict understanding of sin and judgment. We have fur-
ther seen that the orthodox solution to the problem of evil
is not, contrary to Gnostic or Alexandrine conceptions,
an escape from evil matter to a pure world of spirit,
but the redemption of the material, physical universe
through the restored union of spirit and sense. This
restoration is achieved through the life and death of
Jesus Christ, who in the orthodox view is the ultimate
expression of the union of matter and spirit. The Incar-
nation becomes the doctrine most central to the typolog-
ical exegesis of Scripture, which finds its sacramental
understanding in the relationship between prophetic history
and fulfilled history.

The Christian view of reality fosters a sacramental
view of symbol in which the symbol itself becomes the
manifestation of an infinite truth which cannot be known
apart from it. Thus the materiality of the symbol, its
concreteness, its finiteness, becomes a means for reach-
ing a truth which cannot be intellectually grasped. The
literal expression of a character becomes in Dunbar's terms
"an embodiment of what is infinite," and takes on an impor-
tance foreign to the Greek-allegorical method. Charac-
terization in this sacramental Judeo-Christian understanding

becomes a means for expressing the truth of the Incarnation, through which it finds its ultimate justification. A view of characterization based on objective historical reality will pay great attention to the truthful representation of history; the characters created in the spirit of such a method will reflect its inherent respect for bodily life and its concern for historical truth on both an individual and universal level.

This does not mean that a character created in the Judeo-Christian spirit which we describe here must be a historical figure, (although he can be), but that he must be regarded as a historical figure, and that he must in turn draw the reader's attention to the universal plan of salvation revealed in the Scriptures and manifested bodily in Christ. That is, in order to be interpreted according to the focus of the sacramental "allegory of the theologians," a character will, through the power and truth of his literal representation invite acceptance as a historically concrete being while yet pointing us to the universal context through which his historical existence finds expression and meaning. Gregory the Great puts it succinctly: "Allegoria est machina per quam anima levatur ad Deum."[142]

---

[142]Gregory the Great, _Promemium ad Super Sanctica Canticorum Expositio_, cited by H. F. Dunbar, _Symbolism in Medieval Thought_, etc., p. 269.

In making these general contrasts between the two alle-
gorical methods, we must be careful to note that within the
mainstream of orthodox exegesis, it is obvious that there
are natural limits to the importance given the literal-
historical level, particularly with reference to the par-
ables and commandments of Jesus. Some of the words of
God are not specific historical events, but merely a word
requiring obedience to a particular statute or lesson.
Even so, within the orthodox tradition, words of command
and admonishment are much more likely to be related to a
historical center, as Augustine's summary of the orthodox
approach to Biblical exegesis reveals: "...in these pro-
phetic stories, some are merely relations, yet they are
adherent unto those that are significant and in a manner
linked to them" (St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, xvi,
143
2). Augustine's statement acquires added meaning in
Walsh and Monahan's translation of the same passage:

> We investigate these hidden meanings of Divine Scrip-
> ture as best we can, some finding symbols with more,
> others with less success. However, what is certain to
> all men of faith is, first, that these things were not
> done and recorded without some prefiguring of what

---

143 St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, cited by Hollander
in Allegory in Dante's Commedia, p. 23.

was to come, and <u>second, that they are to be referred only to Christ and his church, which is the City of God concerning which, from the beginning of the human race, there has been no lack of prophecy which we now see completely fulfilled.</u>[144]

Augustine's qualification puts an objective control on all truly orthodox exegesis. Whether or not there may be or appear to be a purely Platonic or highly spiritualized understanding of passages of Scripture in a particular exegetical text, all interpretations should ultimately be related to the historical fact of the Christ-event. If they are not, they are not truly within the centrally orthodox tradition.

The contrast between literary characters created and received according to the focus of the sacramental "allegory of the theologians" (that method of Biblical analysis espoused by orthodox Christian interpreters) and those created according to the focus of the "allegory of the poets" (or personification--allegory) has been observed by a number of important critics. Henri de Lubac, for example, makes an interesting observation concerning the allegorical method of Alain de Lille, whon he regards as directly within the Greek-Platonic tradition of personification-allegory. Alain's work, he writes, is double in meaning, but it does not have as its principal sense a meaning which is truly historical in a dramatically realistic way. This observation applies in a unilateral way to the whole Platonic tradition:

---

[144]St. Augustine, <u>City of God</u>, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan (Washington: Cath. Univ. of Am. Press, 1952), p. 489 (Italics mine).

> Lépopée Alain présent même un caractère tout a fait
> an-historique et en ce sens, non Biblique--par quoi
> d'ailleurs, elle est d'allure plus métaphysique et moins
> profoundment Chrétienne.[145]

In a similar manner, (as we already noted in the introduction
to this chapter), Charles Singleton sees a radical differ-
ence between the figure of Lady Philosophy in Boethius'
Consolation of Philosophy and Dante's Beatrice in the Divine
Comedy. Etienne Gilson also insists that Dante's complex
historical characters are qualitatively different from the
figures of personification-allegory. That Dante employs both
in the Divine Comedy should not, Gilson suggests, deter us
from distinguishing sharply between the two. Though we should
not hesitate, he comments, to assign Geryon of the Inferno
the abstract qualities of greed and fraud wherever he appears,
we cannot legitimately treat the figure of Virgil in the same
way simply because on the narrative level his actions and
character have "the resilient, varied, often unpredictable
unity of those of a concrete living being."[146] Dante's fig-
ures do often have association with abstract of typical
meanings, but their fictive natures are too rich and complex
to serve merely as signs for abstract ideals. Beatrice,
although she has association with the concept of Revelation,
Wisdom, Truth, the Churcn, and/or the Contemplative Life,[147]

---

[145] De Lubac, Exégèse Mediévale II, second partie, p. 206.

[146] Gilson, Dante, p. 294.

[147] See Edward Moore, Studies in Dante: Seconde Series
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), pp. 79-151, for an excel-
lent discussion of the different theories regarding Beatrice.

is not primarily any one of these, but the living individual which Dante creates. Edward Moore points out that Dante seems to take pains to add historical detail to his narrative in the mention of Beatrice's exact age and dates, in the reference to her father and friend in the _Vita Nuova_, in the representation of her literal death in the Purgatorio, and in her assignment to a definitive place in heaven along with other historical characters. Even Geryon, although he does not have the fleshly reality of Beatrice or Virgil, is placed within a Christian schema which embraces the whole of history. Dante centers on the historical essence of his fictive beings, on their individual reality, and this is the starting-point for any association or meaning they have beyond history.

We must remind ourselves at this point that in referring to the historical essence of Dante's characters, we are not insisting that they be either imitations of historical figures or that Dante himself considered his own characterizations as historically real. What we are saying is that Dante treats the figures of Dante, Virgil, Beatrice, Cato, Ulysses, etc., _as_ historically real and _as_ participants in a historical plan which includes and reaches beyond earthly history. It is his understanding of, and commitment to the Christian vision of man which makes this fictive reality possible. As Singleton puts it: The fiction of the _Divine Comedy_ is that it is not a fiction."[148]

---

[148]Charles Singleton, "The Irreducible Dove," _Comparative Literature_ 9 (Spring, 1957), 129.

Perhaps the clearest example of Dante's capacity for stressing both the historical life of a character and his place in the universal plan of Christian history is the figure of Statius in the _Purgatorio_ XXI and XXII.[149] Dante establishes Statius' historical identity immediately with a clear mention of his literary productions. The scene which follows has been noted by many critics as a masterpiece of dramatic realism--Statius, not recognizing his mentor in Virgil, seeks the reason for Dante's knowing smile when he involuntarily praises the great Latin poet. Virgil, however, forbids Dante to reveal his identity to Statius, who asks why Dante is smiling. Dante, caught in the middle of Virgil's modesty and Statius' question, experiences an extremely human moment of social embarrassment, until Virgil releases him from silence. This subtle bit of realistic human drama sets the scene for a far greater drama on the Christian level-- the story of Statius' conversion to Christianity. This story, in keeping with the Christian method of characterization we have outlined in this study, gains much in psychological truth and dramatic suspense through the historical reality of the literal action.

Other aspects of this episode reinforce the historical reality of Statius' reactions on the literal level. In keeping with the Christian understanding of character as a process of development containing within itself the possibility

---

[149]Dante, _The Divine Comedy_, trans. H. R. Huse (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1954), pp. 265-274.

of substantial change, Statius describes his own conversion to Christianity in terms of a progression. He is first attracted to Christianity through his own pagan studies of history and poetry. His thirst after the everlasting kingdom hinted at in Virgil's Fourth Eclogue leads him to association with the new preachers of the word, the martyrs of the early faith. Statius finds these martyrs to be kindred spirits and is drawn into belief. His conversion causes a real change in his behavior and perspective, which he describes as an enlightenment of his total being. The content of this enlightenment is definitely orthodox in nature, a fact which Virgil makes clear in his insistence on the insufficiency of good deeds in the working of grace: "It does not appear that you as yet had faith, without which good deeds are insufficient" (Purgatorio, XXII, ll. 59-60).[150] This represents a clear departure from the theological orientation of the Romance of the Rose, where Nature offers a decidedly rationalistic concept of the way to salvation:

> But I know very well that it is quite true that however the heavens work to give them those natural ways that incline them to do those things that drew them to this end, obedient to material that goes about to bend their hearts in this way, even so, they can, through teaching, through clean, pure nourishment, by following and good company that is endowed with sense and virtues, or through certain remedies, provided they are good and pure and also through goodness of understanding, they can, I say, obtain another result, provided that, like intelligent people, they have bridled their natural ways. For when a man or woman wants to

---

[150]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 271.

> turn his spirit away from his own nature, against his
> good and against right, Reason can turn him back, pro-
> vided that he believes in her alone (Romance of the Rose,
> ll. 17064-17077).[151]

The Statius episode in Dante has no such overtones of classi-
cal humanism. Man finds salvation through the painful process
of repentance and faith, and Statius' characterization is
utterly tied up with the definition of reality which informs
the Christian understanding of history.

In fact, this entire episode, permeated as it is with
Statius' devotion and respect for Virgil, glows with a
warmth and human color not to be found in the tradition of
personification--allegory which springs from the Greek vision
of reality. Dante himself seems uncannily aware of the
humanity of his figures. As Statius bends to embrace Vir-
gil, the older poet warns him that such affection is not pos-
sible between the shades of the underworld. Statius, reply-
ing, seems to catch the essence of our reaction to Dante's
masterful characterizations:

> Now you can understand
> The greatness of the love that warms me
> For you when I forget our emptiness
> And consider a shade as a solid thing.
>   (Purgatorio XXI, ll. 133-36)[152]

Almost, we feel, does Dante persuade us that his beings are
real, that this episode in the Purgatorio did, or will happen, or
is happening. His characters, like the shades of this
episode, are always on the verge of transforming themselves

---

[151]Jean de Meun, Romance of the Rose, pp. 286-287.

[152]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 269.

into "solid things" through the great power of divine and human love which permeates every aspect of Dante's celestial vision.

Dante's capacity for creating the illusion of historical reality in his characters can be seen to have strong affinities with the orthodox exegetical tradition which we have described in this chapter. Although he cannot be said to have written historical truth in the same way that the writers of Holy Scripture wrote historical truth, Dante clearly creates his characters in the spirit of the orthodox strain of exegesis which begins in the words of Jesus and St. Paul and runs through Tertullian, Ireneaus, and Augustine up to Aquinas. Dante's figures first invite our total participation in their reality on a literal level. If their meaning then widens into an infinity beyond earthly history, it is only after they have had a thorough grounding in the particulars of earthly existence. In Dante we catch a glimpse of eternity, but we see it only through the _summa_ of the created world. As such, his poetic creations represent a continuation of that emphasis on the literal level of the text which we see in the earliest orthodox exegetes, men for whom the truth of the Incarnation was the source of all meaning.

CHAPTER V

CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES ON MEDIEVAL LITERARY THEORY:
RESULTING EFFECTS ON THE PROBLEM OF FIGURATIVE
EXPRESSION IN CHARACTERIZATION

In the preceding chapter I have attempted to trace the
Greek-Platonic and Judeo-Christian perspectives on reality
through their manifestation in the exegetical tradition from
the first century up to the age of Chaucer. At the end of the
chapter I demonstrated how the two different understandings of
allegorical interpretation which result from the two perspec-
tives affected the presentation of character in two influen-
tial works of the medieval period, particularly in regard to
the emphasis placed on historical realism on the literal
level of the text. More generally, I noted the continuing
presence of philosophical and theological elements which seem
to go hand in hand (as demonstrated in chapters II and III),
with either the Greek-Platonic understanding of reality or the
orthodox Judeo-Christian perspective.

In this chapter I will attempt to assess the extent to
which elements from either the Greek-Platonic or Judeo-Christian
perspectives on reality manifest themselves in the tradition
of literary criticism which informs the Middle Ages, especially
as it relates to the medieval understanding of characteriza-
tion, and more particularly to Chaucerian characterization.
The study will cover representative authors from four major

groups of theorists leading up to the age of Chaucer. These will include the literary theorists of the early Christian period (involving Martianus Capella, Cassiodorus, Macrobius, Statius, Bede, Isidore and others); the Neo-Platonic theorists of the twelfth century including most of the artists associated with the School of Chartres (Bernardus Silvestris, William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres, Bernard of Tours, John of Salisbury, Alain de Lille, and Hugh of St. Victor); the poetic theorists of the later 12th and 13th centuries (Matthew of Vendome, John of Garland, Goeffrey of Vinsauf, Evrard of Bethune, and Gervaise de Melkley); and those theorists and artists most immediately relevant to Chaucer (Dante, Boccaccio and Ovid).

In the first three chapters of this study I have developed a rationale for the method of analysis employed in this chapter. In accordance with that rationale, analysis of the theories will be carried on with an eye to isolating the philosophical and allegorical elements, both explicit and implicit, which have been shown to bear directly on the approach to characterization taken by certain medieval artists and theorists. It has been demonstrated in Chapter II that the Philosophical and allegorical elements involved in a Greek-Platonic perspective (except in the case of comic characterization, which, where allowed at all, is governed by careful theoretical restrictions) tends to foster a universalized or "typicalized" character whose historical reality is unclear. It has been demonstrated in Chapter III, on the other hand, that

the philosophical and allegorical elements which inform the
Christian view of reality offer a solid basis for the creation
of character which has a three-dimensional quality, what we
have referred to earlier as a sense of felt historical life.
The analysis will be carried on within the framework of the
comparison between the classical and Christian views of
characterization which has been operative throughout this
dissertation.

The following questions should serve to define the broad
areas covered by the analysis and to summarize the specific
issues which are relevant to this study:

1. What is the view of history represented in the
    theory? Is there an awareness, for example, of a
    providential plan in history despite the working of
    chance? Is earthly history taken seriously at all
    as material for what is considered the good life?
    How is salvation understood? Is there an emphasis
    on salvation in the Christian sense of a commitment
    to the person of Christ, or is salvation consid-
    ered more in the Greek sense of a gradual throwing
    off of bodily individuality?

2. In this light, what is the extent of the notion of
     individuality which is operative in this theory?
    Is there evidence of the Christian understanding of
    the essential union of spirit and body in man and a
    consequent emphasis on man's actions in historical

life as important to his nature? Or is there more
of an emphasis on the character's innate nature,
on his "pre-existent essence?" In other words, is
fate emphasized over free will? Is man seen as a
rational being, capable of choices which define and
affect both his historical and his eternal destiny?
Or is he viewed as a static moral essence which is
essentially incapable of development? What is the
consequent view of dramatic conflict and character
motivation revealed by this theory? (Is the essence
of dramatic conflict seen to be the character's
attempted escape from his inevitable destiny (Greek
view) or in his free choice or rejection of the
person of Christ (Christian view)? What is the
resulting view of judgment which the theory might
display? Does it, in emphasizing real moral choice
and real moral evil, assume a real judgment (Chris-
tian view), or does it de-emphasize judgment and
soften the orthodox position? On a more particu-
lar level, is there any evidence that the theorist
treats the elements of characterization (dress, ges-
ture, verbal patterns, etc.) as a means for the
enhancement of character motives in action? Or
does the theorist view dress, rhetorical gesture,
etc., only for rhetorical effect--as a means of
enhancing the universal type of character which
is being described?

3. In conjunction with the Christian understanding
   of human nature and the possibility of sinful
   behavior in the most sterling character, does the
   theory allow for presentation of extremes of good
   and evil behavior in one character? Does it allow
   for the depiction of substantial development of
   character, or is all characterization static, with
   no mixture of style allowed? In this light, what
   is the view of comic characterization held by the
   theorist?

4. Finally, what can be gleaned from the theory about
   the author's view of allegory and symbol? How impor-
   tant is the literal level of the narrative? Is
   there an objective referent for the allegory or
   symbol used, and what is the content of that refer-
   ent?

It will be evident that not all the questions formu-
lated here can be applied with equal success to each theory
treated in this chapter; however, application of even a few
of the questions to relevant material should yield useful
information for assessing the general philosophical orienta-
tion of the theory described, an orientation which has been
shown to be relevant to characterization.

It will also become apparent that the study of the
medieval critical tradition involves some problems unique to
the period. J. W. H. Atkins has pointed out, for example,

that there is some truth to the belief that "intellectual
conditions during the Middle Ages were such as to militate
against the adoption of a critical attitude toward life in
general."[1]   The authority of Rome and Scripture, the uncertain
state of the vernacular, the predominance of logical studies
in the medieval curriculum and (what Atkins refers to as the
"most serious" problem)--the relative ignorance of the
classics, all serve to retard the critical acumen of the
Middle Ages.   In addition, the critical tradition, along
with other great western literary traditions is still in the
process of formation.   Great changes in literary theory and
practice are taking place on all sides: the changeover from
a quantitative system of versification to accentual-syllabic
forms, the development of "courtly love," and the gradually
increasing stature of the vernacular.   Through all of this,
the critical tradition is also in the process of development.
But, as Atkins points out, critical theory is usually found
scattered in other material of a predominately literary or
philosophical nature.[2]   Often, as we pointed out in Chap-
ter IV, theory is closely, even inextricably, intertwined
with the exegetical tradition, and must be approached through
that perspective.   Buried in material of this sort, theoret-
ical criticism is difficult to find and more difficult to

---

[1]J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The
Medieval Phase (Cambridge: The University Press, 1943),
p. 1.

[2]Atkins, p. 5.

assess. Formal treatises on rhetoric or poetry, although they have some manifestation in Bede, Alcuin, and the grammatical tradition, do not appear in force until the 12th century, when Matthew of Vendome writes the Ars Versificatoria (c. 1175). Most of the critical theory in the Middle Ages exists as commentary which is, as Atkins put it, "casually introduced" into other material.

The medieval habit of incorporating critical theory into philosophical, literary, and theological material of varying sorts can facilitate the kind of study I attempt here. The physical proximity of statements which reveal the philosophical orientation of the author with the actual critical comment of characterization following close after can be illuminating. In addition, the philosophical statement itself can often be as illuminating for the study of characterization as explicit commentary on the subject.

One of the purposes of the analysis attempted in this chapter will be to assess the nature of Christian and classical influences on the literary theory of the day. J. W. H. Atkins has commented that a great many of the classical literary doctrines represented by Cicero's De Inventione, the Pseudo-Ciceronian Ad Herrenium, Quintillian's De Institutio Oratoria, Aristotle's Rhetoric, and Horace's Ars Poetica are funnelled into the middle Ages through a predominately Christian line of exegetes and encyclopedists, including Isidore, Bede, and Augustine. In fact, Atkins regards the Roman tradition as weak in itself (there is little evidence to suggest,

for example, that Aristotle's Poetics were known in Europe before the 15th century, and Chalcidius' fourth-century translation of Plato's Timaeus is the only pure Platonic document available), and as having little influence in the face of the overpowering authority carried by the exegetical tradition. Not only were Greco-Roman documents scarce, but the classical works which were cherished, according to Atkins, "stood nearest in spirit to Christianity, and were therefore of use for doctrinal purposes."[3]

Atkins' argument, as he himself points out,[4] has most weight when one is describing the early Christian tradition. Even so I have demonstrated earlier in this study that even in its earliest stages the exegetical tradition was not free from classical influence and that a distinction between the classical and Christian approaches to life and literature are evident even within the larger orthodox tradition from the earliest centuries on. A study of literary theory with a focus on characterization from the time of Macrobius and Augustine reveals a Greco-Roman tradition which, in its substance, is alive and flourishing side-by-side with orthodox Christianity right up to the age of Chaucer. Chaucer himself reflects the continuing conflict of the two world-views, and analysis of the critical traditions which affected him can give a great deal of insight into that conflict, and into its effect on his own approach to characterization.

---

[3] Atkins, p. 14.

[4] Atkins, p. 9. He comments that secular humanism has a positive value attached to it by the time of Chaucer.

Platonism in various forms comprised a large part of the classical tradition which informed the Middle Ages. In addition to Chalcidius' fourth-century translation of Plato's Timaeus, Platonic influences sift into the medieval period primarily through the Platonized treatises of Apuleius (De Platone et Eius Dogmate, De Mundo), Pseudo-Apuleius (Asclepius), Boethius, Martianus Capella, and Macrobius.[5] These treatises later became major sources for the Chartrian Platonism of the twelfth century.

Martianus Capella

Of the early Neo-Platonic rhetorical treatises, those of Boethius, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella have the greatest influence on Chaucer. Although most scholars date Martianus' De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et De Septem Artibus Liberalibus according to the terminal year of A.D. 439 when the Vandals took Carthage, Lou Conklin[6] suggests that Martianus probably lived and wrote much earlier; Conklin gauges as early as the last half of the third century and the first part of the fourth, based on Martianus' use of the name Byzantium in reference to Constantinople, whose name was not changed until 330 A.D.[7] If Conklin is right,

[5]Ernst R. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1953) p. 108.

[6]Lou Conklin, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, The Fifth Book (De Rhetorica) of the De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et De Septem Artibus Liberalibus, trans. Lou Conklin (Master's Thesis, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1928), p. 1.

[7]Conklin, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, De Nuptiis, pp. 6-7.

Martianus is the earliest of the three most important car-
riers of Platonism during the dark ages.

Martianus has received wide attention for his general
role as preserver of classical antiquity in European schools
of the fifth through the eleventh centuries (especially in
Brittany, France and Ireland), for his role as probable
originator of the concept of the seven liberal arts (the med-
ieval quadrivium and trivium), and for his later importance
to the twelfth-century School of Chartres and the allegorical
traditions of the later Middle Ages. Some scholars believe
that Martianus was probably a lawyer who had something to do
with the proconsul's office in the city of Carthage, and who
taught and wrote about the rhetoric of his profession on the
side.[8] Others, taking into account his turgid Latin style,
hold that Martianus was a poor farmer who happened to have
received enough of an education to compose his masterpiece
the De Nuptiis, but who lacks the polish of earlier rhe-
toricians.[9] Martianus modelled the De Nuptiis primarily
after Varro and Cicero, although there are traces of Petron-
ius, Apuleius, Priscian, Solinus, Euclid and Quintillian in
the work.[10] Structured according to Varro's Satires, the

---

[8]Martianus Capella, "The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella,"
translated and introduced by William Harris Stahl, with a
study of the allegory and the verbal disciplines by Richard
Johnson with E. L. Burge in Martianus Capella and the Seven
Liberal Arts, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press,
1971), I:17.

[9]Conklin, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, De Nup-
tiis, p. 1.

[10]Conklin, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, De Nup-
tiis, p. 13.

De Nuptiis is written in the form of a Menippean Satura
(partly in verse, partly in prose), and is divided into nine
books, of which the first two cover the marriage of Philology
and Mercury, and the remaining seven, the seven liberal arts.
It will be helpful to summarize the general content of the
allegory here.

In the first book, Mercury announces his desire to
marry, but refuses the first set of prospects offered him.
Virtus suggests that he go to Apollo for help, and Apollo
chooses Philology as his proper bride. Virtus, Mercury, and
Apollo then set out to gain permission from Jupiter for the
marriage. Jupiter, unable to make up his mind on the issue,
refers the matter to an assembly of married gods and goddesses.
With the exception of Discordia and Seditia, who are barred
from the proceedings, the gods (all allegorical figures)
agree to the marriage with the stipulation that Philology
must be made immortal. Jupiter commands that all the gods
be present at the ceremony, and the first book ends.

In the opening of the Second Book, Philology attempts
to find out whether or not her marriage is suitable by reckon-
ing up the numbers connected with her name and Mercury's.
The solution is favorable and she goes to her mother Phron-
esis for preparation. The Muses then begin to sing, and
Philology takes her place. The Three Graces appear and kiss
the bride; the first on her forehead; the second on her mouth,
the third on her breast (grace will be upon her sight, her

tongue, her spirit). Athanasia informs Philology that Jupiter says she must be carried to the gods in a royal litter, but that she cannot be so carried until a heavy load is removed from her heart. Philology rids herself of the burden by reading a script which she has under her arm. She then drinks the cup of immortality given her by Apotheosis, and is carried toward the place of Jupiter. Juno Pronuba acts as her guide the rest of the way. When they arrive, Philology takes her place with the Muses and Mercury stands by the side of Pallas. Phronesis presents the wedding gifts and reads Poppaean Law. Phoebus arises and brings seven handmaidens (the seven liberal arts) from Mercury's servants as attendants to the bride. Each of the handmaidens presents a digest of the art she represents to her gods.[11]

On a philosophical level, the shape of Martianus' allegory reveals the Neo-Platonic influence which drifts in from his sources. For Martianus, communion with the gods and immortality are won only as man cultivates the seven liberal arts which alone have the power to lift him to classical ideals of concord and propriety and finally to the realm of the eternal verities. The union of learning (Philology) and eloquence (Mercury) is a symbol of this goal; man attains salvation as he gains and exercises knowledge of the trivium and the quadrivium. Stahl compares this conception of salvation with the Christian view:

---

[11]Taken from Conklin's summary, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, De Nuptiis, pp. 9-12.

...whereas the Christian attains salvation by faith, trust in God's mercy, and love manifested in deeds,-- none of which virtues demand intellectual gifts--the men who in Martianus' system attain immortality are (with the exception of Hercules) men whose wisdom in matters of religious lore, agriculture and technology, or the seven arts, has benefitted mankind. The idea that an untutored peasant, by the mere quality of his love for God and His creatures, may attain sanctity and eternal bliss, is alien to Martianus; immortality in his eyes is earned by fame won through service, not by love or innocence alone.[12]

The understanding of salvation presented by Martianus in the De Nuptiis thus elevates the arts and their cultivation to a position of great authority where they receive the suprahuman sanction of the gods themselves. Such a view of the arts and salvation as we shall see later, vies with the Christian understanding during the centuries leading up to Chaucer.

Martianus' thoroughly classical understanding of the process of salvation is matched by an equally classical conception of the nature and power of destiny in the life of man. Stahl points out that in early sections of the De Nuptiis men are aided or impeded by fate in their attempt to achieve immortality (Sections 11-15, 21-22, 32, 88). Fate, in turn, directs the decisions of the gods (18, 64-65, 68-69). Man may strive to influence the fates through intellectual prowess, but his own destiny rests ultimately on their whim. Although this fatalistic philosophy is most evident in the early books of the De Nuptiis, we find an echo of the view

-----

[12]Stahl, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, The Quadrivium, p. 88.

in the fifth book under the section dealing with "kinds of proof." Martianus describes the type "proofs deduced from effects" in terms of an example which reveals the old classical attitude toward destiny:

> Proof is deduced from effects when there is some uncertainty in a case, as when the existence of fate is proved by the fact that men stay alive even when they are unwilling to. For fate is the source of life and death, and the ability to live or die is determined by des-iny. (Section 494)[13]

Thus Martianus explains the concept of "proof deduced from effects" through an example clearly based on common acceptance of the notion of destiny. Stahl points out that this fatalistic conception of universal processes precludes the suggestion of initiation into a mystery or of Divine intercession which are found in the Christian perspective.[14]

Martianus also follows a typically classical pattern in his discussion of the function of moral character in the process of declamation. In section 545, Martianus exhorts lawyers and advocates to gain the good will of the jurors "by our portrayal of the facts of character--either that of ourselves, or our opponents," and goes on to elaborate on the usefulness of the rhetorician's reputation in advancing a case.[15] This recognition of the function of information on the moral standing of a given character, and especially of the

---

[13]Martianus Capella, The Quadrivium, p. 74.

[14]Stahl, "Introduction" to Martianus Capella, The Quadrivium, p. 89.

[15]Martianus Capella, The Quadrivium, p. 109.

rhetorician himself, may be seen as a later version of the classical emphasis on the character of the poet and the rhetorician which we see in Horace and Cicero (Stahl points out, however, that Martianus does not seem to have the same degree of emphasis on personal moral conduct which we see in the earlier rhetoricians).[16]

Martianus' explanation of the kinds of narrative also follows closely on his classical models. Robert Hollander[17] points out that the categories of section 550 and 551 are modelled after the pseudo-Ciceronian Ad Herrenium. In those sections, Martianus distinguishes between history, fable, argument, and civil or judicial evidence:

> History is like Livy; fable is neither true, nor like truth as for instance, 'Daphne turned to a tree;' argument, in this connection is not fact, but contains things which could be facts, as in comedy, 'a father is feared,' or 'a prostitute is loved;' judicial narration is the exposition of actual deeds or of deeds which have the semblance of truth.[18]

Later in this study we find the same distinction between history and fable, and argument or comedy and legal evidence in Macrobius, who elaborates on them in far greater detail. Unlike what we will see in Macrobius, Martianus does not go on to explicitly defend the use of imaginary setting and character as proper vehicles for ideal truth. However, from

---

[16]Stahl, p. 897.

[17]Robert Hollander, Allegory in Dante's Commedia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 258.

[18]Martianus Capella, The Quadrivium, p. 111.

his own use of a fabulous setting and allegorical characters
in the De Nuptiis, we may assume that his idea of what con-
stitutes a "truthful representation" implicitly coincides
with that of Macrobius, whose Saturnalia and Commentary on
the Dream of Scipio are analyzed in the following section.

Macrobius

We have already noted that of the early Neo-Platonic
allegorists, the works of Boethius, Macrobius and Martianus
Capella have the greatest influence on Chaucer. Of the three,
William Harris Stahl rates Macrobius, apart from Chalcidus,
"the most important source of Platonism in the Latin West."[19]
Stahl's refusal to consider Boethius in this assessment is
perhaps a result of his observation that Macrobius represents
a purer brand of Neo-Platonism than the highly Christianized
Boethius. Macrobius, although he probably lived during the
Christian reign of the emperor Honorius, makes not a single
reference to Christianity in any of his works. Because of
his reputed position as an official in the court of a Chris-
tian emperor, Stahl thinks Macrobius may have been a Christian
with "strong pagan influence" when he wrote the Commentary.[20]
However, if this is true, Macrobius yet shows no signs of
that "inward Christianization" of which de Lubac speaks in
his study of allegory in the Middle Ages. E. R. Curtius,

---

[19]William Harris Stahl, "Introduction" to Macrobius,
Commentary on the Dream of Scipio (New York: Columbia Uni-
versity Press, 1952), p. 10.

[20]Stahl, "Introduction" to Macrobius, Commentary, p. 7.

in fact, designates him a "pagan Neo-Platonist" and makes no
reference to his Christian office.[21]

Macrobius' Neo-Platonic world-view is demonstrable in
both of his major works, the Commentary on the Dream of
Scipio (written about 410 A.D.) and the Saturnalia, (written
sometime after the Commentary). We have shown in earlier
chapters that the understanding of history put forth by a
given author has much to do with his conception of individual
salvation. If earthly history is seen as something good,
or at least redeemable (as in the Christian view) then there
is the possibility for a substantial redemption of the indi-
vidual personality in history. If earthly history is viewed
as something evil, and the body as something to be rejected,
then the redemption of the individual consists in escaping
from earthly history and rising up to a state of undifferen-
tiated communication with the eternal ideals.

We remember, too, that in the Christian view of history,
salvation consists in an encounter with and a decision for
or against the person of Jesus Christ. In the classical view
it consists in a "good moral life" or a gradual ascent from
the body through moral goodness to the universals. (Although
morality is part of the orthodox Christian message, it must
follow rather than precede the inner conversion effected by
faith in Christ.) The relative emphasis on morality, and
the definition of "salvation" as a gradual ascent toward

---

[21]Curtius, p. 443.

moral purity in the Greek-Platonic view results in a de-
emphasis on historical choice and a greater accent on fate
as the governing force in the universe. It also results in
a more sanguine view of judgment in the afterlife; where
there is a weakening of the concept of the autonomous will,
there is a concurrent rise in doctrines which proclaim the
"salvability of all" as Origen put it. The results of all
this for characterization, we remember, is that characters
which spring from the soil of Greek philosophy tend to have
some sort of didactic purpose. Following as they do in the
Greek tradition of idealized characters created for the pur-
poses of moral instruction, the characters follow exemplary
and typicalized patterns of personality and action. They
can thus be said to have less historical life than charac-
ters created out of a Christian frame of reference, where
the emphasis is not on ideality, but on a specific individual's
interaction with his creator.

In Macrobius, although there is no direct reference to
characterization, we find substantial evidences of the general
Greek philosophy in regard to history and art. In the first
place, Macrobius' conception of the relation between God and
man is conceived of in terms of the typical archetypal pat-
tern, and follows the Neo-Platonic definition of the <u>Nous</u>:

> God, who both is and is called the First Cause, is alone
> the beginning and source of all things which are which
> seem to be. He, in a bounteous outpouring of His
> greatness, created from Himself Mind. The Mind,
> called <u>nous</u> as long as it fixes its gaze upon the
> Father, retains a complete likeness of its creator,
> but when it looks away at things below creates from

        itself Soul. Soul, in turn, as long as it contem-
plates the Father, assumes his part, but by diverting
its attention more and more, though itself incorporeal,
degenerates into the fabric of bodies.[22]

We have here not only the Neo-Platonic notion of archetypes,

but a hint of the typical Neo-Platonic distrust of the body.

The idea of an escape from the prison of the fleshly shell

is scattered throughout Macrobius--usually in conjunction

with a gradual attainment of moral perfection.[23]   In fact,

the idea of salvation is tied up in the effort to become

morally perfect. Eternal reward, writes Macrobius, comes

only as the result of a life of virtuous duty. He quotes

Paulus' advice to Scipio on a life of duty as prerequisite

to ascent into the afterlife:

        But Scipio, cherish justice and your obligations to
duty, as your grandfather here and I, your father, have
done; this is important where parents and relatives are
concerned; but it is of utmost importance in matters
concerning the commonwealth. This sort of life is your
passport into the sky to a union with those who have
finished their lives on earth, and who, upon being
released from their bodies, inhabit that place at
which you are now looking, meaning the Milky Way.[24]

This passage, besides defining salvation in terms of a

gradual moral ascent to the universals, contains the famous

"star-imagery" which became a standard medieval metaphor

for heaven.

---

[22]Macrobius, _Commentary_, p. 143.

[23]See Macrobius, _Commentary_, pp. 74-77; 92-93; 120-121;
124-125; 129; 144-145.

[24]Macrobius, _Commentary_, p. 93.

Macrobius continues on with the Neo-Platonic concep-
tion of salvation later, even going so far as to define the
death of the soul as life in the body, and true life as
contemplation of the eternal verities.

It is interesting that the Neo-Platonic notion of the
corruption inherent in bodily life is a theme running through-
out the works of Philo, the Greek exegete who had such influ-
ence on the Christian Platonists of Alexandria (see Chap-
ter IV of this dissertation). One scholar, E. E. Robbins,
has connected Macrobius directly with the Pythagorean Arith-
metical tradition which comes down from Philo.[25] We might
add that Philo's understanding of the disjunction of body
and spirit and his whole allegorical approach form a direct
link as well. Immediately after his statement on the tainted
life of the body, in fact, Macrobius identifies this idea
with the Platonic and Pythagorean traditions he later goes
on to explain in Chapters X-XV.

The most comprehensive statement of the medieval atti-
tude toward suicide occursin Macrobius in the context of
this thoroughly Neo-Platonic world-view. To commit suicide,
writes Macrobius, is to restrict severely the time needed
in life for moral purification: "We must therefore use the
span of life allotted to us in order to get a greater oppor-
tunity of purification."[26]

_____

[25]See E. E. Robbins, "Arithmetic in Philo Judeaus,"
Classical Philology 26 (October, 1931), 345-361.

[26]Macrobius, Commentary, p. 141.

The whole idea of the soul as an entity which, in its union with the flesh, becomes tainted and requires a gradual disassociation with the flesh for salvation gives way to another notion which we have seen throughout the Classical tradition--the notion of the "perfectibility of all mankind." The idea of judgment in Macrobius, as in Origen and Clement, is restricted to a period of purification, where the soul blackened as it is, receives cleansing and finally attains the same perfection as all other souls. This notion is evident in the following passage, where Macrobius again cites the Grandfather's advice to Scipio on the "dutiful life" and the consequences of a life lived on a purely sensual level:

> Indeed, the souls of those who have surrendered them-
> selves to bodily pleasures, becoming their slaves,
> and who in response to sensual passions have flouted
> the laws of Gods and of men, slip out of their bodies
> and hover close to the earth, and return to this
> region only after long ages of torment.[27]

The idea of a "temporary hell," also prevalent, as we pointed out earlier, with the Christian Platonists at Alexandria, is reinforced by an earlier statement by Macrobius to the effect that hell and traditional stories of punishment are "merely allegories and figures representing the distress of the souls of wretched mortals on earth."[28]

What can be gleaned from the Commentary about Macro-bius' approach to allegory and figure also follows in the

---

[27]Macrobius, Commentary, p. 244.

[28]Macrobius, Commentary, p. 15.

classical tradition. Macrobius makes the creation of a properly ideal character the backbone of his argument for the use of allegorical fiction in expounding philosophical truth. Replying to those critics who denounce the use of "imaginary character, event, and setting" because it is not a straightforward representation of the truth, Macrobius writes that one must make a distinction between the kinds of fiction allowable. One group of artists, he comments, uses fables "in order to gratify the ear only;" another group uses them in order to "encourage the reader to good works."[29]

The second main group is also subdivided by Macrobius into two smaller groups; one in which both the setting and plot are fictitious (for example, Aesop's Fables) and one in which the argument of the story is true, but is carried out in a fictitious style.[30] Of this second type of "virtuous fiction," Macrobius allows only a "decent and dignified conception of holy truths, with respectable events and characters," and denounces any allegory which presents the gods as adulterers and malefactors of every sort. Here we see the same emphasis on ideality which was evident in early classical commentaries on Homer. Unlike some of those commentaries, however, Macrobius does not go to great lengths to cover up or heal indecent fables of the gods, but simply exhorts the literary artist to the creation of morally blameless character in the first place.

---

[29] Macrobius, Commentary, p. 84.

[30] Macrobius, Commentary, p. 85.

Macrobius' only mention of comedy in the Commentary comes in this same section and his attitude toward it reveals a weaker but still discernibly Platonic attitude. Although he is not as harsh on comedy as Plato, he yet places it in his first and inferior main grouping--those fables written only for gratification of the ear--and later relegates it to the "children's nursery" because such forms are unworthy to bear philosophical truth.[31] This attitude, we may speculate, has something to do with the fact that comedy in the classical view, although not specifically harmful within certain limits, still depicts human error in a way not totally acceptable to a theorist solidly within the Platonic tradition.

When dealing with the highest philosophical mysteries-- those ideals completely untainted by the human error depicted in comedy and beyond comprehension even through allegorical fiction--Macrobius writes that only analogy and simile are appropriate for their transmission to ordinary mortals. The highest truths, in fact, can only be known by revelation to "eminent men of superior intelligence;" others must satisfy their desire for truth by going through dramatic ritual.[32] In this idea we see more than a trace of the old Platonic idea of a moral hierarchy in which only the best man can receive enlightenment in the highest sense. We see this same attitude in the Saturnalia, where Macrobius seems to

---

[31]Macrobius, Commentary, p. 84.

[32]Macrobius, Commentary, p. 87.

see himself as reasonably far up on the scale of moral--and thus poetic--comprehension. Speaking of Virgil's _Aeneid_ he writes:

> But we, who claim to have a finer taste, shall not suffer the secret places of this sacred poem to remain concealed, but we shall examine the approaches to its hidden meanings and throw open its inmost shrine for the worship of the learned. (_Saturnalia_ I. 24. 13)[33]

The Macrobius criterion for distinguishing the three kinds of literary form (i.e., the pure fable, gratifying only to the ear; the mixed fable which draws men toward virtuous behavior under a guise of pleasing fiction; and the pure truth, which is received only through mystic enlightenment and transmitted to others only by means of simile and analogy--for example Plato's comparison of the Idea of the Good with the Sun) is at base a philosophical one founded on his understanding of the moral hierarchy of literary styles, and, as we have seen in Horace and Cicero, on the moral character of the artist himself.

The very conception of allegorical poetry in Macrobius also follows the classical pattern--that of an inner philosophical truth covered by a veil of fiction for the purposes of hiding the inner truth which only the morally blameless man is fit to receive. Macrobius' exegesis of Virgil in the _Saturnalia_ follows the Greek-allegorical approach in this sense--the works of Virgil are read and explicated in

---

[33]Macrobius, _Saturnalia_, trans. Percival Vaughan Davies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 156.

terms of their didactic content.[34]   In sum, Macrobius demon-
strates those philosophical aspects of the classical world-
view which we have shown in earlier chapters to be relevant
to characterization. In his approach to allegorical method
we have an explicit mention of characterization which is
viewed in light of the didactic which Macrobius sees as the
purpose of all poetry.[35]   Literary characters in Macrobius'
view best serve the individual and the national interest when
they are conceived as ideal moral exempla. Macrobius'
concept of characterization can thus be said to run well
within the classical critical tradition.

St. Augustine

Written within a decade of Macrobius' Commentary, Augus-
tins's well-known De Doctrina Christiana, (begun 395, finished
c. 427) despite some Obvious Platonic influences, forms a
significant contrast in both its philosophical orientation
and its approach to allegory with the former work.

The central doctrinal contrast between these two impor-
tant critical works has to do with the attitude taken toward
the physical body. Whereas in Macrobius "flesh" is defined
as the earthly matter of the body, something to be repudiated

---

[34]Curtius, p. 445.

[35]R. H. Greene agrees. See his comment on Macrobius
in "Alan of Lille's De Planctu Naturae," Speculum 31 (Oct.,
1956), 656: "Macrobius justifies the use of fiction as a
legitimate and apt means by which the lover and teacher of
truth can establish extramundane ideals and sanctions for
virtue among men."

if one is to reach the contemplation of the eternal verities,

in Augustine the "flesh" is defined only as that part of the

whole nature of man which is corrupted by sin. The physical

body is not inherently evil, but only the "unconquered habit

of the flesh."[36] In fact, Augustine speaks directly to the

problem raised by those who seek God through a studied neg-

lect of the body:

> Those who seek to do this (i.e., extinguish bodily
> passions) perversely war on their bodies as though they
> were natural enemies. In this way they have been de-
> ceived by the words, 'The flesh lusteth against the
> spirit; and the spirit against the flesh; for these are
> contrary to one another.' For this was said on account
> of the unconquered habit of the flesh against which the
> spirit has a concupiscence of its own, not that the body
> should be destroyed, but that its concupiscence, which
> is its evil habit, should be completely conquered so
> that it is rendered subject to the spirit as the
> natural order demands.[37]

Here we see that Augustine's understanding of the nature of

man is not built on a rejection of the body, but on a con-

ception of the proper subordination of body to spirit. Thus,

"The spirit does not resist the body in hate, but in a desire

for dominion."[38] In other words, only the concupiscent

desires of the body are evil. The physical flesh itself is

not evil, because man was made in the image of God and will

be restored to his primal state at the Last Judgment, when

all flesh will experience a bodily resurrection. According

---

[36]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robert-
son (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. 21.

[37]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 37.

[38]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 21.

to the Augustinian view, of course, dominion over the con-
cupiscent desires of the flesh is achieved only through the
new birth or the conversion experience, which is based on
the saving action of Christ in history (see On Christian
Doctrine, Chapters XIII, XIV, XIV), and will only be com-
pleted at the Resurrection when "the body will thrive in
complete peace, immortally in subjection to the spirit."[39]

It is interesting that Augustine makes this basic Chris-
tian theology central to his understanding of the three
styles. Though closely following the popular classical
definitions, in Augustine's hand the doctrine of the three
styles receives some interesting new elements. First, Augus-
tine interprets Cicero:

> To these three things--that he should teach, delight,
> and persuade--the author of Roman eloquence himself
> seems to have wished to relate three other things when
> he said, 'He therefore will be eloquent who can speak
> of small things in a subdued manner, of moderate things
> in a temperate manner and of grand things in a grand
> manner.'[40]

Augustine goes on to describe each style: the subdued style
through the example of St. Paul's typological explanation of
the relatively unadorned Sarah-Hagar story in Galatians 4;[41]
the moderate style in terms of a greater number of verbal
ornaments (to illustrate this category, Augustine cites the
rhetorically balanced cadences of Romans 12: 3f);[42]   and

---

[39] Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 21.

[40] Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 145.

[41] Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 146.

[42] Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 150.

the grand style,

> not so much in that it is adorned with verbal orna-
> ments, but in that it is forceful with emotions of
> the spirit....it is carried along by its own impetus,
> and if the beauties of eloquence occur they are
> caught up by the force of the things discussed and
> not deliberately assumed for decoration.[43]

For this style, Augustine uses the example of St. Paul in

II Cor. 6:2-11: "Behold now is the acceptable time; behold,

now is the day of salvation."

Thus Augustine builds his entire description of the

three styles and their relative importance on their ability

to persuade the hearer; and for Augustine, that persuasion

can be said to have only one end--the conversion of those

who hear to the Christian faith. This is clear not only

from his selected examples, but also in his discussion of

the character of the orator, which follows closely on the

previous section. As in Horace, Quintillian and Cicero,

Augustine puts great stock in the moral conduct of the speaker,

but from a specifically Biblical perspective:

> However, the life of the speaker has greater weight
> in determining whether he is obediently heard than any
> grandness of eloquence. For he who speaks wisely and
> eloquently, but lives wickedly, may benefit many stu-
> dents, although it is written, he 'is unprofitable
> to his own soul.'[44]

The speaker's ability to persuade the hearer to conversion is

what is foremost in Augustine's mind here, a fact which is

again evident from his references to Jesus' comment in

---

[43]Augustine, <u>On Christian Doctrine</u>, p. 150.

[44]Augustine, <u>On Christian Doctrine</u>, p. 164.

Mark 8:36: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

It is interesting, too, that Augustine's attitude toward art in general is far more relaxed than the typical classical humanist, who often tends to see training in the arts as a necessary prerequisite to moral enlightenment. In contrast, Augustine makes much over his belief that although training in rhetoric can be helpful in Scriptural exegesis, it is not necessary to have rhetorical training in order to use the colors of rhetoric,[45] nor, in his opinion, is it necessary for one to be eloquent in order to be wise.[46] Later, Augustine writes that eloquence and rhetoric are "not in themselves good to pursue," and that "we do not hold them to be of such importance that we would wish mature and grave men to spend their time learning them."[47]

Augustine's more Biblical treatment of the arts, is also reflected in his approach to characterization. In the De Doctrina we do not find the classical concern for presenting

---

[45]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 103.

[46]cf. chapter III, 29, Augstine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 103: "And not only examples of all these tropes are found in reading the sacred books, but also the names of some of them like allegoria, aenigma, parabola. And yet almost all of these tropes, said to be learned in the liberal arts, find a place in the speech of those who have never heard the lectures of grammarians and are content with the usage of common speech."

[47]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 117.

exemplary figures in a morally flattering light. Throughout

the discussion of the character of David in chapters XIX-

XXIII, Augustine makes no attempt to gloss over David's moral

irresponsibility. In fact, he defends the depiction of

David's sin on theological grounds:

> If he (the believer) reads of the sins of great men,
> even though he can see and verify in them figures of
> future things, he may put the nature of the things
> done to this use, that he will never hear himself
> boast of his own virtuous deeds and condemn others
> from the vantage of his righteousness when he sees in
> such men the tempests that are to be shunned and the
> shipwrecks that are to be lamented....The sins of these
> men have been recorded for a reason and that is that
> the lesson of the apostle may be everywhere momentous,
> where he says, 'He that thinketh himself to stand,
> let him take heed lest he fall.' There is hardly a
> page in the Holy Books in which it is not shown that
> God resists the proud, but to the humble offers grace.[48]

In this passage it is clear that Augustine sees reason for

including the sins of great men in Biblical history. If

they can fail, he suggests, so can we. The repeated emphasis

on man's capacity for evil--even in those characters usually

considered Biblical heros--indirectly reinforces the orthodox

case against reliance on any inherent strength for salva-

tion, and forms the assumption underlying Augustine's under-

standing of character presentation. It also signals a

radical departure from the classical tendency to downplay

or shut out the evils or accidental errors inherent in the

character of exemplary literary figures. Augustine's under-

standing of character evidences the Christian practice of

presenting extremes of character in one individual. This

_____

[48]Augustine, <u>On Christian Doctrine</u>, p. 99.

harks back to the Christian belief that man is capable of great extremes of good and evil and of great and substantial change (i.e., conversion or a fall from grace) within a given lifetime.

It is interesting that in the De Doctrina Christiana, discussion of the representation of evil characters is carried on in the context of a discussion of the possible approaches to the literal text.[49] While commenting on the "miserable servitude" of those persons who cannot get beyond the literal meaning of such words as "sabbath" and "sacrifice,"[50] Augustine yet warns against the opposite trap of treating what is meant to be taken literally in a figurative sense.[51] He then establishes a test for ascertaining whether or not a particular passage of Scripture is literal or figurative:

> And generally this method consists in this: that whatever appears in the Divine Word that does not literally pertain to virtuous behavior pertains to the love of God and of one's neighbor; the truth of faith pertains to a knowledge of God and of one's neighbor.[52]

This passage could be taken to suggest that only the exemplary or virtuous actions of Biblical characters are acceptable as encouraging "virtuous behavior" or the "truth of

---

[49]See Chapter III, 5, Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, pp. 84-88.

[50]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 83.

[51]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 87.

[52]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 88.

faith" in believers. But again, Augustine makes it very clear that this is not the case, insisting that even the actions of sinful Biblical characters are profitable for our edification in the faith. Although careful to insist on the proper use of the representation of evil men in Scripture, (i.e., such representation should ultimately serve as a warning to us—and therefore as an aid to faith), Augustine is never squeamish about the literal level of Biblical history.

He drives home this point by insisting that the Biblical narrative should not be taken on an allegorical or spiritual level alone, even when it offends the contemporary reader's cultural sensibilities. The best allegorical approach takes into full account both the literal and the allegorical levels:

> Therefore although all or almost all of the deeds which
> are contained in the Old Testament are to be taken fig-
> uratively as well as literally, nevertheless the reader
> may take as literal those performed by people who are
> praised, even though they would be abhorrent to the
> custom of the good who follow the divine precepts after
> the advent of the Lord.[53]

Augustine's emphasis on the preservation of the literal level in this passage represents the opposite point of view from those classical exegetes who found it necessary to heal the moral errors of the classical heros with an abstract and completely spiritualized interpretation. Earlier (in Chapter III, p. 49) we pointed out Augustine's concern for the

---

[53]Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 98.

preservation of the literal text in The Trinity, the Sermons, the Contra Faustum, and the De Genesi ad Litteram. Now we see that same concern demonstrated in his most obviously "rhetorical" treatise.

Throughout the De Doctrina Christiana, then, we find the same strong emphasis on historical presentation of reality that we found in other Augustianian writings and in the earliest orthodox exegetes. Although not as elaborately explained as in other passages, there are examples of the typological exegesis of Scripture as well.[54] In sum, while Augustine adheres to the classical rhetorical agenda (general philosophical statements, discussion of the three styles, treatment of allegory), his treatment of this material is entirely Christian in approach. The strong emphasis on the doctrine of the Incarnation, the presentation of good and evil in character, the careful attention paid to the historical level of the text, even where morally distasteful--all these elements play an important part in establishing the background out of which a historically realistic literary figure may develop.

Bede

Bede, the great English scholar of the 7th and 8th centuries deserves mention, along with his famous pupil Alcuin, as a transition-figure in the history of the English critical tradition from the opening of the 8th century through the

---

[54]See XX, 39, and XXI, 45, in Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 146; p. 153.

Carolingian Age. His treatise On the Metrical Arts is highly

technical with few of the philosophical pronouncements which

fill large portions of the rhetorical works of Macrobius

and Augustine. Bede draws heavily from the Latin grammarians

for his theories and is indebted to Fortunatus, Sedulius,

Juvenius, Manitius, and Donatus for the main outlines of his

ideas.[55] The De Metrica is interesting from the perspective

of this study for its interesting blend of elements from both

the classical and Christian approaches to poetry. On the

classical side, there are the long and arduous discussions

of syllables, meter, rhythm, kinds of verse and contrasts

with older forms of verse. On the Christian side, there is

Bede's voluminous use of Biblical examples and his stated

purpose--to "strive to imbue you with the divine writings and

the ecclesiastical statutes, also wisely to instruct you in

the metrical art, which is not unknown in the sacred Scrip-

tures."[56] This statement of purpose, as Robertson points

out in the Preface to Chaucer, constituted an authoritative

word on the treatment of classical literature in the Middle

Ages. Incorporated into canon law by Gratian, Bede's approach

to the subject was often imitated.[57]

---

[55]See Ruby Davis, "Introduction" to Bede, De Arte Metrica (Ph. D. dissertation, Cornell University, June, 1925), p. xxiii.

[56]Bede, De Arte Metrica, p. 77a.

[57]See Robertson, Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 19a.

An example of the interesting blend of classical and
Christian material which often occurs in Bede can be found
in the last chapter (XXV) of the De Arte Metrica, just before
the dedication of the De Schematibus et Tropibus which fol-
lows. It is noteworthy that while Bede uses both classi-
cal and Biblical examples for his explanation of the kinds
of poetry, he yet keeps the distinction between pagan and
Christian literature clear, usually referring in general
terms to "them" and "us." In the Greek view, writes Bede,
there are three forms: (1) active or imitative, (2) exposi-
tory, (3) common or mixed. Bede distinguishes between the
three kinds on the basis of the intrusion of the narrator
into the basic action. In the first category, active or immi-
tative poetry, "speaking personnages are introduced without
the intervention of the poet."[58] For this category, Bede
uses the Song of Songs as an example. In the second category,
or expository poetry, "the poet himself speaks without the
introduction of any personage." The examples Bede selects
for this group are "the three whole books of the Georgics,
and the first part of the fourth, as well as the verses of
Lucretius, and the like," alongside, "among us," the Proverbs,
Ecclesiastes, and the Psalms.[59] In the third type, common or
mixed poetry, "the poet himself speaks and speaking person-
ages are introduced."[60] Examples for this category include

---

[58] Bede, De Arte Metrica, p. 76a.

[59] Bede, De Arte Metrica, p. 76a.

[60] Bede, De Arte Metrica, p. 77a.

The Iliad, the Odyssey, the Aeneid, and "among us" the story

of Job.[61]   While Bede here demonstrates a respect for Classi-

cal literature, Biblical examples dominate the material, and

the distinction between the Sacred Scripture and pagan poetry

remains implicitly clear.

Bede's fundamentally Biblical approach to the subject of

poetry reminds us of St. Augustine's approach in the De Doc-

trina Christiana.   Both of them espouse a similar goal--Bede

to encourage a fellow-deacon to "expend labor on the perusal

of those writings in which we believe we have eternal

life,"[62]   and Augustine to inform fellow-Christians on the

kinds of rhetoric most useful for persuasion to the faith.

The goal of both rhetoricians is the acceptance and deepen-

ing spiritual awareness of the Christian faith among both

believers and non-believers.

Then, too, Augustine and Bede are strongly influenced

by Christianity in their approach to figurative expression.

Both men see the analysis of classical tropes as useful pri-

marily for the discussion of classical literature, and both

demonstrate an understanding of Biblical typology which in

turn influences their approach to the literal level of the

text.   In the De Schematibus et Tropibus, Bede defines a

tropic locution as what is made "when the manner of speaking

is changed from its proper meaning to a figurative resemblance

---

[61]Bede, De Arte Metrica, p. 77a.

[62]Bede, De Arte Metrica, p. 76a.

(or imitation)."[63]   He insists that the Bible is the prece-

dent for the use of figurative language, despite classical

claims to the contrary,[64]   and proceeds to analyze the various

figures of speech used in the Scriptures.

For the purpose of this study, the most significant dis-

cussion concerns the figure aestismos, or as Bede defines it,

"a many-faceted trope, and of numerous virtues, for aestismos

is thought to be whatever dictum that lacks rustic simplicity

and is polished with elegant urbanity." ("Aestismos est tro-

pus multiplex, numerosa   virtutis: nam $\overset{\cdot}{\alpha}\sigma\tau\varepsilon\overset{\cdot\cdot}{\iota}\sigma\mu\grave{o}\varsigma$

putatur quidquid dictum simplicitate rustica caret, et satis

faceta urbanitate expolitem est."[65]   Bede's explanation of

this figure is essentially an explanation of his understand-

ing of the typological approach to Biblical exegesis. He

begins the discussion by distinguishing what is an allegory

in deed (that is, a Scriptural passage which constitutes

---

[63]Bede, De Schematibus et Tropibus, in Patrologiae
Latinae cursus completus, ed. Jean-Paul Migne, 221 vols.
(Turnhout, Belgium: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici,
1844-64), XC:175. (Hereafter this series will be referred
to as PL): "Solet iterum tropica luc tio reperiri, quae fit
translata dictione a propria significatione ad non propriam
similitudinem, necessitas aut ornatus gratia."

[64]"Sed ut cognoscas (dilectissimi fili) cognoscant item
omnes, qui haec legere voluerint, quod sancta Scriptura
caeteris omnibus scripturis non solum antiqitate, quia divina
est, vel utilitate, quia ad vitam ducit aeternam, sed et
antiquitate, et ipsa praeeminet positione dicendi idea
placuit mihi, collectis de ipsa exemplis, ostendere quia
mihil hujus modi schematum, sive troporum valent pretendere
ullis saeculis eloquentiae magistri, quod non illa praeces-
serit." Bede, De Schematibus et Tropibus, in PL, XC, 175.

[65]Bede, De Schematibus et Tropibus, in PL, XC, 184.

historical fact) from an allegory of <u>word</u> alone. According to Bede, an example of an allegory-in-fact is contained in the Genesis account of the Abraham story where it is written that Abraham had two sons, one from a serving-maiden, and one from a free woman. This historical fact, writes Bede, who is imitating St. Paul's exegesis of the same passage in Galatian 4, makes allegorical reference to the two dispensations expressed in the Old and New Testaments.

In contrast, the allegory in word employs a general metaphor, and not a historical deed, to announce either a future historical fact relevant to the Kingdom of God or a tropological or anagogical meaning. In this case, Bede uses the example of Isaiah 11: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse and a flower shall rise up out of its root." He interprets this passage to mean that "through the Virgin Mary the Lord Saviour was born through the root of David" (quo significatur de stirpe David per virginem Mariam Deominum Salvatorem fuisse nasciturum).[66] It is evident from this example, that an "allegory of word" may refer to a future historical fact or a tropological or anagogical meaning. Bede even states this a few sentences later:

> Likewise, again, the allegory of the word or of the deed figuratively denotes sometimes a historical fact, sometimes types, sometimes tropological matter (that is, a moral reason), and sometimes an anagogy (that is, a leading of the senses to higher things).

---

[66]Bede, <u>De Schematibus et Tropibus</u>, <u>PL</u>, XC, 185.

> Item allegoria verbi, sive operis, aliquando histori-
> cam rem, aliquando typicam, aliquando tropologicam,
> id est, moralem rationem, aliquando anagogen, loc est,
> sensum ad superiora ducentem, figurate denuntiat.[67]

Similarly, writes Bede, one historical fact in Scripture may
through allegorical extension indicate another historical
fact which will take place in the future. Thus, writes Bede
"History is figured through history." ("Per Historiam namque
historia figuratur.")[68] Here Bede is clearly describing the
"allegory of the theologians" familiar to Biblical exegetes
from the earliest Christian centuries, in which the first
and literal sense is historical and the second or allegorical
sense is also historical. His example makes this quite
clear:

> Often, in one and the same matter, the historical and
> verbal senses (the mystical sense of Christ or the
> Church), the tropological sense and the anagogical
> senses are all figuratively intimated. For example
> 'the temple of the Lord,' according to history, is
> the temple of Solomon; according to allegory it is the
> Lord's Body, concerning which John said 'Destroy this
> temple and in three days I will raise it up again;'
> (John II) or of His Church, of whom it is said, 'For the
> temple indeed is sanctified by God, which is you.' It
> is understood through tropology as being some of the
> faithful to whom it is said in I Cor. II: 'But don't
> you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit
> which is in you?' The 'Temple of the Lord' through
> anagogy is the dwelling of heavenly joy to which he
> aspired who said, 'blessed are they who dwell in your
> house, Lord, for age after age they will praise you.'
> Likewise is to be taken Psalm 147: Praise God, Jerus-
> alem, Praise your god, Sion; for He has strengthened
> the latches of your gates and blessed your sons in
> you; Concerning the terrestrial city of Jerusalem,
> the Church of Christ, the spirit of the elect, and the

---

[67] Bede, _De Schematibus et Tropibus_, in _PL_, XC, 185.

[68] Bede, _De Schematibus et Tropibus_, in _PL_, XC, 185.

celestial kingdom; according to history, according to allegory, according to tropology, and according to anagogy, it can rightly be received and understood.

(Nonnunquam in una eademque re, vel verbo, historia simul et mysticus de Christo vel Ecclesia sensus, et tropologia, et anagoge, figuraliter intimatur, est: templum Domini, juxta historiam, domus quam aedificavit Solomon; juxta allegoriam, corpus dominicum, de quo ait Joan II: Solvite templum hoc, et in tribus diebus excitabo illud, sive Ecclesia ejus, cui dicitur, Templum enim Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos per tropologiam, quisque fidelium, quibus dicitur I Cor. II; An nescitis quia corpora vestra templum est Spiritus sancti, qui in vobis est? per anagogen, superni gaudii mansiones, cui aspirabat qui ait: Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine, in saeculum saeculi laudabunt te. Simili modo quod dicitur Psalmo CXLVII: Lauda Deum tuum, Sion: quoniam confortavit seras portarum tuarum, benedixit filiis tuis in te; de civibus terrene Jerusalem, de Ecclessia Christi, de anima quo que electa, de patria coelesti, juxta historiam, juxta allegoriam, juxta tropologiam, juxta anagogen, recte potest accipi.[69]

Thus Bede clearly allows for a typological exegesis of Scripture which is grounded in historical fact and parallels the allegorical approach of Tertullian, Augustine, and Jerome before him.

Bede's orthodox approach to typology in the De Schematibus et Tropibus is particularly interesting in terms of the light it sheds on the famous passage in the Commentary on Ezra, in which Bede describes the allegorical interpretation of Biblical Literature as:

...a stripping off of the bark of the letter to find a deeper and spiritual meaning in the pith of spiritual sense. (Confidens vero adjustore et consolatore Jesu Christo quia donet nobis propitius, retecto cortice literae, altius aliud, et acratius in medulla sensus spititualis invenire....[70]

---

[69] Bede, De Schematibus et Tropibus, in PL XC, 186.

[70] Bede, "Praefatio," In Esdram et Nehemiam Prophetas: Allegorica Expositio, PL XCL, 808. The translation is by Atkins, English Literary Criticism, p. 49.

Charles Donahue has noted that this interpretation of the

literal level of Scripture fostered an incorrect understand-

ing of the letter as "chaff" and the spirit as "kernel"

which clashes with the Augustinian view.[71]   However accurately

this may describe the meaning derived from the passage by

some of Bede's interpreters, this analysis cannot be applied

to Bede himself. Though he cannot be said to emphasize the

importance of the historicity of the literal narrative as

openly as Augustine, it is certain from the passages just

cited that where there is a clear historical reference in

Scripture, Bede does not discard it in favor of a "spiritua-

lized meaning," but uses it as the basis for additional alle-

gorical meanings which often have historical content in them-

selves--"Per historiam namque historia figuratur." It is

unfortunate that the passage in the Commentary on Ezra is

often used as the definitive description of Bede's approach

to allegory when a review of his allegorical method reveals

a typology very close to Augustine in both spirit and manner--

including an attitude toward figurative expression which dis-

plays a high regard for the literal-historical level of the

text.

The School of Chartres

For nearly three centuries following the death of Bede

and Alcuin, there is a gap in critical studies due to the

---

[71]Charles Donahue, "Summation: Patristic Exegesis," in
Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature, ed. Dorothy Bethu-
rum (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 74.

political turmoil surrounding the Viking invasions and the Norman Conquest and its consequences. During this time (9th through the 11th centuries) many of the early educational centers were destroyed by Danish invaders, and despite the work of Alfred, who translated Boethius, Orosius, and Bede, and offered the first defense of the vernacular, many of the ancient manuscripts were lost. Even in France there was a long period of decline in the liberal arts due partially to the dampening effect of the Cistercian monasteries in Northern France.[72] However, the study of the liberal arts continued at Orleans and Tours, and it was from these centers that a new movement began to develop which had as its primary aim the assimilation of classical culture and Christian theology. This movement came to be associated most closely with the Cathedral School at Chartres, and produced and influenced a number of important medieval artists and critics; among them, Bernardus Silvestris, Alain de Lille, Jean de Hanville, Guillaume de St. Thierry, and the later literary theorists John of Garland, Matthew of Vendome and Goeffrey of Vinsauf.

Influences on the School of Chartres derive from Chalcidius' translation of Plato's Timaeus and the early Platonizing allegorists Martianus Capella, Macrobius, Guillaume de

---

[72]Winthrop Wetherbee, Platonism and Poetry in the 12th Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 5.

de Conches and Boethius, who supply the Chartrians with key elements in much of their philosophy. Nevertheless, the School of Chartres developed its own particular brand of Platonic thought and it will be worthwhile to outline some of their doctrines here before going on to analyze those elements which bear directly on characterization in the representative treatises of John of Salisbury and Alain de Lille.

First, Chartrian thought is characterized by an emphasis on cosmology. The cosmos is viewed as the measure of man's mind and spirit; to know the causes of cosmological relations is to know something about man. Second, the way to knowledge of mankind is through knowledge of the liberal arts, which reveals to the soul her relation to the cosmos and her responsibility to it.[73] Boethius and Martianus Capella are the philosophical proponents of these doctrines and the Chartrians set them forth poetically.

Chartrian theology does not depart from orthodox solutions to the problem of the amalgamation of Christian and classical thought when it identifies the Aristotelian concept of the Efficient, Formal and Final Cause with the Trinity[74] and when it compares the absolute Being of Platonic philosophy with the I Am That I Am of the Scriptures, an analogy first

---

[73]See Wetherbee, pp. 21-22.

[74]See John of Salisbury, _Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers: Being a Translation of the First, Second and Third Books and Selections from the Seventh and Eighth Books of the Policraticus of John of Salisbury_, trans. Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), pp. 230-231. Hereafter referred to as _Policraticus_.

noted by Augustine in the <u>De Civitate Dei</u> 9.10.[75] But Chartrians departed from tradition in their treatment of the World Soul, which, from a Platonic perspective, they equate with the Holy Spirit and define as a link between the sensible and spiritual world and as an expression of God's love. Orthodox theologians took issue with this definition of the Holy Spirit because, in Wetherbee's words, it "suggested too radical a separation among the Persons of the Trinity" and applied "indifferently" to the whole creation "what was meant to apply to man alone."[76]

The world-Soul, or the <u>Nous</u>, in fact, was a concept which applied neither to the realm of philosophy, nor to the realm of theology, but to what Wetherbee calls "a sort of tertium quid," a middle ground between the two.[77] It is from this ground, explains Wetherbee, that such immensely popular allegorical figures as Nature and Genius develop in the Middle Ages. Chartrians viewed the universe as ordered according to a series of hierarchies which grew less and less substantial as they drew closer and closer to the eternal ideals. The relations between the ideal and the real sphere was one of analogy, where countless similarities could be drawn between the divine order and earthly life.[78] This fact, Wetherbee points out, encouraged a strong subjective and imaginative

---

[75] See Winthrop Wetherbee, p. 31.

[76] Wetherbee, p. 32.

[77] Wetherbee, p. 34.

[78] Wetherbee, p. 35.

element in Chartrian thought and led to an emphasis on the
intuitions of the philosophic mind, an emphasis not unlike
that which we observed in the early Alexandrine exegetes.
This resulted in an introverted attention to the progress of
the intuitive mind as it moved upward through the various
"divine analogies" toward absolute truth. Within the total
working of such a schema, Nature was viewed as a kind of
autonomous force which governed the cosmos, making sure that
the ordered analogies of which it was composed kept within
their limits.

It is out of such a strongly Platonized understanding
of the world-order that writers such as John of Salisbury,
Guillaume de Conches, Bernard Silvestris and Alain de Lille
find inspiration for their allegories--and derive at least a
partial philosophical basis for their critical approach to
literature.

Alain de Lille (1128-1202)

Alain de Lille, the twelfth-century poet who wrote both
the De Planctu Naturae (c. 1176 or before) and the Anticlau-
dian (c. 1178) is perhaps the most famous representative of
the School of Chartres. Known to the Middle Ages, along with
Albertus Magnus as doctor universalis for the depth and scope
of his knowledge, Alain was born c. 1128 at Lille and later
studied and taught at Paris.[79]   There he came under the influ-
ence of the writings of Gilbert de la Porree, Bernard

---

[79]See Curtius, p. 117.

Silvestris, Bernard of Chartres, and Thierry of Chartres,
all noted teachers and writers of the Chartrian tradition.[80]

Alain's major works both contain elaborate allegorical narratives which serve as vehicles for his particular brand of Chartrian Platonism. Because they are important for an understanding of Alain's thought, a summary of the allegories will be included in the discussion of each work. The De Planctu Naturae begins with a man lamenting the present state of the cosmological order. Nature's natural sexual chastity has been threatened by the "monster of sensual love" and the philosopher laments the passing of the old values.[81] A vision representing Nature descends and comforts the philosopher. She speaks of the natural order and harmony of the universe and compares herself with her more powerful sister, Theology. When the dreamer asks why she is weeping and why her garments are rent, she replies that the "beastly sensuality" of men is the cause both of the condition of her garments and of her sadness. She comments that Mankind "commits monstrous acts in its union of genders, and perverts the rules of love by a practice of extreme and abnormal irregularity," and afterward cites several examples from classical myth of perverted sexuality--Helen's adultery, Pasiphae's lust, and Myrrha's unnatural lust for her father.

---

[80]Alain de Lille, The Anticlaudian of Alain de Lille, trans. William Hafner Cornog (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), p. 32.

[81]"Alas! Whither has the loveliness of Nature, the beauty of character, the standard of Chastity, the love of virtue departed?--Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, trans. Douglas M. Moffatt (Hamden: Archon Books, 1972), p. 1.

The dreamer then asks why Nature denounces only Mankind when the gods are also guilty of much licentiousness. In this, Nature chides him for "giving faith to the dreaming fancies of poets,"[82] and exhorts him to follow philosophy, the "saner" treatment. Nature then goes on to explain the story of the Fall in terms of an allegory in which Venus and her son Cupid become the allegorical sign of harmony in grammar and rhetoric. She draws a comparison between the faithless union of Venus and Antigamis, which produces the illegitimate son Mirth and the lawful union of Hyman and Venus to produce the harmonious Cupid.

After this, Nature bewails the condition of the world. ("The evening of faith lies upon the world and the night of the Chaos of falsehood is everywhere.")[83] When the dreamer asks for a specific enumeration of the evils of which she speaks, Nature replies with a list of vices: Disunity, Harlotry, Gluttony, Avarice, Effeminacy, Pride, Envy, and Flattery. She then presents an allegory of virtues, showing how these vices may be subdued[84] and appoints Genius as overseer of the task of making war on those men who are not obeying Nature's precepts. Truth and Falsehood then contend in Genius for the depiction of the Truth[85] and after a struggle,

[82]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, p. 39.

[83]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, p. 58.

[84]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, pp. 75-94.

[85]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, pp. 92-93.

he finally pronounces anathema on

> whoever turns away the lawful cause of love, or is ship-
> wrecked in gluttony, or swallows greedily the delirium
> of drunkenness, or thirsts in the fire of avarice, or
> ascends the shadowy pinnacle of insolent pride, or suf-
> fers the deep-seated destruction of envy, or keeps
> company with the false love of flattery.[86]

Nature's position having been preserved the dreamer's vision
ends.

Alain's allegory includes a great many Platonic elements
which reveal themselves at every turn in the narrative. One
of the earliest examples of the kind of analogical thinking
exhibited by the Chartrians occurs at the onset of Nature's
dialogue with the dreamer when Alain pauses to explain
Nature's ability to physically communicate with him:

> When she saw that I had returned to myself, she depic-
> ted for my mental perception the image of a real voice,
> and by this brought into actual being words which had
> been so to speak, archetypes ideally conceived.[87]

Here the Chartrian habit of conceiving the sensual order as
a reflection of the divine archetypes is strikingly evident.
Later, Chartrian overtones come out again when Nature speaks
of the union of the body and the spirit in very Platonic
terms. Alain speaks of Nature ordering the senses in prepa-
ration of the body's union with spirit:

> So would the material part of the whole body, being
> adorned with the higher glories of nature, be united
> the more agreeably when it came to marriage with its
> spouse the spirit, and so would not the spouse, in
> disgust at the baseness of its mate, oppose the marriage.[88]

---

[86]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, p. 93.

[87]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, p. 24.

[88]Alain de Lille, _Complaint_, p. 24.

Even in a description of the harmonious union of body and
spirit, the Platonic hostility toward fleshly life is evi-
dent. It is interesting, too, that a Platonic emphasis on
rationality can also be demonstrated. Nature herself makes
rationality the principle of order and opposes it to lust,
the chief enemy of Alain's rationalistic world view. Moral
didacticism, a key characteristic of Platonic and Chartrian
thought, is evident in the final description of the battle
of the vices and the virtues at the end of the Complaint.

Even the allegory of Mirth, the illegitimate offspring
of Venus and Antigamis, demonstrates the old Platonic animos-
ity toward Comedy. Comparing Cupid with Mirth, Nature com-
ments:

> In the former shines his father's culture and courtesy,
> in the latter glooms the grossness of his father's bru-
> tality. The former dwells by gleaming springs, silvery
> in white splendors; the latter continuously frequents
> places cursed with perennial barrenness. The latter
> pitches his tent on the desert plain; the former is
> pleased with the wooded valley. The latter without
> cease spends the night in taverns; the former continues
> days and nights under the clear sky. The former wounds
> those whom he spears with golden hunting-spears, the
> latter lances those whom he strikes with iron javelins.
> The former intoxicates his guests with a nectar not
> bitter; the latter ruins with the sour drink of
> absinthe.[89]

Here Alain's moralistic suspicion of the kind of content
which characterizes comedy reveals itself in his personifi-
cation of Mirth as a cruel and licentious man, seeking to
poison and destroy his adversaries with ugly words of satire
and obscenity. Earlier Alain makes the contrast between

---

[89]Alain de Lille, Complaint, p. 54.

chaotic Mirth and the harmonious order of exalted rhetoric
even clearer by associating the proper use of rhetoric
directly with Love, or the personifications of Cupid and
Venus.[90]

Perhaps the most classical aspect of Alain's allegory
can be seen in Nature's understanding and use of poetic fic-
tion in itself, which she communicates to the dreamer during
their first conversation together:

> Can it be that thou dost not know how poets expose
> naked falsehood to their hearers with no protecting
> cloak, that they may intoxicate their ears, and, so to
> speak, bewitch them with a melody of honeyed delight;
> or how they cloak that same falsehood with a pretense
> of credibility, that, by means of images of objective
> things they may mold the souls of men on the anvil of
> dishonorable assent; or that in the shallow exterior
> of literature the poetic lyre sounds a false note, but
> within speaks to its hearers of the mystery of loftier
> understanding, so that, the waste of outer falsity cast
> aside, the reader finds, in secret within, the sweeter
> kernel of truth?[91]

It is clear, first of all, that in Alain's view, poetry,
which employs as its vehicle the objects of sensual experience,
is not on the same level as the more exalted discipline of
philosophy. The correspondence between the poetic sign
and the inner spiritual meaning is purely a matter of analogy.
Alain sees the allegory and its meaning as separate, and the
poetic narrative is presented as clearly inferior to the
heavenly truth it represents. The separation of the concrete
body of the text and its spiritual meaning reminds us of the

---

[90]Alain de Lille, Complaint, p. 51.

[91]Alain de Lille, Complaint, pp. 39-40.

radical separation of the sensual and the abstract which we found in the Christian Platonists of Alexandria, and which resulted ultimately from their misinterpretation of the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation.

Alain, of course, is not completely averse to the use of poetic fiction, and even fiction which has historical elements, if it depicts "in secret within, the sweeter kernel of truth...."[92] Yet, he is angered by poets who degrade the gods by speaking of them idly and vainly and who depict their adulteries and misconduct, sins which according to Alain cannot be imputed to the character of God. Alain's displeasure with the moral evil in some poetic representation reflects the purist quality of Platonic thought--its belief that nothing which has any concourse with earthly sensuality is quite so unstained as the eternal ideals. When Alain does use good or morally pure poetry, he tends to use it in a very classical sense--that is, he uses it to cover up indelicate matters which are too debased for a straight-forward explanation. Thus Nature describes the Fall of Man in terms of sugar-coating it with poetry in order to express what is too unholy in acceptable form:

> For as I make my beginning in a loftier and nobler style, and desire to weave the line of my story, I do not wish as before to explain my principles on a dead level of words, nor yet to pollute unholy subjects with new profanities of speech, but rather to gild with the golden ornaments of chaste words matters of shame, and to deck them in the various colors of beautiful expression.[93]

---

[92]Alain de Lille, Complaint, p. 40.

[93]Alain de Lille, Complaint, p. 42.

Although the theological meaning of his allegory contains the orthodox story of the Fall, Alain's whole approach to the subject has great affinities with the classical refusal to depict sinful or debased action, and the parallel practice of healing debased topics with ornamental coverings of allegory for purposes of making it palatable to the reader.

Even where Alain's understanding of Christianity seems to reflect a very orthodox content, the very language he employs is often very classical in idiom. The contrast he makes between Nature and Theology, while it emphasizes the powerlessness of Nature to offer grace to the Christian, yet couches the superiority of the grace-giving Theology in very Platonic terms. Nature admits that she can comprehend only the "first birth," while Theology alone is capable of comprehending the "second" birth. Nature "attains faith by reason," Theology "attains reason by faith;" Nature "barely sees things that are visible;" Theology "comprehends in their reflection things incomprehensible;" Nature "almost like a beast walks the earth;" Theology "serves in secret heaven."[94] Thus while Alain's content reveals glimpses of orthodox Christian doctrine, his basic approach to the topic remains heavily influenced by the Classical tradition. What we seem to have in Alain, then is a Christianity very much watered-down by the classical philosophy and literary perspective which we have earlier seen sifting down through the Platonized theology of the Alexandrine exegetes.

_____

[94]Alain de Lille, Complaint, p. 30.

Alain's essential attachment to a pagan-humanistic ideal becomes even more clear in his masterwork, the Anticlaudian (written c. 1178). The Anticlaudian narrates the story of Nature's wish to rectify her previous mistakes by creating a perfect man. She commissions Prudence to journey to God to obtain the soul of the man, which is beyond her power to create. Prudence takes her seven handmaidens, the seven liberal arts, and fastens them to her car, which is drawn by five horses representing the five senses and which is controlled by the Charioteer, Reason. The chariot moves up through the heavens until it is unable to proceed any further and is aided by Theology, who conducts Prudence into the presence of God. Overcome by his splendor, she faints, and is revived by Faith. Having presented her petition to God, who grants her request, Prudence returns to Nature's court with the new soul, and Nature and her court proceed to endow it with gifts. Fortune, mother of Nobility, is the last of the court to give her gift. The news of the newly-created man reaches Alecto, the fury, who calls together the vices for battle against the man. The new man subdues all the vices, one by one, and triumphs. ("Virtue rises, Vices Succumb, Nature triumphs.")[95]

In the Anticlaudian Alain exhibits the same attachment to the Chartrian-Platonic ideals which we saw in the De Planctu Naturae. In the opening pages of his poem, Alain describes

---

[95] Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 24.

it as written for those who "will not permit the quickened

substance of their reason to rest among base imaginings,

but dare to aspire to the intuitions of forms divine,"[96]

thus reiterating the Platonic aspiration toward the ideal.

A specifically Chartrian Platonism shows up in Alain's fas-

cination with the Nous which he sees as the primary agent in

a very Platonized conception of creation. God sends out

Nous to search for a model of the ideal human mind patterned

after the deity: the sequence which follows reveals the

Chartrian understanding of the relation between the divine

idea and the human soul very clearly:

> This form the Nous presents to God that He might
> fashion a soul after its pattern; then He selects a
> seal, giving a form to that soul according to the
> traces of that form, imprints by the model an appear-
> ance such as the ideal demands; the image usurps the
> entire resources of the original and the figure bespeaks
> the stamp.[97]

Here the basic Chartrian concept is of the Nous as the order-

ing principle of Nature, working by means of a reflected

image of the Mind of God. The same basic concept inherent

in Alain's description of the paintings which adorn the house

of Nature. As reflections of the divine ideals, these paint-

ings "turn shadows of things into things and transform sepa-

rate lies into one truth."[98] Alain goes on to make specific

reference to Plato whom he represents as living in the house

---

[96]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 48.

[97]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 128.

[98]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 54.

and as "evincing the very secrets of things in the profound

mind of heaven and seeking to discover the intention of
God.[99]

All these evidences of Platonic doctrine in Alain's

philosophical approach are counterbalanced by several ref-

erences to more central orthodox doctrines--including Luci-

fer's Fall,[100] the Augustinian doctrine of cupidity as the

root of all evil,[101] the ascendancy of faith over reason,[102]

and several explicit references to the Incarnation and aton-

ing action of Jesus Christ.[103] However, most of these doc-

trines are expressed through an allegorical veil, and many

are given a decidedly Platonic twist. The union of soul and

body, for example, is accomplished only through the mediat-

ing forces of Concord, and traces of a Platonic disdain for

the body remain in Concord's description of her function:

"Unless my tie binds souls to bodies, the spirit, disdaining to

dwell in these houses, deserting the penitentiaries of the

flesh would return to its proper places of origin."[104] While

this allegory is descriptive of the Christian doctrine of the

union of spirit and flesh, the language is yet Platonic and

---

[99]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 55.

[100]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 98.

[101]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 98.

[102]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 117.

[103]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 116.

[104]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 71.

detracts from the full force of the sacramantal liaison.

Even Alain's description of Christ's Incarnation emphasizes

to an almost immoderate degree the "loathsomeness" of the

body.[105]   Winthrop Wetherbee has noted the deeply-rooted

Neo-Platonic perspective of the poem in just these terms.

Commenting on the general character of the Anticlaudian,

with special reference to Alain's allegorical expression of

the Incarnation in the creation of the ideal man, Wetherbee

observes:

> Its character is Neo-Platonic and it is only imper-
> fectly linked with the idea of a single, pivotal
> intervention of the divine in human history....[106]

Alain's very approach to the subject of allegory is in

itself revelatory of his essentially classical orientation:

> Yet the substance is two-fold, one a narrative; the
> other of mystic significance....And, just as the mean-
> ing is wrapped around the material, so the significa-
> tion of the allegory shines through the material.[107]

While he is careful to verbalize the close relation of the

narrative and its mystic significance, the nature of the rela-

tion is less one of true sacramental union than a close, but

still distinct joining of the two levels of meaning. Though

Alain does not pay particular attention to the indispensa-

bility of the literal level of the text, we may gather from

his general philosophical position that material substance

is always regarded as inferior--even greatly inferior--to

---

[105]Alain de Lille, _Anticlaudian_, p. 116; see also p. 130.

[106]Wetherbee, p. 218.

[107]Alain de Lille, _Anticlaudian_, p. 51.

the spirit. Moreover, from the fabulous nature of his own allegory, we may gather that "historicity" or "realism" of any kind is of a very secondary concern. In fact, where the historical narrative is distasteful or immoderate or a depiction of evil, Alain regards the use of a fabulous narrative as far superior to the method of straight historical realism. Speaking of the evils resulting from the Fall, we remember, Alain comments that he wished "to give these monstrous vices a cloak of well-meaning phrases."

These facts and their relevance to Alain's specific approach to the problem of characterization are most clearly evident in his descriptions of some of the more important allegorical figures in his poem. The figure of Reason, for example, has particular significance in this regard. Not only is Reason described in terms of the exemplary qualities which we have come to expect in the description of such a figure—"peaceful," "mature," "wise," but she is holding a triple mirror which serves as an occasion for Alain to explain once again the gradual ascent of the good soul from the base particulars of substance to "the origin of the world, the idea of the globe, the pattern, aspect, cause, first beginnings, the end."[108] In a similar manner, Alain uses the figure of Concord to reiterate the classical doctrine of propriety:

> Form figure, mode, class, degree, becomingly fit the parts and perform their obligated functions. Thus the united members agree in the place of harmony, for in none is a discordant relationship seen.[109]

---

[108]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, pp. 63-64.

[109]Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 69.

We remember that in traditional classical theory where realistic portrayal of character--including historical detail and common behavior--is allowed, it is usually allowed only in the presentation of comic figures. Even there it is carefully restricted. Earlier in the De Planctu Naturae, we noticed evidences of this same attitude in Alain's allegorical depiction of the adulterous marriage of Venus and Antigamus. In the Anticlaudian there is a similar passage. Nature, endowing the perfect soul with human gifts, places restrictions on the amount of mirth he is allowed to express. The perfect man can laugh, but his merriment must be dignified and moral, fitting Alain's allegorical personification:

> Laughter is present--not he, however, to whom malignant ridicule gives abortive birth, whom envy bears from within or the outward form of false love engenders or lewdness portrays with fickle brain; but having much dignity, temperately branding the face, deforming the features with no immoderate laughing.[110]

Thus Alain's understanding of mirth contains a very classical appeal for restraint and moderation. The classical tendency to preserve the dignity of its characters at all costs is indicative of Alain's commitment to the ancient belief that only what is morally exemplary should be presented to the reader. This notion, as we have shown, is rejected by Christian theorists on the grounds that depiction of fully historical characters--both evil and good--not only finds precedent in the Scriptures, but serves as a realistic warning

---

[110] Alain de Lille, Anticlaudian, p. 131.

to the believer of the past and present bounty of God's grace in his own life. A truly historical presentation of man is possible in Christianity because of the Christian's view of the grace of God. Man is saved while a sinner, totally apart from any merit he may contrive. When redemption is accomplished, it is accomplished in history. In the classical view, man, through a philosophical-moral progression, strives upward toward the eternal verities.

In Alain, where we find a combination of the two viewpoints, the Christian doctrine evident is orthodox, but in an application to literary theory and practice, falls back into the old classical patterns.[111]

John of Salisbury

An older contemporary of Alain, John of Salisbury, wrote the _Policraticus_ c. 1159 while secretary to Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. John's Chartrian influence came early in his career as a student at the cathedral school at Chartres, where he was directly influenced by William of

---

[111]C. S. Lewis, _Allegory of Love_ (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 98-106, and E. R. Curtius, _European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages_, pp. 117-122, are in essential agreement with my contention that Alain is strongly influenced by the pagan-humanist tradition. In terms of his approach to figurative expression, this means that Alain's allegory is only an allegory of spiritual content rather than an allegory of real sacramental method. Affected at crucial points by his attachment to an ultimately classical world-view, Alain's approach to characterization fosters a universalized or typical character on all counts.

Conches and Gilbert de la Porrée.   Later, suffering a

necessary absence from England after the murder of his friend

and mentor Thomas, John, nearing the end of his own life,

accepted a post as Archbishop of Chartres under the French

King Louis VII, a position which he held until his death

in 1180.

The mixed influence of John's association with the ortho-

doxy of Becket and the Platonism of the School of Chartres

reveal themselves in the Policraticus. The doctrinal content

of John's work is more substantial in volume and in ortho-

doxy than Alain's, and perhaps as a result, John's theoretical

conception of figurative expression changes slightly from

Alain's. However, this does not seem to affect the actual

presentation of his allegorical figures

What can be demonstrated of John's perspective on the

orthodox faith which is relevant to his approach to figurative

expression? John's references to the Incarnation, a central

doctrine of Christianity, and the basis for the Christian

attitude toward historical reality have only a slightly Pla-

tonic character. Whereas Alain de Lille often referred to

the gross sensuality of the body and its loathesomeness,

John is content to emphasize in less dramatic but no less

forceful terms the immense gulf between flesh and spirit, and

to assure the believer of his final absorption into "spirit."

---

[112]John of Salisbury, Policraticus, p. 3.

Describing the complete rebellion of body from spirit at the
Fall of Adam, he comments:

> ...in no way can the two be harmonized without the
> intervention of the grace of Him who hath made both
> one and shall make flesh to be absorbed by spirit at
> the judgment of the elect.[113]

Though "Platonized" to a degree this passage represents an
essentially orthodox position on the Incarnation which is
restated at other points in the Policraticus.[114]

John's orthodoxy is also apparent in his treatment of the
doctrine of free will and the possibility for judgment. We
remember that in the Christian Platonists of Alexandria, and
in the classical allegorists of the third, fourth, and fifth
centuries there is a tendency to de-emphasize free will and
to regard all humankind as ultimately "salvable" if only a
process of purification--both within and without the body--
is carried on for a time. Traces of this doctrine are
nowhere to be found in the Policraticus. Instead, John
includes a very clear restatement of the Augustinian position
on this issue in Book II, Chapter 20:

> For neither was it impossible for man not to sin because
> God had foreknowledge that he would sin nor was the
> Lord ignorant that he would sin because he had the power
> not to sin....So we see that, exercising complete free-
> dom of will, he had the power to sin or not to sin, for
> by no harsh dispensation, no compulsion of fate, no
> spur of stipulation, nor yet by any fault of nature was
> he urged on to sin, and this as indubitable cause
> plunged man almost of his own free will into death.
> But because in wrongdoing he allowed the reins of

---

[113]John of Salisbury, Policraticus, p. 402.

[114]See John of Salisbury, Policraticus, p. 77 and
throughout.

discretion to slip from his hands, he lies prostrate, overwhelmed to such a degree that by the righteous judgment of God he is now unable to abstain from sin when he so desires, because he did not will to abstain from it when he had the power.[115]

This doctrine of free will is then made the cornerstone of

John's attitude toward judgment:

Behold, freedom of will is preserved herein, seeing that by saying, "If you be willing," or "if you refuse," He promises to all punishment or reward--either the one or the other; not as a result of the irrevocable judgment or destiny of God, but in accord with each one's desserts.[116]

There is no equivocating in this passage--John's position on

the issue is clear.

John's adherence to orthodox tradition in his treatment

of free will and judgment is no less apparent in his under-

standing of grace. Alain de Lille's tendency, despite his

insistence on the mediating power of grace in the process

of salvation, is to view salvation in terms of the soul's

moral progression from earthly substance to a mystic commun-

ication with the universals. Despite the needed intervention

of Theology, Nature is seen as having a great deal of say in

the creation of the "perfect man." John rejects the Platonic

rhetoric used by Alain, and substitutes a solidly orthodox

understanding of grace and morality:

Yet I do not enlarge the fringes of corrupt nature nor raise the phylacteries against grace as though nature possessed any good which it did not receive; since it is certain that without grace we can do nothing.[117]

---

[115] John of Salisbury, _Policraticus_, pp. 99-100.

[116] John of Salisbury, _Policraticus_, p. 12; see also the section on the judgment of Judas, p. 132.

[117] John of Salisbury, _Policraticus_, p. 155.

325 of 543

In this passage it is clear that corrupt human nature has not
even the smallest power to make a moral action without the
redeeming power of grace; and the metaphorical language em-
ployed is taken straight from Matthew 23:5, the central issue
of Jesus' controversy with the "natural morality" of the Phar-
isees. Thus John's doctrinal position in the Policraticus
appears to be much more solidly orthodox than Alain's posi-
tion in the De Planctu Naturae and the Anticlaudian.

This more orthodox position on doctrinal matters, however,
does not seem to have affected his classical view of the sub-
ject of mirth and comedy. Like Alain, John strives for mod-
eration of mirth. Discussing the comportment of the ideal
man he writes:

> It is pleasant and not the least unbecoming for a man
> of honor to indulge occasionally in reasonable mirth,
> but it is disgraceful to lower personal dignity by
> excessive indulgence in it.[118]

Later on, John associates the irreligious man with the low
comic characters of Petronius, thereby demonstrating the
classical tendency to make a connection between comedy and
the evil character. In Book VIII chapter 3, John himself
uses the comic characters of Terence's play The Eunuch to
make a number of moral points on the excesses of evil men,
their greed and immoderation. Thus John, true to the clas-
sical tradition, seems to allow depiction of the stock comic
character when it is used to a moral end. There is no evidence,
however, that he has the profound grasp of the extremes of

---

[118] John of Salisbury, Policraticus, p. 38.

good and evil allowed by the Christian definition of con-
version and evidenced in the works of Augustine and Dante,
for example.

Still, John's position is more within the Christian main-
stream than Alain de Lille, and this manifests itself most
clearly in his approach to the problem of figurative expres-
sion. John's attitude toward the use of the literal level
of the text, for example, is revelatory of a new awareness
of historicity in the text. First, John makes the orthodox
contrast between Scripture, which "provides the letter not
only with words, but with reality itself," and "liberal stud-
ies" where "not things, but words merely have meaning."[119]
The new sensitivity toward the historical validity of Scrip-
ture[120] causes a slight softening in John's attitude toward
the inclusion of historically realistic material in the nar-
rative. Analyzing the communication of truth in literary
discourse, John writes:

> The serious is to mingle with the trivial, the false
> with the true in such a way that all may logically con-
> tribute to the attainment of the supreme truth. Let us
> cause no disquiet if some of the accounts which are
> written here are found to be stated differently else-
> where; since even historical facts in the confusing

---

[119] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, p. 264.

[120] With reservations: Regarding what he sees as histor-
ical contradictions in Scripture, John writes: "I do not
care to run the risk of formulating truth. My intention is
merely to share ungrudgingly with my readers for their bet-
terment what I have read in different writers. Even the
Apostle does not say: 'What things soever were written are
true,' but 'what things so ever were written were written
for our learning.'" John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*,
p. 216.

vicissitudes of events, are discovered to be contradictory, yet they are serviceable for the principal harvest, that of utility and rectitude.[121]

Even though suspicious of too strong a concern for historical

facticity in the text, John here allows the retelling of a

historical fact if it contributes to the moral formation of

the believer. This slight softening of Alain's position,

which is a whole-hearted acceptance of the classical tradi-

tion of "perfuming" the depiction of vice "with the odor of

sweet words,"[122] is a reflection of John's more orthodox doc-

trinal stance.

Despite the slight interest in the literal level evinced

by John in his general treatment of narrative form, when

describing the proper approach to characterization per se

he is definitely within the Platonic tradition of personifi-

cation--allegory. Quoting Ovid's description of the personi-

fication of Envy

> Her face is pale, her body shrunk, the eyes awry, her
> teeth all foul and black; Her breast is green with gall
> and tongue spread o'er with venom. Never does she
> smile save at the sight of other's woes; she never sleeps.
> Alert with sleepless cares; Unwelcome, too, the sight of
> man's success and at the sight she pines away; she rends
> while rent herself; she is her self-made torturer.[123]

John comments on Ovid's method of characterization:

> The description is no less true although the author per-
> sonifies an abstract idea, since in this the essence of
> the fiture which is named sarcographia consists in the

---

[121]John of Salisbury, Policraticus, pp. 215-16.

[122]Alain de Lille, Complaint, p. 42.

[123]John of Salisbury, Policraticus, p. 288.

fact that it clothes with poet's license abstract ideas with bodily form.[124]

The poetic method described here is explicitly that of personification--allegory. Thus we see that while the orthodox aspects of John's theological position slightly affect the attention he pays to the historical element in narrative, his basic stance toward characterization is unaffected.

Hugh of St. Victor

Hugh of St. Victor, writing in the opening quarter of the 12th century, reveals philosophical roots which place him still further within the orthodox Christian mainstream. The Didascalicon, written in Paris during the 1120's, is influenced by Plato's Timaeus and Macrobius' Commentary, and yet has strong affinities with the Orthodox tradition--especially as regards his approach to allegory.[125]

Platonic influences show themselves first of all in Hugh's understanding of man's earthly dilemma, which is presented in the De Sacramentis under the guise of the Pseudo-Dyonysian figure of the three eyes. The fall caused blindness in the eye of contemplation and a blearing of vision in the eye of reason. The eye of the flesh was left unimpaired.[126] Hugh

---

[124]John of Salisbury, Policraticus, p. 288.

[125]Jerome Taylor in "Introduction" to Hugh of St. Victor, The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 3, writes that the Didascalicon may be studied from the standpoint of the relationship it establishes between the arts and Scriptural exegesis.

[126]This metaphor is found in Hugh of St. Victor, De Sacramentis I. x. 2 and I. vi. 12-15 (PL. CLXXVI, 329C-330A and

expresses the same idea in a more straightforward fashion

in the Didascalicon:

> For the mind, stupified by bodily sensations and enticed
> out of itself by sensuous forms, has forgotten what it
> was, and, because it does not remember that it was any-
> thing different, believes that it is nothing except what
> is seen. But we are restored through instruction; so
> that we may recognize our nature and learn not to seek
> outside ourselves what we can find within.[127]

The defective state of man's nature can be corrected "by

active effort" in philosophy and the arts, whose purpose is

"to restore within us the Divine likeness, a likeness which

to us is a form, but to God is his nature."[128]

For the Middle Ages, of course, the arts do not include

except in a peripheral way, imaginative literature as we

define it today. The arts for Hugh are all included under

the general heading of philosophy. Philosophy itself is

divided into the theoretical, the practical, and the mechan-

ical; the theoretical is divided into theology, physics

and mathematics (which is itself split into arithmetic, music,

geometry, and astronomy). The practical is divided into sol-

itary, private, and public; the mechanical into fabric mak-

ing, armament, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine, and

theatrics. Hugh offers us his reason for the omission of

what he calls "the appendages of the arts"--

270C-272C, pp. 167; 102-104). See Taylor p. 14 and p. 177
for other references.

[127] Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalion, p. 47.

[128] Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon, p. 52.

all the songs of the poets--tragedies, comedies, satires,
heroic verse and lyric iambics, certain didactic poems,
fables and histories, and also the writings of those
fellows whom today we commonly call 'philosophers:'

Occasionally, it is true, they touch in a scattered and
confused fashion upon some topics lifted out of the arts,
or, if their narrative presentation is simple, they
prepare the way for philosophy....who willingly deserts
truth in order to entangle himself in these mere by-
products of the arts will find, I shall not say infinite,
but exceedingly great pains and meagre fruit.[129]

Here we see traces of a Platonic animosity toward all that is

not openly philosophical. Hugh's idea is to perfect the eyes

of reason and contemplation through an exercise of the prac-

tical and theoretical arts and to exercise prudence or

knowledge by means of the remaining arts.[130] Imaginative

literature, diffuse as it is, and weighed down with a multi-

tude of colors and forms is considered by Hugh much less

valuable for the task of beginning the ascent which will

bring man back into the realm of the eternal verities. For

Hugh, the first stage in the process is study, and it is for

this reason that the Didascalicon was written.

The idea of an ascent to the Divine Mind and of the moral

effort required for it--indeed, the whole notion of the arts

as an integral part of that ascent, ("increments," as Taylor

has it, "of a growing divine likeness in man")--[131] is a

conception which is contrary to orthodox doctrine and one

---

[129]Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon, p. 88.

[130]See Taylor, p. 15.

[131]Taylor, p. 30.

which forms a clear contrast with Augustine's approach to the matter. For him, the arts were not indispensable to salvation. The arts could sharpen man's perceptions and widen his cultural horizons, but they are not necessary to a knowledge of saving grace. In his later years, Augustine even retracted some of his early writings which in his eyes put too much stress on the liberal arts:

> In these books, I am displeased...because I attributed a great deal to the liberal arts, of which many saintly men are much in ignorance, and with which many who are not saintly are thoroughly conversant. (De Ordine, I. viii)[132]

For Augustine, knowledge is not defined in terms of knowing the arts, but in terms of the exercise of Charity. The arts are always subsidiary to the pursuit of that goal, reached only through the redeeming love of Christ. As Taylor puts it, while Hugh puts all the arts under philosophy and enjoins their pursuit, Augustine "interprets his analysis of the pagan arts in terms of what a Christian intellectual may not improperly acquire."[133]

However, both Hugh and Augustine agree that the secular arts can be useful for Scriptural exegesis, and that the Scriptures could be rendered more intelligible through them. There are other affinities between Hugh and the orthodox tradition as well. First, Hugh's understanding of the World-Soul or Nature shows the influence of orthodox

---

[132] St. Augustine, De Ordine, PL XXXII, 987-988.

[133] Taylor, p. 31.

theology. For him, God, not Nature or "Nous," is the dis-
tributor and governor of the arts and Jesus Christ, "in whom
all things cohere," is the central figure of his cosmology.[134]
The influence of orthodoxy is seen most clearly, however, in
Hugh's approach to allegorical exegesis. Hugh's perspective
on allegory has something of the sensible balance we found in
Bede:

> In the divine utterances are placed certain things which
> are intended to be understood spiritually only, certain
> things that emphasize the importance of moral conduct,
> and certain things said according to the simple sense of
> history. And yet, there are some things which can be
> suitably expounded not only historically, but allegori-
> cally and tropologically as well.[135]

A few paragraphs later, Hugh begins an interesting discussion
of the significance of words and the added significance of
things in Holy Scripture which is not only reminiscent of Bede,
but looks ahead to Dante:

> It ought to be known that in the divine utterance, not
> only words but even things have a meaning--a way of com-
> municating not usually found to such an extent in others'
> writings. The philosopher knows only the significance of
> words, but the significance of things is far more excel-
> lent than that of words, because the latter was estab-
> lished by usage, but Nature dictated the former. The
> latter is the voice of men, the former is the voice
> of God speaking to men. The latter, once uttered, per-
> ishes; the former, once created, subsists. The unsub-
> stantial word is the sign of man's perceptions; the thing
> is a resemblance of the Divine Idea.[136]

Only at the end of this passage does Hugh fall once again

---

[134] Taylor, p. 29.

[135] Hugh of St. Victor, _Didascalicon_, p. 121.

[136] Hugh of St. Victor, _Didascalicon_, p. 121.

into one of the Platonic conceptions which betrays the classical side of his basic orientation.

Following his recognition of the "allegory of the theologians" in Holy Scripture, Hugh goes on to insist on the necessity of preservation of the historical level of the text. In Book VI of the Didascalicon he reviews the order of allegorical interpretation and requires that a solid knowledge of history comes before the allegorical and tropological senses: "Nor do I think that you will become perfectly sensitive to allegory until you are grounded in history."[137] Later he refers to history as "the foundation and principle of sacred learning" and even includes an amusing warning against certain "philosophers" who show a propensity for jumping up into an allegorical stratosphere without consulting the historical level of a given text:

> I know that there are certain fellows who want to play
> the philosopher right away. They say that stories
> should be left to pseudo-apostles. The knowledge of
> these fellows is like that of an ass. Don't imitate
> persons of this kind.[138]

Despite the strong emphasis on the historical level of the text, however, Hugh draws back a degree from the sacramental integration of the historical and allegorical levels which we find in Dante. His conception of the aim and purpose of Scriptural exegesis, for example, is couched in very Platonic terms:

---

[137]Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon, p. 135.

[138]Hugh of St. Victor, Didascalicon, p. 135.

> The idea in the mind is the internal word, which is
> shown forth by the sound of the voice, that is by the
> external word. And the Divine Wisdom, which the
> Father hath uttered out of his heart, invisible in
> Itself, is recognized through creatures and in them.
> From this is most surely gathered how profound is the
> understanding to be sought in the Sacred Writings, in
> which we come through the word to a concept, through
> the concept to a thing, through the thing to its Idea,
> and through its Idea arrive at the truth.[139]

Still, Hugh's basic orientation seems to be far within
the orthodox mainstream. Both his doctrinal stance and his
attitude toward the literal level of the text reveal a
respect for history which even surpasses the growing aware-
ness of history evinced by John of Salisbury. We were able
to test John's new awareness of the historical level of the
text against his practical approach to characterization in
the _Policraticus_. In the example I have chosen, John showed a
handy grasp of the allegorical method of "allegory of the
poets," or personification-allegory, as we have defined it
in this study. This does not prove that he had no awareness
of the kind of realistic characterization allowed by his doc-
trinal stance on free will and by his new attention to the
historical level of the text, but his silence on this very
issue may suggest that he either was not fully aware of the
practical literary implications of his approach to exegesis,
or that his exegetical principles were not fully integrated
into his literary practice. Hugh's _Didascalicon_ is a polemi-
cal work which unfortunately contains no direct theoretical

---

[139] Hugh of St. Victor, _Didascalicon_, p. 121.

statements on characterization and no examples which might help to test the generalizations I make here. From a study of his general approach to allegorical exegesis, however, and from John's example, we can probably say that though Hugh moves close to a respect for the historical level of the text, his basically hostile attitude toward imaginative literature and his ultimately didactic emphasis on the spiritual senses of the Biblical text would lead to the conclusion that in the Didascalicon we do not find an environment any more conducive to the creation of a historically realistic literary character than we find in John of Salisbury.

Thus the great literary theorists from Augustine to Hugh demonstrate the growing influence of the classical tradition on their view of literature and the difficulty inherent in integrating the two approaches to figurative expression we have distinguished in this study. Alain appears to be the most classical of the group in his unwillingness to accept even a historical retelling of the Scriptural narrative. Regarding the Fall of Man and the crucifixion as subjects too debased and common for communication to the masses, he creates an allegorical fantasy which in its doctrinal content represents the orthodox position, but in literary form is made palatable to more classical tastes. John, although his doctrinal stance is solidly orthodox, and though his approach to allegorical exegesis shows the orthodox attention to the literal-historical level of the text, yet

separates his approach to Scripture from his literary approach to characterization. What evidence we have suggests, once again, that his approach to characterization is one of personification-allegory, or "allegory of the poets." In Hugh of St. Victor, we find much the same situation—a strong respect for the historical level of the text of Holy Scripture and no demonstration of an integration of that approach into his view of imaginative literature.

The Medieval Ars Poetriae

Toward the end of the 12th century, the results of the cultural reawakening generally associated with that century were beginning to appear in the literary theory of the period. Whereas most of the literary theory in existence before the 12th-century renaissance must be culled laboriously out of the philosophical and didactic material in which it is submerged, from the twelfth century on it became increasingly common for medieval rhetoricians to treat literary matters in a more self-conscious and explicitly technical fashion. Roger P. Parr sees the new emphasis on technical virtuosity as a result of two basic developments in the history of rhetorical theory: first, the breakdown of the Aristotelian tradition (involving the Rhetorica, the Topica, and the De Poetica) which resulted in the loss of what Parr refers to as "the philosophical view of literature," and second, the revival of Sophistic Rhetoric with its emphasis on colorful brilliance

and form over intensity of subject matter.[140] Parr sees both

of these factors as a result of the gradual relaxation of

church discipline over the ascending forces of secular

humanism. While the Ciceronian rhetorical tradition (involv-

ing the De Inventione, the De Oratore and the Pseudo-Ciceronian

Ad Herennium) makes some effort to preserve a classical bal-

ance between form and content in its approach to poetry, the

grammatical tradition (Donatus and Priscian) makes little

attempt to preserve the philosophical orientation which

marks the older classics. As C. S. Baldwin has noted, poetry

began to mean much more the study of style, and specifically

the study of stylistic decoration. As a result, the new

"Poetriae" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries drew heavily

on the technical aspects of the classical tradition for their

approach to poetry.[141] Throughout this study, I have drawn

a contrast between the Greek-Platonic and Christian perspec-

tives on reality and have noted the conflict between them which

often manifests itself in the lack of integration between

doctrinal content and literary theory in the medieval period.

In the poetic manuals of the later twelfth and thirteenth

centuries we find the same conflict and lack of integration.

It can be demonstrated that all of the figures associated

with the poetic manuals of the twelfth and thirteenth

---

[140]See Roger P. Parr, "Introduction" to Geoffrey of
Vinsauf, Documentum de Modo et Arte Dictandi et Versificandi,
trans. Roger P. Parr (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press,
1968), p. 10. Hereafter referred to as Documentum.

[141]C. S. Baldwin, Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (New York:
The MacMillan Co., 1928), p. 195.

centuries--Matthew of Vendome (<u>Ars Versificatoria</u>--c. 1176),
Geoffrey of Vinsauf (<u>Poetria Nova</u>--between 1208-1213), John
of Garland (<u>Poetria; Exempla vitae honesta</u>--middle thirteenth
century), Gervais de Melkley (<u>Ars Versificatoria</u>--c. 1216),
and Evrard of Bethune (<u>Laborintus</u>--uncertain date)--demonstrate
a strong classical orientation, although we will deal only
with Matthew and Geoffrey here.[142]   Because of the openly
critical nature of these manuals, it will be possible to
focus more specifically on those aspects of the theories
which deal directly with characterization itself.

<u>Matthew of Vendome</u>

The approach to characterization taken in the <u>Ars Ver-
sificatoria</u> of Matthew of Vendome contains a great many ele-
ments of classical doctrine. For Matthew, the purpose of
characterization is to instruct in virtue, or to warn against
vice.[143]   Thus his characters have a "generalized" quality
meant to reveal a moral ideal of some sort. Matthew states
this explicitly at one point toward the middle of his treatise:

> Therefore those characteristics which are attributed
> to the Pope, or to Ceasar, or to various persons who
> are described should be understood not as peculiar

---

[142]The standard work containing the important treatises
on poetics in the Middle Ages in the original Latin in addi-
tion to much valuable commentary is Edmond Faral's <u>Les Arts
Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle; Recherches et Docu-
ments sur la technique litéraire du Moyen Age</u> (Paris: H.
Champion, 1962). In this dissertation, however, I will
cite only translations of Faral's editions of the original
documents.

[143]Matthew of Vendôme, <u>Ars Versificatoria</u>, trans.
Aubrey E. Galyon (Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Iowa,
May, 1970), p. 17. Hereafter referred to as <u>Ars</u>.

characteristics of those particular persons, but as characteristics that may apply to other persons of the same status or age or rank, or office, or sex.[144]

Thus Matthew emphasizes the exemplary quality of his characterizations, an emphasis which goes hand in hand with his understanding of the poet as a moral teacher of exemplary character.[145] Even when the person described is identified with his proper name, he is still to be treated only as an exempla. Matthew writes that proper names are "used to represent a general class of persons and not to indicate special qualities belonging alone to those persons who are named."[146]

The section which follows contains a very classical checklist of elements to take into account when creating one of these exemplary characters. According to Matthew, one should pay attention to name, nature, fortune, moral character, goals, change in emotional status, judgment, action, exploits, language, course or motive, time and place. He stresses the necessity of classical propriety in the assignment of inner and outer qualities to a character of a given age and station,[147] and throughout he stresses the typical nature of his descriptions. In his own words, the "Pope" is not a particular person, but the representation of "the power of binding and loosing;" "Caesar" is not the historical

---

[144]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, p. 35.

[145]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, p. 28.

[146]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, p. 35.

[147]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, pp. 15-16.

Caesar, but his typical essence, "the desire to forge a way into forbidden territory and the longing for conflict which he vowed to make his way of life."[148]

Matthew includes in his work a number of characterizations which bear out the classical approach to characterization taken in his theory. A few lines taken from his extended description of the Pope in Chapter I will serve as a clear illustration of his orientation:

> All mankind looks to the Pope as an example
> In him honesty shines, reason is supreme, order flourishes--
> Dutiful in religion and modest in voice, nourisher of
> Virtue, a provider of counsel, the best of mankind,
> He is eager to find what ought to be given, nor does he
> Change his pronouncements to please his hearers.
> His mind is suitable for a leader; his gentle temper
> Remains settled; his gracious piety flourishes in peace.
> His conversation does not smack of earthly affairs;
> Beholding God, he eschews man's sinful pursuits.
> Succoring the sorrowful, ministering to the miserable,
> Reproving the reprobate, upholding those who uphold the
> laws,
> He hungers and thirsts after righteousness....[149]

The attention to propriety of station and behavior and the overwhelmingly moralistic nature of this description follows directly in the classical tradition of personification first established by the early Greek allegorists and kept alive in the literary theory of Alain, John and Hugh.

Having demonstrated solid evidence of classical elements in Matthew's theory of characterization, what of his ostensibly Christian world-view? Unlike John, Alain, and Hugh of

---

[148]Matthew of Vendome, _Ars_, p. 35.

[149]Matthew of Vendome, _Ars_, pp. 17-18.

St. Victor, Matthew's treatise contains almost no direct

theological commentary. Instead, what little Christian

influence we can find is usually in the form of Biblical

metaphors, which are liberally sprinkled throughout the

Ars:

> To continue this metaphor drawn from material things,
> no one can fashion a gay costume from odds and ends of
> old rags; just as a bit of yeast ferments the entire
> mixture, so it is in verses. (Italics mine)[150]

In a similar fashion, he writes only a few paragraphs later:

> Since any good principle set forth for public use ought
> to enlighten one--a hidden lamp is of no use whatever--
> this work, therefore, will indicate those forms of
> expression which add to ornamentation. (Italics mine)[151]

And again:

> These writers (those unskilled in knowledge) are like
> an unworthy hired hand who usurps the position of the
> shepherd, or like an unworthy dependent who tries to
> unseat his patron. (Italics mine)[152]

Matthew's obvious familiarity with the Bible reveals itself

in these passages, but we note that such Biblical references

are always used to reinforce a very classical doctrine of

rhetoric. Similarly, Matthew's treatment of the Pope in the

characterization just quoted includes many Biblical ideals,

but is ultimately structured around the classical conception

of characterization as a moral example, a pure type of

virtue.

---

[150]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, p. 67.

[151]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, p. 67.

[152]Matthew of Vendome, Ars, p. 69.

Perhaps the most significant argument for the disjunc-
tion we sense between Matthew's ostensible attachment to the
Christian perspective and his own practice is the total
absence of the Charity which illumines the Augustinian
approach. Matthew apparently wrote the _Ars_ in direct response
to a detractor or detractors whom he often characterizes
(following the precedent set by Jerome in the _Against_
Rufinus)[153] as "Rufus," a cuckolded lover, the cheap slave
of an illegitimate passion. The tone of his work as Galyon
puts it, is "often personal, obsessive, and obscene."[154]
It is also blatantly vengeful, and quite contrary to the
spirit of New Testament theology:

> Let a slanderous tongue not be imputed to me, if
> only I slander a slanderer. I take comfort in Solo-
> mon's words: 'Answer a fool according to his folly,
> lest you be thought like him!' Therefore having been
> injured by your attacks, I bite a biter back; oppressed,
> I would oppress; wounded, I wound; tit for tat is only
> fair....[155]

The passage which follows this vengeful diatribe includes
several indecent insults directed at the caricature of "Rufus."
Appearing as it does only a few paragraphs from the end of
the treatise, this passage blunts the paean to the Triune
God which concludes the treatise on what is intended to be a
note of high spirituality.

---

[153]See St. Jerome, "Against Rufinus," in _Dogmatic_
and Polemical Works, trans. John N. Hritzu (Washington:
The Catholic University of America Press, 1965), pp. 47-222.

[154]Aubrey Galyon, "Introduction" to Matthew of Vendome,
Ars, p. xxi.

[155]Matthew of Vendome, _Ars_, p. 131.

Thus Matthew's theory of characterization definitely presents a problem of integration which is even more severe than that evidenced in the theorists of the early 12th century. Although he presents an avowedly Christian outlook, his real perspective can be shown to be directly in line with the classical tradition of characterization which we have traced throughout this dissertation.

Geoffrey of Vinsauf

Geoffrey of Vinsauf, writing approximately a quarter-century after Matthew, is directly associated, as was his contemporary, with the School of Chartres through the influence of Bernard Silvestris of Tours. He was born in Normandy c. 1150, spent time in France and Italy, and later worked for Richard I. It was during this time that Geoffrey completed the Poetria Nova, his most important critical work. As in Matthew, Geoffrey's interest in characterization grows out of a larger interest in the theories of amplification and abbreviation, which were the major principles governing composition during the twelfth century. Geoffrey is the first Latin theorist to make what later became the traditional antithesis between the medieval stylistic procedures of amplificatio and abbreviatio, and to devote substantial portions of his own poetic treatise to each. (In the Poetria Nova, lines 203-218 include a definition and comparison of the two concepts, lines 219-689 deal with amplificatio and lines 690-736 with abbreviatio.[156]   Of the two procedures,

---

[156]See Curtius, p. 49.

amplificatio, which involved the extension of a given composition by means of the proper use of rhetorical figures, was regarded as the more important method. Understandably enough, the brevitas formula, which was developed in conjunction with the epistolary style and involved the contraction of prolix rhetorical matter received less attention.

Characterization was developed primarily as a means of amplification, and great stress was placed on the description of the outward form, the seasons, and various medieval scenes. Perhaps the most familiar of these descriptions, and one directly relevant to characterization involves the typical medieval description of a beautiful woman, which follows a fixed order, beginning at the head and continuing down to the feet. Geoffrey gives us a typical example of this kind of description in the Poetria Nova:

> Let Nature's compass describe first a circle for her
> head. Let the color of gold be gilt in her hair; let
> lilies spring in the eminence of her forehead; let the
> appearance of her eyebrow be like dark blueberries; let
> a milk-white path divide those twin arches. Let strict
> rule govern the shape of the nose, and neither stop on
> this side of, nor transgress, what is fitting. Let
> the lookouts of her brow, her eyes, shine, both of them,
> either with gems' light or with light like that of a
> star. Let her face rival the dawn, neither red nor
> bright, but at once both and neither color. Let her
> mouth gleam in a form of brief extent and, as it were,
> a semicircle; let her lips, as if pregnant, rise in a
> swell, and let them be moderately red; warm, but with a
> gentle heat. Let order compose her snowy teeth, all of
> one proportion; let the fragrance of her mouth and that
> of incense be of a like scent. And let Nature, more
> potent than art, polish her chin more highly than pol-
> ished marble. Let a mild-white column be with its pre-
> cious color a handmaiden to the head, a column which
> bears up the mirror of the face on high. From her
> crystal throat let a kind of radiance go forth which

can strike the eyes of a beholder and madden his heart.
Let her shoulders adjust together with a certain dis-
cipline, and neither fall away as if sloping downward,
nor stand, as it were upraised, but rather rest in
place correctly; and let her arms be pleasing, as
slender in their form as delightful in their length.
Let substance soft and lean join together in her slen-
der fingers, and appearance smooth and milk white,
lines long and straight; the beauty of the hands lies
in these qualities. Let her breast be a picture of
snow, bring forth either bosom as if they were, in
effect, uncut jewels side by side. Let the circum-
ference of her waist be narrowly confined, circumscrib-
able by the small reach of a hand. I am silent about
the parts just below; more fittingly does the imagina-
tion speak of these than the tongue. But let her leg
for its part realize its length in slenderness; let a
foot of excellent smallness sport in its own dainti-
ness. And thus let beauty descend from the top of the
head to the very roots, and everything together be highly
polished down to the very fingernail.[157]

Such descriptions originated through the models supplied by

Sidonius Apollinaris in his description of Theodoric, in

application of the classical _effictio_ formula, and in the

Chartrian Platonistic idea (probably originating in Ber-

nard's _De Universitate Mundi_) that Nature, in creating man,
[158]
begins with the head and proceeds downward to the feet.

These descriptions, because they follow a fixed pattern and

deal with an idealized beauty, often became conventionalized

to the point of triteness. Geoffrey seems to have been aware
[159]
of the problem, but his own description resembles many

another medieval lady.

---

[157]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, "The New Poetics," in _Three
Medieval Rhetorical Arts_, ed. James J. Murphy (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1971), pp. 54-55. Hereafter
referred to as _Poetria Nova_.

[158]Atkins, p. 104.

[159]"The 7th device, description, pregnant with words,
follows that the work may swell, but though she be large,

Geoffrey's general description of the creation of characters in the Documentum follows the same conventionalized approach that we generally find in medieval portraiture. Geoffrey emphasizes the typical aspects of characterization, stressing the doctrine of decorum--the suitability of each character to his age and station in life. Lecturing on the characteristics which should be assigned to boys and old men, Geoffrey writes:

> Likewise, if one has to speak of the person of a boy or an old man, Horace shows the properties of each time of life; and the properties of a boy by these verses:

>> A boy knows how to articulate words and touch the ground with a firm foot, rejoices to play with his equals, flies into a rage and puts it aside as easily and is changed every hour....

> ...And he assigns the properties of an old man like this:

>> Many troubles beset an old man either because he seeks something and then abstains miserably from the things found--fears to use them, or because he administers everything timidly and feebly....He is difficult and quarrelsome, praising time past when he was a boy, and critical and condemning of youth.[160]

Thus the section on the device of description in the Documentum reflects the same classical emphasis on typicality and decorum which we find in the Ars.

---

let her be delightful, let her be handsome as well as big. Let the matter manage to marry with the words in due form. If she seeks to be nourishment and full refreshment for the mind, let not her brevity be too terse nor her conventional nature too trite." Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, p. 53.

[160]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Documentum, p. 160.

Another method of amplification--style--is also relevant
to Geoffrey's conception of characterization. We have pointed
out earlier in this study the classical tendency to separate
styles and to associate each style with a given social level
of character. In the Ars Poetica, Geoffrey adheres strictly
to the classification of styles on the basis of social status.
The high style, employed in the treatment of exalted persons
and themes, utilizes the "difficult ornaments" (ornatus dif-
ficilis); the middle and low styles, which deal with less
exalted material and commonplace persons, utilize the "easy
ornaments" (ornatus facilis). In the Documentum de modo et
arte dictandi et versificandi, Geoffrey's prose treatise on
poetics, he makes the association which we describe here and
gives examples from Virgil:

> Therefore there are three styles; low, middle and
> grand. And the styles receive such nomenclature by
> reason of the person or things about which the treat-
> ment is made. For when persons or things are treated,
> the style is low; when we speak of intermediate persons
> or things the style is middle. Virgil employes all
> three; low in the Bucolics, middle in his Georgics and
> grand in the Aeneid.[161]

The classification of the three styles imitates the classical
categories. In Geoffrey we find none of the Christian goals
which mark Augustine's treatment of the same classifications.
Matthew's understanding of classical decorum may be said to
keep well within the classical tradition.

In his treatment of comedy Geoffrey also adheres to the
classical understanding. Although less wary of satire than

---

[161]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Documentum, p. 88.

Matthew,[162] Geoffrey is amenable to the introduction of comic figures into literature--even into his own literature--but, as in the older classicists, only comedy which includes a moral point is allowed. This is borne out in Geoffrey's own example for the rhetorical figure "notatio" in the New Poetics. Introducing this section, Geoffrey asks, "Do you know about the character of the sluggish man?" and follows with a description, including comic dialogue, of the typical actions of a sluggard being awakened by a friend in the morning. The lazy man makes excuses, pretends to hunt for his clothes ("moving with the speed of a turtle") and tries to cover up the fact that he is stalling.[163] For Geoffrey, this comic characterization becomes the occasion for a moral comment to his audience:

> We are of this man's likeness when we are called to
> the true joys. Captivated by various delights, either
> we stop up the ears of our heart, or if the ear be open,
> we always delay to come to those joys. If finally we
> come, perchance dragged by force, we move with the slow
> motion of the tortoise.[164]

Here Geoffrey follows in the classical tradition of allowance for "moral" comedy which we saw even in Plato. In the Documentum, Geoffrey includes a classical warning against the danger of excess when dealing with the low or comic style:

---

[162]"If you wish to inveigh against foolish people, attack in this way; praise, but facetiously, accuse, but bear yourself good-humoredly and in all ways becomingly; let your gesture more than your words nip the ones mocked." Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Documentum, p. 49.

[163]Geoffrey, Poetria Nova, pp. 82-83.

[164]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, p. 83.

"If you use the low style be not dull and bloodless, that,

be not contemptible because of exceeding levity and baseness

of words."[165]

There are other strong signs of classical doctrine in

Geoffrey's general understanding of the poetic task, although,

as we pointed out earlier, some of these doctrines have

reached a stage of decadence. Geoffrey's constant reitera-

tion of the doctrine of classical decorum, for example, is

often undercut by his own tendency to over-emphasize rhetor-

ical virtuosity. Still, the classical treatment of charac-

terization, though couched in terms of the medieval theory of

amplification, retains a strong classical flavor, emphasizing

conventional descriptions, social stratification according

to style, classical decorum, and moral didacticism.

At this point, we again ask the question, what Christian

elements enter into Geoffrey's work and can they be said to

affect his theory of characterization in any way? Geoffrey,

unlike Matthew, includes a large amount of Christian doctrine

in his theory of characterization, most of it in the form of

examples used to illustrate his essentially classical approach.

Perhaps the clearest example of the disjunction between Geoff-

rey's actual method and his doctrinal content is found about

midway through the Poetria Nova. Writing about the use of

"light" figures (figures whose "ornamental effect derives

from the polished selection and positioning of words in

_____

[165]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Documentum, p. 91.

their literal senses), and of "heavy" figures (those figures
which are not used in their ordinary meanings,[166] Geoffrey
launches into a theological statement which comprises impor-
tant aspects of Biblical doctrine from the Fall of Man to the
Resurrection. This illustration even contains a specific
and very orthodox reference to the Incarnation, which we have
shown earlier to be basic to the concept of Christian sacra-
mental symbolism:

> Serpent of ill will and enemy of our race, why did you
> damn Christ to the cross? Did he deserve it? But he
> was void of all sin. Did you think his body an illu-
> sion? But he took flesh from the Virgin. Did you
> think him to be all man? But he proved himself to be
> a God in virtue, by which merit he earned the right to
> damn you....For this reason God came to dwell among
> us in true flesh; he could not be disgraced by the
> stain of our flesh, and ultimately he washed us with
> his blood.[167]

Not only do we have an explicit reference to the Incarnation
in this example, but Christ himself is pictured in a very
orthodox fashion. Geoffrey is true to the Biblical spirit
in other ways as well. Unlike Alain, he offers a straight-
forward presentation of the humiliation and suffering involved
in the crucifixion or from an explicit retelling of the
story of the Fall.[168]

And yet, while these portions of Geoffrey's work indi-
cate that he has the kind of theological understanding of the
Incarnation and bodily resurrection to facilitate a sacramental

---

[166] See Murphy's note to <u>Poetria Nova</u> in <u>Three Medieval
Rhetorical Arts</u>, p. 77.

[167] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, <u>Poetria Nova</u>, p. 75.

[168] Geoffrey of Vinsauf, <u>Poetria Nova</u>, pp. 83-85.

understanding of characterization, such references do not

seem to affect his basic approach to figurative expression

in any substantial way. His references to "figure" are still

couched in the same Platonic terms that we have seen in

Alain, Hugh and John. In Geoffrey's case, the vocabulary

seems even more indicative of the split between meaning and

form than the language of Hugh and John:

> Whenever your meaning comes clothed in apparel of
> this sort [referring to the colors], the sound of the
> words is sweet to the happy ear, and it soothes the
> inner mind with an unexpected delight.[169]

Later Geoffrey explains the added weight and seriousness

which accrues to a given figure when it "covers itself, as

it were, with a cloud."[170] In addition, Geoffrey's under-

standing of figural expression follows the classical tradi-

tion in the distinction he makes between the "lightness" of

a word taken only on the literal level, and the "serious"

nature of a word which has an inner meaning.[171] It is sig-

nificant, too, that Geoffrey's definition of allegory ("the

figure of speech by which one thing is denoted by the letter

of the word and another by its meaning")[172] follows the basic

pattern of the "allegory of the poets;" he shows no awareness

of the typological method or of the "allegory of the

---

[169]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, _Poetria Nova_, p. 67.

[170]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, _Poetria Nova_, p. 71.

[171]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, _Poetria Nova_, p. 77.

[172]Geoffrey of Vinsauf, _Poetria Nova_, p. 64.

theologians" which we have shown to be associated with that attention to the historical level of the text which may result in a more historically realistic portraiture.

Thus Geoffrey's approach to figurative expression cannot be said to constitute the aesthetic soil necessary for the production of a historically realistic character. Geoffrey's work is moralistic and didactic. In traditionally classical fashion, his literary theory emphasizes the conventional, typical aspects of characterization over any concern for individualizing detail. In fact, the whole orientation of Geoffrey's work, as both Atkins and Baldwin have pointed out, tends to de-emphasize the substantive content of literature in general and to accent instead the formal ornamentation which has become the most noted characteristic of the poetic manuals.

Throughout, the thesis of this dissertation has been that the Christian perspective on man offers the philosophical background necessary for the presentation of a literary character which possesses a sense of historical reality. Conversely, the Greek-Platonic perspective on reality has been shown to foster a universalized or typicalized character. In dealing with Alain, Hugh, John of Salisbury, Matthew of Vendome, and Goeffrey of Vinsauf, we have demonstrated the degrees of conflict between the Christian and classical perspectives on reality and the resulting effect of that conflict on the medieval theorist's approach to figural expression. In most cases, the theorist's attitude toward history,

and more particularly, toward the historical level of the narrative as that attitude reveals itself in his general philosophical orientation, his exegesis of Scripture and poetry and his understanding of comedy, can be demonstrated to be directly relevant to the creation of either a historically realistic or a highly typicalized literary character.

With each of the theorists I have attempted to demonstrate how a greater or lesser adherence to the orthodox Christian world-view or to the Classical viewpoint affect their approach to characterization. In some cases there is an attachment to the orthodox perspective in word which is not matched in actual fact. That is, many of the theorists with which I have dealt have an ostensible attachment to the main tenets of Christian doctrine, including the bodily Incarnation and Resurrection, which is not fully integrated into either their literary theory or practice. Thus respect for the Platonic ideals often overshadows a verbal attachment to Christianity and results in disparagement of or inattention to the representation of history on the literal level of the text, and ultimately, as far as characterization is concerned, in a propensity toward personification over historical realism in characterization.

CHAPTER VI

CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES ON THE
LITERARY THEORY OF DANTE AND BOCCACCIO

Following the Ars Poetriae of the 12th and 13th centur-

ies, the aesthetic treatises of early fourteenth-century

Italy are those closest in order to Chaucer and most immed-

iately relevant to his literary artistry. Though Dante and

Boccaccio have long been regarded a serious influence on

Chaucer's portraiture by producing the literary models which
[1]
serve as his sources, it is more rare to find critics who

deal with these two Italian masters in terms of the theo-

retical influence--indirect, but significant--which comes

down to us in Boccaccio's De Genealogia Deorum, and in the

literary theory which can be collected from Dante's De Vul-

garia Eloquentia, the De Monarchia, and the "Letter to Can

Grande." In addition, there is some material which can be

gleaned from scattered commentary in the poetic works them-
[2]
selves.

---

[1]See "Chaucer and Dante," Howard Schless in Critical
Approaches to Medieval Literature: Selected Papers from
the English Institute, 1958-59, ed. Dorothy Bethurum (New
York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 134-154;
169-71; J. A. W. Bennett, "Chaucer, Dante, and Boccaccio,"
Medium Aevum 22 (1953), pp. 114-15; John L. Lowes, "Chaucer
and Dante," MP 14 (1916-17), 705-735; Robert A. Pratt, "Chau-
cer and Boccaccio," TLS (Feb. 28, 1935), p. 124; "Chaucer's
Use of the Teseida," PMLA 62 (September, 1947), 598-621;
and J. S. P. Tatlock, "Chaucer and Dante," MP 3 (January,
1906), 307-372 , among others.

[2]J. L. Lowes, for example, comments on Chaucer's use of
the De Vulgaria Eloquentia on Troilus and Criseyde in "Chau-
cer and Dante," MP 14 (April, 1917), 706-707; Paul G. Ruggiers
in "The Italian Influence on Chaucer," in Companion to Chaucer.

355 of 543

Even among these critics it is rare to find those who comment specifically on the influence of certain aesthetic emphases in the theoretical writings of both Dante and Boccaccio which may bear significantly on Chaucer's characterization in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>. My task here will be to analyze these treatises for purposes of discerning some of those philosophical and aesthetic elements which in the first three chapters of this dissertation we have demonstrated to be relevant to the process of characterization. In so doing, my purpose is not to undermine or detract in any way from those critics who find the main source of Chaucerian characterization in the poetic models which his Italian sources supply, but only to add the philosophical and aesthetic perspectives on characterization which may be gained from a close analysis of the theoretical writings of the authors in question. Such an analysis should, in light of the comparison followed throughout this dissertation, result in a more informed evaluation of the perspectives on characterization represented by each of these theoreticians, and thus a better view of their overall effect on Chaucerian characterization.

Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 139-161, comments on Boccaccio's connection in <u>De Genealogia Deorum</u> with Chaucer's view of comic realism, and T. R. Lounsbury, <u>Studies in Chaucer</u>, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), II:229, also refers, although much more generally, to the indirect influence of this same work on Chaucer.

Dante

    We would expect the Catholic Dante to demonstrate a
great many elements of orthodox Christian philosophy in his
approach to literature. But as we have shown in Chapter IV,
doctrinal elements may not be thoroughly integrated into a
given theorist's aesthetic approach. The lack of integra-
tion appears not only in the heavily Platonized doctrine of
the works, but in the theorist's approach to figurative
expression as well. Thus we may profitably attempt to dis-
cern how well Dante's openly Christian stance is integrated
into his total outlook on literature. Following the line of
questioning set up in the introduction to Chapter IV, we
begin by asking: What is Dante's conception of history as
it is revealed in his aesthetic commentary? Is there a dem-
onstrated awareness of the theme of providential control?
What is the view of salvation expressed? W. H. V. Reade[3]
points out that for Dante as well as for many other medieval
writers the course of history is entirely providential; that
it has a purposeful beginning and is heading toward a purpose-
ful end.

    The evidence for Dante's own providential vision of
history as it appears in his aesthetic commentary can be
better seen against the backdrop supplied by some of his other
works. Such evidence, of course, is most obvious in the plan
of the Divine Comedy itself, where providential control is

---

[3]W. H. V. Reade, Dante's Vision of History, Annual
Italian Lecture (June 14, 1939), p. 4.

always placed above the rule of Fortune. In the Inferno,

for example, Virgil explains to Dante that Fortune has been

ordained to oversee the distribution of wealth "from one to

another family/ beyond the intervention of human intelligence"

(Inf. 11. 61-96).[4] In Dante's less ambitious prose treatise,

the De Monarchia, the figures of Roman history--Augustus and

Tiberius--are seen as agents of God who are actually respon-

sible for setting the universal scene for redemption.[5]

In addition to the notion of providential control which

appears in this passage from the De Monarchia, Dante's uni-

versal conception of the interaction of sacred and secular

history is also evident. Roman and Christian history together

is seen as of one piece--Augustus Ceasar is as much the agent

of God as any Biblical figure:

> That men were then blessed with the tranquillity of
> universal peace all historians testify, and all illus-
> trious poets; this the writer of the gentleness of
> Christ felt it meet to confirm, and last of all Paul,
> who called that most happy condition, 'the fulness of
> time.'[6]

Robert Hollander[7] points out that the amalgamation of sacred

and secular history is a characteristic of both Dante and St.

Augustine. Neither, he contends, make any distinction

---

[4]Dante, The Divine Comedy, trans. H. R. Huse (San Fran-
cisco: Rinehart Press, 1954), pp. 38-39.

[5]Dante, De Monarchia, trans. Aurelia Henry (New York:
Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1904), pp. 59-63.

[6]Dante, De Monarchia, p. 59.

[7]Robert Hollander, Allegory in the Divine Comedy
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 99-103.

between Roman and Biblical history. In the De Civitate Dei,
Book XVIII, for example,[8] Augustine combines what he takes as
the literal history of the Aeneid with Biblical history.
Dante follows suit in the Divine Comedy, where he uses inci-
dents from The Aeneid, I, 11. 157-386, as the basis of the
action in the Inferno I and II.[9] Hollander points out the
parallelism in five major incidents: (1) the early metaphor-
ical description of Dante's swim through perilous waters
(Inferno I, 11. 22-27) and the description of a near shipwreck
in Aeneid I, 173-181; (2) Aeneas' encounter with the three
beasts of Aeneid I, 184-85 and Dante's parallel encounter in
Inferno I, 26-60; (3) Venus' appearance before Aeneas in
Aeneid I: 327 f. and Virgil's appearance before Dante in
Inferno I, 60f.; (4) Aeneas' description of himself as a pil-
grim with Dante's pilgrim status in Inferno I, 29; (5) Venus'
appeal to Jupiter, Aeneid I, 228, with Beatrice's visit to
limbo in Inferno II, 116. Throughout the poem the two great
histories--Roman and Biblical--are interwoven so closely as
to form one universal conception. Hollander concludes:
"As the greatest medieval poet, he gave, as has so often been
said, one thousand years of human history their fullest single
expression."[10] H. F. Dunbar also writes that Dante does not

---

[8]Augustine, The City of God, in The Writings of St.
Augustine, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, 18 vols.
(Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953),
VIII:83-182.

[9]Hollander, pp. 92-93.

[10]Hollander, p. 194.

limit the divine message of history to Old and New Testaments,
but teaches that Roman history, both Pre-Christian and Chris-
tian, forms part of the divine drama.

In Dante's aesthetic theory, this particular aspect of
his view of history is revealed openly at only one obvious
place in the Convivio, where in IV, 5, 16-54, Dante synchro-
nizes the birth of David with the foundation of Rome:

> All in all, this, the birth of David and the birth of
> Rome, happened at the same juncture, namely at the
> coming of Aeneas from Troy into Italy, which was the
> origin of the most renowned city of Rome, as the records
> testify.[11]

In the "Letter to Can Grande" Dante's understanding of the unity
of all history can be observed in his opening greeting to
Can Grande, where Dante puts Biblical, classical, and present
truth on the same level in a series of metaphors describing
his pilgrimage to Verona:

> But that a long uncertainty might not keep me in too
> great suspense, as the Queen of the East sought Jerus-
> alem, as Pallas sought Helicon, so sought I Verona to
> examine with faithful eyes the things I had heard.[12]

In Dante's eyes, history both Roman and Christian is viewed
as a single reality and as contributing to the providential
plan revealed and established for all time in the Holy
Scripture.

---

[11]Dante, Convivio, trans. William Walrond Jackson
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 206; W. H. V. Reade
points out the quote, Reade, p. 13.

[12]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande della Scala," in A Trans-
lation of Dante's Eleven Letters, trans. Charles Sterrett
Latham, ed. George R. Carpenter (New York: Houghton Mifflin
Co., 1891), pp. 187-88.

That plan of history needs little review here--except
to point out once again that it revolves around the central
event of the Incarnation--on Christ's claims to be the ful-
fillment of Jewish Messianic prophecy from the beginnings of
time, on his past and present role as Redeemer, and on his
promise to come again at the end of time. As we have seen
earlier, the emphasis placed on prophetic fulfillment in Chris-
tianity gives rise to a conception of history in which all
events are seen in light of God's Word to man in Christ. A
Christian writer like Dante interprets all history in terms
of what has been objectively revealed to him in the person
and actions of Christ as they are recorded in Holy Writ.
All historical event is seen as a prophetic outworking, in
the past, present, and future, of God's plan of salvation.
No critic has depicted this "figural" view of history and its
contrast with the modern view more clearly than Auerbach:

> We are apt to consider the events of history and the
> happenings of every-day life as a continuous develop-
> ment in chronological succession. The figurative inter-
> pretation combines two events causally and chronologically
> remote from each other by attributing to them a meaning
> common to both. Instead of a continuous development,
> the direction and ultimate result of which is known to
> us, the figurative interpreter purports to know the
> significance and ultimate result of human history,
> because this has been revealed to mankind; in this
> theory, the meaning of history is the fall and redemp-
> tion of man, the Last Judgment, and the eternal Kingdom
> of God. We, on the other hand, are able to explain to
> a certain extent every single historical fact by its
> immediate causes and to foresee to a certain extent its
> immediate consequences, moving, so to speak, on a hori-
> zontal plane; with the figurative approach, on the con-
> trary, in order to explain the significance of a single
> historical event, the interpreter had to make recourse
> to a vertical projection of this event on the plane of

providential design, by which the event is revealed
as a prefiguration or fulfillment, or perhaps as an
imitation of other events.[13]

It is the view of history described here on which Dante con-

structs the Divine Comedy. The whole meaning of his greatest

work, in fact, cannot be unlocked without the realization

that Dante's method is to imitate God's plan of redemption

as he sees it revealed in the created universe, in the word

of Scripture and in the Person of Christ. Francis Ferguson

puts it exactly:

> When Dante writes at the beginning of the Purgatorio,
> 'ma qui la morta poesi risurgi,' he might have added
> an invocation of history also, for he intended the poem
> to represent the truth of history.[14]

This connection between the Biblical view of history

and Dante's historical vision, if it is not directly avowed

in Dante's "Letter to Can Grande," still thoroughly informs

the aesthetic commentary in it. It is significant, for

example, that in describing the meaning and aesthetic method

of his Comedy, Dante uses a Biblical metaphor to illustrate

his point:

> That this method of expounding may be more clearly
> set forth, we can consider it in these lines; 'When Israel
> went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of
> strange language; Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his
> dominion. For if we consider the letter alone, the de-
> parture of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time
> of Moses is signified; if the allegory, our redemption

---

[13]Eric Auerbach, Typological Symbolism in Medieval Lit-
erature, Yale French Studies, No. 9 (Yale University Press,
1952), p. 5.

[14]Francis Fergusson, Dante's Drama of the Mind: A
Modern Reading of the Purgatorio (Princeton: Princeton Uni-
versity Press, 1953), p. 126.

accomplished in Christ is signified; if the moral meaning, the conversion of the soul from the sorrow and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified; if the anagogical, the departure of the sanctified soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of everlasting glory is signified.[15]

What is first apparent in this passage is the depth of the vision of figural history contained in it. Dante chooses perhaps the most important event of Old Testament history as his literal text--the story of the Exodus, and then goes on to connect it immediately with Christ-event of the New. In the last two senses, what Dante refers to as the moral and anagogical meanings, the objective history of the literal level, is brought into the realm of individual experience. Implicit in this movement from the objective historical text to the subjective experience of the believer is Dante's conviction that Christian history is not only important as objective truth, but as personally experienced fact. An event in the history of the Jewish nation and its prophetic heralding of Christ's redeeming act becomes the external foundation for the inner history of the individual believer. Thus we see in this passage Dante's grasp both of the providential plan of god and his understanding of its effect on the individual soul. On the basis of this passage alone, notwithstanding the clear balance between objective revelation and personal enlightenment which we see in many episodes in the _Divine Comedy_ (the Statius episode is perhaps the most

---

[15]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," pp. 193-194.

complete example in the <u>Divine Comedy</u>), we can see that Dante uses the Biblical understanding of history as the basis for his own aesthetic.

Dante's explanation of the opening invocation of his <u>Comedy</u> toward the middle of the Can Grande letter brings this home in a particularly interesting way. He first makes a distinction between an <u>exordium</u> (or introduction) composed by poets and those composed by rhetoricians. Rhetoricians, he writes, write introductions in order to prepare the minds of their listeners for what is to come, but they also "pronounce something of an invocation." Dante goes on to draw out the form of the rhetorical aspect of the introduction, relying heavily on "Tullius' New Rhetoric," (or Cicero's <u>De Inventione</u>) for the three preparatory aims of an introduction, by which "an auditor should be rendered well-disposed, attentive, and docile." And yet, he gives the three aims a specifically Biblical and very personal character. Describing his technique in terms of Cicero's three divisions, Dante writes that he brings the reader to a "benevolent" or "well-disposed" state by alluding to "those things which are especially alluring to human desires, namely, the joys of Paradise." He excites them to a state of attention through mention of the "marvellous character" of what follows "namely, the nature of the Kingdom of heaven;" and he brings them to "docility," or an awareness of the possibilities either for "remembering" the state of personal enlightenment which

initiated his own vision, or for having an experience of the

Kingdom of Heaven like to his own and for then "remembering"

or retaining part of what they would see, "for if he, [that

is, if Dante has it] others also would have the power."[16]

The purpose of Dante's invocation in his own words is thus

to move the reader to an experience of the Kingdom of God,

that is, to experience in a mystical sense, a measure of the

"first heaven," or of the "divine light" which presages the

presence of God. This condition he goes on to define in

terms of mystical experiences recorded by apostles and

prophets and the Fathers of the Church--experiences which

the memory finds it almost impossible to retain for later

communication:

> For the comprehension of these things it must be under-
> stood, that when the human intellect is exalted in this
> life, on account of the natural relation and affinity
> that it hath to the separate intellectual substance,
> it is exalted to such a degree that after return the
> memory waxeth feeble because it hath transcended human
> bounds.[17]

It is interesting that despite what looks like some very

Platonic language in this description, only specifically

Biblical examples follow, i.e., the experience recorded by

Paul in II Cor. 12:3 and 4

> And I know a man in Christ above 14 years ago
> (whether in the body or out of the body, I know
> not; God knoweth), that he was caught up into
> Paradise and heard secret words, which it is not
> granted for man to utter.

---

[16]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 202.

[17]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," pp. 211-12.

and by Matthew (Matt. 17:6 and 7), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28), Daniel (Daniel 11:3), and by various Fathers of the Church. Thus Dante immediately gives a Biblical content to what could be misconstrued as communion with the universal forms.

It is also significant that for Dante, at least, a good portion of the vision is deemed communicable: After this he saith that he will tell whatever of the Holy Realm he had the power to treasure in his mind, and this he saith is the subject of his song."[18] This fact in itself--that the content of his vision is communicable in terms of poetry--is in line with the orthodox insistence upon the communicable nature of the Biblical Revelation. It is even in line with the direct Biblical command to "preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). Thus Dante's stated purpose in writing the Divine Comedy--"to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to guide them to a state of happiness"--can be seen in terms of the mission given by Christ to the whole church. The Divine Comedy is a restatement of what has already been objectively revealed in Scripture and manifested in tradition; however, it is a restatement of the truth under the form of Dante's own poetic gift. Despite Dante's obvious awareness of his poetic vocation, his primary function as an artist is not to create beautiful

---

[18]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," pp. 214-15.

poetry, but to act as a bearer of the divine truth "which worketh grace in the hearer." The stated purpose of the Comedy reflects Dante's concern with his vocation as a Christian and as a poet--in that order.

Thus Dante's conception of history is in line with the Christian interpretation of history presented in Scripture. We see this especially in his explanation of the four-fold method of interpretation which reveals an orthodox understanding of prophetic fulfillment and a grasp of the concept of individual salvation which De Wulf pointed out earlier in Chapter III as one of the salient features of the Christian interpretation of history. We see this same emphasis on an individual experience of divine grace in the statement of purpose which follows the interpretive passage on the meaning of the Comedy.

These elements reveal Dante's strong commitment to the orthodox conception of history and offer a framework in which to consider some further aspects of the notion of individuality which can be demonstrated in Dante's aesthetic commentary. First we may ask--is there any evidence in Dante's aesthetic commentary of an emphasis on man's action in historical life as important to his nature and destiny? Is there, in other words, any emphasis on the concept of rational choice or free will as it is defined in the orthodox tradition? (choice for or against a commitment to Christ)? What is the resulting view of judgment and the afterlife?

We remember from the discussion of the problem of free
will in Chapter I that Aristotle, though he rejects the Pla-
tonic notion that "no man is voluntarily wicked," yet retains
a certain sympathy for the inherent weakness in human nature.
Though he does not wish to absolve man from responsibility,
he still cannot ultimately explain why one man is good and
another bad and thus his judgment of human evil is always
tempered by his great sense of historical accident, of the
uncontrollable forces in life which threaten to overcome man.
Still, Aristotle's understanding of virtue as "a habit of
choice" puts a greater emphasis on free will than we find in
Plato, and it is not surprising that Dante often quotes the
great classical philosopher in explaining his own conception
of human freedom. While he makes good use of that aspect of
Aristotelianism which points up man's rational choice,
Dante's essentially Christian vision of free will moves sev-
eral steps beyond pure Aristotelianism.

Dante's idea that the soul contains within itself the
capacity for either virtuous or evil action, and that it is
through the habitual exercise of either one or the other
capacity that the individual's nature and destiny develops
is essentially Aristotelian in conception. For example,
Dante summarizes Augustine's and Aristotle's view of the
matter in the Convivio:

> Both (St. Augustine and Aristotle) would have a man
> accustom himself to do right and to bridle his passions,
> in order that this scion of which we spoke may be
> strengthened by good habit and be confirmed in its

uprightness, so that it may be able to bear fruit, and from its fruit may issue the enjoyment of human happiness.[19]

Despite the Aristotelian overtones of this passage, Dante earlier makes it perfectly clear that the habit of virtuous action does not originate solely within man or even primarily as a result of willed action; but of divine grace. A soul may prepare itself for the working of grace by cultivating its good rather than its bad potential, but "the seed of excellence" comes from the "virtue of the mover of heaven."[20]

Dante's insistence on the action of grace as the origin of virtue in man comes out once again in his discussion of "true nobility," where it is abundantly clear that for Dante, aristocratic bloodlines have nothing to do with goodness:

No one, because he is able to say, 'I am of such and such a stock,' is entitled to believe that he is possessed of nobility, if these fruits (courage, temperance, liberality, highmindedness, love of honour, good temper, affability, truthfulness, pleasantry, justice) are not in him...and none can confer this gift save God alone, with whom there is no respect of persons, as the divine Scriptures declare.[21]

Thus, though Dante often uses Aristotelian language, his position on free will actually starts from the Christian emphasis on the primacy of grace in the exercise of virtue. In fact, Dante's whole attitude toward the problem of free will ultimately reminds us far more of Augustine's treatment of the problem than Aristotle's, although Augustine utilizes

---

[19]Dante, _Convivio_, p. 266.

[20]Dante, _Convivio_, p. 261.

[21]Dante, _Convivio_, p. 258.

aspects of the Aristotelian approach. Perhaps the clearest

example of this is Dante's defense of the divine gift of

free will in the Convivio:

> God imparts life to all things in His goodness, and if
> anything is made evil thereby, this is no part of the
> divine intention, but must needs come to pass through
> some accident in the progress of the designed effect.
> For if God made the good angels and the bad, he did not
> make them both designedly, but only the good; the wick-
> edness of the bad followed afterwards, apart from His
> design that God did not foreknow their wickedness.
> But so strongly was His affection set on bringing forth
> creatures endowed with spirit that His foreknowledge of
> some who must needs come to a bad end need not and should
> not have withheld God from their production.[22]

This passage, aside from the Aristotelian formulation of the

problem of evil, reminds us forcibly of Augustine's own treat-

ment of the problem in "Free Choice of the Will,"[23] where he

also argues that it is useless to imagine a perfect world in

which the will is exercised in accordance with a right desire

for the good. It is better, he suggests, to believe that

this world is the best of all possible worlds than to denounce

God for allowing the existence of evil. Boethius, as we have

already pointed out, gives a similar answer to the problem.

The view of free will put forth by Dante, Augustine, and

Boethius is finally paradoxical; although man cannot be con-

verted without the grace of God, he can make motions of

seeking toward God before the grace of God is activated.

The latter half of this paradox is what we might call the

---

[22]Dante, Convivio, p. 170.

[23]St. Augustine, The Free Choice of the Will, in The
Teacher, Free Choice of the Will. Grace and Free Will,
trans. Robert P. Russell (Washington: Catholic University of
America Press, 1968), p. 93.

"Aristotelian" half; the former the new Christian element.
Free will in Dante, as in Augustine, is ultimately a matter
of voluntary choosing to love God through the state of grace.

The importance placed on free will in the vision of
human freedom expressed in Dante becomes the basis for his
view of judgment, which, though it holds some outward ves-
tiges of the classical view, yet rests securely within the
more centrally orthodox tradition. We remember that in the
classical view, man's free choice is de-emphasized in favor
of his fated innate nature, which is bestowed on him even
before life begins. When man is seen as having a fixed moral
capacity from all time, a capacity which is in a sense bestowed
by the gods, the idea of punishment for that fixed moral
state is repugnant. The classical solution to this problem
is to soften the idea of eternal judgment, creating various
"limbos" or "purgatories" where the soul is purified until
it loses all taint of earthly existence.

Dante, with the medieval Church of course, retains part
of the old classical idea in the concept of purgatory, "the
second realm where the human spirit is cleansed and becomes
worthy to rise to heaven," (Purgatorio I, 406) [24], and yet
there is never any question about the state of the souls
remaining in Hell. In the Inferno, Dante asks Virgil if the
torments of the damned will increase after the great judgment

[24]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 171.

or be "less or equally painful" (Inferno, VI, 103-105).[25]
Virgil replies with a scientific axiom--"that the more perfect
a thing is, the more bliss or pain it feels," and goes on to
suggest that since the damned will be more complete, their
torture will be the greater for that fact. Earlier in this
study we pointed out that the characterizations of Francesca
and Paolo, Farinata and Cavalcanti gain much in dramatic
intensity through our realization that they are "fixed" in
judgment with no chance of further development. The stunted
personalities presented to us are a reminder of the great
choices these figures made in historical life, and serve
merely to point up the seriousness of human freedom. There
is no loophole for a second chance presented in these passages--
no suggestion that the figures will be released from the
destiny in Hell which they chose in historical life. This
philosophical stance forms a direct contrast with the Gnostic
and early-Platonic doctrine of the "perfectibility of all"
which we see reflected in the Alexandrine exegesis of the
first and third centuries.

Perhaps the most Christian statement on free will in the
Comedy is found in Purgatorio XVIII,[26] where Virgil explains
the role of love in choice. Defining love as an innate
spiritual desire for the thing loved, Dante points out that
there is no merit which can come from a decision directed by

---

[25]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 35.

[26]William Torrey Harris, The Spiritual Sense of Dante's
Divine Comedy (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896),
p. 174, mentions the passage.

a love which is implanted in man from the outside. Virgil,
the pagan philosopher, answers that only Beatrice and faith
hold the key to this mystery, and refuses to discuss the
matter further, except to say that "Those who have gone on
deeply in philosophy have been aware of this innate liberty,
and therefore have left ethics to the world" (Purgatorio
XVIII, ll. 66-68).[27]   Thus Virgil implies that a life lived
according to love is on a higher plane than life lived
according to an external moral system. Still, he goes on,
the loves which can be implanted in the soul are only as
good as the object of their affection. True free will, he
implies, is exercised only in the choice of the best love;
all false loves which claim our attention can and should be
resisted: "Thus supposing that every love by necessity is
kindled in you, the power exists in you to resist it" (Purg-
atorio XVIII, l. 68).[28]

Thus the view of free choice presented throughout the
Comedy is strongly informed by the Christian vision of Divine
Love. Like Augustine, Dante walks the paradoxical tightrope
between God's agency and man's choice and finally resolves
the problem by pointing his pilgrim toward the only true love,
a love which will mold all his choices to the right end.

Although we find no direct mention of judgment in the
Convivio the strict orthodox view of judgment and free will

[27]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 252.

[28]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 252.

is clearly reflected in Dante's <u>Letter to Can Grande</u> in the

key passage following explanation of the four levels of

literary interpretation:

> The subject, then, of the whole work taken according
> to the letter alone, is simply a consideration of the
> state of souls after death; for from and around this
> the action of the whole work turneth. But if the work
> is considered according to its allegorical meaning,
> the subject is man, <u>liable to reward or punishment</u>,
> <u>according as through the freedom of the will he is</u>
> <u>deserving or undeserving</u>.[29]

The reference to eternal judgment and the importance given

the human will in historical life is unmistakable. Dante's

aesthetic commentary is consistent with his masterful exploi-

tation of the possibilities for human drama inherent in the

Christian view of history as a revelation which requires

appropriation by the individual human will. The "Letter to

Can Grande" presents in distilled form what has been implicit

in the <u>Comedy</u> and the <u>Convivio</u> all along—the assumption of

a real judgment at the end of time necessitating real moral

choice in historical life.

We may now explore a third area of Dante's aesthetic com-

mentary: In conjunction with the Christian understanding of

human nature and the possibility of sinful behavior in the

most sterling character, does the theory allow for presenta-

tion of extremes of good and evil behavior in one character?

Does it allow for the depiction of substantial development

in character, or is all characterization static, with no mix-

ture of style allowed?

---

[29]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 195.

One of the areas where these questions are most applicable is in the understanding of comic characterization, which in classical aesthetic theories I have shown to be rigidly held to the depiction of only a certain kind of evil (that is, the laughable evil of only slight moral fault) within a strict stylistic classification (i.e., how comic characters go with low comic style). In light of these considerations, what is the view of comic characterization held by Dante?

Again, we must go first to the <u>Divine Comedy</u> for the added background it offers for a discussion of Dante's theoretical commentary on this problem. The comedy of the <u>Divine Comedy</u> has long been a subject of interest for scholars of Dante. Leo Spitzer, concentrating on the farcical elements of the <u>Inferno</u>, Cantos XXI and XXIII, notes what he calls the complete lack of heroic tone in this section of the <u>Comedy</u>, and attributes this to Dante's use of the farce as a comic form. Spitzer defines the character type which emerges from the pure use of the form:

> In the purest examples of the farce, no character is allowed to rise above the standard level of mediocre wickedness; no higher principle of a transcendental, or even of a common moral nature is allowed to appear on the horizon; with the utter ruthlessness of untranscendental comedy man is represented as singularly stripped of his suprahuman qualities--wallowing in the pitch and mire of his infra-human nature. Not only do we see him <u>homo hominis lupus</u> (everyone cheats the other), man himself is <u>lupus</u>, no divine grace shines through the farce.[30]

---

[30] Leo Spitzer, "The Farcical Elements in 'Inferno" Cantos XXI-XXIII," in <u>Essays on Dante</u>, ed. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 173.

It seems to bother Spitzer that Dante includes such a "bar-
ren and shallow" picture of man in the Divine Comedy and he
ascribes its inclusion in Dante's spiritual masterwork to the
poet's artistic and moral curiosity.[31] He reasons further
that the farcical elements in Dante point to a larger provi-
dential scheme of order in which God shows himself to be the
victor over devilish forces. Spitzer sees Dante's relaxed
treatment of this part of the Comedy as the reflection of
a deeper optimistic trend in Christian art which is "respon-
sible," as he puts it, "for its basically undramatic nature."[32]

Of course, in one sense Spitzer is correct in emphasiz-
ing the final victory of providence in the Christian scheme;
Christian philosophers have been known from the beginniing
to highlight the controlling aspect of good over evil. But
in another, he fails to take into account the other side of
the paradox--that is that the Christian, though ultimately
victorious, has a battle with evil in this life despite the
victory of Christ. Thus he fails to grasp the tension which
Dante achieves through the comic elements in this episode,
for the picture of evil presented in Cantos XXI-XXIII of the
Inferno is not without a deep recognition of the seriousness
of evil.

---

[31]Spitzer, "The Farcical Elements in 'Inferno' Canto
XXI-XXIII," in Essays on Dante, p. 175.

[32]Spitzer, "The Farcical Elements in 'Inferno' Cantos
XXI-XXIII," in Essays on Dante, p. 175.

The action in the three cantos revolves around the fact that Virgil is tricked into believing Malacoda's advice to go on to the next unbroken bridge in order to continue his passage. The bridge, it turns out, is in ruins, and Virgil falls prey to the lie. His anger at the lie and at himself for not discerning the lie is not laughable, but sympathetically thought-provoking, and the fact that he unknowingly quotes Christ's words on the subject of the devil's lying spirit adds a note of profound seriousness to Virgil's reaction to evil: "I once heard someone say at Bologna that the Devil has many vices, among which I heard that he is a liar and the father of lies" (Inferno XXIII, 11. 142-44).[33] Then, too, we are disquieted by the fact that Virgil, Dante's spiritual guide and the symbol of Reason, has the potential to be blinded by a reasonable lie. This in itself causes a careful reassessment of the Satanic enemy on the part of both Virgil and the reader, however farcically it may be represented.

Spitzer's inadequate analysis of the situation may partially be due to the fact that he does not take into thorough account the profoundly dramatic view of characterization which is operative here. As we pointed out in earlier chapters, the understanding of man in the Christian view includes first of all the fact that he is both sinner and saint--that

---

[33]Dante, Divine Comedy, p. 113.

he is an individual capable of substantial change in life.

Man's potential for change involves the possibility of spir-

itual rebirth, or the creation of the new man in Christ

through an action of grace. Where there is such a rebirth,

a radical change in character without destruction of the

unique personality of the individual takes place. The char-

acter of the conversion experience in the New Testament is

prefigured by the pattern of judgment/repentance--mercy/regen-

eration in the Old. Of course, the opposite--a temporary

fall from grace--is possible and this is part of the dramatic

tension which continues throughout the Christian life.

The Christian understanding of conversion in this sense

makes possible the representation of lower characters in

serious as well as comic narrative. Conversely, a profound

seriousness always underlies the comic vision of man. Taken

as a whole, the Christian vision allows for a great mélange

of extremes in one character--the comically low with the

tragically profound; the heroic with the ridiculous. The

representation of extremes of character in one individual

forms a direct contrast with classical view of comic reality

which when it allows comedy at all keeps it rigidly controlled

by a representation of only mischievous evil or ludicrousness

in characters of low social status, and by careful restric-

tions on style. It is the Christian recognition of the

mélange of good and evil possible in each historic situation

and character which lies behind the farcical elements of the

Inferno and which explains the appearance of a non-transcendent

artistic form in the midst of a work of such transcendence. This cannot be explained merely as a slight case of artistic curiosity, --it is a fundamental reflection of the Christian vision of the Comedy itself.

Dorothy Sayers seems to understand the polarities of behavior allowed in the depiction of Christian character when she analyzes the comic character of Dante the Pilgrim in her Introductory Papers on Dante.[34] Dante, she notices, while participating in the most serious of all dramas, is often laughably ridiculous in behavior. She speaks of the "fear and egotism" of Dante's first meeting with Virgil (Inferno I, 11. 67f.), his "childishness" (Paradiso I, 11. 100-102), and "Beatrice's feminine sense of his absurdity."[35]

The episode, according to Miss Sayers, which best portrays both the humanity of Dante and his divine appointment is Purgatorio XXVII, where he crosses the lake of fire at Virgil's urging. She comments:

> There is a certain reticence about the crucial moment--
> did he go or was he pushed? I think there is a convul-
> sive start--better to go before one is pushed--and the

---

[34]Dorothy Sayers, "The Comedy of the Comedy," Introductory Papers on Dante (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), pp. 151-78.

[35]Sayers, "The Comedy of the Comedy," in Introductory Papers on Dante, pp. 155-161; Allan H. Gilbert also points out Dante's comic cowardice (Inf. 2:35; 2:122; 3:31; 7:5; 8:104; 9:55; 17:85; 24:32; 21:121; 31:109; Purgatorio 20:135; 29:140; and his comic curiosity (Inf. 6:46; 29:106; 32:43; 33:116; Purgatorio 13:91; 20:15; 21:79; 23:52; 24:11; 32:70; Paradiso 85:127; 8:44; 15:87; 32:103; 22:58, and his "unheroic heroism" in general. Allan H. Gilbert, Dante and His Comedy (New York: New York University Press, 1963), pp. 67-69.

> humiliating consciousness that it is no good trying
> to bolt, because one will be caught and stopped. It is
> not heroic, but how one sympathizes! Divine Comedy?
> --divine, no doubt, but certainly comedy even in the
> narrower sense of the word.[36]

The comically undignified behavior which Miss Sayers notes in

the passage above is something not to be found in the heroes

of the classical epics, and yet there is great drama here,

great suspense of the first order. In fact, the Pilgrim's

life, his eternal life--is itself at stake. The dramatic

situation is couched in Biblical terms--the pain of the refin-

ing fire must be experienced before the Christian is allowed

to cross into Paradise. In the throes of a decision of

whether or not to subject himself to the refining process

Dante comes across as timid and absurdly unheroic, and yet

ummistakably a child of grace. This mixture of the sublime

and the humble is an integral part of the Comedy, as it is an

integral part of the Christian perspective on reality.

The perspective we identify here is also discernible

in Dante's aesthetic theory. We note in the Convivio, for

example, a general unwillingness to classify men as "noble"

in terms of either wealth or aristocratic background.

"Riches," writes Dante,[37] are "mean in their nature," and

true nobility is based on virtue, not noble birth:

> No one, because he is able to say, 'I am of such and
> such a stock,' is entitled to believe that he is pos-
> sessed of nobility, if these fruits (virtues) are not

---

[36]Sayers, "The Comedy of the Comedy," in Introductory
Papers on Dante, pp. 165-166.

[37]Dante, Convivio, p. 191.

> in him...and none can confer this gift save God alone, with whom there is no respect of persons, as the divine Scriptures declare.[38]

Here we see that Dante's classification of men rests solely on Scriptural grounds. He sees virtue not in terms of ethical goodness or evil, but in terms of the grace of God. Thus in very unclassical fashion he crosses the lines of wealth, position and birth, setting up an absolute standard of nobility which rests firmly on the Biblical understanding of Grace.

We see the same tendency to blur the classical distinctions in Dante's defense of the common language in which the Comedy is written. In the De Vulgari Eloquentia Dante identifies two kinds of speech--the naturally acquired vernacular and what he refers to as "secondary speech" or language which is acquired only by much diligent study of grammar and the rules of language. He then comments in typically unclassical fashion:

> Of these two [kinds of speech], then, the vernacular is the nobler, both because it is enjoyed by the whole world (although it has been divided into [languages with] differing words and paradigms), and because it is natural to us, while the other is more an artificial product.[39]

In the Convivio, Dante offers several more reasons for his use of the vernacular--he wishes to magnify it and he wishes

---

[38]Dante, Convivio, p. 258.

[39]Dante, "De Vulgari Eloquentia," in Literary Criticism of Dante Alighieri, trans. Robert S. Haller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 4.

to defend it from detractors.[40]   But the main issue for him
is clearly a concern for the precise communication of his
subject matter.

> The goodness which is most loved and commended in any-
> thing is most distinctive of it....the clear showing
> forth of the conception is most lovely and commendable
> and this is best done by the native tongue.[41]

Dante thus reveals a consistent concern for communication of
truth which overrides the rigid classifications of stylistic
appropriateness of style and subject-matter set up by clas-
sical and classically-influenced theoreticians.

The relaxed attitude toward the use of common language
and Dante's tendency to cross stylistic lines, also shows up
in the commentary on characterization which he makes in
the "Letter to Can Grande," where he writes that "a tragic
figure may lament in a commonplace language."[42]   Allan Gil-
bert interprets this to mean that "the normal epic figure may
be lowered in dignity to fit a comedy," and goes on to cite
instances of characterization in the Comedy--for example,
the figures of Brunetto Latini, and Guido da Montefeltro,
where Dante seems to mix ridicule with respect. In these
cases, there is a recognition both of the exalted dignity of
man and his sinful foolishness and pride.[43]

---

[40]Dante, Convivio, p. 56.

[41]Dante, Convivio, p. 63.

[42]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 197.

[43]Gilbert, p. 77.

Dante goes even further than this in his approach to comedy and comic character. He not only allows for a representation of the noble and debased aspects of man, and for a combination of lofty subject-matter with what was considered at the time a vulgar style, but he exalts the comic form itself. This begins to be apparent in his description of comic form in the "Letter to Can Grande:"

> The title of the book is: 'Here beginneth the Comedy of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine by birth, but not by character.' And for the comprehension of this it must be understood that the word "comedy" is derived from $\kappa\omega\mu\eta$, village, and $\omega\delta\eta$, which meaneth song; hence comedy, as it were, a <u>village</u> song. Comedy is in truth a certain kind of poetical narrative that differeth from all others. It differeth from Tragedy in its subject matter,--in this way, that Tragedy in its beginning is admirable and quiet, in its ending or catastrophe foul and horrible; and because of this, the word "tragedy" is derived from $\tau\rho\alpha\gamma\sigma\varsigma$, which meaneth goat, and $\omega\delta\eta$. Tragedy is, then as it were a goatish song; that, foul like a goat, as doth appear in the tragedies of Seneca. Comedy, indeed, beginneth with some adverse circumstances, but its theme hath a happy termination, as doth appear in the comedies of Terence. And hence certain writers were accustomed to say in their salutations in place of a greeting, 'a tragic beginning and a comic ending.' Likewise they differ in their style of language, for Tragedy is lofty and sublime, Comedy, mild and humble,--as Horace says in his <u>Poetica</u>, where he concedeth that sometimes comedians speak like tragedians and conversely: 'Interdum tamen et vocem somoedia tollit. Iratusque Chremes tumido delitigatore; Et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri.' From this it is evident why the present work is called a comedy; for if we consider the theme, in its beginning it is horrible and foul, because it is Hell; in its ending, fortunate, desirable, and joyful, because it is Paradise; and if we consider the style of language, the style is careless and humble, because it is the vulgar tongue, in which even housewives hold converse.[44]

Here Dante makes an implicit contrast between the "goatish song" of tragedy and its ending in adverse circumstance, and

---

[44]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 197.

the "happy termination" of comedy. He also links the classical conception of comedy (a poem beginning in sadness and ending in happiness) with a vision of the Christian life as something begun in hell and progressing toward Paradise.

This link between comedy and the Christian vision of historical life becomes even more explicit in Dante's explanation of the four levels of meaning which we pointed out earlier. As Nevill Coghill puts it, Dante claims for his Comedy not only that it is an example of comic form, but that it corresponds to the shape of ultimate reality.[45] In the suggestion, Coghill goes on, that the movement of the soul from corruption to grace is a movement from hell to Paradise, Dante reveals to us that the theme of the Christian life--and of his Christian comedy--is "love absolute,...the power and glory of God, seen by created souls as the Beatific vision for which they were created."[46] Dante includes a definition of this ultimate theme at the end of the "Letter to Can Grande:"

> ...true blessedness consisteth in knowing the source
> of truth; as doth appear in St. John where he saith:
> 'This is true blessedness, that they might know thee,
> and true God, etc., and in Boethius III of de conso-
> latione where he saith: 'To see Thee is our end.'
> Hence it is that many things that have a great utility
> and delight will be asked from these souls, as from
> those beholding all truth, in order to reveal the glory
> of their blessedness. And because when the Source or

---

[45]Neville Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearean Comedy," Essays and Studies 3 (1950), p. 14.

[46]Coghill, p. 6.

the First, which is God, hath been found, there is nothing to be sought beyond (since He is the Alpha and Omega, which is the beginning and the End, as the vision of St. John doth demonstrate) the treatise draweth to a close in God, who is blessed throughout all the ages.[47]

Thus in Dante's commentary on his own work we see an aesthetic approach which springs from a profoundly Christian vision of reality. Comedy is seen in light of the Christian understanding of man as capable of great extremes of circumstance and action, and the greatest of comic themes is the movement of man from a state of misery to an experience of Divine Love.

The fourth and for the purpose of this study the most important aspect of this analysis of Dante's aesthetic commentary is his theoretical understanding of allegory and symbol as it bears on characterization. We will attempt to answer the following questions: What can be gleaned from the Convivio, the De Eloquentia and the Letter to Can Grande on the subject of allegory and symbol? In light of our understanding of the orthodox exegetical tradition, and the tradition of "typical" exegesis, what emphasis is given in each treatise to the historical level of the narrative? Is there an objective referent for the allegory or symbol used, and what is the content of that referent?

The most obvious references in Dante's aesthetic theory to the subject of allegorical interpretation occurs in the

---

[47]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," pp. 215-16.

Convivio II, and in the "Letter to Can Grande." In the

Convivio, Dante makes his famous distinction between the

"allegory of the poets" or "a truth hidden under a beautiful

fiction," and the "allegory of the theologians" which is pat-

terned after the orthodox understanding of Scriptural alle-

gory expounded by Augustine, St. Thomas and the early exeget-

ical tradition:

> I say that, as is affirmed in the first chapter, it is
> meet for this exposition to be both literal and allegor-
> ical. And to make this intelligible, it should be known
> that writings can be understood and ought to be expounded
> chiefly in four senses. The first is called literal,
> and this is that sense which does not go beyond the
> strict limits of the letter; the second is called alle-
> gorical and this is disguised under the cloak of such
> stories and is a truth hidden under a beautiful fiction.
> Thus Ovid says that Orpheus with his lyre made beasts
> tame and trees and stone move toward himself; that is
> to say that the wise man by the instrument of his voice
> makes cruel hearts grow mild and humble and those who
> have not the life of Science and of Art move to his will,
> while they who have no rational life are as it were like
> stones. And wherefore this disguise was invented by
> the wise will be shown in the last Tractate but one.
> Theologians indeed do not apprehend this sense in the
> same fashion as poets; but inasmuch as my intention is
> to follow here the custom of poets, I will take the
> allegorical sense after the manner which poets use.[48]

It is the second, or allegorical sense which is of particular

interest to us here as an example of the classical habit of

separating fiction from truth and making the allegorical and

not the literal sense the most important. Compare this alle-

gorical method with Dante's description of the "allegory of

the theologians" in the "Letter to Can Grande:"

---

[48]Dante, Convivio, p. 73.

> For the clearness, there, of what I shall say, it must
> be understood that the meaning of this work is not sim-
> ple, but rather can be said to be of many significations,
> that is, of several meanings; for there is one meaning
> that is derived from the letter, and another that is
> derived from the things indicated by the letter. The
> first is called literal, but the second is allegorical
> or mystical. That this method of expounding may be
> more clearly set forth, we can consider it in these
> lines: 'When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of
> Jacob from a people of strange tongue, Judah was his
> sanctuary and Israel his dominion.' For if we consider
> the letter alone, the departure of the children of Israel
> from Egypt in the time of Moses is signified; if the
> moral meaning, the conversion of the soul from the sor-
> row and misery of sin to a state of grace is signified;
> if the anagogical, the departure of the sanctified soul
> from the slavery of corruption to the liberty of ever-
> lasting glory is signified. And although these mys-
> tical meanings are called by various names, they can in
> general all be said to be allegorical since they differ
> from the literal or historic; for the word _allegoria_ is
> derived from the Greek--which in Latin in _alienum_ or
> _diversum_.[49]

Here we see a restatement of the orthodox exegetical posi-

tion on allegory. Dante sees the relationship between the

major historical event of the Old Law--the Exodus--and the

major event of the New Law--Redemption wrought by Christ--as

allegorical. It is important to note that although the

allegorical sense is regarded as distinct from the literal-

historical, there is a relationship between them differing

from the relationship between the "beautiful lie" and its

meaning in "allegory of the poets." Charles Singleton char-

acterizes the difference in the following manner:

> But the kind of allegory to which the example from
> Scriptures given in the _Letter to Can Grande_ points is
> not an allegory of "this _for_ that," but an allegory
> of "this _and_ that," of this sense plus that sense. The
> verse in Scripture which says, "When Israel went out
> of Egypt," has its first meaning in denoting a real his-
> torical event; and it has its second meaning because
> that historical event itself, having the Author that it

---

[49]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," pp. 193-94.

had, can signify yet another event: our Redemption through Christ. Its first meaning _in facto_, in the event itself. The words have a real meaning in pointing to a real event; the event, in its truth, has meaning because events wrought by God are themselves as words yielding a meaning, a higher and spiritual sense.[50]

Not only does the literal-historical level receive primary emphasis in Singleton's analysis of Dante's method, but the literal and allegorical meanings described by Dante are seen as having a far more substantial relationship in the "allegory of the theologians" than in the "allegory of the poets."

The distinction Singleton observes here between the definition of "allegory of the poets" given in the _Convivio_ and the "allegory of the theologians" put forth in the "Letter to Can Grande" is not accepted in all critical circles. R. H. Greene, for example, argues that the kind of allegory described by Dante in the _Convivio_ is not essentially different from the allegory described in the "Letter to Can Grande,"[51] and attributes the method of allegorization in both cases to the "rhetorical tradition of the conventional _accessus_ _ad_ _auctores_," rather than to the tradition of orthodox exegesis. Although Greene admits some similarity between the allegorical method described by Dante in the "Letter to Can Grande" and conventional Scriptural exegesis,

---

[50]Charles S. Singleton, _Dante Studies I_ (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 91.

[51]R. H. Greene, "Dante's 'Allegory of Poets' and the Medieval Theory of Poetic Fiction," _Comparative Literature_ 9 (Spring, 1957), 122.

he insists that the first level of meaning in any poetry is a poetic fiction, and thus is rooted in the medieval tradition of the classical aesthetic.

There can be, Greene suggests, a Christian allegory of the poets, in the sense of a poetic fiction or veil' which would serve as the abstract sign for a specific Christian message,[52] but he insists that in the primary or literal sense poetry cannot attain the level of historical reality ascribed to it by Singleton. All medieval art, he writes--even Christian medieval art--is a human art and thus belongs to the classical tradition represented by such writers as Macrobius, Boccaccio, Fulgentius, Alain de Lille and Prudentius. D. W. Robertson sides with Green in insisting that the medieval poetic tradition is essentially classical in its orientation and method. In a footnote to his article, "Some Medieval Literary Terminology,"[53] Robertson characterizes Dante's distinction between the "allegory of the poets" and the "allegory of the theologians" as the difference between a narration of fictitious events and a narration of the actual events of Scripture. He concludes:

> But Professor Singleton confuses this distinction with that between verbal allegory and the allegory of things. It seems obvious, moreover, that the Divine Comedy is a poem, not a history, and certainly not a new chapter in Scripture.

---

[52]Greene, p. 125.

[53]D. W. Robertson, "Some Medieval Literary Terminology," SP 48 (July, 1951), 653, n. 51.

Singleton himself answers these charges not by insist-
ing that the historical reality of the Comedy's literal level
is the same as the historical reality of Scripture, but by
suggesting that the illusion of reality on the literal level
is so powerful that the reader, while in the act of reading,
may be said to fall under the spell of that fiction in such
a way that it becomes history for him. This whole illusion
of a reality, which may be said to occur also in a reading
of the best novelists of our own age, is yet qualitatively
different from the experience of reading a modern historical
novel, for example. That is, reading Dante is different
from reading Tolstoy because under Tolstoy's illusion of
reality we get no sense of the Biblical time-frame which
structures all of history and gives it meaning; while under
Dante's, we do.[54]   In other words, the first illusion which
is created in the Comedy is an illusion of real event, an
imitation of the Scripture and of the created universe.

In the "Letter to Can Grande" Dante tells us that the
subject of his work, "the state of souls after death," is to
be taken literally.[55]   If so, then the event pointed to by
the literal level is the actual journey to God through the
world beyond. This event in turn prefigures the historical
event of man's pilgrimage to God in this life. The literal
level is a projected fiction of the author--Dante has not

[54]Singleton, p. 130.

[55]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 193.

yet experienced the "soul's state after death," nonetheless

he is so positive of its reality in the life-after-death

being experienced by the departed Beatrice and Virgil and in

its coming reality for himself that it is an actual sub-

stantive even for him, despite the fact that it is outside

the present time-space continuum. Moreover, the literal

reality of the journey to God after death is not literal

because Dante experiences it; it is literal because Scripture

says it will happen, and because Scripture itself is rooted

in the historical Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the bodily

Word of God, He who gives flesh to symbol.

In "allegory of the theologians," the human poet builds

his creation parallel to the allegorical method used in

Scripture. The truth of Scripture is used by the artist as

both the spiritual origin of the operation and the pattern

by which it proceeds. As Joseph Bryant puts it:

> The human poet is not a Christ, and he cannot make
> something out of nothing, as Christ did, but his making
> is a species of creation nonetheless. One might call
> it an act in continuation of that impulse by which the
> world was made--an act performed in emulation of the
> original creator, or the human and partial redemption
> of experience from scattered data and the transforma-
> tion of that data into something strange, admirable,
> and of great constancy. In short, the poet is not God,
> but he does God's work in God's way.[56]

Thus Dante's poem can be considered a double imitation.[57]

It is first an imitation of the created universe of God

---

[56]Joseph Bryant, Hippolyta's View: Some Aspects of
Shakespeare's Plays (Louisville: University of Kentucky
Press, 1961), p. 4.

[57]Singleton, p. 6.

(itself a book of symbols of divine things) and second, an
imitation of the Bible which is a record of God's use of
historical event to reveal Himself to mankind. Its authority
is not that of Scripture only, but the reality to which Scrip-
ture points--the Incarnate Word of God. One can see a small
vignette of this double imitation in the Paradiso, XXV,
ll. 55-56, when Beatrice (herself a historical personality)
speaks of Dante as one who "was allowed to come from Egypt
to see Jerusalem, before his life's warfare was over." The
reality of the two characters of the allegory is indisputably
historical, as are the Biblical events in which they see
themselves as living actors.

Thus the "allegory of the poets" and the "allegory of
the theologians" are different in the way that the literal
level is interpreted. Singleton puts it in terms of a two-
fold test:

> (1) Does the reader in the act of reading view the
> literal sense as "fable," "fiction," as "imaginary,"
> and justified only if it conveys the truth? If so,
> this is the reading focus of the allegory of the
> poets.

> (2) Does the reader in the act of reading take the
> literal sense to be real, that is, take the events nar-
> rated as real, and does it happen that this literal
> line of event discloses along its way the shape of
> other events, also real? If so, this is the reading
> focus of the allegory of the theologians.[58]

Greene is wrong, Singleton observes, in insisting that we
do not have to change our own allegorical focus when we
switch from reading according to the kind of poetic allegory

---

[58]Singleton, p. 131.

described in the Convivio, to the kind of allegory described
in the "Letter to Can Grande."[59]   Etienne Gilson treats the

same problem, resolving it in much the same way:

> We cannot understand the Divine Comedy in the sense in
> which he (Dante) himself meant it unless we treat as
> fiction what was to him only fiction, and as reality
> what he himself conceived as reality. Those who do
> not share Dante's faith are not thereby absolved from
> the duty of reading his work on the assumption that it
> was written by a believer.[60]

Adding to observations on the "historicity" of the

Comedy, Robert Hollander notes that Dante, along with his

imitation of Scriptural truth, treats the events of classical

antiquity as though they had actually happened, and never

regards them as a "discardable fabula:"

> All that must be understood is that for Dante the
> events recorded in the literature of pagan antiquity
> have for purposes of his fiction, as much historical
> validity as do the events recorded in the Bible. The
> latter may be more "true" in his eyes, but the situations
> of Aeneas or Jason are as significant for Dante's theory

---

[59]Singleton makes the point here that Greene's inability to accept the notion of a distinction between Dante's allegorical method and the method of most medieval and modern writers is a "sense of real repugnance at the notion that anyone, in this latter day of our enlightenment should be asked to adopt a "reader's attitude" which looks like superstition or obscurantism, or at least to require an act of faith which one is not at all disposed to make." The underlying reason for this attitude, Singleton points out, is the difference between the Greek mind, which finds the Incarnation to be foolishness, and the Christian mind which makes the Incarnation the central event of history. Philo Judeaus cannot accept the literal-historical level of Scripture as true, because he thinks according to the classical rationalism which is behind "allegory of the poets." St. Thomas, St. Augustine, and Dante do accept it because of their fundamental belief in the integration of matter and spirit in Christ. Singleton, p. 133.

[60]Etienne Gilson, Dante the Philosopher (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949), p. 296.

of the "true lie" as the situations of Moses or Rahab.[61]

In the same vein, Francis Fergusson observes that Dante's treatment of the individuals in the <u>Divine Comedy</u> is based solidly on the drama of history revealed in the Christian faith and contrasts sharply with his treatment of character in the <u>Convivio</u>, where he uses individuals in rationalistic fashion, to illustrate "his own moral principles."[62] Fergusson points out with Gilson and Singleton that the figures in the <u>Comedy</u> must be apprehended in the same spirit in which they were created by Dante. The reality of the <u>Comedy</u>, finally, goes back to the fact of the Incarnation, and to the meaning it gives to history.[63]

---

[61]Robert Hollander, <u>Allegory in Dante's Commedia</u> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 75.

[62]Francis Fergusson, <u>Dante's Drama of the Mind</u>, p. 126.

[63]Fergusson comments eloquently on the kind of reality which gives meaning to Dante's great work: "The realms of the <u>Inferno</u> and the <u>Purgatorio</u> are not real as God's world is real; the Virgil who appears there is not real as the Christians of St. Paul's time were real. But the act of spirit whereby Dante grasps the historic Virgil and the Virgil of the <u>Commedia</u> is truthful, he believes, in the same way as St. Paul's historic understanding was true. In both cases the understanding is formed and authenticated by the love of Christ. Christ, appearing at a moment in history, gives form and meaning to the temporal sequence itself. At the same time the love of Christ (available to humanity since the Incarnation) can form the life (or actions) of the human spirit in accord with truth. Insofar as Dante or St. Paul was moved, in the effort to understand history by the love of Christ, this effort of understanding gave truth." Fergusson, p. 131.

Thus we see in Dante strong ties with the orthodox emphasis on the historical validity of Christianity and a resultant emphasis on the literal-historical level of the text. These ties are especially evident, as we have observed, in Dante's aesthetic commentary on the subject, and especially in the "Letter to Can Grande." We may point out here that even in the more rationalistic Convivio, which most critics recognize as having more affinity with the classical rather than the Christian view of reality, Dante's accent on the importance of the historical level of narrative is very strong and may reveal a definite link both with the orthodox exegetical tradition and his later, more complete statement of the figural view of reality in the "Letter to Can Grande." In the Convivio, Dante writes:

> Wherefore inasmuch as in writings the literal meaning is always the outside, it is impossible to arrive at other meanings, especially the allegorical, without first arriving at the literal. It is impossible, moreover, because in everything natural and artificial, it is not possible to proceed to the form unless the matter on which the form must be imposed is first made ready for it.[64]

This passage reveals that the literal text was of first importance to Dante even during the writing of the Convivio, and also reveals once again the concern with content over form which we have shown to be related to an essentially Christian vision of reality. Although Singleton, Fergusson, and Hollander are correct in distinguishing the allegorical

---

[64]Dante, Convivio, p. 74.

approach described in the _Convivio_ from that of the "Letter

to Can Grande," it does not seem to me that the distinction

is so strong as to indicate a complete reversion on Dante's

part from a "rationalistic" to a Christian perspective. The

Convivio in its basic form and content reflects the Christian

view of reality—perhaps not so obviously nor forcefully as

the "Letter to Can Grande," but nevertheless clearly enough

that foundations of the faith are visible. Perhaps the best

explanation for the "rationalistic" tone of the _Convivio_ is

the medieval tendency to conform Christianity to philosophical

precept. Ernst Curtius reminds us that in the centuries

leading up to and including the Middle Ages, it was a common

tendency of apologists to equate Christianity with philoso-

phy.[65] Furthermore, he is careful to note that such an

equation is not solely or exclusively the result of Alexan-

drine rationalism, or even early Greek Classicism, but instead

reflects a "mode of thought which goes back to the early

church."[66]

Dante, himself, Curtius points out, claims a philosophi-

cal function for his poetry. In the "Letter to Can Grande,"

he writes that

> form or method of treating is _poetic_, _figurative_,
> _descriptive_, _digressive_, _transumptive_, and, in addi-
> tion, _explanatory_, _divisible_, _probative_, _condemnatory_
> and _explicit in examples_.[67]

---

[65] Ernst R. Curtius, _European Literature and the Latin Mid-
dle Ages_, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row,
1953), pp. 211-13.

[66] Curtius, p. 213.

[67] Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 196.

Curtius points out that the last group of descriptive phrases

is taken directly from the Scholastic tradition, and their

inclusion in a description of a poetic work represents an

integration of the philosophic-scientific tradition found

in Scholasticism with the Christian aesthetic.[68]

In sum, Dante's aesthetic theory as it is expressed in

both the Convivio and the "Letter to Can Grande" reflects the

basically Christian understanding of reality which we see in

his poetry. In both the Convivio and the "Letter to Can

Grande" we see evidence of a universal view of history in

which Fortune is the handmaid of Providence and secular his-

torical data is subsumed into a larger vision of divine con-

trol. The Biblical content of that vision is seen to be con-

sistent with the universal figural approach to history which

is first utilized by Christ and St. Paul within Scripture

itself and later developed by the orthodox exegetes. Such an

approach involves not only the concept of a universal and

prophetically realized series of historical events, but a

recognition of man's individual place within and response to

---

[68]Curtius notes that both Albert the Great (Summa Theo-
logica and St. Thomas made a distinction between "a poetry
based upon human fictions and a poetry of which divine wisdom
makes use to impart absolute truth and certainty." Curtius,
p. 227. Divine Scripture utilizes poetic metaphor "because
it is needful and profitable." (Summa I, 1, 9, ad. i.).
Nevertheless, writes Curtius, St. Thomas and Albert are not
interested in evaluating poetry, and regard it as inferior
to philosophy. Dante's integration of poetry and philosophy
in the "Letter to Can Grande" thus represents a radical depar-
ture from the Thomistic approach to poetry, a distinct con-
trast which is not usually noted by scholars. Curtius,
pp. 223-224.

those events. The development of an orthodox concept of free will and grace in both the Convivio and the "Letter to Can Grande" reveal Dante's adherence to the traditional approach to the subject. In line with the Biblical understanding of man as a creature capable of substantial change and extremes of behavior, Dante develops in his aesthetic commentary a theory of comedy which allows for the representation of ludicrous or ridiculous behavior in the most exalted characters. Dante makes comedy--the transformation of a "foul and sad beginning into a happy end"--a metaphor for the shape of ultimate reality as it is interpreted in the Christian vision. Finally, Dante's understanding of allegory and symbol, as it appears both in the Convivio and the "Letter to Can Grande," but especially in the latter epistle, reflects the allegorical approach first developed by St. Paul and utilized by orthodox exegetes through the Middle Ages. This approach is based on an understanding of symbol as the total integration of sign and substance, of word and thing which rests, ultimately, on the truth revealed in the Incarnation.

Boccaccio

Boccaccio's aesthetic treatise, the De Genealogia Deorum,[69] exhibits an interesting blend of Christian and classical

---

[69]Known first hand by Chaucer, according to T. R. Lounsbury, Studies in Chaucer, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1892), II:229. Lounsbury suggests that Chaucer did not know the Decameron, but was more familiar with the aesthetic theory of the De Genealogia Deorum.

elements which despite its adherence to orthodox theological principles ultimately encourages a classical rather than a Christian approach to the problem of characterization. Though Boccaccio's defense of poetry is informed on all levels by the truth of the Christian revelation, Boccaccio, unlike Dante, is unable to grasp the deeper implications of the sacramental view of reality for his entire approach to literature and aesthetics.

Throughout the De Genealogia Deorum, Boccaccio manifests a clear commitment to orthodox Christian doctrine. In the preface to the work, for example, he stresses the superiority of Christian truth to "deadly Gentile error" and emphasizes the objective quality of the Scriptural revelation:

> The ancients departed the way of all flesh, leaving behind them their literature and their famous names for posterity to interpret according to their own judgment. But as many minds, so many opinions. What wonder? There are the words of Holy Writ, clear, definite, charged with unalterable truth, though often thinly veiled in figurative language. Yet they are frequently distorted into as many meanings as there are readers.[70]

In the opening pages of Book IV, Boccaccio again stresses the importance of poetic adherence to Scriptural truth. Poets, he writes, should not be scorned because they are not wealthy, but instead admired as "the wisest of men" provided that they "recognize the true God."[71]

---

[70] Boccaccio, Boccaccio on Poetry: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of De Genealogia Deorum, trans. with a preface by Charles G. Osgood (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 11. Hereafter cited as De Genealogia Deorum.

[71] Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 23.

In keeping with this very orthodox view of the poetic

vocation, Boccaccio goes on to write that poetry itself is a

"gift from God" and that it depends solely on a "strange,

supernal inspiration."[72]   Boccaccio is even careful to define

the content of this "supernal inspiration" as something spe-

cifically Christian. Discussing the similarities between the

poetic inspiration of the Gentile and that of the Christian

prophets and poets, he makes the following distinction:

> And I think the poets of the Gentiles in their poetry--
> not perhaps without understanding--followed in the steps
> of these prophets; but whereas the holy men were filled
> with the Holy Ghost, and wrote under his impulse, the
> others were prompted by mere energy of mind, whence such
> a one is called a "seer."[73]

Here Boccaccio's careful adherence to Christian doctrine is

clear; the distinction between "nature" and "grace" is made

specific to the problem of poetic inspiration. This same

adherence to specifically Christian content is evident later

on in Book XV where Boccaccio refers to Christ's life,

death and Resurrection, thereby giving, once again, an explic-

itly Christian content to his references to the "sincere faith

and eternal truth" to which he is committed.[74]

And yet, Boccaccio's actual approach to poetry, though

attached to an orthodox conception of the Christian faith,

does not go much beyond the classical understanding of literary

---

[72]Boccaccio, *De Genealogia Deorum*, pp. 39-41.

[73]Boccaccio, *De Genealogia Deorum*, p. 46.

[74]Boccaccio, *De Genealogia Deorum*, pp. 124-127.

representation. Boccaccio, for example, sees no truly pro-
found significance in the distinction made by Dante between
the "allegory of the poets" and the "allegory of the theolog-
ians." For Dante, we remember, the distinction between the
two kinds of allegory is qualitative; in the "allegory of the
theologians," the reader in the act of reading takes the lit-
eral level of the text as actually true and as prophetically
disclosing the outline of other events, also true. The orig-
inal pattern for this type of writing is the Scripture, in
which both the literal level and its prophetic counterpart are
historically true, and part of the foreordained plan of God.
While the human poet cannot create a literal level which is
historically true in the same sense as God's creation is his-
torically true, he may imitate God's way of creating and thus
produce a work of art which has its mimetic basis in histor-
ical reality. While interacting with this kind of literature,
the reader, as Charles Singleton puts it, may be said to "fall
quite under the spell" of the illusion of reality created on
the literal level.[75]

In the "allegory of the poets," on the other hand, the
reader is invited from the start to view the literal level as
a fiction, and as justifiable primarily by its conveyance of
a hidden meaning or truth, which the reader is to be ferreting
out as he goes along. In the De Genealogia Deorum, Boccaccio's
definition of the nature, origin, and function of poetry does

---

[75]Charles Singleton, "The Irreducible Dove," Comparative
Literature 9 (Spring, 1957), p. 12.

not go beyond that of the figurative approach of the "allegory
of the poets" and his treatment of the literal level is def-
initely casual, in the tradition of John, Hugo, and Alain.
This becomes clear in Boccaccio's description and analysis of
the four forms of fictional truth. It is significant in
itself that the whole discussion is couched in terms of a
defense of the disguised truth which is hidden under the var-
ious types of veils which are available to the poet.[76] The
first types of fictional veil require little if any semblance
of historical reality:

> The first superficially lacks all appearance of truth;
> for example, when brutes or inanimate things converse....
> The second kind at times superficially mingles fiction
> with truth, as when we tell of the daughters of Minyos
> at their spinning, who, when they spurned the orgies of
> Bacchus, were turned into bats....[77]

It is true that Boccaccio in his definition of the third kind
of fictional expression makes provision for a narrative which
seems "more like history than fiction."[78] However, the recog-
nition given to the historical level here is probably more a
result of the influence of euhemerism and Boccaccio's know-
ledge of the classical tradition of mythological exegesis
than it is the sign of any profound grasp of the sacramental
principle.[79] Also Boccaccio is very careful to emphasize the

---

[76]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 48.

[77]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 48.

[78]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 48.

[79]Charles G. Osgood, "Preface" to Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. xix.

need for recognizing the hidden or moral meaning attached
to these historical fables, and makes his final point with
a reference to the Odyssey, the Aeneid, and the parables of
Christ:

> For however much the heroic poets seem to be writing
> history--Vergil in his description of Aeneas tossed
> by the storm, or Homer in his account of Ulysses bound
> to the mast to escape the lure of the Siren's song--yet
> their hidden meaning is far other than appears on the
> surface....My opponents need not be so squeamish--Christ,
> who is God, used this sort of fiction again and again
> in his parables.[80]

Thus even when Boccaccio allows for historical realism on
the literal level, he is more interested in the moral wisdom
which it hides, and consistently enjoins the reader to look
for the level of meaning which lurks below the surface of the
historical narrative. As Singleton points out, this
approach to allegory is very classical in its method--it is
an allegory of "this for that" and not the allegory of double
significance--of "this and that" which Dante calls the alle-
gory of the theologians."[81]

Because of his more classical approach to poetic allegory
in this sense, the historicity of the literal level is less
of an issue for Boccaccio than it is for Dante. Instead of
the great emphasis on the need for historical truth on the
literal level which we find in the Convivio, for example, we
find in the De Genealogia Deorum what amounts to a defense

---

[80]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 49.

[81]Singleton, "The Irreducible Dove," p. 134.

of the use of the "beautiful lie" on the literal level. It

is not, as Boccaccio explains, that a poet cannot use his-

torical truth on the literal level if he so chooses, but that

there is really no need to do so if some kind of spiritual

or moral purpose is conveyed.[82]   In other words, there is no

essential difference in Boccaccio's mind between a truth con-

veyed by means of a fiction and a truth conveyed by means of

real history. In his eyes, both are equally the truth.

The implication here is that the truth is essentially cap-

able of existence apart from finite forms. Dante, shaped by

his profound commitment to the central fact of the Incar-

nation and by his awareness of the implications of that fact

for his poetry, gives historical or incarnated reality a much

more vital function. In keeping with the tradition of ortho-

dox exegesis which we traced back to Ireneaus, Chrysostome,

Augustine, and others, he places a higher value on literature

which grounds itself in finite and the historical and which

thus finds itself automatically closer to the creative center

of Christianity.

In contrast, we find Boccaccio consistently defending

the use of the poetic lie throughout the De Genealogia Deorum

by virtue of the fact that it carried ideal or eternal truth.

We find a good illustration of this classical tendency in

Boccaccio's description of Virgil's motives for writing the

[82]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 65.

Aeneid. First, he comments, Virgil makes no effort to be

historically correct, but fashions history solely for its

poetic effect.[83] Second, Virgil creates Aeneas for the purpose

of showing "with what passions human frailty is infested, and

the strength with which a steady man subdues them."[84] Third,

Virgil writes the Aeneid in order to praise the moral upright-

ness of the existing emperor, and fourth and last, in order

to exalt the glory of Rome. It is by a citation of these

very classical conceptions of ideal truth that Boccaccio

proves that "Virgil is not a liar, whatever the unthinking

suppose."[85] Thus Boccaccio's major theme in the De Genealogia

Deorum--the defense of poetic fiction in the service of truth--

manifests itself in obvious form once again.

The conception of poetic mimesis operative here is only

very slightly removed from the classical conceptions of mimesis

outlined in Chapter I. It is even closer to the kind of poetic

allegorization promoted by Christian-Platonist exegetes of

the first, second and third centuries, whose influence we see

in the writings of Alain, John of Salisbury, and Hugh of St.

Victor. In fact, we remember from a discussion of the Greek

Platonists Clement and Origen and from a description of the

Gnostic heresies which influenced some of their doctrines, that

---

[83]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, pp. 67-68.

[84]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 68.

[85]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 69.

the Platonic emphasis on the moral ideal was generally linked

with the development of moral hierarchies designed to measure

the degrees of moral purity in men. We see traces of this

tendency to categorize moral excellence in Boccaccio, who in

the opening pages of Book IV categorizes his opponents in

just such a fashion, placing the poet at the very top of the

moral scale because of his gift of greater insight into the

eternal truths. The emphasis on the moral excellence of the

poet can be traced to the origin of the classical definition

of propriety; a poet cannot truly perceive what is fitting

and proper in his poetry unless he displays a quality of moral

excellence in his own character.

The division of literary styles according to the depic-

tion of high, middle or low types of character is rooted

in this concept of a moral hierarchy. We see the classical

influence on Boccaccio along precisely these lines in his

treatment of comedy in the De Genealogia. Charles Osgood has

noted that Boccaccio's division of fictional types into three

basic categories with the inclusion of the fourth but barely-

treated category of "Old Wives' Tales" derives from Cicero's

classical definition of the fictional types in both the De

Inventione 1. 19. 27 and the Ad Herrenium 1. 8. 13.[86] Boc-

caccio's category one matches the Ciceronian definition of

fabula (neither true nor probable); category two parallels

---

[86]See Osgood note 14 to Book 14, Chapter 9, Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 165.

the Ciceronian type argumentum (fiction, yet probable); and
category three resembles the Ciceronian type historia (like
history, but remote in time).

It is the second category, or argumentum, which is most
relevant to our discussion of comedy. Boccaccio expands on
the use of the form which mingles truth and fiction, writing
that although it can be put to good use, as in the case of
the ancient Hebrew writers, it can be perverted by comic
writers who care more "for the approval of a licentious pub-
lic than for honesty."[87] Here, in addition to the Ciceronian
association of the type argumentum with comic form (cf. Chapter
II, pp. 87-88), we see the classical concern for the corrup-
tive influence of comedy and its depiction of low and licen-
tious character. This same concern surfaces in several other
places in the De Genealogia Deorum. In Book XIV, Chapter 15,
Boccaccio denounced Ovid for the "licentious imagination"
and "unrighteous mind" which are displayed in the Art of Love.
Earlier, Boccaccio refers to "bad poets" who fill the stage
with adulteries and corrupt the public morals. Osgood writes
that this may refer to the Greek practice, cited by Boccaccio
in the Commentary on Dante, of reciting adulterous stories
from a small stage in the midst of the theatre, and often
enacted by mimes and buffoons.[88] Boccaccio's stern denunciation

---

[87]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 48.

[88]Boccaccio, De Genealogia Deorum, p. 182, n. 25.

of the decadence of these comedies reflects his classical

commitment to a virtuous and dignified poetry in the high

style:

> Their works should be condemned, hated, and spurned, as
> I shall show later. Yet if a few writers of fiction
> erred thus, poetry does not therefore deserve universal
> condemnation, since it offers us so many inducements to
> virtue, in the monitions and teachings of poets whose
> care it has been to set forth with lofty intelligence,
> and utmost candor, in exquisite style and diction,
> men's thoughts on things of heaven.[89]

Although Boccaccio is very hard on licentiousness in comic

poetry, he follows the classical tradition in making an excep-

tion of the poetry of Plautus and Terence, and remarks on

their use of historical realism in comedy. Writing that these

poets themselves intended no meaning other than the literal

level of their poetry, he yet comments on the incidentally

instructive function of this poetry--and its relation to the

parable form. In fact, the passage in which this statement

occurs is one of the few passages in the *De Genealogia Deorum*

in which Boccaccio specifically mentions the portrayal of

character:

> The better of the comic poets, Terence and Plautus, for
> example, have also employed this form, but they intend
> naught other than the literal meaning of their lines.
> Yet by their art they portray varieties of human nature
> and conversation, incidentally teaching the reader and
> putting him on his guard.[90]

---

[89]Boccaccio, *De Genealogia Deorum*, pp. 38-39. Osgood
mentions that this denunciation of bad comic poetry may come
from the *Ars Poetriae* of Horace or from Macrobius' *Somnium
Scipionis*, note 25, p. 182.

[90]Boccaccio, *De Genealogia Deorum*, p. 49.

The association of good or moral comedy in this sense with the portrayal of varieties of human nature may derive from Cicero's rather elaborate explanation of the comic form, occurring under the category "argumentum" in the De Inventione.[91] In any case, the classical emphasis on moral instruction as the end and purpose of all types of good poetry finds clear expression in Boccaccio. It is clear, too, that however instructive comic poetry may be, it receives a less exalted position in the hierarchy of types because of the incidental nature of that instruction.

We see this same classical approach operating once again in Boccaccio's discussion of Dante's Comedy, where Boccaccio shows concern over the inappropriateness of the term 'comedy" for Dante's subject-matter. It is clear that he associates comedy only with low subjects and persons of low degree. Dante's Comedy, however, is a strange mixture of the humble and the sublime, since it, according to Boccaccio, deals with exalted persons (angels, men of eminence and the Deity) and is yet written in low language. Boccaccio's true classical purism comes out strongly when he comments at the end of this passage that had Dante written his poem in the more exalted Latin tongue, it would have been all the more sublime and dignified.[92]

---

[91] See Cicero, De Inventione, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 56-61.

[92] Commenta, I, pp. 84-85. I am grateful to Paget Toynbee, Dante Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 73, for pointing out the passage. Robert Hollander has noted that in

The literary results of Boccaccio's concern for the clear separation of the sublime from the ridiculous can best be illustrated in a comparison with the more Dantean Chaucer. Chaucer, following in the Dantean-Christian tradition of presenting great extremes of noble and comic behavior in character, takes the heavily dramatic suicide scene in Boccaccio's Filostrato and flaunts its comic possibilities.

In Boccaccio the scene is one of unrelieved dramatic intensity. The lovers embrace one another, cry bitter tears and sigh in anguish. When Criseyde faints, Troilus curses Jove and prepares to kill himself before Criseyde awakens and stops him.[93] The scene is narrated with an eye toward enhancing the high drama of the situation in which Troilus and Criseyde find themselves. In Chaucer, the scene follows essentially the same sequence except that Chaucer draws attention to the double religious standard which is evident in the very language of the two participants. When Troilus is about

---

his treatment of the four-fold method in the same commentary on Dante (Hollander uses the Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante, ed. Giorgia Padoan, Milan, 1965). Boccaccio seems to substantially analyze only a two-fold allegorical method, dealing simply with the literal and allegorical/moral senses. Hollander bases his opinion on the distinction set forth in the accessus. In this passage, Boccaccio makes an obvious distinction between the "superficial" literal-historical sense and the allegorical senses, which include both moral and Biblical meanings. It is clear, too, that the literal-historical level has less status, according to Boccaccio, than the "allegorical" levels.

[93]See Boccaccio, The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio, trans. Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929), pp. 343-349.

to kill himself, he bids a defiant farewell to the fates and,

in keeping with his devotional attitude toward Criseyde,

implores him in the words of Christ on the cross to "receive

his spirit."[94]   Chaucer again draws out attention to the mean-

ingless religious language used by both lovers when a few sen-

tences later, Criseyde conveniently awakens from her swoon,

"thonks Cipride" for her good fortune, later swearing "O

mercy God" when she "realizes" how close Troilus was to death

In both instances Chaucer adds the religious rhetoric to the

basic story supplied by Boccaccio. The contrast between the

words and their religious implication produces an obvious

comic irony which takes a good deal of the edge from the high

drama of the situation and forms a clear contrast with Boc-

caccio's narrative.

Though his portrayal of the would-be suicide exploits

the comic irony contained within it, Chaucer's treatment of

the scene does not fall into frivolous levity. The very ser-

iousness of useless oaths and of Christian" language used in

the service of an illicit love would not have been lost on the

reader, and reminds us rather strongly of the ethic underlying

Dante's treatment of comic episodes in the Inferno.

Thus we may conclude this short section on Boccaccio's

literary theory with the observation that Boccaccio, although

demonstrating a clear attachment to the content of Scriptural

---

[94]Geoffrey Chaucer, "Troilus and Criseyde," in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1957), pp. 453-454.

Revelation, has not integrated his faith with his total
approach to poetics in the profound way in which Dante and
Chaucer accomplish the same task. Boccaccio's aesthetic
theory is marked by philosophical emphases and methods
reaching back into the tradition of classical exegesis which
finds its roots in allegorical methods developed by Plato and
Aristotle, refined by later classicists, and carried into the
Middle Ages through the allegorical method promoted by the
Christian Platonists and other Greek-influenced Christian
theologians and aestheticians. As a result, Boccaccio's
understanding of figurative expression, an understanding
which derives from a very classical conception of literary
theory, cannot be said to constitute an environment conducive
to the production of historically realistic characters in fic-
tion, except as these figures are viewed as exponents of the
classical definition of comedy.

CHAPTER VII

CHARACTERIZATION IN CHAUCER'S TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

We come now to the focal point of this study. Having

established the origin, history, and general character of

two important perspectives on literature which exist at the

time of Chaucer, what light can they be seen to shed on the

nature of Chaucer's approach to poetics? Specifically, what

can be said about the nature of Chaucer's characterization

in Troilus and Criseyde? To what extent, in other words,

does Troilus and Criseyde manifest the classical perspective

on reality? To what extent the centrally orthodox view?

How does Chaucer's relation to each tradition affect the

presentation of the characters of Troilus, Criseyde and Pan-

darus? These questions will be explored through a focus on

the four basic issues which have been demonstrated earlier

to be most relevant to the problem of the literary presenta-

tion of character: (1) the artist's general view of history,

(2) the resulting view of fate and free will, (3) his attitude

toward comedy, and (4) his approach to figurative expression.

A number of Chaucerian critics have commented on the

remarkable sense of history which pervades Chaucer's Troilus

and Criseyde. Bloomfield comments on Chaucer's preoccupation

with accurate chronology and his "strong feeling for the past,

the present, and the future."[1] John McCall observes that

Chaucer's sense of history enables him to create a narrative

which is "more realistically and completely dramatic,"[2] and

R. K. Root observes that Chaucer gives his story a "compell-

ing sense of actuality."[3] In addition, Bloomfield reinforces

the major thesis of this paper by ascribing Chaucer's sense

of history primarily to his insight into the implications of

the Christian view of reality, a view "profoundly marked by

the belief that events necessary to the salvation and res-

toration of man and his world will and have taken place in

earthly history," and by the assmmption that such events

"reveal providential plans and purposes which are essen-

tially benevolent."[4]

In the course of this chapter, it will be demonstrated

that Chaucer, though he exhibits some ties with the classical

perspective on reality, yet shows a more fundamental attach-

ment to the Christian vision which informs his immediate

predecessor, Dante, whose basic theological and allegorical

orientation comes down to us in the sacramental tradition.

---

[1]Morton Bloomfield, "Chaucer's Sense of History,"
JEGP 51(1952), 305.

[2]John McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's Troilus,"
ELH 29 (March, 1962), 274.

[3]Geoffrey Chaucer, The Book of Troilus and Criseyde,
ed. and with a preface by R. K. Root (Princeton: Prince-
ton University Press, 1926), p. xxxiii.

[4]Bloomfield, p. 301.

Chaucer's essentially Christian perspective on history
is perhaps most evident in the theme of providential control
which stands at the center of his narrative. Like Dante,
Chaucer faithfully depicts the old classical story of the
fall of Troy while yet demonstrating a clear awareness of
its limitations from the Christian perspective. It is his
own clear awareness of the providential perspective from
which he speaks that gives Chaucer's careful handling of his
pagan tragedy --a story which takes place before the birth
of Christ--such a profound sense of Christian meaning.
Throughout the retelling of the classical story, we are
reminded of the view of reality which is Chaucer's consis-
tent absolute. This absolute, of course, becomes explicit
in the Epilog (_Troilus and Criseyde_ V, 1835f.),[5] where Chaucer
makes a clear contrast between the Christian and pagan
world-orders and gives us a sense of the difference between
Christ's love and an earthly love controlled by destiny and
unillumined by the higher definition of freedom which is
implicit throughout the _Troilus_.

Although this aspect of the poem is often pointed out
by critics, it will be useful to review some of the more
obvious reminders of the Christian world-view which Chaucer
scatters liberally through his poem. This first hint of a

[5]Geoffrey Chaucer, _Troilus and Criseyde_, in _The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer_, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1957). Hereafter all references to the text are taken from this edition.

contrast between natural and heavenly love, between love moti-

vated by fate, and love motivated by freedom occurs in the

opening verses of Book I, when the narrator introduces his

tale of love and asks his readers in remembering their own

sorrow in natural love to pray for those lovers they know who

may be in the same circumstance as Troilus:

> And Preieth for hem that ben in the cas
> Of Troilus, as ye may after here,
> That Love hem brynge in hevene to solas;
> And ek for me preieth to God so dere.
>   (I, 28-32)

The confusion between earthly and heavenly love evident in

the narrator's devotional plea serves as an implicit reminder

of the Christian values which undergird the poem. Chaucer

uses the same technique in describing Troilus' capitulation

to his romantic destiny.

Early in Book I, the narrator refers to Troilus' fall

into love as a "conversion" and later Pandarus urges Troilus

to "have pees with himself," by accepting the "grace" which

is offered to him, and to "repente" of his former coldness

to love. At the end of Book I Pandarus in planning his

approach to Criseyde opposes the two loves and comments on

the susceptibility of human nature to one or the other kind:

> Was nevere man or womman yet bigete
> That was unapt to suffren loves hete,
> Celestial, or elles love of Kynde;
> Forthy some grace I hope in hire to fynde.
>   (I, 977-980)

In Book II, Criseyde and Pandarus continue the opposition

with their consistently religious references--mostly in the

form of mild oaths. In the first conversation alone, Pandarus

swears "If God wol," "By God," "God yow see," "I thonk it
God," "For love of God," and "God be my savacioun" over 10
times. Criseyde runs a close second with her constant cries
of "For Goddes love," "Yea, holy God," "By God," "With grace
of God," and "for love of God." These references to God as
Pandarus and Criseyde use them are obviously casual conver-
sational fillers. They are not intended by either charac-
ter to carry the depth of meaning that Chaucer conveys through
their inclusion in the language of each character here.
Unobtrusively, he keeps the contrast between earthly and
heavenly love before us.

Pandarus' description of Troilus' dream-confession affords
Chaucer another chance to display his talent for double-
entendre. Troilus, according to Pandarus' report, "repents"
of his rebelliousness against Cupid, begs him for "mercy"
and even berates himself with the words of the catholic con-
fessional--"Mea culpa"--all in his sleep (II, 525). Later
on, when Criseyde debates the matter of her surrender to
Troilus, she reveals a clear awareness of the distinction
between "celestial" and "natural" ethics:

> What shal I doon? To what fyn lyve I thus?
> Shal I nat love, in cas if that me leste?
> What, par dieux! I am naught religious.
> And though that I myn herte sette at reste
> Upon this Knyght, that is the worthieste,
> And keepe alway myn honour and my name,
> By alle right, it may do me no shame.
>   (II, 757-763)

It is obvious that Criseyde's first allegiance is not to an
inner code of faith, but to an outer code of social reputation.

In Book III, we have what first appears to be an eclipse of the tension between heavenly and earthly love which is implicit in the early books of <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>. The third book opens with a paean to the "thousand formes of love" including the loves of man, beast and God (III, 7-14). The body of Book III is in itself a paean to the natural love of Troilus and Criseyde, which the narrator in conclusion links once again to the love of God:

> So wolde God, that auctour is of Kynde,
> That with his bond Love of his vertu liste
> To cerclen hertes alle, and faste bynde,
> That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste;
> And hertes cole, hem wolde I that he twiste.
> To make hem love, and that hem liste ay rewe
> On hertes sore, and kepe hem that ben trewe!
> (III, 1765-1771)

The clear linkage between earthly and heavenly love at this point and the narrator's obvious enthusiasm over the con-summation of Troilus and Criseyde's love seems to refute the subtle hints of opposition which were pointed out in Books I and II.

E. T. Donaldson has a very interesting explanation of this short eclipse of the narrator's objectivity at this point which also has a direct bearing on Chaucer's historical sense. Donaldson suggests that the narrator in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u> has essentially two identities; one the "unloved servant of the God of Love" and one as a historian. It is as a histor-ian that the narrator first presents himself--the careful follower of his "auctour Lollius" and the "olde bookes" which portray Criseyde as the historical embodiment of the faithless,

deceiving woman. However, it is as a vicarious participant
in the love-affair that the historian loses his objective
view of Criseyde and becomes emotionally involved in his own
narration, halfway falling in love with Criseyde himself.[6]
Donaldson points out that the tension between the two views
increases to an almost unendurable level until the beginning
of Book IV where the historian is entirely subverted for
the moment by the vicarious lover. The narrator begins as
the historian--"For how Criseyde Troilus forsook"--and then
under the force of his sympathy for her breaks down into--
"Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde" (IV, 15-16).

Although Donaldson has grasped the tension which is
operative here, and the narrator's momentary capitulation to
a subjective point of view, we must note that Chaucer the
author finds ways of controlling our emotional reactions to
the lovers even as his narrator himself yields to the beauty
of Troilus and Criseyde's romantic liaison. In the very
first scene of Book III, for example, Chaucer continues to
remind us of the Christian universe which constantly threatens
to break into the romantic world created by Pandarus and the
lovers. At the point in their first meeting at Deiphebus'
house when Criseyde receives Troilus into his service, it
seems to Pandarus that bells ring spontaneously as a manifes-
tation of the miracle which has taken place (III, 183).

---

[6] E. T. Donaldson, "Troilus and Criseyde," in Chaucer's
Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader (New York: Ron-
ald Press, 1958), pp. 966-67.

Besides heralding the miracle of the beginning of the
courtly relationship, the bells also serve as a subtle
reminder of the high point of the Christian eucharist, when
the host is elevated to symbolize the union of flesh and
spirit in Christ. Chaucer keeps the contrast of the two
world-views--the pagan and Christian--before us. Pandarus
adds to the religious overtones of this scene by falling
down on his knees and thanking the goddess Venus for the
miracle.

Chaucer continues his subtle reminders of the Christian
world-view throughout the rest of Book III. Pandarus con-
stantly "prays" to Apollo for help. Criseyde, unsettled by
Pandarus' contrived story about her "fals" love for Horast
reacts with a comment on the "mutability of earthly joys"
(III, 820), the most Boethian-Christian of Middle-English
themes. When Troilus and Criseyde are finally together,
there is another "repentance and forgiveness" scene and just
before Troilus finally embraces Criseyde he puts "al in
Goddes hand." Criseyde yields, and welcomes Troilus by call-
ing him her "knyght" her "pees" and her "suffisaunce." If not
open heresy in the pagan world which Chaucer has created,
Criseyde's comment is certainly suspect from the standpoint
of the Christian condemnation of idolatrous love.

At two points during the consummation scene, Chaucer
even seems to allow the Christian world-order which hovers
so subtly over the romantic universe of the lovers to break

into the poem on an almost consciously explicit level. The
first instance occurs when Criseyde comforts Troilus after
his swoon and speaks to the feigned "problem" of his jealousy.
When she finds he is jealous because she refused to look at
him during the Feast of Palladin, she replies:

> Swete, al were it so
> What harm was that, syn I non yvel mene?
> For by that God that bought us bothe two
> In all thyng is my entente clene.
>   (III, 1163-1166)

This very orthodox reference to Christ's redemptive act on
the cross is, from the perspective of the characters, simply
another example of the careless epithets which Criseyde and
Pandarus scatter freely through their conversation. However
casual, this passage still serves to introduce a clear ref-
erence to Christ's love directly into the romantic world of
the lovers and demonstrates Chaucer's conscious attempt to
control that world.

The second instance of a more explicit interjection of
the Christian perspective into the narrative occurs at the
very height of the narrator's excitement over the lover's
meeting. In the conclusion to Book III, the narrator comments
that Troilus held everyone lost who was not in "Love's heigh
service," and then remarks rather ambiguously: "I mene folk
that oughte it ben of right" (III, 1793-95).[7] Thus even in
Book III, where the narrator becomes totally involved in the

---

[7]Howard Patch points out these two passages in Howard
R. Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge: Harvard University
Press, 1959), p. 25.

action of the poem and the emotions of the lovers Chaucer reminds us of the Christian universe which threatens at every point to break into the fateful circle which the lovers have drawn around themselves. Like Pandarus poking his head through the curtains of Criseyde's bed, the Christian reality threatens entrance into the world of an idolatrous Eros on every level.

In the last two books, that reality breaks into the poetic universe of the lovers in force. The fact that they perceive its entrance as fortune's whim makes the irony Chaucer achieves in his Christian allusions all the more powerful. One of the most poignant of these allusions occurs in Troilus' wish that all lovers find a love "of steel" which will "endure in joy:" "God leve that ye fynde ay love of stiel, and longe maie youre lif in joie endure" (IV, 325-26). The contrast between what Chaucer's Christian audience knew about the eternal quality of God's love and the only love which Troilus perceives at the moment is only too obvious. Chaucer continues to use this technique throughout Criseyde, referring to the turn of the wheel of fortune, remembers that she has fallen from "heven" into "helle" (I, 712); her "soule" seeks only Troilus (IV, 699); she swears faithfulness to him "by all the gods" (IV, 1535-1540). Troilus, likewise, "prays" to Jove, and considers himself in "hell" at the end of Book IV. In Book V, he calls Criseyde's home the "shrine of a Saint," dreams the sort of prophetic dreams

which are commonplace in Biblical history, and once again
 prays to Cupid for relief. By using traditional Christian
language and action throughout the pagan world of his poem,
Chaucer keeps his reader subtly aware of the Christian vision
which informs it.

In the Epilog, of course, the Christian perspective
which informs the poem up to this point mostly through ironic
inversion becomes totally explicit. Troilus goes up to the
eighth sphere, and having seen the vanity of his "fals"
love, finds the true joy which Chaucer's narrator, now fully
objective and fully within the Christian world-view once
again, defines a few verses later in the famous address begin-
ning "O yonge fresshe folkes...." In this address, Chaucer
enjoins his audience to worship Christ, whose sacrificial
love evidenced on the cross is the only true and enduring
love. Thus he gives an explicit content to the love of
which his whole story is the impermanent and imperfect image.
It is obvious, too, that Chaucer's view of history is informed
at all levels by the central historical fact of the Christ-
event, which he reiterates in almost creed-like form:

> And loveth hym, the which that right for love
> Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above.
> (V, 1842-44)

The subtle hints of the Christian historical perspective which
we have seen all along in the ironic duality of the speech
and actions of the characters thus culminates in a clear
statement of the historical fact against which Chaucer measures

all seeming reality. Although his characters are pagan,
their lives are given significance through the Christian
matrix in which they move.

The characters of Troilus and Criseyde are informed by
the Christian view of history not only through the philosoph-
ical control which Chaucer constantly exercises over his
characters through their inadvertent references to the Chris-
tian world view, but also through an increase in the dramatic
tension brought about in the interplay of the classical notion
of fate and the Christian belief in individual free will.
In Chapter II of this study I noted the effect of a fated
or an historical notion of reality on the representation of
character in literature. The philosophers of the classical
age, as I have shown, encouraged a view of history which
emphasized its chaotic nature. Man, defeated from the first
by the very nature of earthly history, yet strives to find a
way of ordering or controlling the chaos he sees for the
purpose of attaining eternal truth. As R. G. Collingwood
put it, "Man's fate is master of him, and the freedom of his
will is shown not in controlling the outward events of his
life, but in controlling the inward temper in which he faces
these events.[8] Eric Auerbach, we remember, notes that the
destiny man spends most of his life trying to escape is his
own, and that classical tragedy arises out of the struggle of

---

[8]R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clar-
endon Press, 1946), p. 20.

man against his own substantive and unchanging nature, determined before birth, and only gradually unfolded to him as he lives. A man's choices, though apparently free in the beginning, are shown to have been governed by fate all along. The drama arises out of the seeming reversals of the fateful situation of the character. These reversals cause momentary hope in a good outcome, momentary belief in free will.

But in classical drama, the hope and the belief are always short-lived. Through some new twist of circumstance, some new piece of information, the character once again recognizes his true destiny and is forced to bow to it. Aristotle points out that these elements of recognition and reversal occur only in the plot and thus suggests that freedom of the human will is always secondary in classical drama to the inevitability of the action. Where plot is more important than character, where the colossal dimensions of the struggle against destiny are more important than personality, we might expect a movement away from a historically individual representation of man toward a more universalized "type-character."

There are elements of this view reflected in both George L. Kittredge's and John L. Lowes' suggestion that Chaucer's characterizations in Troilus and Criseyde arise from the historic circumstances surrounding the fate of Troy. Lowes comments that Chaucer's handling of the narrative makes us consistently aware of the impending fate of Troy,[9] and

---

[9] John L. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of his Genius (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1934), p. 180.

Kittredge writes explicitly that for Troilus and Criseyde,
"the fate of Troy is their fate...the tragedy of character
grows out of the tragedy of situation."[10] For these critics
and others[11] it is clear that the dramatic unity of action in
Troilus and Criseyde resides in plot rather than in charac-
terization.

We would expect such a view to go hand in hand with a
mention of Chaucer's failure to create convincingly dramatic
characters which have true flesh-and-blood appeal. However,
this is seldom the case. Most critics give Chaucer a grudg-
ing respect for the dramatic appeal of the character of
Criseyde, at least, and sometimes attribute elements of his-
torical realism to Pandarus or Troilus as well. The resolu-
tion of Criseyde's individually dramatic appeal with an
aesthetic which seems to give more attention to plot than
character varies from critic to critic. One of the more inte-
resting explanations is offered by Arthur Mizener, who locates
the modern tendency to see Criseyde as a psychologically
realistic character in a failure to perceive that Chaucer

---

[10]G. L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge:
Harvard University Press, 1915), pp. 119-121.

[11]Lowes and Kittredge are supported in their view that
Troilus and Criseyde is essentially tragic in conception by
Arthur Mizener, "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde,"
PMLA 54 (March, 1939), 65-79; D. S. Brewer, Chaucer (London:
Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 99n; Paul F. Baum,
Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation (Durham: Duke University
Press, 1958), p. 155; and W. C. Curry, "Destiny in Chaucer's
Troilus," PMLA 45 (March, 1930), 129f.

never motivates his heroine, in the fact that he never pre-
sents Criseyde as making a clearly-motivated choice.[12] Cri-
seyde never changes, writes Mizener. She is the type of a
faithless woman from the start, and Chaucer creates sympathy
for her by enlisting us on the side of what she seems to be
at the beginning of the narrative. The gap between what
Criseyde is in the early books and what she is shown to be
later is the answer to the mystery of her character and the
dramatic intensity of her appeal. In other words, the tragedy
is that in Book V, Criseyde does not act in accordance with
what we thought her nature to be in Book I. We discover
that she is not what she seemed to be. She is, however,
what she has been all along--a faithless woman; we simply
did not perceive the fact earlier.

This, of course, is to view the characters of Troilus
and Criseyde in much the same light as those critics who
tend to deal with all Chaucerian characters as fixed types.[13]
Viewing the characters of Troilus and Criseyde in this light
puts Chaucer directly within the classical tradition of
characterization, with its emphasis on substantive and
unchanging moral natures, inevitability of plot, and drama
which arises only out of the tension between the appearance
of good and the ultimately tragic reality.

---

[12]Mizener, p. 68.

[13]D. W. Robertson, for example, emphasizes the fixed
nature of Chaucerian characterization. D. W. Robertson,
Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton University Press,
1963), p. 269.

Although this particular critical viewpoint helps to identify the operation of classical aesthetic elements which come down to Chaucer in the classical tradition we have explored in this study, it does not fully account either for the attention given to the concept of free will in Troilus and Criseyde, nor for the changes which we see in the characters of Troilus and the narrator, nor for the optimistic Christian vision expressed in the Epilog. It can be demonstrated that while Chaucer's characters show evidences of the influence of a classical conception of character they are ultimately subsumed into the higher comic vision of the Dantean-Christian reality. Although Fortune is mock mistress of ceremonies for the duration of the action, the Christian God is the final measure of all things. On the classical side, Chaucer does seem to construct a formal hierarchy with his three major characters, a hierarchy which seems at first to be based on moral and social grounds. However, the social and moral categories of this hierarchy, though present and utilized by Chaucer, are muted in favor of a new Dantean-Boethian standard of love and free will which becomes the final test of each character's spiritual authority in the narrative. Though Chaucer uses the classical categories to delineate his characters, he finally undercuts the whole classical notion of fate which underlies the predetermined status of his characters and brings us, with Troilus, into

a new awareness of the imperfection of all natural loves and the failure of all human intention both to will and to do the good.

The characterization of Pandarus, for example, demonstrates a world-view founded on a false love of gaiety and pleasure.[14] Pandarus' language, full of conventional moral sententia and easy ornament,[15] marks him immediately as a middle-class comic type from the classical perspective, and reveals both a studied use of moral aphorism and an inconsistent proclivity for metaphors of gaming and fortune. Behind a respectable facade of moral truth, Pandarus hides a voracious love of gaming and a questionable ethic.

Chaucer constructs that double world-view from the opening talk with Troilus, when Pandarus convinces the unhappy lover that he can help him with the argument: "A fool may ek a wise man ofte gide" (I, 630). The proverb itself is a perfect example of conventional sententia,[16] and yet at the same time Pandarus has correctly characterized himself as a jester, a worldly-wise gamester, who slips in and out of his various roles like quicksilver, and who sees love as nothing

---

[14]See Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Richard H. Green (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962), p. 70.

[15]Robt. O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 187.

[16]W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), Appendix.

more than a fascinating game with alternate serious and comic

phases. Just before he pushes Troilus into a revelation of

his secret love, he says to himself: "Aha! Here begynneth

game!" (I, 868).[17] He pays homage to The Goddess of Love

and realizes love's power over personal feeling, but refuses

to be hindered from his gaming even by his own love-failures;

he even turns those failures, by means of a Boethian metamor-

phosis, into an asset to his strategy:

> Sith of two contraries is o lore,
> I that have in love so ofte assayed
> Grevances, oughte konne, and wel the may
> Conseillen the of that thow art amayed.
> (I, 645-49)

The logic, while recalling the Boethian discussion of con-

traries,[18] fails to mention that the "one thinge larned" by

Boethius is God, who creates the contraries and binds them

together in unity. Thus Chaucer subtly calls the original

rendering to mind through Pandarus' distortion of it, a tech-

nique which serves to keep the characterization in the proper

spiritual perspective.

In the conversation which follows Pandarus again reveals

his talent for using Boethius for his own game. This time the

subject is fortune. He explains to Troilus that fortune's

wheel must move up, not down, since Troilus is already on the

bottom, thereby comforting Troilus, but leaving the inevitable

---

[17] Sister Anne Barbara Gill, _Paradoxical Patterns in Chaucer's Troilus: An Explanation of the Palinode_ (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1960), points out the passage.

[18] Boethius, pp. 70-71.

movement of the wheel downward once again hanging implicit in the air. Pandarus, of course, is not thinking about the implications of the total movement of Fortune's wheel, since what is important to him at the moment is simply the excitement of the game of love, the challenge of getting his friend to play. While the entire conversation heads toward Pandarus' successful manipulation of Troilus into "repentaunce," toward Troilus' entrance into what Pandarus sees as the game of love, Chaucer manages to keep the elements of the Boethian world view implicit in and defining the jester's perspective.

At the end of the meeting with Troilus, Pandarus leaves to plot his game with Criseyde the next day, and when he finally arrives, plays it masterfully. Entering the room his attitude is one of boisterous good fun, and soon he has Criseyde charmed by his absurd high spirits and his irreverent desire for dancing. After the highjinks at the beginning, he indirectly brings up the subject of his secret, on which Criseyde quickly pounces, and then once having manipulated his partner into the right position, begins another kind of dance which leads to a series of gradual concessions on Criseyde's part and to her final accession to his will--and her own--in Book III.

When Pandarus calls the next day, he once again plays the fool and gets Criseyde to laugh at this expense before proceeding with Troilus' case. The jokes Pandarus employs in both these instances reflect his usual incapacity for

taking anything seriously--including himself--and points up his ultimate attachment to the process of gaming. In an almost three-level pun, Chaucer has Pandarus advising Criseyde: "Loke alway that ye fynde Game in myn hood!" (II, 1109-10). Here the jab at himself, the spoof on cuckolding, and the word "game" itself bring to the surface all of Pandarus' multi-faceted attachment to the Goddess of Flux, to the process rather than the "end" of things.

In the last books, Chaucer carries out this philosophy to its logical conclusion. In Book IV, reacting to Troilus' grief and anxiety at the prospect of losing Criseyde, Pandarus remarks:

> Swich fir by process, shall of kynde colde,
> For syn it it is but casuel pleasaunce,
> Some cas shall putte it out of remembraunce.
> (IV, 418-420)

Here the emphasis on the ability of "cas" (i.e., circumstance) to change all for better or for worse echoes his arguments in the initial scene with Troilus. His attitude further reveals itself in the statement arguing for the abduction of Criseyde in Book IV:

> Forthi tak herte, and thynk right as a Knyght,
> Thorugh love is broken alday every lawe,
> Kith now somwhat thi corage and thi myght;
> Have mercy on thiself, for any awe
> Lat not this wrecched wo thyn herte gnawe.
> But manly set the world on six and sevene,
> And if thow dye a martyre, go to hevene!
> (IV, 617-623)

Not only does this passage directly contradict Boethian philosophy, in which the law of God expressly governs the

the lawlessness of human love,   but it falls into the very

language of chance itself at the end, adjuring Troilus to

"stake the world on a throw of dice!" Thus Chaucer keeps

his character in control through the Boethian standard of

love implicit in Pandarus' reversal of it. The ironic proph-

ecy of Troilus' martyrdom spoken in jest by the essentially

irreligious Pandarus also points toward the fulfillment

against which Chaucer plays his limited world-view. Troilus

will die and he will "go to hevene" in a much more literal

sense than Pandarus suspects.

In Book V Pandarus, now dealing with a despondent

Troilus, offers the only remedy he knows--a time of play

at Sarpedoun. His strategy, true to form, is to get Troilus'

mind off his philosophical speculations and back into the

world of the moment, into the flux of time. Barbara Gill

has pointed out that Pandarus is in this sense a false Lady

Philosophy, trying to cure Troilus by illusion and decep-

tion. Pandarus, she concludes, has no remedy as does Lady

Philosophy; he is caught in his own game:

> By all the sleight of that game he has offered
> Troilus a false view of love, affording him
> only temporary sensual pleasure and approximate
> despair in its deprivation.[20]

Furthermore, Pandarus' false friendship has become the nega-

tive model of the genuine friendship--based on virtue

---

[19]Boethius, p. 74.

[20]Gill, pp. 51-52.

described in Boethius and Jean de Meun.[21] Thus through a
multiple use of ironic religious foreshadowing, negative
contrast, and the underlying metaphor of "gaming," Chaucer
constructs a character who in his limited view of love-as-
game suggests the very values which he negates, and prefigures
the positive statement of those values in the Epilog.

There is another technique which Chaucer uses in defin-
ing the limits of Pandarus' world-view. I have suggested
that love defined as a game does not recognize the existence
or operation of free will. Pandarus' whole technique in
dealing with Troilus is a combination of manipulation and
chance. Where decision can have no real effect, where love
is not controlled with the mind of reason and choice, man
can exercise no real dominion over his world, but becomes a
victim (albeit, in Pandarus' case, a canny victim) of the
Goddess Fortuna. Pandarus, whose world-view is limited to
exactly this understanding of reality, becomes the very sym-
bol of chance as a result.

But what is more important, Pandarus is himself presented
as being aware of the other alternatives to his own position
on the subject. In Book I, during his first talk with Troilus,
Pandarus tells the love-stricken warrior that he intends not
to restrain Troilus from his love "theigh that it were Eleyne
that is thi brother wif, if it wiste!" This comment not only

---

[21]See Robertson's discussion of this friendship in
Preface to Chaucer, p. 486.

demonstrates Pandarus' total attachment to the God of
romantic love, but also reveals his awareness of the external
moral code which puts restrictions on romantic feeling and
which thus contradicts his own position. His emphatic will-
ingness to flaunt that code in the face of romantic attach-
ment is obvious.

Later on, Chaucer again makes us aware of Pandarus' con-
scious knowledge of an external ethic which is at variance
with his own. In Book III, 11. 274-280, he says he has not
helped Troilus for "covetise," but "oonly for t'abregge that
distresse/ For which wel neigh thow deidest," (III, 262-63),
and then contrasts his obvious attachment to the "good" of
pleasurable satisfaction with the public code:

> And were it wist that I, thorugh my engyn
> Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,
> To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn,
> Whi, al the world upon it would crie,
> And seyn that I the werste trecherie
> Dide in this cas, that evere was bigonne
> And she forlost, and thow right nought ywonne.
> (III, 274-280)

Pandarus' recognition of the public code of morals at this
point serves as a subtle reminder of that Christian code of
ethics which hovers around the characters at numerous places
in the narrative. It also makes us aware of a conscious
choice that Pandarus himself has made, probably at some point
before Chaucer's story even begins.

In the characterization of Criseyde, Chaucer shifts his
attention to a different form of false love. Robert Payne
has noticed that Criseyde's rhetorical style is consistently

unelaborated and natural, placing her in a middle-class social
category distinct from Pandarus' exaggerated sentiousness,
but still more closely allied with his plain style (she speaks
only one lyric and almost never employs tropes in dialogue)
than with Troilus' idealism.[22]   The general rhetorical kin-
ship between Criseyde and her "em" is carried out in at least
one other area. Criseyde, like her uncle, demonstrates a
slightly less cynical, but still very unmistakable awareness
of the "game" she plays. When Pandarus threatens death in
Book II if she will not "give mercy," Criseyde says to her-
self: "It nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie" (II, 462).[23]
But it is significant that the context of her remark reveals
more the fear of a loss of reputation than the inherent
attachment to "gaming" which Pandarus displays. Criseyde is
worried about "what men wolde of it deme" if Pandarus makes
a scene in her house, and although she is concerned with the
rules of the game (she demurs when Pandarus' imagination
wanders too far to the future of the love affair, cf. "Nay,
therof spak I nought!" (II, 590), she is more concerned with
her own honor--and specifically, with the paradoxical enlarge-
ment of personal self-esteem along with the threats to public
honor which unmarried love, even of a worthy man, brings.

---

[22]Payne, p. 199.

[23]Gill points out the passage, p. 43.

Chaucer establishes this attention to honor solidly

through the _descriptio_ at the beginning of Book I ("And ek

the pure wise of hire mevynge/ Showed well that men myght

in hire gesse honour, estat, and womanly noblesse"), and
[24]
develops it in her decision to love Troilus:

> All were it nat to doone,
> To graunte hym love for his worthynesse.
> It were honour with pley and with gladnesse;
> In honestee with swich a lord to deele,
> For myn estat, and also for his heele.
> (II, 703-707)

Here Criseyde exhibits a remarkably canny appreciation of

the social advantages of loving a king's son.

In Book II, Criseyde vacillates between her desire for

physical pleasure and the personal security of loving a

worthy man, and her fear that her honor and reputation will

be smirched by the relationship. She reasons:

> What shal I doon? To what fyn lyve I thus?
> Shal I not love, if that me leeste?
> What, par dieux! I am naught religious.
> And though that I myn herte sette at reste
> Upon this knight, that is the worthieste,
> And kepe alwey my honour and my name,
> By alle right, it may do me no shame.
> (II, 757-763)

Despite her decision and the confirmation given by Antig-

one's Song, Criseyde's buried anxiousness surfaces again

in Book III when she checks to make sure that Pandarus

understands the stipulation of secrecy which applies to her

visit to his house and warns him against "goosish people's

---

[24]See Robertson, p. 487; see also C. S. Lewis, _Allegory of Love_ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 186-190.

spech, that dremen thynges which that never were" (II,
584-585).[25]   Later on in the same book her fear once again

reveals itself in the rhetorical question: "And who may

stoppen every wikked tonge/ or soun of belles while that

thei ben ronge?"[26]

Clearly, Criseyde's phobia about the secrecy of her

affair and the protection of her honor (a phobia which is

in part conventional, but also a reflection of an overcon-

cern for public sanction) affects Pandarus and Troilus with

a hypersensitivity for her reputation, even as it makes

us wonder why she is so concerned with secrecy if she really

plans to keep her honour in the first place. In Book III,

immediately after the meeting in Deiphebus' house, Pandarus

advises Troilus to keep Criseyde "out of blame, Syn thow art

wys, and save alwey hire name" (III, 265-266). Later on,

Troilus decides not to abduct Criseyde for the express

reason that he holds her honor derer than his life ("And

me were levere ded than hire diffam" (V, 565).

Criseyde's concern for her honor rises up again in

Book IV during her last meeting with Troilus. She argues

for her 10-day stay in Calkas' camp by bringing up Troilus'

pledge to keep her honor:[27]   "May ye nought 10 dayes thanne

abide/ For my honour, in swich an aventure?" (IV, 1328-29).

---

[25]See Gill, p. 58.

[26]See Gill, p. 56.

[27]See Gill, p. 42.

In fact, "honour" informs Criseyde's vocabulary in the same way that "game" informs Pandarus' vocabulary. "Honour" comprehends a kind of ultimate religious standard for Criseyde, even as "gaming" forms the ultimate ethic for Pandarus. This becomes particularly apparent in the mixture of religious and secular language in her final plea to Troilus not to plan an elopement:[28]

> ...Thynketh on my honestee
> That floureth yet, how foule I should it shende,
> And with what filthe it spotted sholde be
> If in this forme I shoulde with yow wende,
> My name should I nevere ayeyn wold wynne
> Thus were I lost, and that were routh and synne.
> (IV, 1576-82)

"Routhe and synne" are obviously defined in this instance as attacks on public reputation, and not sin in the orthodox sense. It is a sign of Criseyde's ultimate perspective that the conventional Christian definition of sin has no meaning for her. Criseyde's inattention to this fact cannot be explained away literarily by her pagan condition, since she demonstrates awareness of her alternatives, and the contrast between her defense of personal honor and the Christian ideal of sacrificial love could not have been lost on Chaucer's audience.

Criseyde's definition of "routhe and synne" is not the only use of stock religious phrases. Meaningless religious language echoes through her speech, and every other word is a conventional religious oath: "For Goddes love I preye,"

---

[28]See Gill, p. 61.

"for the love of God I yow wrecche," "with Goddes gover-
naunce." The emptiness of this kind of language reaches a
climax in Book IV, when Criseyde, needing some extra rhe-
torical mileage, swears her fealty to Troilus on all the
gods and invites "Atropos my thred of lif to brest, if I
be fals!" (IV, 154-57). A stanza later she even opens her-
self to damnation to substantiate her point. All this is
followed by her vow that she will be so faithful to Troilus
"that ay honour to meward shal reboun" (IV, 1666).

There is a certain hysteria lacing Criseyde's whole
manner at this point. Sensing that somehow her own author-
ity is inadequate in the face of such a need to convince
Troilus of her sincerity, she drags in all the outside
"authority" she can muster and still fails to convince. Of
course, the heart-weakness of her "intent" becomes clear at
the end as Criseyde talks with Diomede. Despite her feel-
ings for Troilus, she finally chooses her immediate "securi-
tee" as the more solid value:

> In hire soule ay up and doun,
> The wordes of sodeyn Diomede,
> His grete estate, and peril of the toun
> And that she was alone and hadde need
> of freendes help....
>
> (V, 1023-27)

Diomede's "grete estat" has a great attraction; Criseyde's
fear of being alone does the rest; and all the while Chaucer
has made his own subtle point: that sincerity is no substi-
tute for the truth.

Apart from the general Christian definition of "unlaw-
ful love" which has already colored the reader's suspicions
about Criseyde, there is an explicit irony in her use of
Boethian aphorisms on the mutability of human joy even as
she expects Troilus' arrival at her bedside.[29]   Chaucer sets
his characterization of Criseyde against several Boethian
injunctions, the most important of which is a denunciation of
honor not based on virtue:

> For virtue has its own honor, and this honor is trans-
> ferred to those who possess virtue. Since popular
> acclaim cannot accomplish this, clearly it does not
> have the beauty which is characteristic of true honor.[30]

It is significant that Dante has a long section on this very
subject in the Convivio, and comes to essentially the same
conclusions as Boethius.[31]   Thus Criseyde stands exposed.
Her real attachment has been not to virtue, but to reputa-
tion, social status, and personal safety; ironically, she loses
all in seeking the public honor which these goals represent.

Chaucer makes it clear, as he did with Pandarus, that
Criseyde has freely chosen her own "false god"--that she has
been at least half-consciously aware of her alternatives from
the beginning. When Criseyde first hears of Troilus' request

---

[29]Gill, p. 59.

[30]Boethius, p. 49.

[31]Dante, Convivio, trans. William Walrond Jackson
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 258. Dante writes:
"No one, because he is able to say, 'I am of such and such a
stock,' is entitled to believe that he is possessed of nobil-
ity, if these fruits (virtues) are not in him...."

for love from Pandarus, for example, she pushes him for his

exact meaning. When Pandarus tells her straightforwardly

"that ye hym love ayeyn for his lovynge/ As love for love is

skilful guerdonynge" (II, 391-92). Criseyde reacts with what

should only be construed as a charming bit of feminine

hypocrisy:

> With he stynte, and caste adoun the heed
> And she began to breste a-wepe anon,
> And seyde, "Allas for wo! Why nere I deed?
> <u>For of this world the feyth is al agoon</u>
> Allas what sholden straunge to me doon
> When he, that for my beste frend I wende
> Ret me to love and sholde it me defende?
> (II, 407-413, Italics mine)

That Criseyde is fully aware of the external "code of faith"

which condemns illicit love is clear from her reference to

"the world" in which "the feyth is all agoon."[32]   In fact,

her ostensible attachment to that "lost feyth" is what

Chaucer uses to great effect in this passage, since it is

very clear not only here but a few verses later as well that

Criseyde is only too willing to throw that faith over when

it becomes expedient.

Once again we go back to the key passage in Book II

where Criseyde weighs the advantages and disadvantages of a

love-affair with Troilus. Significantly, Criseyde, like

Pandarus, demonstrates disregard for the public institution

of marriage, commenting that most husbands either "...ben

ful of Jalousie,/ or maisterfull, or loven novelrie" (II,

---

[32]Howard Patch points out the reference, p. 25.

755-56). Immediately after, she shows both her allegiance to Pandarus' pleasure-ethic and her awareness of an external code which judges her own by exclaiming:

> Shall I nat love; if that me leeste?
> What, par dieux! I am nought religious.
> (II, 758-59)

Criseyde's recognition of the "religious" code which condemns her own and the choice she makes is patently clear at this point. Although Chaucer cannot be said to emphasize her decision in favor of the pleasure-ethic, he does find ways of subtly letting us know that Criseyde is on very shaky ground.[33] Once again, Chaucer may at first seem to be using the classical technique of creating a heroine who is "fated" from the beginning to a particular degree of moral awareness, but with only a phrase, he makes us aware that we are still in a universe where free choice is fully operative. Throughout, Chaucer's treatment of the character of Criseyde is managed so that we see her "slydynge corage." She never really comes to the point of a conscious decision, but her surface indecision is often only a "game"--played sometimes with others, sometimes only with herself--which hides a decision already formulated, even if she refuses to admit it, on the deeper levels. As the modern epigram has it--"Not to decide is to decide."

---

[33]H. R. Patch comments that "the degree of intent is delicately managed, we admit, so that she [Criseyde] has almost nothing to do. This is a method which suits her temperament admirably....Still, Chaucer does not himself waver for the moment and depict a heroine of pagan morality." Patch, p. 25.

With Troilus, of course, the problem of fate and free will, subtly implicit in the characterizations of Criseyde and Pandarus, gradually becomes an explicit and agonized issue. Up to the point of the consummation scene, Troilus hardly seems aware that free will exists. Unlike Pandarus and Criseyde, he never exhibits an even half-conscious awareness of the external code of ethics which breaks into the limited world-views of the two other major characters. Unlike Criseyde and Pandarus he is "religious," but his "religioun" is totally the religion of love, and there is no split between his reverence for Providence and his love for his lady. We see this at the beginning of Book I, when he asks God to help him toward his goal of service to Criseyde:

> Yow thanke I, Lord that han me brought to this
> But whither goddesse or womman, iwis,
> She be, I not, which that y do me rewe.
> (I, 424-426)

Here it is clear that in Troilus' mind there is little distinction between earthly and heavenly love, love of "Kynde" and love of God.

Several times during his first conversation with Pandarus, Troilus continues to make references to God, first asking Pandarus to leave "for the love of God," and then praying to God that it will be for his "beste" to tell Pandarus his problem. At the end of Book I, encouraged by Pandarus to pursue his love for Criseyde, Troilus transfers that confidence to his assessment of the war and boldly pronounces,

"God will helpe us atte laste!" referring to his belief that
God will give the Trojans victory. Again in Book III, during
his first visit with Criseyde, Troilus pleads for mercy and
then comments:

> God woot, for I have, as ferforth as I have had konnynge,
> Ben youres al, God so my soule save
> And shal, til that I, woful wight, be grave.
> (III, 100-103)

For Troilus, the exclamations "God Woot!" and "God so my
soule save" have not the ironic effect that they have in the
mouths of Pandarus and Criseyde. In Troilus' conversation
the oath is believable, and just how meaningful it is to him
becomes clear later on in Book III:

> And for the love of God, my lady deere,
> Syn God hath wroght me for I shall yow serve,
> As thus I mene, he wol ye be my steere.
> (III, 1289-91)

It is clear that for Troilus the God of Love has willed this
relationship and gives his blessing to it. There is, as Dronke
points out, a complete equation of the whole idea of trust
and service to the beloved with service to God.[34] Troilus'
understanding of God, limited though it may be, is untainted
by the scheming pragmatism of Pandarus, and the ever-so-subtle
calculations of Criseyde. His love, though misplaced, is
whole-hearted and naive.

Of course, from the Christian perspective which stands
just outside Troilus' world-view, there are obvious problems

---

[34]Peter Dronke, "The Conclusion of Troilus and Criseyde,"
Medium Aevum 33(1964), 49.

in equating the love of God with human love. For one thing
there is a tendency to evoke God's sanction on something
which is not His chosen destiny for us at all. Clearly,
this is exactly what Troilus does throughout the poem. At
the very beginning of Book I, when Troilus first realizes
he is in love, he laments the fact that God made him love a
lady without pity, "Sith thow most loven thorugh thi des-
tine" (I, 520). Later, as his love affair develops, Troilus
continues to view the whole business as his destined end.
Thus he takes no real responsibility for his actions in it.
This lack of active responsibility is evident throughout the
poem.

Troilus himself views the state of being in love in terms
of being caught in a trap, with no warning or defense.
Early in Book I he comments:

    O fool, now artow in the snare
    Tha whilom japedest at loves peyne.
    Now artow hent, now gnaw thin owen cheyne!
    Thow were ay wont ech lovere reprehende
    Of thing fro which thou kanst the nat defende.
                                    (I, 507-11)

Troilus' love seems to "happen" to him, to come to him
entirely by circumstance. Whenever there is a need for aggres-
sion, the impetus for action always comes from the outside
in the form of Pandarus' machinations. It is Pandarus who
makes the first foray into Criseyde's heart; Pandarus who
initiates the first letter; Pandarus who plans the first
meeting at Deiphebus' house and then orchestrates the proceed-
ings. In all of this, Troilus is totally acquiescent, totally
without an active part in the proceedings.

In the consummation scene Chaucer exploits the comic
absurdity of this lack of aggression to the hilt. Pandarus'
manipulation of the action, as quick and ingenious as it has
been in the first two books, in the consummation scene be-
comes positively inspired. Not only does Pandarus play the
exhausting game of getting Criseyde to come without ruffling
her sense of honour, not only does he spend an evening
entertaining her and hiding Troilus, not only does he con-
trive the jealousy story which finally brings Troilus to Cri-
seyde's side, not only does he then tell both Troilus and
Criseyde what to say, but he is finally obliged to rip off
Troilus' shirt and bodily throw him into Criseyde's bed.

In all this, Troilus exhibits not a spark of free will—
he simply lets things happen. Of course, he finally does
take "sodeyn" possession of his lady, but this comes as the
result of sudden sexual arousal rather than of any "planned"
or intentional action on his part.[35] Chaucer seems to draw
our attention to this "new quality" in Troilus' love at least
twice within the verses following. When Troilus goes home to
his palace after the first night with Criseyde, he remembers
every detail of the evening and Chaucer comments that "Desir

---

[35]H. R. Patch suggests that Troilus' "sin" is inaction—
his failure to exercise free will. Though it is true from
the Christian viewpoint, it seems to me that Chaucer takes
pains to absolve Troilus from guilt by presenting him as
completely unaware of an alternative ethic. Unlike Pandarus
and Criseyde, Troilus is unconscious of any "religioun"
but the "religioun" of love.

al newe hym brende, and lust to brede/ Gan more than erst,
and yet took he non hede" (III, 1546-47, Italics mine).
Again, when Troilus reports the story of his "glade nyght"
to Pandarus, he tells his friend, "I not myself nought wisly
what it is/ But now I feele a newe qualitee,/ Yee al another
than I dide er this" (III, 1653-55, Italics mine). One gets
the feeling that this is the sincere report of a newly-
experienced passion on Troilus' part.

Pandarus' reaction, however, reveals more than a hint
of double-entendre:

> Pandare answerd, and seyde thus, that "he
> That ones may in hevene blisse be
> He feleth other weyes, dar I leye,
> Than thilke tyme he first herde of it seye."
> (III, 1656-1659)

Somehow in Pandarus' mouth, the identification of earthly
and heavenly love which we see in Troilus becomes a mockery.
We sense immediately that Pandarus knows much more about
earthly passion than Troilus and that he is simply talking
Troilus' language in order to pacify him and gain power
over him--something which he has done throughout. It is Pan-
darus, in fact, whose actions we find most interesting and
whom we follow most closely, simply because Troilus' actions
are so predictably passive.

Troilus' main contribution to the action of the narra-
tive has been his vacillating emotional state. He is con-
stantly in a "traunce bitwixen hope and derk disesperaunce,"
depending, Chaucer tells us, on the tone and frequency of

Criseyde's letters. ("And after swich answeres as he hadde/ So were his dayes sorry outher gladde", II, 1350-51). He is also constantly praying to the God of Love--and to Criseyde-- to help him out. Thus when Criseyde finally accepts him fully and asks forgiveness for hurting him, Troilus takes this as a sign of God's blessing on the relationship and, "sodeynly avysed, hire in armes faste to hym hente" (III, 1187).

It is my opinion that Chaucer draws out attention to Troilus' religious devotion in this scene by pointing out that just before Troilus takes possession of Criseyde he puts "all into Goddes hand, as He that mente nothyng but wel" (III, 1185-86). Troilus' sense of trust in the goodness of the God of Love is exactly the issue on which Chaucer wants us to focus. If we did not know better, we would say at this point that from a certain Christian perspective Troilus has done everything exactly right. Instead of trusting in his own powers he has trusted in God's grace and he has believed that God's ultimate intentions toward him are good ones. He confidently states his trust in the goodness of God before he acts. The problem is, once again, that Troilus has put his trust in an object which does not possess the objective goodness to which he appeals. Instead of placing his trust in a god which is above circumstance and flux, Troilus puts his faith in an unconsecrated fleshly good which cannot bear the weight of his belief.

It is not surprising that when his fortune changes, Troilus blames God for turning on him, for "falsing" his truth in what Troilus had believed to be God's goodness. But of course the whole point is that God is good and His goodness lies in the very fact that He will not let Troilus remain blind to His larger will. God's ultimate intentions are good; this is what Troilus cannot see. Again, it is the apparent goodness of Troilus' love which is the whole crux of Chaucer's story. Troilus' definition of Goodness is totally circumstantial. For him, the good is defined in purely romantic terms; "God" is the God of love and love can be satisfied only by full possession of his lady-idol.

According to Chaucer's ultimate world-view, Troilus' real sin is that he presumes to worship a false god as the ultimate good. This same presumption in different forms is the main problem with all the characters in Troilus and Criseyde; they put their faith either in fortune, in themselves, or in romantic love, although Troilus, because he seems most unaware of the revealed truth which judges his actions, comes out a bit better than Pandarus and Criseyde in the end.

Chaucer makes the problem of placing one's trust in an unworthy object abundantly clear in an important passage in Book I, when he links pride or presumption with "blynde entencioun:"

    O blynde world, o blynde entencioun.
    How often falleth al the effect contraire
    Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun!
                        (I, 211-213)

In various ways each character in Troilus is discovered to
be relying in some basic sense on a false concept of their
capacity to will and to do the good. In fact, this is how
Chaucer defines "pride" and "presumpcioun." In the case of
Pandarus and Criseyde, Chaucer calls the very sincerity of
the intention itself into question. In the case of Troilus,
the intentions are sincere, but, as we have pointed out, they
are not grounded in reality, and thus prove inadequate in the
face of suffering and evil.

Chaucer's non-didactic emphasis on this truth is felt
throughout the story in his emphasis on the character's
"entent" to do the good and in a constant reference to the
gap between what is said and what is actually meant. This
emphasis probably results from the combined interest of both
Dante and Boethius in the problem. In the Purgatory, XXI,
105-108, Dante states explicitly that "the will cannot do
all it wishes," and throughout the Comedy points out instances
where intention breaks down in the face of circumstance. (See,
for example, the case of Piccarda and Constance in Paradiso,
Canto IV, 346-350.) Boethius deals with the problem of inten-
tion in Book IV, prose 2 when he discusses the difference in
will-power between the good and the evil man.[36]

The influence of Dante and Boethius on the problem of
intention is felt throughout Troilus and Criseyde. Pandarus,
for example, responds to Troilus in their very first conver-
sation together by assuring him that his "entencioun/ Nis

---

[36]Boethius, p. 77.

not to yow of reprehencioun" (I, 683-84). Later on, he en-
joins Troilus to repent "with al thyn herte in good entente"
(I, 935). In Book II, Pandarus quiets Criseyde's fears of
the "end" of the relationship in which Pandarus invites her
to participate by assuring her that he speaks "of good
entencioun" (II, 295). Of course, Pandarus must follow the
code of romantic love, and is thus caught between his real
intention--to bring the love of the lovers to a physical
consummation--and the "intent" which he ostensibly presents
to Criseyde.

Criseyde herself is aware of Pandarus' real intent from
the first, and just after the long internal monologue in
which she mulls over the pros and cons of loving Troilus,
Chaucer brings the subject of "intent" into sharp relief as
Antigone sings her song in the garden. This song, in which
Antigone urges Criseyde to love, begins with the phrase:
"O love to whom I have and shal/ Be humble subgit, trewe in
myn entente...." and continues on to praise the power of love
to move the will to virtuous intention:

> This is the right lif that I am inne
> To flemen all manere vice and synne:
> This dooth me so to vertu for t'entende
> That day by day I in my wille amende.
> (II, 851-854)

Immediately after this, Criseyde begins to weaken. Although
Chaucer does not say she consciously decides to love Troilus
at this point--he does comment "And ay gan love hire lasse
for t'agaste/ than it dede erst, and synken in hire herte,/

That she wex somwhat able to converte" (II, 900-03). Immed-
iately after this, Criseyde goes to bed and dreams that an
eagle rends her heart from her breast and carries it away,
after replacing it with his own. This is the conventional
way of telling us that Criseyde has fallen in love; that
Troilus has taken her heart away and replaced it with his
own. Without mentioning a conscious decision to love, Chaucer
makes it clear that Criseyde has been conquered.

Although she has already decided to love--and to love
without holding back--Criseyde yet must play the game with
Pandarus, veiling her own true intent. Once again Chaucer
subtly calls our attention to the whole problem of intent.
When Criseyde answers Troilus' letter, she thanks him for
"al he wel mente towards her" (II, 1221). The narrator,
immediately following, comments that Criseyde's intent is
"pleynly" "to love hym unwiste, if she myghte;/ And guerdon
hym with nothing but sighte" (II, 1293-95). Later on, he
assures us that Criseyde is "al innocente of Pandarus'
entente" when she goes into Troilus' sick-chamber. Of
course, the narrator's attitude, as we pointed out earlier,
is suspect because of his own obvious fondness for Criseyde.

In Book III, Criseyde herself draws attention to the
whole problem of good intentions when she responds to Troilus'
accusation that she refused to look at him in the temple
with the comment: "What harm was that, syn I non yvel mene?/
For, by that God that bought us bothe two,/ In alle thyng is
myn entente cleene" (III, 1164-66). Later, the narrator

explains that Criseyde yields to Troilus because she trusts his "clene entente" (III, 1229-30).

Again and again, Chaucer weaves the good intentions of his major characters into the dialogue and gradually strengthens our impression that for Pandarus and Criseyde, at least the end of their intent is more than superficial satisfaction of a courtly code of manners. That Criseyde and Pandarus have been playing the same game all along becomes clear during the last part of Book III. Pandarus' invitation to Criseyde to dine at his home offers a classic example of unsaid intent. Criseyde, guessing that Troilus is at Pandarus' home even after Pandarus swears that he is not, gladly takes up her uncle's invitation "withowten await" (III, 1579). Of course, Criseyde's probable awareness of Troilus' whereabouts is not told us explicitly, but Chaucer manages to draw our attention to the problem with typical delicacy:

> Nought list myn auctour fully to declare
> What that she thoughte whan he seyde so,
> That Troilus was out of twone yfare,
> As if he seyde thereof soth or no.
> (III, 575-78)

Thus Chaucer, while he gives us no concrete revelation of Criseyde's actual intent in accepting Pandarus' invitation, points a finger directly at what he knows is already in her mind.

After the consummation scene, Pandarus seeks out Criseyde as she lies in bed in the morning, and Chaucer's portrait of Criseyde at this point reflects both her immediate

happiness and a typically feminine tendency to foist her
responsibility for the affair on to her uncle. But in the
end, Criseyde forgives Pandarus for his machinations, and
begins to "pleye" with him in a manner which suggests not
only full forgiveness, but a secret and delighted approval
of all which has occurred. In fact, the slightly lascivious
"pleyeing" which ensues at this point is almost grounds for
assuming secret complicity between Pandarus and Criseyde--
an unsaid but hilarious recognition that both have reached
their unconfessed goals, that each has played the game
without giving anything away--even to each other. Chaucer,
fox that he is, never allows us to go too far in our judg-
ment, however, and leaves the scene at a point of careful
ambiguity.

As the story winds to its unhappy conclusion, Chaucer
keeps the notion of betrayed intentions before us. Caught
in the circumstances surrounding the Trojan war, Criseyde in
a secret meeting with Troilus declares her plan and her
"entente" to come back to him (IV, 1525-26). When Troilus
registers apprehension at her plans, Criseyde berates him
for not trusting her good word:

> Now for the love of Cinthia the sheene,
> Mistrust me nought thus causeles, for routhe,
> Syn to be trewe, I have yow plight my trouthe.
> (IV, 1608-1611)

Not only is Criseyde's unintentional lie at issue here, but
its falseness is underscored by the use of the phrase

"plighte my trouthe," by which Chaucer through yet another double-entendre, keeps the Christian ethic subtly before us.

In Book V, Criseyde writes the letter which finally brings Troilus to an acceptance of the truth. After promising Troilus once again that she will come ("but yet in swich disjoynte? I stonde as now, that what yer or what day/That this shal be, that kan I naught apoynte."), she concludes with the blythe comment that she hopes he will not take offense because her letter is so short since "th'entente is al, and nat the lettres space, (V, 1630). Just before this the narrator, referring to Criseyde's first letter comments on Criseyde's "botmeles bihestes" (bottomless promises) and laments openly: "thus goth the world. God shilde us fro meschaunce,/ And every wight that meneth trouthe avaunce!" (V, 1435). "Every wight that meneth trouthe...."--this is the crux of Chaucer's subtle message, and cannot be seen except against the background of the Christian reality which is Chaucer's final authority. Pandarus and Criseyde do not mean the truth at all; Troilus, although sincere in his promises and intentions, finds them empty--even presumptious--when placed in the service of a good which has been given only human definition. Ultimately, all of Chaucer's characters are seen as sinners when judged according to the larger set of standards constantly set forth throughout the poem. Thus Chaucer's Christian world-view greatly affects the representation of his characters, especially in

regard to the emphasis given the problem of intention and its subterranean connection with pride and presumption.

Mary McCarthy offers some insight into a general realism which emphasizes the problem of human incorrigibility when she observes that realistic characterization is never achieved without comedy, and that contrary to popular belief, a comic character is "likely to be more complicated and enigmatic than a hero or heroine, fuller of surprises and turnabouts."[37] Miss McCarthy identifies the source of the comic character's realism in his very appeal to our corporate sympathy with man's willful refusal to change or grow:

> The comic element is the incorrigible element in every
> human being; the capacity to learn from experience
> of instruction is what is forbidden to all comic crea-
> tions and to what is comic in you and me.[38]

It is not clear exactly whether or not Miss McCarthy herself would associate what she calls "human incorrigibility," that comic but exasperating willfulness (which breaks out unpredictably in all of us) with the more serious reality of human sin, but it is certain that a medieval Christian audience would have been capable of seeing the connection. In the Christian view, human imperfection in any form, whether characterized as morally serious or not, from a human standpoint is regarded as the sign of a deeper malaise.

---

[37] Mary McCarthy, "Characters in Fiction," On the Contrary (London: Heinemann, 1962), pp. 288-89.

[38] McCarthy, p. 288.

The depth of that malaise in the Christian understanding is the more striking by contrast with the classical views of human nature which precede it. Plato, for example, even though disillusioned with man's capacity to come up to the ideal, never lost his faith in the capacity of education to activate the will and produce good actions and character. Aristotle, while he saw the powerlessness of good intention in the face of man's passionate nature, did not develop the deep recognition of the powerlessness of human will reached in the Christian vision of man. Neither offers a solution to the problem of the weakness of the will beyond the exhortation to cultivate on one's own power, the natural goodness one finds within the human personality. In both Plato and Aristotle, the view of human nature is always tinged with optimism, a faint hope that if the conditions are exactly right, man will be able by the light of his own reason, to apprehend, to will and to do the good. In contrast, the Christian view of man recognizes human ability to apprehend the truth and even intend it, but utterly rejects any notion of man's capacity to fulfill those intentions: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18).

The Christian emphasis on the utter depravity of man adds a dark dimension even to a comic representation of his "incorrigibility," for human imperfection in any measure

betrays the presence of forces which work toward destruction
of the ideal. Thus even the minor faults of a particular
fictional character are no laughing matter for any man to
whom the fact of human sin is an occasion for the eternal
wrath of God. Chaucer, it seems to me, rests firmly within
the orthodox Christian tradition when it comes to the atten-
tion he gives to the whole problem of intention in this
sense. He exposes man's tendency to overestimate his capacity
to perform that which he intends at every opportunity.

The Christian view of comedy operative in Chaucer also
affects his presentation of the major characters on a slightly
different level. We remember that in the classical view of
man, characters are born into a fixed moral level which,
though it may appear to change actually remains a function of
an individual's ultimate destiny throughout life. This
unchanging moral nature, we remember, led to the depiction
of ideal characters with a fixed moral and social standing
and a universal rather than an individual appeal. The Chris-
tian vision of man, however, depicts man--any man, regardless
of social standing--as capable of radical moral change in
life. The potential for change involves the possibility of
spiritual rebirth, or the creation of the new man in Christ
through an action of grace. Such a conversion experience,
which also involves a conscious commitment to the person of
Christ, takes place without destruction of the unique personal-
ity of the believer. The opposite--a temporary or permanent

fall from grace--is also possible, and the drama of the Christian vision of man arises from just these possibilities.

We remember, too, that the Christian perspective makes possible the representation of lower or sinful characters in serious or comic narrative. In Dante, such a view of man makes possible the low comedy in Cantos XXI-XXIII of the _Inferno_. Not only does this episode present the bestial side of man, and his cowardice in the farcical style, but it presents a Virgil who is capable of serious error, or a serious misestimate of the devil's power. It is comic, but it is also profoundly tragic, a mixture of both the exalted dignity of man and his sinful foolishness. The representation of extremes of behaviour in one character forms a direct contrast with the classical view of comic reality, which, when it allows comic characterization at all, keeps it rigidly controlled by a representation of only mischievous evil or ludicrousness in characters of low social standing, and by careful restrictions on style.

The contrast in these two views of comedy may shed some light on Chaucer's characterization in _Troilus and Criseyde_. Although it seems to me that much of the surface tone of _Troilus and Criseyde_ is mischievous rather than serious, the poem is profoundly serious in its ultimate vision of reality, and there are hints of that seriousness throughout the narrative, especially at those points, identified in the preceding sections of this study, where Chaucer allows the Christian

world-view which controls his characters to break consciously into the poem. It is during these touchstone moments in the poem, when we are made aware of the free Christian universe which generally hovers outside the fated world in which the characters move, that the characters seem most dramatic in the Christian sense, that they seem most capable of making a free choice. It is also at these moments when the extremes of moral behavior possible for any given human being come into sharpest focus. This may be one reason why Pandarus, and especially Criseyde, have a deeper sense of felt life than the character of Troilus, who is presented as so morally impeccable, so sincerely and blindly devoted to the "religioun" of love. It may also be another reason why the comedy surrounding the characters of Pandarus and Criseyde takes on a darker note than that surrounding Troilus.

In fact, Chaucer builds much of the humour in the scene involving Pandarus and Troilus around the gap between Pandarus' rather jaded understanding of the ways of erotic love and Troilus' uninitiated innocence, his reverent attitude toward the whole subject of love. In the first scene between the two characters in Book I, for example, Pandarus' jokes are directed precisely toward Troilus' "religious" behavior: Pandarus asks first whether the Greeks have made him weak, and then surmises:

> Or hastow som remors of conscience
> And art now falle in some devocioun,
> And wailest for thi synne and thin offence,
> And hast for ferde caught attricioun?
> (I, 554-557)

This is Pandarus' typical manner--joking, irreverent, tinged with ironic religious allusion. Troilus responds with an exclamation of woe which, however silly, has none of the overtones of Pandarus' knowing irony.

The contrast in the two characters reflects the difference once again in their awareness and recognition of good and evil. Pandarus, having more earthly experience, more carnal knowledge in both senses, understands fallen human nature. Troilus, though most certainly fallen from the Dantean-Christian perspective, yet within the world of the poem has a certain innocence. The characterization of Troilus itself demonstrates a definite Christian element in its mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous, in its mixture of the war-hero image and the portrait of the ineffectual lover. He is a King's Son--the person of highest social standing in the narrative--and at the same time behaves in a ridiculously melodramatic fashion. His actions may be attributable to youth, but they are no less ridiculous on that account. Like Dante the Pilgrim in the Divine Comedy, Troilus is often the picture of unheroic heroism. Chaucer makes us patently aware through the clash of extremes in his protagonist that we are in a world far removed from the classical vision of comedy.

Of course, Chaucer accomplishes this mélange of extremes within the circumscribed limits of his story, and Troilus, as we have pointed out, is not nearly so conscious of his choices as Dante the Pilgrim. Troilus is foolish, but naive in

his foolishness, and his characterization, lacking the self-consciousness of the two other major protagonists, is less dramatically convincing as a result. Somehow Chaucer's audience is made to feel that Troilus' woebegone romanticizing is ridiculous without being in any way threatening to our sense of the good.

With Pandarus, we have another situation. Pandarus is a middle-class type whose comedy often fits exactly the mold. In this sense, his character is very classical in conception—and yet Pandarus, while falling directly into a proper classical category, displays comedy which is not untouched by a darker element which can arise only out of the Christian vision of man. We think of Pandarus primarily as a mischief-maker and we participate in his game with the same high spirits in which he carries it on at Criseyde's palace. But Pandarus' mischief-making is motivated by the god of good fortune in love, and thus his machinations have a slight taint of lawlessness and chaos. Not only is this brought out in his attachment to gaming, which we mentioned earlier, but Chaucer draws out attention to it, sometimes explicitly, as when in Book IV he urges Troilus to "ravisshe" Criseyde and rationalizes, "Thorugh love is broken al day every lawe" (IV, 618).

The darker side of Pandarus' characterization can also be seen in his comic witticisms. With Pandarus, there is always the underlying double-entendre, the knowing leer, the

recognition of the ulterior motive. This makes him more
cognizant of human failing, ineffably more sinister. And
it is the reason why Pandarus comes closer to the vision of
dramatic characterization reached in the comic recesses of
the _Divine Comedy_, with Dante's profound awareness of human
capacity for evil. Pandarus himself, it is clear, has long
ago decided to attach himself to a false god of gaming and
pleasure. In him, we see none of the struggle and choice we
see in both Troilus and Criseyde at various points in the
narrative. He has been a "servant of Love" for a long time--
as Chaucer makes clear in the beginning of Book II. It is
also clear from his banter with Criseyde that he either has
not had a successful love-life, or that he is now too old to
attract an affair of his own. In any case, the liaison between
Troilus and Criseyde gives him a chance for vicarious partic-
ipation in what is no longer a viable option for him. Un-
like the younger lovers, Pandarus, although he demonstrates
clear awareness of his alternatives, has already made his
decision to attach himself to a false good, and as such, he
is much more the tempter than the tempted. He has no prob-
lems with guilt and sin because his religion of chance does
not allow them definition. In his world, there is no good
and bad, only good luck and bad luck. Aware of the outside
standard which judges his own, he is yet fully committed to
the fateful world which he creates for himself, and into
which he draws both his niece and Troilus.

E. T. Donaldson has noticed that in this sense Pandarus
bears a relation to the problem of reality in being what the
modern world would deem a "thoroughgoing realist."[39]   Para-
doxically, writes Donaldson, this seems to mean Pandarus has
no respect for an objective reality at all. For him, things
are what he makes them, and what he creates in Troilus and
Criseyde is a world of illusion, which finally crashes down
around all the participants.

Pandarus, of course, accepts no responsibility for the
crash. There is no evidence in the poem that he has any con-
science about his role in the sad end of the love-affair at
all. To him, it is all Criseyde's fault, and he hates
her as a result (V, 1733). To Troilus, also, he pictures
himself only as a servant, ("I dide al that the leste")
(V, 1736), thus absolving himself on that front. While
recognizing the fact of human failure and sin, Pandarus
keeps it always at arm's length, never allowing it to judge
his own behavior or to affect his ultimate attachment to the
religion of chance and pleasure.

With "tendre-hearted" Criseyde, however, guilt and fear
come much closer to piercing to the inner spirit. Neverthe-
less, the comedy in her characterization springs from essen-
tially the same source as her uncle. Criseyde's comic behav-
ior is most evident in the gap between her "inner" and "outer"

---

[39]Donaldson, p. 972.

intentions. I have pointed out in an earlier section of this chapter the subtle calculating which goes on in her mind as she fences with her "em" in their first meeting. The whole problem for Criseyde, once she has decided not to lose what may be her last chance at love seems to be how to get Troilus within the limits of courtly tradition--and how to get him without admitting to her "em," herself, or Troilus how eagerly she awaits the consummation of their love. After the first night with Troilus, however, Criseyde can relax a bit, and comments to Troilus when he claims her, "Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte deere,/ Ben yold, ywis, I were now nought heere!" (III, 1210-1211).

Later on, her comic pleasure in melodrama and the physical aspect of love becomes even more apparent in the meeting with Troilus just after they both find out the news of her pending return to the Greek camp. After the suicide scene, in which Criseyde swoons and Troilus swears he will follow her in death, and pulls his sword out of its sheath, Crisyde handily revives and they begin to lament together. Criseyde then promises that if Troilus had killed himself, she surely would have followed suit. Immediately after this, however, she tires of the melodrama and the proof of love game and gets down to business:

> But hoo, for we han right ynough of this;
> And lat us rise, and streght to bedde go,
> And there lat us speken of our wo.
> (IV, 1242-44)

I do not wish to suggest that Chaucer presents Criseyde as
a wanton or a slattern at this point; he is much too subtle
for that. But it is clear that there are elements in her
motives which are not entirely pure, which are tainted by
the same dark blood which ties her with her uncle. What
makes Criseyde different from her "em," and somehow more
appealing is her deeper awareness of guilt and death--
the forces of divine judgment. The dramatic force of her
characterization, in fact, arises to a great degree from her
struggle against these forces.

The conflict is first evident when Criseyde is in the
process of deciding the depth of her involvement with Troilus.
It is true that Criseyde is afraid of loving Troilus because
of reputation and "honour," as I pointed out earlier, but
there is a deeper fear which underlies her final decision--
fear of old age and death. Chaucer is careful to point this
out in her first long conversation with Pandarus, when he
suggests that if Criseyde does not have pity on Troilus, her
beauty will not stretch to make amends for it:

> Thenk ek how elde wasteth every houre,
> In ech of yow a partie of beautie
> And therefore, er that age the devoure
> Go love; for old, there wol no wight of the.
> (II, 392-96)

Immediately after this passage Pandarus brings up spectres
of "crows-feet" and unkind mirrors, playing more on Criseyde's
fear of fading beauty. Criseyde's response to all this, sig-
nificantly enough, is to react morally--expressing shock at

a world (and an uncle) in which the "feith is al agoon" (II, 410). Earlier, I pointed that Criseyde has already allowed her moral sensibilities to be undermined at this point, and I think Chaucer would have us seriously consider the effect of Pandarus' much more pragmatic argument on her feminine psyche. Criseyde is not immune to carpe diem logic. The fact that she reacts morally, expressing fear of Troilus' intentions and her involvement, it seems to me, is only a cover-up for what she really fears and may not be able to admit to herself--loss of beauty and earthly security, without father or husband in old age. It is interesting that Chaucer again subtly brings up the point in the description of Criseyde which occurs in Book V--Criseyde is "tendre-hearted" and "slydynge of corage" Chaucer tells us, and then adds, "But trewely, I cannot telle hire age" (V, 825-26).

Criseyde is also plagued by guilt, a fact which appears most clearly in the scene already treated in this study, where she absolves herself directly after berating herself for having "falsed oon the gentileste/ That evere was!" It is this outcry which reveals Criseyde's true heart in the matter, but it is her self-made absolution which demonstrates a mind and spirit unwilling to face responsibility in sin, much as she is unable to face the thought of aging and death. Chaucer's phrase, "slydynge of corage" takes on added meaning in this light.

But Criseyde obviously has the admirable qualities of an utterly charming, high-spirited nature, great beauty, culture, and a capacity for true romantic feeling. These qualities not only affect the narrator, who is constantly defending Criseyde until the end; they also affect us. How <u>could</u> such a one?--is our question as well as Troilus'; and the answer, once again, is found in the Christian vision of reality which allows for great extremes of behavior in the most sterling of characters. In the Biblical vision, man is a creature capable of both good and evil, depending on his moral choices. While the great Biblical figures of David, Solomon, Noah, and Abraham commit serious sins, they may be restored in an instant to the Grace of God as they choose to recognize their sin and repent. A sinner has always the opportunity for conversion and thus for a changed--often a radically changed--life. Seen in this light, Criseyde's character is darkened by our knowledge that she has had alternatives and has chosen not to recognize them, has decided not to face herself on the deeper levels.

Thus we have in Chaucer's characters some of the quality of the comic characterizations in the <u>Divine Comedy</u>. The sublime and the ridiculous, the admirable and the undesirable, the sinner and the saint are found in each character with perhaps a trifle less emphasis on the dark side than we see in Dante.

As a corollary to the new status given the humble, the ridiculous, and even the sinful aspects of man's behavior in the Christian vision, it is also interesting that Chaucer wrote, like Dante, in the vernacular. Scholars recognize Chaucer's unique contribution in the vernacular, stressing that the literary language utilized during his lifetime was overwhelmingly French, and that it remained so up to the Fifteenth Century. They point out that Richard the Second's Court was the first English-speaking court after the French invasion, and that almost all courtly literature was written in French during Chaucer's lifetime. In addition, the only other major contemporary of Chaucer's to write poetry in English was Gower, and he does not attempt an English poem until the late 1380's, making a great point of it (in the First Prologue of the Confessio Amantis) when he does. Dante, we remember, defended his use of the common language in which the Divine Comedy is written in the "Letter to Can Grande." There Dante reasons that his native tongue is best for the high subject-matter of the Comedy because it is most easily understood, and clear communication of the truth is Dante's major aim. We find no such explicit concern for the communication of truth in the native tongue in Chaucer, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that Dante may have offered a model for Chaucer in this regard, and that Chaucer's use of the vernacular has some connection with the relaxed attitude which Dante takes toward rigid classical prescriptions concerning appropriateness of style and content. The "Letter to Can

Grande" also contains the interesting comment on characteriza-
tion which we pointed out earlier--that a tragic figure may
lament in a commonplace language.[40]   Allan Gilbert interprets
this to mean that "the normal epic figure may be lowered in
dignity to fit a comedy."[41]   Here it would seem that we have
an aesthetic prescription which exactly fits Troilus' charac-
terization in Troilus and Criseyde. In Troilus, Chaucer
seems to mix ridicule and respect in exactly the manner sug-
gested by Dante's "Letter."

While the Christian vision of reality allows for extremes
of behavior in the presentation of a given character, and while
it allows for the mixture of ridicule and respect, its
emphasis is ultimately on the hope that the individual will
choose to leave his sinful "darkness" and come into the
light of the Kingdom of God. In other words, Man, though
born into a state of perversity, may, through the grace of
God become attached to a force which empowers his will to do
the good, which gives him hope for escaping from his hopeless
state. The objective grounds for this experience are sup-
plied in the redemptive act performed through Christ's death
and Resurrection.

This, then, is what forms the basis for the Christian
comic vision. As Nevlle Coghill has pointed out, comedy can

---

[40]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," in Eleven Letters of
Dante, trans. Charles Sterrett Latham, ed. George Rice
Carpenter with a preface by Charles Eliot Norton (Boston:
Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1891), p. 197.

[41]Allan H. Gilbert, Dante and His Comedy (New York: New
York University Press, 1963), pp. 61-68.

only be ultimately laughable where there is an objective
solution to the problem of human incorrigibility and will-
fulness, where there are objective grounds for seeing beyond
the human predicament. The highest reality for any Chris-
tian _is_ comic in nature; that is, beginning in the painful
circumstances of sin and death, the Christian moves through
repentance to an experience of God's love and mercy. The
shape of comic form becomes the shape of reality.

"Realism" thus becomes a word fraught with profound
meaning, and with profound implications for an analysis of
realism in medieval characterization. A truly "realistic"
narrative structure in the medieval sense, will be construc-
ted on the Christian pattern; i.e., there will be a movement
or suggestion of a movement from the fallen to the redeemed
state; there will be a conflict exhibited between the indi-
vidual's incorrigibly human will and the will of God, lead-
ing on the individual's part to submission and redemption.
Such a conception of narrative allows for a great deal of
dramatic conflict in a peculiarly modern sense because it
sees human life as a process involving conflict and yet lead-
ing toward ultimate fulfillment. The conflict is seen as a
necessary part of the final resolution. Such a view of medi-
eval realism refuses to admit a strong distinction between
medieval "hierarchical stasis" and modern dramatic tension.
Instead, it places the modern element of dramatic conflict
within a framework which gives ultimate meaning to that

conflict. Eric Auerbach has shown that in the case of Dante

this kind of conceptualization

> does not destroy or weaken the earthly nature of
> his characters, but captures the fullest intensity
> of their individual earthly being and identifies it
> with the ultimate state of things.[42]

Dante achieves a greater sense of dramatic reality in

the Comedy, not only by allowing for representation of both

the noble and debased aspects of man, and for a combination

of lofty subject-matter with vulgar language, but by exalt-

ing the comic form itself. Comedy for Dante is part of the

very shape of reality, and he consistently links the classical

definition of comedy (a poem beginning in sadness and ending

in happiness) with a vision of the Christian life as some-

thing begun in the relative hell of fallen earthly life,

and progressing toward Paradise. Coghill reminds us at this

point that the movement of an individual soul in this sense

is a movement toward God, toward "love absolute...the power

and glory of God seen by created souls as the Beatific Vision

for which they were created."[43]   Dante seals the union of

comedy with the theme of the soul's movement toward absolute

love in the "Epistle to Can Grande," when he defines "true

blessedness" as consisting in:

> ...knowing the source of truth; as doth appear in
> St. John where he saith: 'This is the true blessed-
> ness that they might know thee and the true god, etc.,

---

[42]Eric Auerbach, cited by Charles Singleton, Dante Stud-
ies, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954-58),
II:108.

[43]Coghill, p. 6.

and in Boethius III of <u>de consolatione</u>, where he saith:
'To see thee is our end.'[44]

Although we can find no explicit commentary on this view in

Chaucer, the whole thematic structure of the work--which is

an exploration of the inability of human love to lift man

into the presence of God--supports the Dantean view.

The best evidence for an association of Dante and Chau-

cer on this issue is the Epilog to the Troilus itself, where

the end of Troilus' love is given an explicit content:

> O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
> In which that love up groweth with your age,
> Repeyreth hom fro woroldly vanyte,
> And of youre herte up casteth the visage
> To thilke God that after his ymage
> Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
> This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.
>
> And loveth hym, the which that right for love
> Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;
> For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
> That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
> And syn he best to love is, and most meke,
> What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?
>   (V, 1835-47)

The comic vision of reality defined here is explicitly Chris-

tian, with an explicitly historical content. Love is Christ's

life, death and Resurrection; by loving Him, the Christian

will come to an ultimately happy end. This is the cornerstone

upon which Chaucer's comic vision, like Dante's, rests.

In light of Chaucer's openly Christian explanation of

Troilus' end in the Epilog, the characters gain even more in

---

[44]Dante, "Letter to Can Grande," p. 215.

personal appeal due to their uniquely individual definitions

of the love which they each see as the ultimate Good.

Chaucer shapes his characters through his evaluation of their

implicit relation to the Christian standard: Pandarus as

the type of those who would see the workings of Fortune as

the governing force of love and a fierce participation in

its game as the only possible solution to the problem of

reality; Criseyde as a representative of those whose view of

love is dominated by an underlying concern for personal secur-

ity defined in earthly terms; Troilus as the type of those

who although naturally closer to the Christian ideal through

courtly deference to others, are yet blinded on earth by

allowing their love to be governed by human, rather than

divine authority. Chaucer's theme is the Christian message

of perfect love represented by Jesus Christ: his technique,

the implicit contrast between Christ's love and the false

loves represented by Pandarus and Criseyde, and the imperfect

love represented by Troilus. Chaucer arrives at his end, as

I have shown, through a standard Dantean-Boethian progression--

we follow Troilus from a false to a true conception of love,

from the stoic acceptance of his fate at the end to the heav-

enly revelation after his death.

In developing his characters, Chaucer keeps the positive

standards of the Epilog before our minds through unmistakable

reference to Christian principles, however ironically dis-

torted, throughout the work and through the use of religious

language which recalls the Christian schema of salvation. The governing pattern of spiritual love has thus been evident from the beginning, and Chaucer disposes his characterizations according to a preconceived framework, developing the different aspects and failures of the human love which affords an imperfect, though reflected image of Divine love while pointing to its end in the perfect love of Christ.

Since Troilus is a pagan without the benefit of Biblical revelation, he must come to an understanding of Divine love through the failure of human love, and his particular brand of human love must be demonstrated to contain within it prefigurations of the Christian solution. The beauty of the love-affair takes much from Troilus' deference to his lady--in his complete and noble concern for the "other." It is because of his complete attachment to the noble ideal which is his conventional birthright as a king's son (there are even Christian overtones in this) that Troilus is granted the privilege of the highest comic vision. Human and divine love are not presented as opposites, but as two parts of hierarchical continuum which for the pagan Troilus begins in the lower realm of experience and ends in revelation. As Boethius puts it: "but if, as I have pointed out, there is a certain imperfect happiness in transitory goods, no one can doubt that there is a perfect and enduring happiness."[45]

---

[45]Boethius, p. 43.

Part of the genius of the technique Chaucer employs in drawing his characters is that it allows him to disentagle his audience from an immediate romantic involvement with them, and thus to give us the artistic objectivity to grasp the spiritual principles at work in his poem. This does not mean that we are not emotionally affected by the love-affair. It simply means that our emotions are finally enlisted on the side of the Christian view of reality out of which his poem grows,[46] and we are taught, along with Troilus, a new definition of love.

The standard medieval-Christian view of reality is finally what determines the reality of a given medieval narrative as I have defined it; it is the comic shape of the narrative which controls the ultimate realism of the characters within such a pattern. Not only that, but a knowledge of the ultimate resolution of human fallibility becomes the basis for a sympathetic--if sometimes slightly rueful--enjoyment of the comic representation of human error within the narrative pattern. We could not profoundly enjoy the imitation of human error if its power to enslave had not been broken. This is not to say that a Christian audience would have condoned the representation of sin; it is simply to say that from the final Christian perspective, sin and death have lost their sting, and this knowledge can affect our attitude toward the fictional representation of sin. For one thing,

---

[46]Payne, p. 223.

the knowledge of this fact makes possible a greater capacity

to see the ideal potential inherent in man. Where there is

a more profound understanding of the power of redemption,

there is a more profound capacity to look through man's immed-

iate faults and to envision him in the likeness of Christ,

to see him with the eyes of faith, as it were. Because of

this capacity for seeing the end of things for a character

operating within a Christian framework, the representation of

his moral lapses, done without an eye toward sensual titilla-

tion, cannot be viewed with bitterness or condemnation. I

would even go so far as to suggest that the extent of the

sympathy evinced by the author--or the critics--for the

characters of a particular fictional work will have a direct

relation to their emphasis either on the vices and errors

evident in human character, or on the "end" of those vices

and errors in salvation. That there were two such strains

in medieval theory has been demonstrated by Coghill, who

distinguishes between "satiric comedy," or comedy which pur-

sues the principal characters with some bitterness for their

vices and teaches what is useful and expedient in life, and

what is to be avoided; and "romantic comedy," or comedy which

focuses on life as something to be grasped and depicts the

happy resolution of a series of confusions and mishaps.

Romantic comedy, Coghill suggests, is much more likely to

take into serious account the comic narrative line, and

although the ends of either comic form are ethical, in one

the laughter effected is gentle and comforting; in the other,
punitive and deterrent. The two contrasting views form the
basis, Coghill suggests, for the typical medieval comic
strain, which springs from the romantic root, and the typi-
cal Renaissance strain, which evolves into bitter satire.
Chaucer, of course, he identifies as springing directly from
the medieval romantic strain, and the point of his article
is that Shakespeare "reached for his Chaucer" in construct-
ing his own masterful comedies.

Coghill's categories are especially interesting in light
of the aesthetic problem of the relation of the didactic ends
of medieval art to its grasp and expression of real life.
A truly Christian view of life will exclude neither of the
two ends of art, and scholars are wrong to emphasize the
didactic ends of Troilus and Criseyde. Even in their recog-
nition of the power of the Epilog of Chaucer's great tragi-
comedy Troilus and Criseyde, they emphasize to too great a
degree the deterrent effect of the work, its moral "sentence,"
to the exclusion of the end of "grete joye and solas," which
Chaucer suggests elsewhere as an equally proper end of comedy.[47]

---

[47]The only direct mention of comedy in the Canterbury
Tales, for example, occurs when the Knight, tired of the
Monk's repetitive examples of tragedy, bids him stop his
boring monologue and then comments:
    I seye for me, it is a greet disese,
    Whereas men han been in greet welthe and ese,
    To heeren of hire sodeyn fal, allas!
    And the contrarie is joye and greet solas,
    As whan a man hath been in povre estaat,
    And clymbeth up and wexeth fortunate,
    And there abideth in prosperitee.

We come now to the subject of Chaucer's view of alle-
gory, and, more particularly, to his treatment of the literal
level of the narrative and the nature of the content which it
disguises. Throughout this chapter, I have suggested that
Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde may be taken as a humorous,
sometimes ironic, sometimes serious reflection or "allegory"
of the divine love which controls and gives meaning to the
romantic-pagan action of the poem at all levels.

In sections of Chapters III, IV, and V of this disser-
tation, I explored the history of the differences between the
allegorical tradition promoted by classical poetics and the
allegorical perspective of the centrally orthodox Christian
tradition. The major differences in the approach to alle-
gory taken in the two traditions was seen to have resulted
from early disagreements over the nature of the Biblical Rev-
elation. The conflict focused on the interpretation given
the literal level of the Biblical text. Basically two ways
of treating the literal narrative developed during the centur-
ies following the birth of Christ: one view, what I have des-
ignated the "classical" or "Greek-Platonic" view, sees the Old
and New Testaments purely as a material springboard into an
elevated realm of moral and spiritual truth. The other view,

Swich thyng is gladsom, as it thynktth me,
And of swich thyng were goodly for to telle.

"Prologue of the Nun's Priest's Tale," ll. 2769-78,
Robinson, p. 198. I am grateful to Mr. Coghill for pointing
out the passage.

which I have designated the "sacramental" or centrally ortho-
dox Christian view, sees the literal level of both Testaments
as having historical validity in addition to their function
as a type or "allegory" of future historical and spiritual
events, specifically the advent of the Kingdom of God, both
within and beyond history.

On a more fundamental level, the differences between
the two traditions involve a distinction between the sacra-
mental view of symbol which finds its incarnational meaning
in Christ and its historical referent in Scripture, and the
classical view of symbol in which the symbol serves as the
abstract "sign" for an intellectual system which has no fixed
objective content. It is clear that the emphasis given to
the literal level of the text in the sacramental approach to
allegory will be much greater than that given in the classi-
cal tradition. That emphasis will also tend to be manifested
in greater attention to historic reality and individualizing
detail, which in turn can be shown to be directly relevant
to characterization. Where the historical basis of a piece
of literature is de-emphasized or ignored, the imitation of
concrete historical details or character portrayal will tend
to disappear or become only minimal adjuncts to the portrayal
by personification of an abstract idea. In other words, the
classical conception of mimesis, which has as its first object
the eternal world of ideals tends to foster a universalized,
non-realistic presentation of character in literature. In

the Judeo-Christian view, on the other hand, the created
world is not only a proper subject of mimesis, but actually
constitutes a physical manifestation of the truth. From the
central Judeo-Christian perspective, the representation of
dramatically realistic character in literature finds its
legitimate rationale in the Christian understanding of the
nature of the material universe and the purpose of history.

Although Chaucer does not achieve the same sense of
sacramental reality in his allegorical approach which we see
in Dante, his use of individualizing detail on the historical
level of the narrative is striking, and the portraits of Cri-
seyde, Pandarus, and Troilus gain much in their sense of
felt life from his attention to the historical setting of his
narrative and his pictorial eye for detail.

At the beginning of this chapter, I explored some of
the larger ways in which the Christian view of history is
manifested in Troilus and Criseyde. I noted earlier, for
example, how the Christian view of reality informs the narra-
tive in a general philosophical sense at all levels, and how
Chaucer uses Christian standards to control the progress of
the narrative--especially as they are manifested in the ironic
inversions of the language of the characters, and even in
certain comments made by the historian-narrator. There are
other ways, as well, by which Chaucer gives an explicitly
historical caste to the literal level of the text which spring
directly from the Christian vision of reality.

I noted that Christianity gives a new importance to history through the concept of revelation, the belief that God entered history in accordance with His pre-ordained plan to "perform actions necessary to the salvation and restoration of the temporal order."[48] The utter uniqueness of the Christ-event not only insures that history will be viewed as a linear progression, but also gives each historical event a unique place in the chronology of the three major events of the Divine Plan--the Creation, the Coming of Christ, and the Second Coming.

This attention to chronology contrasts with the classical perspective in which the passage of time is seen as a series of repeating cycles, resulting in a de-emphasis on the uniqueness of the particular event and a relatively unconcerned attitude toward chronology in general. Henry W. Sams points out the difference between the Christian and classical attitudes toward time in his article on the time-strategies of the Troilus.[49]

R. K. Root has noted that Chaucer takes a considerable interest in the chronological progression of his story and even marks particularly significant dates by the calendar.

---

[48]Bloomfield, p. 301.

[49]See Henry W. Sams, "The Dual Time-Scheme in Chaucer's Troilus," in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, 3 vols. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), pp. 180-85. Sams compares Chaucer's consistent preoccupation with a formal chronology in Troilus and Criseyde with Boccaccio, who does no more than identify the seasons at the beginning and end of the poem.

Troilus' first meeting with Criseyde at the Feast of Palla-
din, for example, is dated April 1 (I, 156); Pandarus makes
his first visit to Criseyde on May 3 (II, 56); and the meeting
at Deiphebus' house is marked as having occurred near "Aperil
the laste" (III, 360). At other points in the narrative,
Chaucer makes us aware of the passing of time by general ref-
erences to the cycle of the moon and the seasons. Troilus'
first meeting with Criseyde, for example, is dated by "the
crescent moon," and in Book V Chaucer informs us that three
springs have passed since the beginning of the love affair.[50]
Morton Bloomfield has pointed out that Chaucer's sense of
passing time is also explicitly illustrated in Book II, when
he comments on the change which takes place in language:

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh he, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as well in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.
> (II, 22-28)[51]

[50]See R. K. Root, ed. _The Book of Troilus and Criseyde_
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1926), p. xxxiii.

[51]Bloomfield notes that though this is the only explicit
passage referring to the passing of time in _Troilus and Cri-
seyde_, Chaucer often draws attention to time or chronology in
other works. In the "Knight's Tale," for example, two of
his characters apologize for violating chronology and the
Knight himself comments on the historical murals in Mars'
Temple which depict events after the time of Theseus (the
murders of Julius Ceasar, Nero, and Corolla), and remarks that
these men were "unborn" (II, 2031f), Bloomfield, p. 305. Tat-
lock notes that Chaucer deliberately archaizes the Franklin's
Tale in order that "the Franklin might with more propriety rail
at such acts and astrological magic as heathenish and might
disavow serious approval of them or faith in their efficacy,
especially for an evil purpose." J. S. P. Tatlock, _The Scene,
of the Franklin Revisited_ (Chaucer Society, Second Series, 51),
p. 914.

And of course Chaucer makes his audience most acutely aware
of time in the long section in Book IV dealing with Troilus'
10-day wait for Criseyde's return.

After the sorrowful Troilus watches Criseyde being led
away by Diomede, he is subjected to an excruciating time of wait-
ing, which Pandarus tries to fill with every sort of unac-
ceptable gaiety. In the description of the party at Sarpe-
doun's we feel Troilus' ennuie and his impatience to get
away. Particularly effective in conveying this sense of
impatience is Troilus' small exchange with Pandarus in Book V,
475-500, in which Troilus expresses his desire to leave and
Pandarus convinces him to stay until the week's end. Although
Chaucer does not go into detail about the three long days
which ensue, he has succeeded in suggesting how interminable
they seem to Troilus.

Later, when Troilus is on the wall with Pandarus look-
ing for Criseyde's return, Chaucer again makes his audience
mindful of the passing of time. The day begins with the ris-
ing of the sun which progresses, "in his course ay upward as
he wente," and Troilus and Pandarus watch each new arrival
with increasing disappointment. At noon they are still there
and though they go home to dine, are back again in the after
noon for another vigil. Troilus during this time is full of
the false hope which makes each new disappointment a harder
blow and which seems to lengthen the time of waiting still
more. The next day again, Troilus hangs his hopes on the

slender thread that he may have miscalculated the day, and

that Criseyde will be coming during the next few hours.

Chaucer emphasizes the excruciating length of Troilus' wait

by drawing it out still more:

> The thridde, ferthe, fifte, sexte day
> After tho dayes ten of which I tolde,
> Bitwixen hope and drede his herte lay
> Yet somwhat trustyng on hire estes olde....
>
> (V, 1205-1208)

During this whole section Chaucer makes his audience acutely

aware of the passage of time with explicit references to the

days and hours of Troilus' vigil. All this reinforces the

sense of history which pervades Chaucer's narrative.

In addition to Chaucer's emphasis on chronology, Henry

Sams has pointed out that there is a second type of attention

given to the passage of time in Chaucer. This time-scheme,

according to Sams "lags behind the formal dating and keeps

pace with the emotional climate of the story."[52] For exam-

ple, Criseyde's first emotional awareness of Troilus' love

is compared with an early spring day in which a cloud quickly

passes over the face of the sun (II, 764-68). Later, Troilus'

ecstatic reception of good news from Criseyde is compared to

closed flowers which open at the coming of a spring dawn

(II, 967-72). And at the beginning of Book IV, Chaucer com-

pares Troilus' feelings on leaving Criseyde with an autumn

scene:

> And as in wynter leves ben biraft,
> Ech after other, til the tree be bare,

---

[52]Sams, p. 182.

So that they nys but bark and braunche ilaft,
Lith Troilus....

(IV, 225-28)

Thus in Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer demonstrates the atten-
tion to time, unique circumstance, and chronology, which
springs directly from the Christian vision of reality.[53]

Not only does the Christian view of reality encourage an
emphasis on chronology and time in the literal level of the
text, but it allows for a greater attention to pictorial
detail due to the greater emphasis given to the particular
historical event. In Troilus and Criseyde the attention given
to historical detail has been compared with the comic "Nun's
Priest's" and "Miller's Tales."[54] Though Chaucer is careful
to preserve the pagan mind-set of his characters and the out-
ward form of the classical narrative, the pictorial details
of his story are all thoroughly medieval--and thoroughly
realistic. H. M. Smyser has pointed out, for example, that
Chaucer seems to have definite fourteenth-century images in
his mind when he writes of the houses within Troy. The

---

[53] See Bloomfield's discussion of Chaucer's attention to
chronology in the Legend of Good Women, "The Knight's Tale,"
and the "Monk's Tale." He comments that Chaucer makes some
anachronisms, but that these are largely due to the superior
claims of art. On the whole, writes Bloomfield, Chaucer is
still more historically-minded than his contemporaries
(Bloomfield, p. 305). Of course, my argument in this study
has been that Chaucer's "anachronisms" spring directly from
the historical vision of reality which is promoted by Chris-
tianity, and are therefore eminently "historical" in the
larger sense.

[54] H. M. Smyser, "The Domestic Background of Troilus and
Criseyde," Speculum 31(April, 1956), 315.

arrangement of Pandarus' house, for instance, is very clear;
one can easily reconstruct it from the information given in
the text with its "outer house," "middle chaumbre," "closet"
and secret trap-door.[55] Another critic has noted the same
attention to detail in Chaucer's reconstruction of Criseyde's
palace. Criseyde and her ladies read in a "paved parlour"
(II, 78-84); Criseyde's own room is apart from the hall and
shaded from the outside by a large cedar tree growing next to
the window (II, 599 and II, 9:18). At one end of the parlour
there is a window-seat which overlooks the street furnished
with a stone of jasper and a cushion embroidered with gold,
(II, 1226-29); and downstairs, there is a large garden with
railed walkways, benches and leafy trees (II, 813-26).[56]
Although we cannot say that Chaucer pays the same attention
to pictorial detail as the modern movelist, there is a measure
of imitative realism here which far surpasses most of his
contemporaries.

Again in the vigil scene of Book V, Chaucer adds the
kind of realistic detail which makes his narrative so his-
torically convincing. When Troilus is on the wall, he is
described as misconstruing every new dot on the horizon as a
potential Criseyde. When this proves fruitless, he goes down
to the porters to tell them to keep the gate open if she comes

[55]Smyser, p. 308.

[56]See Robert D. Mayo, "The Trojan Background of the
Troilus," ELH 9 (December, 1942), 245-56.

late. Later in the afternoon he "loketh forth by hegge, by
tre, by greve," and leans far out over the wall to get a
better glimpse of passers-by. Perhaps the most realistic
touch of all comes at the end of the day, when the warden of
the gates calls in the flocks and shepherds which feed without.
This is the final medieval commonplace which--for that day
at least--extinguishes Troilus' hope.

Another thoroughly medieval detail which comes through
strongly in the narrative is the constant press of people
around the major characters. On the evening after Criseyde
has seen Troilus riding by her house, Pandarus seeks Troilus,
but has no opportunity to talk to him privately until they
are in bed. Criseyde, too, is constantly surrounded by ladies-
in-waiting, and Pandarus must ask for an audience "al pryvely"
in the garden before he can deliver Troilus' first letter.
Even there they are not alone, as is evident from Pandarus'
dare that Criseyde "cast it (Troilus' letter) awey anon/
That folk may gauren on us tweye" (II, 1156-57). [57] Later on
when Pandarus invites Criseyde to his house he pressures her
to be there and then "swor hire softe in hir ere" (III, 566),
that if she does not come "he" will never come to her. Cri-
seyde responds in kind by going "to hym to rowne" (III, 568),
and asking if he means Troilus. In each situation Chaucer
seems to assume that his characters are surrounded by a public

_____

[57] Smyser, p. 313.

audience--a realistic detail which would again have been a
normal aspect of medieval life.

The sense of realism which accrues from the pictorial
background of the story also carries over into the glimpses
Chaucer gives of his major characters. Chaucer's first ref-
erences to Criseyde, although they contain a measure of the
conventional elements often used to praise a medieval lady,
yet retain a pictorial freshness which is striking. He
introduces Criseyde with what seems a conventional remark on
her "aungelik" beauty:

> So aungelik was hir natif beaute,
> That like a thing immortal seemed she,
> As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
> That doun were sent in scornynge of nature.
> (I, 102-104)

Of course, Chaucer uses the conventional comparison later to
accentuate the idolatry of Troilus' love. Immediately after
this, Chaucer gives a quick but romantically colored account
of Criseyde's plea before Hector to stay in the city. During
this short section of the narrative Chaucer offers us only
one truly individualizing detail to offset the idealized por-
trait we receive--Criseyde is dressed in a "samyt broun"
widow's habit (I, 109). Significantly, when she appears at
the feast of Palladin, Chaucer capitalizes on the detail which
he introduced only a few verses before:

> Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,
> In widewes habit blak, but natheles
> Right as oure first lettre is now an A,
> In beaute first so stood she, makeles.
> Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees
> Nas nevere yet seyn thyng to ben preysed derre,
> Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre

> As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone
> That hir behelden <u>in hir blake wede</u>
> And yet she stood ful lowe and still allone,
> Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,
> And neigh the dore, ayundre shames drede,
> Simple of atir and de onaire of chere
> With ful assured lokyng and manere.
> (I, 169-82)

The visual impression received here is one of striking simplicity. Though Chaucer does not describe Criseyde's beauty in detail, he knows the visual effect of a black dress on a beautiful woman and he conveys that effect with great impact through a focus on one concrete detail--the dark widow's habit.

A few verses later, Chaucer again gives what seems a conventionalized description of Criseyde, stressing her statuesque form and her "Honour, estat, and womanly noblesse" (I, 281-87). Immediately following this typicalized description of the qualities befitting her station, Chaucer gives us the single detail which makes his portrait come alive:

> To Troilus right wonder wel with alle
> Gan for to like here mevynge and hire chere,
> Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle
> Hire lok a lite aside in swich manere,
> Ascaunces, 'What! May I nat stonden here!' (I, 288-292)

Criseyde seems to have a clear, supremely confident awareness of the effect that she has on the passers-by. She is so sure of her feminine power that if she were not acknowledged, she would be surprised. It is against this vision of female vitality and self-assurance that we see the luckless Troilus' entrapment in the next verse:

> And of hire look in him there gan to quyken.
> So gret desir and such affecioun,
> That in his hertes botme gan to stiken
> O hir his fixe and depe impressioun.
>   (I, 295-298)

Chaucer has made sure that the "deep impressioun" which
Troilus receives here has just as surely registered on his
audience, and he has done this primarily by means of a few
striking details which give life to what seems an otherwise
conventional portrait.

Chaucer uses the same technique on his heroine toward
the end of Troilus and Criseyde (V, 799-840) when Criseyde
has said good-bye to Troilus and has arrived with Diomede at
the Greek camp. The three portraits which Chaucer injects
into his narrative here have been denounced by Louis Hasel-
mayer as utterly conventionalized, "an afterthought by which
Chaucer seeks to force his new creation into the conventional
format."[58]   Although Haselmayer may have a point when it
comes to the conventionalized portrait of Troilus, the descrip-
tion of Criseyde once again has that single precise detail
which makes her beauty almost palpable. After a thoroughly
generalized reference to her face, figure, and bearing,
"Thereto of shap, of face, and ek of cheere/ There myghte ben
no fairer creature"--Chaucer comments:

> And ofte tyme this was hire manere
> To gon ytressed with hire heres clere,
> Doun by her coler at hire bak behynde
> Which with a thread of gold she wolde bynde. (V, 809-812)

---

[58]Louis A. Haselmayer, "The Portraits in Troilus and
Criseyde," PQ 17 (April, 1938), 220-23.

There is no more individual expression of a woman's physical "atmosphere" than the way she wears her hair, and it seems to me that Chaucer has picked up on this fact in a way which demonstrates once again his attention to the historically concrete.

Though not as strikingly individual as his various portraits of Criseyde, Chaucer's first description of Troilus contains a number of concrete details which reinforce the sense of historical reality operative on the literal level of the narrative. Though Troilus as a great warrior is conventionally compared to "Mars, that god is of bataille" (II, 630), he is described as riding his wounded bay steed at a "pas ful softely," thus revealing a gentler side which contrasts with his war-like demeanor. Chaucer adds to this particular contrast a moment later when he describes Troilus' embarrassment at the accolade he is receiving:

> And ay the peple cryde, 'Here cometh oure joye/
> And next his brother, holder up of Troye!'
> For while he wex a litel red for shame....
> (II, 643-45)

Furthermore, in the midst of a rather generalized description of Troilus' "heigh prowess," his "might", his "youth" and his "hardynesse," Chaucer gives us the sharp visual image of Troilus' battered armor:

> His helm tohewen was in twenty places;
> That by a tyssew heng his bak byhynde;
> His Sheeld todasshed was with swerdes and maces
> In which men myght many an arwe fynde
> That thirled hadde horn and nerf and rynde;
> (II, 638-42)

The detail of the ruined helmet which hangs down Troilus'
back, "by a tyssew" is especially effective in giving this
scene a sense of historical actuality.[59]

The character of Diomede, as well, demonstrates Chaucer's
skill in concrete description. Chaucer gives us a glimpse
of Diomede's ambition and egotism from the first. Approaching
the Greek host, Diomede comments under his breath on the
transaction which is taking place: "I have hered seyd ek
tymes tweyes twelve/ 'He is a fool that wole foryete hymselve'"
(V, 97-98). Immediately after, he begins his knowing court-
ship of Criseyde with all the conventional and impressive
courtesies, and when he comes to her tent the day before
Criseyde is to return to Troy and Troilus, Diomede wastes no
time. First he let Criseyde know that he is aware of her
emotions. Stressing the hapless plight of Troy, he urges
Criseyde to take another "worthy" lover, and then "sobreliche
on hire he thew his lok,/ And seyde I am al be it yow no joie,/
As gentil man as any wight in Troi" (V, 929-30). After this
not-so-subtle advertisement, Diomede continues to press Cri-
seyde for mercy until she finally gives in.

In the narrator's final comment on Diomede, we get the
conventional portrait of the mighty warrior—with one added
detail which reinforces the individualized portrait Chaucer
has managed to convey in the earlier descriptions:

---

[59]H. M. Smyser points out this particular detail, p. 315.

> This Diomede, as bokes us declare
> Was in his nedes prest and corageous,
> With sterne vois and myghty lymes square
> Hardy, testif, strong, and chivalrous
> Of dedes, lik his fader Tideus
> And som men seyn he was of tonge large
> And heir he was of Calydoigne and Arge.
>   (V, 799-805)

While it is true, as Robert Mayo suggests, that Chaucer achieves most of his realistic effect by means of dramatic action and dialogue,[60] we should not ignore the wealth of concrete detail which finds its way into the descriptive sections of Troilus and Criseyde. Throughout the narrative there are those distinctly Chaucerian, distinctly realistic touches--Troilus' exultant "Now be ye kaught" when he finally embraces Criseyde, Diomede's "tonge large," the "smoky reyn" of the lover's first encounter. Chaucer's attention to historical detail in the sense we have defined it once again harks back to his roots in the Dantean-Christian allegorical tradition, where an emphasis on the literal is an essential part of the concept of mimesis.

By pointing out Chaucer's careful attention to creating an illusion of historical reality on the literal level of his narrative, I am not suggesting that he exactly imitates the Dantean allegorical method. In the introduction to this study, I suggested that Christian realism has two basic components. First, Christian reality is defined in terms of its unified historical overview--the monolithic revealed plan

---

[60] Mayo, p. 256.

of God begun at Creation, progressing through the Advent of Christ and his death and Resurrection and terminated by the Second Coming. This great overview of history gives meaning and significance to the minute and particular events of ordinary historical reality because any historical circumstance has its unique place within the larger outlines of Divine Revelation. Translated into literary terms, the author who is committed to a demonstration of the Christian view of history will exhibit both a sense of the underlying structure of the Christian universe (and its corollary doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and Judgment) and a strong attention to particular historical circumstance and individual commitment to the objective facts of Christian history.

In Dante's _Comedy_ the realism exhibited is not the flatly imitative realism of philosophical materialsim (although imitation even in this sense plays a part) but a literary picture of the whole of Christian reality, including a world and an afterlife structured after the Christian understanding of history and eschatology, and a journey faithful to the prophetic experience of a particular individual. It is my opinion that Dante achieves a more integrated portrayal of this understanding of history, balancing his emphasis on the total structure of the Christian reality with his emphasis on the concrete, historical moment and the decisions which it requires. Obviously, as B. F. Koonce has pointed out,[61]

---

[61] B. F. Koonce, _Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in the House of Fame_ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 82-824.

Chaucer's historical narrative is not history in the same
sense as Dante's Comedy. The first level of Chaucer's story
is secular and pagan--Trojan history; Dante's is sacred and
openly Christian--the afterlife journey of an individual
soul. But I am suggesting that while Chaucer chooses an
ostensibly secular cortex to relay his spiritual meanings,
that cortex itself not only contains subtle but unmistakable
references to the total Christian Revelation (both explicit
and indirect), but it bears the marks of the Christian per-
spective in the high level of historical realism it maintains
throughout. The total structure of the Christian revelation
is, as I have pointed out, most clear in the Epilog of the
Troilus, when Troilus mounts up to the eighth sphere and
looks down on "this wrecched world." Although it is true
that Troilus, in keeping with the pagan fiction that Chaucer
has maintained throughout, is not looking down from a Chris-
tian heaven,[62] it cannot be doubted that the eighth sphere as
Chaucer uses it has allegorical overtones which suggest the
Christian world-view undergirding Chaucer's narrative. Troilus
is described as a soul rising "blisfully" upward, he holds the
world "al vanite" when compared with the "pleyn felicitee"
of "hevene above," and he damns the "blynd lust, the which
that may nat last" (V, 1815-25). The final condemnation of

---

[62]Morton Bloomfield points out that the eighth sphere,
or Ogdoad, is the traditional resting-place of the good soul
who possesses gnosis in the Greco-Roman tradition. (See
Morton W. Bloomfield, "The Eighth Sphere: A Note on Chaucer's
Troilus and Criseyde, V, 1809," MLR 53 (July, 1958), 408-410.

the world's "blynd lust" is especially suggestive of the

Christian perspective in that it is almost a direct reference

to I John 1:16 and 17. The Christian language used to

describe Troilus' pagan experience at this point is in my

opinion simply a continuation of the same technique we have

seen throughout the Troilus; it is part of a conscious effort

by Chaucer to remind us of the Christian world view by which

his pagan fiction is informed and controlled. This is made

all the more clear in Chaucer's explicit restatement of the

Christian view of history in lines 1835-1849.[63] It is my

opinion, based on the evidence of Troilus' Dantean-Boethian

movement from a false to a true perspective on worldly real-

ity, on direct reminders of the Christian reality which break

into the pagan world of the Troilus throughout, on the atten-

tion paid to historical detail on the literal level of the

text, and on the explicit revelation of that world-view in

the Epilog, that in Troilus and Criseyde we have a narrative

which verges on religious allegory strongly related to the

sort of allegory we find in the Divine Comedy. I am aware that

this puts me just on the outer limits of Mr. Howard's "fringe

---

[63]It should be clear at this point that I do not agree
with the critical perspective on this passage represented by
Donald Howard, who defines Troilus' movement into the eighth
sphere in terms of a universal secular phenomenon which he
calls "world-alienation," i.e., a "sensibility" which occurs
"if we commune with nature or with God, or if we sink very
deep into our own thoughts or into intimacy with others...."
(Donald R. Howard, "Renaissance World-Alienation," in The
Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason,
ed. Robert S. Kinsman (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1974), pp. 47-76.

group of nostalgia freaks" who "think all of Chaucer's poems
are religious allegories."[64]

Viewed in these terms, the illusion of the Christian
sense of reality which Chaucer achieves in Troilus and
Criseyde is very powerful. Of course, one might argue, and
with some reason, that it is not as powerful as the sense of
Christian reality achieved in the Divine Comedy. Dante's
pilgrim is utterly conscious of his state and of the meaning
of the choices he makes. In addition, he is openly defined
in terms of Scriptural prophecy—there will be a real after-
life according to Scriptural Revelation; there will be a
judgment; there will be a final encounter with God. Thus
Dante's history has the authority of its essentially Scriptural
content, which is openly portrayed within an explicitly Chris-
tian setting. Using the two aspects of the Christian view
of reality as an evaluative tool, we might say that Dante
emphasizes the objective historicity of the Biblical Revela-
tion—the great historical events of the Incarnation, and the
Second Coming. In so doing, he cannot achieve the level of
commonplace historical detail which we see in Chaucer. Chau-
cer's narrative, on the other hand, exhibits the close attention

---

[64]See Donald Howard, "Flying Through Space: Chaucer and
Milton," in Milton and the Line of Vision, ed. Joseph
Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin
Press, 1975), pp. 7-8. While I do not think that all of
Chaucer's poetic work is allegorical, there are solid grounds
for seeing Troilus and Criseyde as a poem containing a well-
developed secondary level of religious meaning which runs
parallel to the classical fiction which serves as its vehi-
cle.

to concrete detail and unique circumstance which springs
from the Christian view of history, but relegates the great
objective markers and doctrines of Christian history to the
background until their complete exposure at the end. He
must do this--his fiction is not the fiction of divine
reality which we see in Dante, but the fiction of classical
legend. Though the outlines of that legend as Chaucer sees
it and large elements within it reflect the Christian vision
of reality, the fictive level is essentially that of pagan,
not divine history, and therefore cannot carry the authority
of the Divine Comedy. We remember that one of the most
striking characteristics of Greek-Platonic exegesis in the
pre-Christian era is its use of allegory as a means for obscur-
ing or excusing moral weakness in heroic character. (See
Chapter IV, p. 18f.) The influence of this view can be
seen in the characterization of Troilus, who is presented as
a "righteous pagan," unconscious, unknowing, ignorant of any
higher love than the love of romantic feeling which is the
religion of his pagan world-view. His characterization, as
a result, cannot match in dramatic intensity the more con-
scious characterization of Dante's Pilgrim. (Paradoxically,
of course, Pandarus and Criseyde, who exhibit the most con-
scious awareness of their alternatives do achieve that inten-
sity.)

The classical influence also makes itself felt in Chau-
cer's attitude toward the idea of judgment. If a character

is presented as incapable of knowing what his choices are,
he cannot be judged for making the wrong ones. Even in the
case of Pandarus and Criseyde, who demonstrate a half-
conscious and sometimes fully explicit awareness of their
alternatives, Chaucer refuses to judge them openly or to
categorize them in heaven or hell as would Dante. Chaucer's
literal level will not permit that judgment because he has
created a pagan world which--on the surface at least--
excludes awareness of the Christian vision. Thus Chaucer's
 heathen allegory is in constant tension with the Christian
world-view which surrounds and informs it until the end, when
it is fully revealed in the Epilog.

In a sense, Chaucer's mimetic method lies mid-way between
Boccaccio, who, though he does not disparage the use of a his-
torical allegory, places poetic effect and moral purpose
over any effort to be historically correct, and Dante, who
consistently places a higher value on literature which grounds
itself firmly in the finite and the earthly, and whose moral
message arises only accidentally from its faithful represen-
tation of the way things are. Chaucer, while faithfully
reflecting the historical details and circumstances of his
medieval world, chooses not to present a straightforward image
of the religious forces which govern it. His method, as I
have said before, is the method of ironic indirection, and he
seems fully aware of the advantages which his negative alle-
gorical method gives him. Chaucer is unwilling to make the

judgment of character which Dante makes. He draws back from
a final assignation of rewards and punishments, and when he
does assign, it is only, in the case of Troilus, to the eighth
sphere, the traditional place for good or righteous men.
He makes a point of leaving Criseyde's Pandarus' actions
unevaluated (at least explicitly).

Thus the overall tone of Chaucer's narrative is one of
sympathetic irony, not judgment. There is a moment of exal-
tation in the end, a moment of undisguised Christian devo-
tion, but it is not the ecstatic mysticism of the Beatific
Vision. Instead, Chaucer is content merely to recognize
the truth, to renew his dedication to "The which that right
for love/ First starf, and roos and sit in hevene above"
(V, 1842-45). Where he judges, it is only for the good;
where there is possibility for another verdict, he remains
silent. There is something very significant about this.
Chaucer seems to have a better sense of his human limits than
Dante, who is not afraid to assume a position of divine
authority, bestowing both reward and punishment where he
decides that it is due. Of course, Dante may be so sure that
his standards are patterned after the divine that he assumes
his divine pose from a reliance on revealed truth, on a con-
fidence that he has like St. Paul, "the mind of Christ."
With Chaucer, there is no sense of the supreme self-confidence
(or God-confidence) which radiates through Dante. Chaucer's
vision is true to the Christian faith, but it is less ideal

than Dante's, less sure. Except for the Epilog, his allegory is a negative reflection of the Christian reality and his allegorical method is one of ironic indirection rather than positive imitation. Although a good deal of Dantean "historicity" rubs off on him, certainly more than on any of his immediate contemporaries, Chaucer's vision is finally a trifle less integrated, a trifle less clear in its sacramental vision than Dante's, a fact which results in characters who are a trifle less conscious of their choices, and a trifle less historically realistic in the Christian sense. Whether this is the sign of an underlying tremor of doubt, or a healthy refusal to make decisions which are out of the realm of human responsibility, I cannot say. Whatever the case, Troilus and Criseyde, for all its classical trappings, demonstrates a subterranean recognition of the Christian perspective on objective historical reality and achieves a level of historical reality on the literal level which shows the definite influences of Dante and thus of the centrally orthodox Christian tradition as I have defined it in this paper.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study has been to determine the nature of the realism of Chaucer's characters and the literary tradition from which it springs. Throughout, I have attempted to show how the peculiar definition of historical reality operative at a given point in time influences both the theoretical understanding of character and its representation in literature. In the first three chapters a comparison was made between the classical and Christian definitions of historical reality and their respective effects on the theory and representation of character in literature. I demonstrated that the classical separation of historical actuality (sensory reality; the experiences of men in the natural world) from the eternal verities, or the ideal forms which were seen as existing independent of earthly history, results in a view of man's nature which is essentially static in conception. Man's nature has its origin in a fixed point outside of history and a man's historical life is merely a manifestation of the substance of his eternal nature. Though it might appear to change for good or evil, a man's character remains at a fixed and substantive ethical level throughout his life.

Such an understanding of the nature of man, as we have seen, leads to a universalized conception of characterization in literature in which characters are fixed at a certain ethical, social and stylistic level, and are not allowed movement either within or across the categories. A side aspect of this view of character presentation involves the classical tendency to create a moral hierarchy out of such rigid social, ethical and stylistic categories. Thus a tragic character, who has the highest social and ethical standing despite his tragic flaw" is deemed closest to the universal ideals and most worthy of imitation. Conversely, the comic character is seen as the least desirable subject of characterization because closest to the norm of mutable historical existence.

In addition, the classical emphasis on the role of fate and destiny in the composition of man's basic nature leads to a literary model in which the dramatic tension arises from the character's struggle against his own inevitable destiny. As a result of the classical view of fate, the role of free will in man is de-emphasized, or, where it is presented, is ultimately found to be an illusion. This leads to a sympathetic portrayal of the condition of man, who is regarded as destined, despite his best intentions, to a fate pre-ordained from the beginnings of time. Though the existence of real evil in the Aristotelian sense of vices and depravities is recognized, literary representation of character (in both

its tragic and comic aspects) will tend to de-emphasize this
kind of evil and to focus more on the errors and frailties
of human nature, the flaws which result from unintentional
evil.

The literary character which is a product of this view
of reality, as I have shown, will tend to be highly abstract
and universalized in his appeal. He will not develop sub-
stantively during the course of his historical life, and
whether comic or tragic, he will serve primarily as a vehicle
for ethical instruction, a means for lifting the reader out
of the realm of mutable historical experience and into the
realm of eternal truth.

The emphasis on a fixed nature in character resulted
in certain techniques of style. First, the fact that a given
man's nature can be expressed in universal terms encourages
a straightforward and rather transparent presentation of
character. The characters of Greek fiction, writes Auerbach,
are open to the point of almost complete externalization—
"what they do not say to others they speak in their own
minds, so that the reader is informed of it."[1] The very
style of such a character's speech is often self-consciously
rhetorical and intended for a splendid effect. As a result,
the motives of the characters are obvious and relations be-
tween characters are set forth clearly and directly, without

---

[1] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 6.

the elements of unmotivated or obscurely motivated conflict and vacillation which is characteristic of other approaches to characterization.

As might be expected, the literary theory which governs such an understanding of characterization tends to emphasize careful classification of character types with their respectively appropriate styles, a strong expression of moral purpose, especially in the high or tragic character, and careful restriction, where it is allowed at all, on comic representation of character. Various combinations of these characteristics were shown to be components of the theories of characterization demonstrated by Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Cicero and Quintillian.

In contrast, the Christian approach to history generates an environment much more conducive to the creation of a character which has earthly or historical dimensions. This is a result of the fact that from the Christian perspective, history and substantive truth are no longer separate entities, but bound together by the Incarnation. Christ, the Word made Flesh, is the God who enters history and gives it a significance and a unity impossible in the classical tradition.

The importance given to the redemptive act of Christ in history is a result in part of the importance attached to the problem of evil in the Christian analysis of reality. In the classical view, evil is regarded as a by-product of the maturation process, an accidental missing of the mark of

philosophic perfection. In the Christian view, evil is not regarded as accidental but as an inevitable consequence of man's historic fall from grace. As a result of Adam's fall, the entire human race is in the same predicament. The problem of sin is thus a universal fact which requires a universal solution. The Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ become the historical answer to the unavoidable problem of man in history. They also become the center of meaning for a universal history which is bounded at one end by creation and fall and at the other by the Second Coming of Christ. The historical plan encompassed by these events is seen by the Christian historian as all-inclusive and God-given. Despite the apparent chaos of history, it is basically an ordered reality, controlled by God and moving toward a predicted end. Christ, the revealed Word of God, reveals or discovers the meaning of past, present and future reality.

The Christian rationale for the idea of a providential plan in history is based on a belief in the concept of Revelation. Christian insight, or _sapientia_, is a necessary prerequisite for understanding the facts of history. Fortune and chance, while they might appear to be forces with substantial power, are in the end ordered by the controlling hand of Providence. The basis for the Christian belief that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purposes," is the Resurrection of Christ. For those individuals who believe

in the resurrection of the body and the redemption of crea-
tion at the end of time, there is no ultimate fatality in
matter. Commitment to such a belief, of course, is a matter
of free choice; a man follows or denies Christ as he wills.

The new emphasis on man-in-history and on the individual
exercise of free will in the Christian vision has a great
effect on the theory and presentation of character in lit-
erature. In the classical vision, man's nature was fixed by
the destinal forces which ordered his character before his
entrance into history. In the Christian view, man, because
of his free will, retains the capacity for substantial change
in history. The portrayal of a real change of character in
a given man involves the depiction of both the evil and good
aspects of his character. Thus in the Biblical view, there
is little of the classical reticence in regard to the imita-
tion of evil behavior. David is both sinner and saint; and a
truthful representation of God's dealings with him requires
the portrayal of both aspects of his development. Sublimity
and humility, great nobility of heart and low social stand-
ing (or vice versa), great weakness and great strength of
character may be common qualities represented in any given
individual. It is the very extremes through which a character
moves that give him an intense historical life; an intimate
and dramatic connection with the revealed historical process
and the God behind the Revelation. Sin, repentance, renewal
and rebirth in the life of the believer form an individual
reflection of the larger pattern of Christian history.

This conception of the nature of man and reality has certain effects on stylistic technique. First, the character and his relations with other characters are tinged with a certain obscurity and mystery. Description is spare; character motivation is often left to the imagination. Emphasis is less on the on-going plot-line than on the characters themselves, and on their intimate and dramatic interaction with the Christian God, with the claim of Christ upon their lives.

It is the emphasis on free will, the necessity for decisive commitment in the life of the believer, which distinguishes the Christian approach to characterization most sharply from the classical view. Though a Christian character may be presented as having striven against the tyrannical pressure of accident and fate in the universe, he ultimately resolves the problem through a belief in free choice and the ultimate sovereignty of God. As a result of this belief, man's historical character takes on a "painful and immoderate intensity."[2] Unable to use the forces of destiny as an excuse for his behavior, man decides his own eternal destiny amid the conflicting forces of good and evil in historical life. Like Christ, the believer is called to a humble immersion in earthly happening. The intimate relation of spirit and historical existence in just this sense forms the basis for the Christian concern for the value of the individual and

---

[2]Eric Auerbach, <u>Dante: Poet of the Secular World</u>, trans. Ralph Manheim (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), p. 14.

the existence of personal identity even beyond death. Christ came in the body and was resurrected in the body; the individual believer follows the same pattern. Thus the individual through an act of the will achieves an integration with his chosen destiny in historical life which is prophetic of total integration after death. The emphasis given to human personality in such a view affects characterization through a consequent emphasis on individuality and the acts of choice which determine the individual's destiny. In sum, the three chapters of this study demonstrated that the two great perspectives on historical reality evinced by the classical and Christian world-views have a great effect on the presentation of character in literature.

In the fourth chapter, the influence of each view of reality on a given author's approach to symbol and allegory was explored through the content supplied by the exegetical tradition. It was demonstrated that the classical exegetical perspective fosters an allegory built on a laminated pattern of "this for that" which is not necessarily given content by the Biblical understanding of history. This in turn results in the creation of "personifications," of abstract ideals or theological principles which rely for their effect primarily on their didactic message. Following the old classical split between mutable history and substantive truth, such personifications do not require that the symbolic representation of a given truth have historical reality. In fact, the gap

between the literal level of the text and its spiritual
or allegorical meaning is often very wide indeed. In con-
trast, the orthodox Christian approach to the subject was
seen to foster a view of allegory in which both the literal
and the figurative levels of a given narrative or characteri-
zation have a strong historical appeal, solid grounding in
historical fact. In Scripture, both levels of meaning have
an actual basis in fact and a prophetic relation one to the
other. In Christian literature such as that produced by
Dante, an imitation of the allegorical technique of Scripture,
while it does not attain the same degree of historical reality
as Scripture still produces a much greater sense of historical
actuality than that generated by the tradition of personifica-
tion-allegory which is fostered by the Classical view.

In Chapters V and VI, a number of works important to an
understanding of aesthetic theory during the time of Chaucer
were analyzed for the elements identified in Chapters II,
III, and IV as being directly or indirectly relevant to the
study of characterization in Chaucer. It was demonstrated
that of the literary theorists of the early Christian cen-
turies, Macrobius and Martianus Capella display an almost
exclusively Neo-Classical approach to the problem of reality
and figurative expression. Augustine and Bede, on the other
hand, demonstrate a clear understanding both of the orthodox
Christian tradition and of the literary principles which derive
from that tradition.

In Alain de Lille, John of Salisbury and Hugh of St.
Victor, I found large elements of orthodox doctrine which
have, however, been significantly modified by the Neo-Classi-
cal Christian tradition coming down through the School of
Alexandria. Philosophical elements in the School of Chartres,
for example, reveal strong Neo-Classical elements which weaken
orthodox doctrine by an emphasis on knowledge over faith as
the criterion for salvation. The philosophical influence of
the Neo-Classical tradition also results in a de-emphasis on
the literal level of the text and a greater attention to the
spiritual or moral meaning of a given narrative. Alain de
Lille, I conclude, exhibits the greatest degree of Neo-
Classical influence in this sense, demonstrating the Alex-
andrine tendency to disguise the unpleasant subjects of sin,
death, and suffering under a cloak of fantasy. John and Hugh,
although rooted in essentially the same tradition as Alain,
demonstrate a slight movement toward a greater attention to
representation of historical truth on the literal level which
may reflect a gradual strengthening of the pure orthodox
tradition as the fourteenth century approaches.

In Chapter VI, I dealt once again with the aesthetic
commentary of two literary theorists who have the most
immediate relevance to Chaucer--Dante and Boccaccio. I found
Boccaccio's literary theory to be a blend of Christian
doctrine and classical theory in somewhat the same tradition
as Hugh, John and Alain. On the other hand, Dante, despite

the heavy classical influence which is demonstrable in his
work on all levels, exhibits an approach to figurative rep-
resentation which is deeply within the orthodox tradition.
Dante's treatment of the figures of comedy, his statement
of purpose, and his figural approach all bespeak a profoundly
Christian understanding of poetics, which, as I have shown
before, has a direct bearing on his approach to characteriza-
tion.

In the final chapter, Chaucer is shown to exhibit strong
ties with the Dantean-Christian approach to characterization
which derives primarily from the centrally orthodox tradi-
tion. First, the same general understanding of history is
evident throughout. Chaucer, like Dante, is concerned with
the problem of providential control and its conflict with
fortune, and devises a narrative in which God is shown to
have the ultimate authority. Chaucer's characters, and
especially Troilus, incorporate a philosophical understanding
of that conflict into the very structure of their dialogue.
Like Dante, Chaucer's whole approach to comedy in _Troilus and_
Criseyde has dark overtones of sin and death--a manifestation
of the Christian understanding of the nature of man, whose
comic human "errors" are often only surface reflections of a
deeper malaise. Unlike Dante, however, Chaucer is careful
to emphasize the innocently ridiculous qualities of his hero
over his evident sins against the Christian code of ethics.
Chaucer, in fact, gets a great deal of artistic sympathy from

the fact that his protagonist is young, pagan, and basically naive. On the other hand, Chaucer does not shun the serious moral failings of his characters, and makes it clear that Criseyde and Pandarus operate with a full awareness of their choices. In fact, the profound dramatic appeal of the characterization of Criseyde arises from our awareness of her conscious struggle with her alternatives. On this account, the deep influence of the Dantean-Christian world-view is completely evident. But Chaucer remains distinctly himself by stopping just this side of any ultimate evaluation of his characters, of any final judgment. He pities Criseyde; he does not condemn her or assign her to hell.

For both Dante and Chaucer, however, love is the governing force of the Christian universe which forms the ethos of both authors, and this love in each is given objective content in the central facts of the Incarnation, death, Resurrection, and Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For Dante, the Biblical revelation is an integral and explicit part of his own pilgrimage toward Love Absolute. For Chaucer, the pilgrimage is veiled by a secular fiction. But that fiction is given a peculiarly historical caste, a realistic weight of detail which distances it from the figurative approach of the classical tradition and puts it much closer to the Dantean frame of reference. The reading focus of Troilus and Criseyde is somewhere between the "allegory of the theologians" and the "allegory of the poets" as Singleton defines them. The

reader knows the story does not have the same historical authority as does Dante's _Comedy_, which is placed directly within the context of Biblical prophecy, but it is history, and its history is only ostensibly secular.

Chaucer, as many others have suggested before me, ultimately defuses the transcendent vision of Dante's _Paradise_. He remains on the human level and looks back, not forward into history. His Christian world-view is a bit less integrated, a touch more classical than Dante's. As a result, his characterizations, as I have suggested, do not all achieve the same level of reality. Criseyde and Pandarus, who exhibit a capacity for free choice and a strong awareness of their alternatives, rise almost to the full stature of the Christian realism exhibited in Dante. Troilus, bound as he is by innately high social and spiritual qualities and by a special innocence bestowed on him by Chaucer, manifests overtones of a classical understanding of characterization which detract from his humanity and ultimately reduce his credibility as a realistic character in the Christian sense.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adkins, A. W. H. From the Many to the One. New York:
    Cornell University Press, 1970.

Alain De Lille. The Anticlaudian of Alain De Lille. Trans-
    lated by William Hafner Cornog. Philadelphia: Uni-
    versity of Pennsylvania Press, 1935.

_____. The Complaint of Nature. Translated by Douglas
    M. Moffatt. Hamden: Archon Books, 1972.

Aristotle. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry. Ed. W. Hamilton
    Fyfe. Translated by Ingram Bywater. Oxford: Clarendon
    Press, 1963.

_____. "The Art of Poetry," in Aristotle. Translated by
    Philip Wheelwright. New York: The Odyssey Press, 1959.

_____. Metaphysics. Ed. H. Tredennick. London: William
    Heinemann, 1933.

_____. The Nichomachean Ethics. Translated by A. H.
    Rackham. London: William Heinemann, 1934.

_____. On the Soul. Parva Naturalia. On Breath. Ed.
    W. S. Hett. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935.

_____. Poetics, in Aristotle, Poetics; Longinus, on the
    Sublime; Demetrius, On Style. Translated by W. Ham-
    ilton Fyfe. London: William Heinemann, 1932.

_____. Physics. Translated by Philip H. Wicksteed and
    Francis Cornford. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann,
    1929.

Atkins, J. W. H. English Literary Criticism: The Medieval
    Phase. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943.

Auerbach, Eric. Dante: Poet of the Secular World. Trans-
    lated by Ralph Manheim. Chicago: University of Chi-
    cago Press, 1929.

_____. "Figura," in Scenes from the Drama of European
    Literature. Translated by Ralph Manheim. New York:
    Meridian Books, 1959.

_____. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.

_____. *Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature*. Yale French Studies, No. 9. Yale University Press, 1952.

St. Augustine. *The City of God* (Abridged version). Ed. Vernon J. Bourke. Translated by Gerald G. Walsh, et al. New York: Image Books, 1953.

_____. *The City of God*, in *The Writings of St. Augustine*. Translated by Gerald G. Walsh, et al. Vols. 6-8. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1952.

_____. *The Confessions*. Translated by John K. Ryan. New York: Image Books, 1960.

_____. *The Happy Life. Answer to the Skeptics. Divine Providence and the Problem of Evil*, in *The Writings of St. Augustine*, Vol. 1. Trans. Ludwig Schopp, et al. New York: Cima Publishing Co., 1948.

_____. *Immortality of the Soul. Magnitude of the Soul. On Music. Advantage of Believing. Faith in Things Unseen*, in *The Writings of St. Augustine*. Translated by Ludwig Schopp, John J. McMahon, et al. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1947.

_____. *Letters* in *The Writings of St. Augustine*. Vols. 9-13. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1951.

_____. *On Christian Doctrine*. Translated by D. W. Robertson. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958.

_____. *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, in *The Writings of St. Augustine*. Translated by Sister Mary Sarah Muldowney, R. S. M. Vol. 17. New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959.

_____. *The Teacher. Free Choice of the Will. Grace and Free Will*, in *The Writings of St. Augustine*. Translated by Robert P. Russell, O. S. A. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1968.

_____. *The Trinity*, in *The Writings of St. Augustine*. Translated by Stephen McKenna, C.S.S.R. Vol. 18. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962.

Baldwin, C. S. _Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic._ New York: Macmillan, 1924.

_____. "'Cicero on Parnassus.'" _Publication of the Modern Language Association_ 42(March, 1927), 106-112. Hereafter cited as _PMLA_.

_____. _Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic._ New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928.

Barnes, Timothy David. _Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study._ Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Battenhouse, Roy W., ed. _A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine._ New York: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Baum, Paul F. _Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation._ Durham: Duke University Press, 1958.

Bede. _De Arte Metrica._ Translated and with an Introduction by Ruby Davis. Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1925.

_____. _De Schematibus et Tropibus,_ in _Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus._ Ed. J. P. Migne. Vol. 90. Turnhout, Belgium: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici, 1844-64.

_____. _A History of the English Church and People._ Translated by Leo Scherley-Price. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968.

_____. "Praefatio," in _Esdram et Nehemiam Prophetas Allegorica Expositio,_ in _Patrologiae Latinae Cursus Completus._ Ed. J. P. Migne. Vol. 91. Turnhout, Belgium: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici, 1844-64.

Bennett, H. S. _Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century._ London: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Bennett, J. A. W. _Chaucer at Oxford and at Cambridge._ Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.

_____. "Chaucer, Dante, and Boccaccio." _Medium Aevum_ 22(1953), pp. 114-115.

Bergin, Thomas G. "On the Personae of the _Comedy,_" in _American Critical Essays on the Divine Comedy._ Ed. Robert J. Clements. New York: New York University Press, 1967. pp. 117-124.

Bethurum, Dorothy, ed. _Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature._ New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Bigg, Charles O. The Christian Platonists of Alexandria. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

Bloom, Edward A. "The Allegorical Principle," Journal of English Literary History 18(September, 1951), 163-190. Hereafter cited as ELH.

Bloomfield, Morton. "Chaucer's Sense of History." Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 51(July, 1952), 301-313. Hereafter cited as JEGP.

_____. "The Eighth Sphere: A Note on Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde V, 1809." Modern Language Review 53 (July 1958), 408-410. Hereafter cited as MLR.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. Boccaccio on Poetry: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of De Genealogia Deorum. Translated and with a Preface by Charles G. Osgood. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956.

_____. The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio. Translated by Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929.

Boethius. The Consolation of Philosophy. Translated by Richard Green. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962.

_____. The Theological Tractates. Translated by H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand. London: William Heinemann, 1918.

Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Brenner, Gary. "Narrative Structure in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde," in Annuale Medievale, 6 (1969), 5-18.

Brewer, Derek S. Chaucer. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1961.

Bronson, Bertrand H. "Personification Reconsidered." JEGP 14 (September 1957), 163-177.

Brooks, Cleanth, and Robert Penn Warren. An Approach to Literature. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952.

Bryant, Joseph. Hippolyta's View: Some Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961.

Carré, Meyrick H. Realists and Nominalists. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Book of Troilus and Criseyde. Ed.
and with a Preface by R. K. Root. Princeton: Princeton
University Press, 1926.

_____. Troilus and Criseyde, in The Works of Geoffrey
Chaucer. Ed. F. N. Robinson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
Co., 1957.

Cheston, G. K. Chaucer. London: Faber and Faber, 1932.

Cicero. Ad C. Herennium Libri; De Ratio Dicendi. Trans-
lated by Harry Caplan. London: William Heinemann,
1954.

_____. De Inventione. Translated by H. M. Hubell. Lon-
don: William Heinemann, 1949.

_____. De Officiis. Translated by Walter Miller.
London: William Heinemann, 1951.

_____. Orator. Translated by H. M. Hubell. London:
William Heinemann, 1939.

Clark, John W. "Dante and the Epilogue of Troilus," JEGP 50
(January 1951), 1-10.

Clement of Alexandria. Christ the Educator. Translated by
Simon P. Wood. Washington: Catholic University of
America Press, 1953.

Cochrane, C. N. Christianity and Classical Culture. Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1940.

Coghill, Nevill. "The Basis of Shakespearean Comedy."
Essays and Studies 3(1950), 1-28.

_____. The Poet Chaucer. London: Oxford University
Press, 1948.

Collingwood, R. G. The Idea of History. Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1946.

Cooper, Lane. Aristotle and the Art of Poetry. New York:
Harcourt, Brace & World, 1913.

Copleston, F. C. A History of Medieval Philosophy. New York:
Harper & Row, 1972.

Crane, R. S. The Languages of Criticism and the Structure
of Poetry. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953.

Curry, Walter C. "Destiny in Chaucer's Troilus." PMLA 45
(March 1930), 129-168.

Curtius, Ernst R. European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper and Row, 1953.

Daniélou, Jean. Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture. Translated by John Austin Baker. London: Dartman, Longman, and Todd, 1973.

_____. Les Figures du Christ dans l'Ancien Testament. Paris: Beauchesnes et Ses Fils, 1950.

Dante Alighieri. The Convivio. Translated by William Walrond Jackson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909.

_____. De Monarchia. Translated by Aurelia Henry. Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1904.

_____. "De Vulgari Eloquentia," in Literary Criticism of Dante Alighieri. Translated by Robert S. Haller. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

_____. The Divine Comedy. Translated by H. R. Huse. New York: Rinehart Press, 1954.

_____. "Letter to Can Grande della Scala," in Dante's Eleven Letters. Translated by Charles Sterrett Latham. Ed. George R. Carpenter. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1891.

Davies, R. T. Review of D. W. Robertson's Preface to Chaucer, in MLR 59 (April 1964), 255-257.

De Lorris, Guillaume and De Meun, Jean. The Romance of the Rose. Translated by Charles Dahlberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

De Lubac, Henri. Exégèse Mediévale: Les Quatre Sens de l'Ecriture. 2 vols. Paris: Aubier, 1959.

De Wulf, Maurice. History of Medieval Philosophy. Translated by Ernest C. Messenger. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926.

_____. Philosophy and Civilization in the Middle Ages. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1922.

Donahue, Charles S. "Summation: Patristic Exegesis," in Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature. Ed. Dorothy Bethurum. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 61-82.

Donaldson, E. T. "The Ending of Chaucer's _Troilus_," in _Early English and Norse Studies_. Ed. Arthur Brown and Peter Foote. London: Methuen, 1963.

_____. "Troilus and Criseyde," in _Chaucer's Poetry: An Anthology for the Modern Reader_. New York: Ronald Press, 1958.

_____. "Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature: The Opposition," in _Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature_. Ed. Dorothy Bethurum. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960. pp. 1-27.

Dronke, Peter. "The Conclusion of _Troilus and Criseyde_." _Medium Aevum_ 33(1964), 47-88.

Dryden, John. "Preface to the Fables," in _The Best of Dryden_. Ed. Louis I. Bredvold. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1933.

Dunbar, Helen F. _Symbolism in Medieval Thought and Its Consummation in The Divine Comedy_. New York: Russell and Russell, 1861.

Eusebius. _The Ecclesiastical History_. Translated by Kirsopp Lake. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1926.

Everett, Dorothy. "Troilus and Criseyde," in _Essays on Middle English Literature_. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959. pp. 115-138.

Faral, Edmond. _Les Arts Poetiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siecles; Recherches et Documents sur la Technique Litteraire du Moyen Age_. Paris: H. Champion, 1962.

Fergusson, Francis. _Dante's Drama of the Mind: A Modern Reading of the Purgatorio_. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.

Forster, Norman. _Aspects of the Novel_. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1927.

Fowler, David C. Review of D. W. Robertson's _Preface to Chaucer_," in _MLQ_ 25 (March 1961), 117-120.

Frank, Robert W. "The Art of Reading Medieval Personification-Allegory." _ELH_ 20 (December 1953), 237-249.

Frye, Northrop. "Specific Continuous Forms (Prose Fiction)," in _The Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism_. Ed. Robert Murray Davis. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Fulgentius, Fabius Planciades. "The Mythologies," in Ful-
      gentius the Mythographer. Translated by Leslie George
      Whitbread. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971.

Gallo, Ernest. The Poetria Nova and Its Sources in Early
      Rhetorical Doctrine. The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

Geffchen, Joseph P. "Allegory, Allegorical Interpretation."
      Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Ed. James Hastings,
      13 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

Geoffrey of Vinsauf. Documentum de Modo et Arte Dictandi
      et Versificandi. Translated by Roger P. Parr. Mil-
      waukee: Marquette University Press, 1968.

_____. "The New Poetics," in Three Medieval Rhetorical
      Arts. Ed. James J. Murphy. Berkeley: University of
      California Press, 1971.

Getty, Agnes K. "The Medieval-Modern Conflict in Chaucer's
      Poetry." PMLA 47 (June 1932), 390-91.

Gilbert, Allan H. Dante and His Comedy. New York: New
      York University Press, 1963.

Gill, Sister Anne Barbara. Paradoxical Patterns in Chaucer's
      Troilus: An Explanation of the Palinode. Washington:
      Catholic University of America Press, 1960.

Gillie, Christopher. Character in English Literature. New
      York: Barnes & Noble, 1965.

Gilson, Etienne. Dante the Philosopher. Translated by David
      More. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1949.

_____. A History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle
      Ages. New York: Random House, 1955.

_____. The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy. Translated by
      A. H. C. Downer. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1940.

Goffin, R. C. "Chaucer and Elocution." Medium Aevum 4
      (October 1935), 127-42.

Goldstein, Harvey D. "Mimesis and Catharsis Re-examined."
      Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 24 (Summer 1966),
      566-77.

Gordon, R. K. The Story of Troilus. London: J. M. Dent
      and Co., 1934.

Grant, Mary A. The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1924.

Grant, R. M. Gnosticism and Early Christianity. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Greene, Richard H. "Alan of Lille's De Planctu Naturae." Speculum 31 (October 1956), 649-674.

_____. "Dante's 'Allegory of Poets' and the Medieval Theory of Poetic Fiction." Comparative Literature 9 (Spring 1957), 118-128. Hereafter cited as CL.

St. Gregory of Nyssa. "On the Soul and Resurrection." Ascetical Works. Translated by Virginia Woods Callahan. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1967.

Grube, G. M. A. Aristotle on Poetry and Style. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958.

_____. Plato's Thought. London: Methuen and Co., 1935.

Hackforth, R. Plato's Phaedrus. Cambridge: University Press, 1952.

Hall, Robert William. Plato and the Individual. The Hague: Martinus Nizhoff, 1963.

Hamilton, Marie P. "Notes on Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," PMLA 47 (June 1932), 403-409.

Hardie, W. F. R. Aristotle's Ethical Theory. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

Harnack, Adolph. History of Dogma. Translated by Neil Buchanan. 6 vols. New York: Russell and Russell, 1958.

Harris, William Torrey. The Spiritual Sense of Dante's Divine Comedy. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896.

Harrison, Benjamin S. "Medieval Rhetoric in the Book of the Duchess." PMLA 49 (June 1934), 428-42.

Haselmayer, Louis A. "The Portraits in Troilus and Criseyde. Philological Quarterly 17 (April 1938), 220-23.

Haskins, C. H. The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927.

Hatch, Edwin. The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church. London: William Norgate, 1890.

Heer, Friedrich. The Intellectual History of Europe. Translated by Jonathan Steinberg. New York: World Publishing Co., 1966.

Hollander, Robert. Allegory in Dante's Commedia. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

The Holy Bible: Douay Version. Baltimore: John Murphy Co., 1914.

Homer. The Odyssey. Translated by S. H. Butcher and A. Lang. New York: Modern Library, 1967.

Horace. Satires. Epistles. Ars Poetica. Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough. London: William Heinemann, 1936.

Howard, Donald R. "Flying through Space: Chaucer and Milton," in Milton and the Line of Vision. Ed. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975, pp. 3-24.

_____. "Renaissance World-Alienation," in The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason. Ed. Robert S. Kinsman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Hugh of St. Victor. The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor. Translated and with an Introduction by Jerome Taylor. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.

Huppé, Bernard F. and Robertson, D. W., Jr. Fryt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Ireneaus. Five Books Against Heresies. Translated by John Keble. London: James Parker and Co., 1872.

Jaeger, Werner. Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development. Translated by Richard Robinson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934.

St. Jerome. "Against Rufinus," in Dogmatic and Polemical Works. Translated by John N. Hritzu. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965.

John of Salisbury. <u>Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints</u>
<u>of Philosophers: Being a Translation of the First,</u>
<u>Second and Third Books and Selections from the Seventh</u>
<u>and Eighth Books of the Policraticus of John of Salis-</u>
<u>bury.</u> Translated by Joseph B. Pike. Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press, 1938.

St. John Chrysostome. <u>Commentary on St. John the Apostle</u>
<u>and Evangelist.</u> Translated by Sister Thomas Aquinas
Goggin. 2 vols. New York: Fathers of the Church, 1960.

Jordan, Robert M. <u>Chaucer and the Shape of Creation.</u> Cam-
bridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Kaske, Robert E. "Patristic Exegesis: The Defense," in
<u>Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature.</u> Ed. Dorothy
Bethurum. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960,
pp. 27-60.

Kean, P. M. "Chaucer's Dealings with a Stanza of 'Il Filo-
strato' and The Epilogue of <u>Troilus and Criseyde.</u>"
<u>Medium Aevum</u> 33(1964), 36-147.

Ker, W. P. <u>Epic and Romance.</u> New York: Dover Publications,
1896.

Kernan, Alvin B. <u>Character and Conflict: An Introduction</u>
<u>to Drama.</u> New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1963.

Kittredge, G. L. <u>Chaucer and His Poetry.</u> Cambridge: Har-
vard University Press, 1915.

Klubertanz, G. P. <u>The Philosophy of Human Nature.</u> New York:
Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953.

Koonce, B. G. <u>Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism</u>
<u>in the House of Fame.</u> Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1966.

Koretsky, Allen C. "Chaucer's Use of Rhetoric in <u>Troilus and</u>
<u>Criseyde.</u> Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto,
1967.

Lawlor, John. Review of D. W. Robertson's <u>Preface to</u>
<u>Chaucer,</u> in <u>Review of English Studies</u> 15 (November 1964),
415-418. Hereafter cited as <u>RES</u>.

Lewis, C. S. <u>Allegory of Love.</u> London: Oxford University
Press, 1936.

Lounsbury, T. R. <u>Studies in Chaucer.</u> 2 vols. New York:
Harper and Brothers, 1892.

Lowes, John L. Geoffrey Chaucer and the Development of His Genius. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1934.

_____. "Chaucer and Dante." Modern Philology 14 (April 1917), 705-735. Hereafter cited as MP.

Lubbock, Percy. The Craft of Fiction. New York: Viking Press, 1957.

McCall, John. "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's Troilus." ELH 29 (March 1962), 263-275.

McCarthy, Mary. "Characters in Fiction," in On the Contrary. London: William Heinemann, 1962, pp. 241-289.

McKeon, Richard. "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity," MP 34 (August 1936), 1-35.

Macrobius. Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Translated and with an Introduction by William Harris Stahl. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.

_____. Saturnalia. Translated by Percival Vaughn Davies. New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.

Manly, John M. "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," in Chaucer Criticism. Vol. I. The Canterbury Tales. Ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1960.

_____. Some New Light on Chaucer. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1926.

Martianus Capella. The Fifth Book (De Rhetorica) of the De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et de Septem Artibus Liberalibus. Translated by Lou Conklin. Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1928.

_____. "The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella." Translated and introduced by William Harris Stahl, with a study of the allegory and the verbal disciplines by Richard Johnson with E. L. Burge in Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

Marty, Martin E. A Short History of Christianity. New York: Meridian Books, 1959.

Matthew of Vendome. Ars Versificatoria. Translated by Aubrey E. Galyon. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Iowa, 1970.

Mayo, Robert D. "The Trojan Background of the Troilus."
ELH 9 (December 1942), 245-256.

Meech, Sanford B. Design in Chaucer's Troilus. Syracuse:
Syracuse University Press, 1959.

Merton, Thomas. Life and Holiness. New York: Image Books,
1964.

Milo, Ronald D. Aristotle on Practical Knowledge and Weak-
ness of the Will. Paris: Mouton, 1966.

Mizener, Arthur. "Character and Action in the Case of Cri-
seyde." PMLA 54 (March 1939), 65-79.

Moore, Edward. Studies in Dante: Second Series. Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1899.

More, Paul Elmer. The Religion of Plato, in The Greek Tradition.
Vol. 1. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1921.

Mure, G. R. G. Aristotle. New York: Oxford University
Press, 1964.

Murphy, James J. "The Arts of Discourse; 1050-1400."
Medieval Studies 23(1961), 194-205.

_____. "The Earliest Teaching of Rhetoric at Oxford."
Speech Monograms 27(1966), 345-347.

_____. "John Gower's Confessio Amantis and the First
Discussion of Rhetoric in the English Language."
Philological Quarterly, 41 (April 1962), 401-411.

_____. "A New Look at Chaucer and the Rhetoricians."
RES 15 (February 1964), 1-20.

_____. "Rhetoric at Fourteenth-Century Oxford." Medium
Aevum 34(1965), 1-20.

Musa, Mark. Advent at the Gates: Dante's Comedy. Bloom-
ington: Indiana University Press, 1974.

Muscatine, Charles. Chaucer and the French Tradition.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.

Nagarajan, S. "The Conclusion to Chaucer's Troilus." Essays
in Criticism 13 (January 1963), 1-8.

Norton-Smith, John. Geoffrey Chaucer. London: Routledge
and Kegan Paul, 1974.

Olson, Elder. *Aristotle's Poetics and English Literature.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Origen. *On First Principles.* Translated by G. W. Butterworth with an Introduction by Henri de Lubac. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Owen, Charles. "Chaucer's Revision of *Troilus and Criseyde.*" *MP* 55 (August 1957), 1-5.

Owst, G. R. *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933.

Oxford Annotated Bible. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism.* Latrobe: Archabbey Press, 1951.

Parr, Roger P. "The Rhetorical Analysis of Chaucer's Narrative Technique." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1956.

Patch, Howard R. *On Rereading Chaucer.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.

_____. "Troilus on Determinism." *Speculum* 6 (April 1931), 225-243.

Payne, Robert O. *The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.

_____. Review: D. W. Robertson's Preface to Chaucer. *CL* 15 (Summer 1963), 269-271.

Pelikan, Taroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine.* 2 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.

Philo Judeaus. *Philo on the Cherubim.* Translated by F. A. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. 2 vols. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929.

_____. *Questions and Answers on Exodus.* Translated by Ralph Marcus. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Plato. *Laches. Protagoras. Meno. Euthydemus.* Translated by W. R. M. Lamb. London: William Heinemann, 1914.

_____. *Laws.* Translated by R. G. Bury. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1926.

Plato. _Phaedo_. Translated by F. Church. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, Inc., 1951.

_____. _Phaedrus_. Translated by W. C. Helmbold and W. G. Rabinowitz. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956.

_____. _Philebus_. Translated by Harold N. Fowler. London: William Heinemann and Sons, 1914.

_____. _The Republic_. Translated by Benjamin F. Jowett. New York: Random House, 1941.

_____. _Timaeus_. Translated by R. G. Bury. London: William Heinemann, 1929.

Polybius. _The Histories_. Translated by W. R. Paton. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1922.

Pratt, Robert A. "Chaucer and Boccaccio," _Times Literary Supplement_ (February 28, 1935), p. 124.

_____. "Chaucer and the Hand That Fed Him." _Speculum_ 41 (October 1966), 619-42.

_____. "Chaucer and the Visconti Libraries." _ELH_ 6 (September 1939), 191-99.

_____. "Chaucer's Use of the Teseida." _PMLA_ 62 (September 1947), 598-621.

Price, T. R. "Troilus and Criseyde: A Study in Chaucer's Narrative Construction." _PMLA_ 2(1896), 307-322.

Quintillian. _Institutio Oratoria_. Translated by H. E. Butler. 2 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1933.

Reade, W. H. V. _Dante's Vision of History_. Annual Italian lecture, 14 June, 1939.

Rickert, Edith. "Chaucer at School." _MP_ 29 (February 1932), 258-270.

Robbins, E. E. "Arithmetic in Philo Judeaus." _Classical Philology_ 26 (October 1931), 345-361.

Robertson, D. W. _A Preface to Chaucer_. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962.

_____. "Some Medieval Literary Terminology." _Studies in Philology_ 48 (July 1951), 669-692.

Robinson, Ian. Chaucer and the English Tradition. Cambridge: University Press, 1972.

Ross, W. D. Aristotle. London: Methuen & Co., 1930.

Ruggiers, Paul G. "The Italian Influence on Chaucer," in Companion to Chaucer Studies. Ed. Beryl Rowland. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Salter, Elizabeth. "Troilus and Criseyde: A Reconstruction," in Patterns of Love and Courtesy. Ed. John Lawlor. London: Edward Arnold, 1966, pp. 86-106.

Sams, Henry W. "The Dual Time-Scheme in Chaucer's Troilus," in Chaucer Criticism. Vol. II:180-185. Eds. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961.

Sayers, Dorothy. Introductory Papers on Dante. New York: Harper and Row, 1959.

Schless, Howard D. "Chaucer and Dante," in Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1958-59. Ed. Dorothy Bethurum. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, pp 134-154.

Scholes, Robert and Kellogg, Robert. The Nature of Narrative. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Sedgewick, Henry Dwight. Dante. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920.

Seznec, Jean. The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition; Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art. New York: Harper and Row, 1953.

Shapiro, Marianne. Woman Earthly and Divine in the Comedy of Dante. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975.

Shorey, Paul. Platonism: Ancient and Modern. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938.

Shotwell, James T. An Introduction to the History of History. New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.

Sider, Robert Dick. Ancient Rhetoric and the Art of Tertullian. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Singleton, Charles. "Dante's Allegory." Speculum 25 (January 1950), 78-86.

Singleton, Charles. <u>Dante Studies</u>. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

_____. "The Irreducible Dove." <u>CL</u> 9 (Spring 1957), 129-135.

Smalley, Beryl. <u>English Friars and Antiquity in The Early Fourteenth Century</u>. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961.

_____. <u>The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages</u>. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964.

Smyser, H. M. "The Domestic Background of Troilus and Criseyde." <u>Speculum</u> 31 (April 1956), 297-315.

Spitzer, Leo. "The Farcical Elements in 'Inferno' Cantos XXI-XXIII," in <u>Essays on Dante</u>. Ed. Mark Musa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.

Tacitus. <u>The Annals of Tacitus</u>. Ed. Henry Furneaux. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896.

_____. <u>The Histories and the Annals</u>. Translated by Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson. 3 vols. London: William Heinemann, 1937.

Tatlock, J. S. P. "Chaucer and Dante," <u>MP</u> 3 (January 1906), 307-372.

_____. <u>The Mind and Art of Chaucer</u>. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950.

_____. <u>The Scene of the Franklin Revisited</u>. Chaucer Society, Second Series, 1951.

Taylor, A. B. <u>An Introduction to Medieval Romance</u>. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1930.

Taylor, A. E. <u>Aristotle</u>. London: T. C. and E. C. Jack, Ltd., 1919.

_____. <u>Plato: The Man and His Work</u>. London: Methuen & Co., 1949.

_____. <u>Platonism</u>. New York: Longman's Green and Co., 1927.

Taylor, Houghton W. "Particular Character: An Early Phase of a Literary Evolution." <u>PMLA</u> 60 (March 1945), 161-174.

Teagar, Florence W. "Chaucer's Eagle and the Rhetorical
    Colors." PMLA 47 (June 1932), 410-418.

Teggart, Frederick J. Theory of History. New Haven: Yale
    University Press, 1925.

Tertullian. "Adversus Marcionem," as retold by John, Bishop
    of Lincoln in The Ecclesiastical History of the Second
    and Third Centuries Illustrated from the Writings of
    Tertullian. London: Francis and John Rivington, 1845.

_____. "On the Soul," in Tertullian: Apologetical Works
    and Minucius Felix: Octavius. Translated by Rudolph
    Arbesmann, O.S.A., Sister Emily Joseph Daly, C.S.J.,
    and Edwin A. Quain, S.J. Washington: Catholic Univer-
    sity of America Press, 1962.

St. Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologica. Translated by Fathers
    of the English Dominican Province. 2 vols. New York:
    Benziger, 1947.

_____. "Summa Theologica," in Introduction to St. Thomas
    Aquinas. Ed. Anton C. Pegis. New York: Modern Library,
    1948.

_____. Summa Contra Gentiles. Translated by English
    Dominican Fathers. 2 vols. New York: Benziger, 1924.

Thomas, Mary Edith. Medieval Skepticism and Chaucer. New
    York: Cooper Square, 1971.

Thompson, James V. A History of Historical Writing. 2 vols.
    New York: MacMillan Co., 1942.

Toynbee, Paget. Dante Studies. Oxford: Clarendon Press,
    1921.

Tuveson, Ernest Lee. Milennium and Utopia. Gloucester:
    Peter Smith, 1942.

Virgil. The Aeneid. Translated by C. Day Lewis. New York:
    Doubleday and Co., 1952.

Ward, Adolphus William. Chaucer. London: MacMillan, 1907.

Wellek, René. "Auerbach's Special Realism " Kenyon Review 16
    (1954), 299-307.

_____. "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship,"
    in Concepts of Criticism. New Haven: Yale University
    Press, 1969.

Wetherbee, Winthrop.   Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth
     Century: The Literary Influence of the School of
     Chartres.   Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Wilkins, Ernest Hatch.   Dante: Poet and Apostle.   Chicago:
     University of Chicago Press, 1921.

Wimsatt, James I.   Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Struc-
     ture in Middle English Literature.   New York: Pegasus,
     1970.

_____.   Chaucer and the French Love Poets.   Chapel Hill:
     University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Wimsatt, W. K., Jr.   The Verbal Icon.   Lexington: Univer-
     sity of Kentucky Press, 1967.

Wrenn, C. L.   Review of D. W. Robertson's Preface to Chau-
     cer.   JEGP 62 (October 1963), 794-801.

Young, Karl.   "Chaucer and Geoffrey of Vinsauf."   MP 41
     (February 1944), 172-182.