The Tensional Nature of John Fowles: Existentialist and Moralist

by

Peter Michael Borich ©

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Borich, Peter M.

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Thesis directed by Professor Frederick M. Holmes, Department of English, Lakehead University

The fiction of John Fowles is existential and moral. The primary function of the thesis is to examine the ways in which it is so. The first question the thesis explores is the relationship between the moral nature of the fictions and modern existentialism. Thinking about this question has traditionally revolved around the nature of freedom. Since Fowles's fiction and existentialism both promote freedom, the moral nature of the fiction is often said to consist in always choosing more and better freedom. But Fowles's freedom is a relative freedom. It is a freedom that, paradoxically, places extreme limitations upon individuals. It is my contention that the alliance between modern existentialism and Fowles's moralism is, in many ways, untenable.

The thesis proposes that we look for a new model and finds that model in the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus. In the thinking of Heraclitus we find not only a meaningful relationship between the existential and the moral, but a paradigm that can be seen to operate in the fictions. In order to illustrate my thesis, I will provide detailed discussions of The Collector, The Magus, and "The Ebony Tower."

All Fowles's protagonists initiate a journey which, corresponding to the two impulses that inform them, the existential and the moral, has two movements: the first is an inward movement; the second is a movement outward. The inward movement--in existentialist terms, the

pursuit of selfhood, in Jungian terms, individuation--is necessary before the protagonist can initiate the second stage. The second movement of the protagonist is a movement outward, a movement into community. Fowles's successful protagonists make both movements; the unsuccessful protagonists fail to initiate the first movement, and therefore do not have the insight to move beyond themselves.

Once the protagonists are aware of both impulses, the existential and moral, they become aware that this new freedom must be excercised responsibly. They must learn to balance the self with the other. This is what John Fowles suggests we must all achieve: we must learn to create a living balance between self and society.

For my parents: extraordinary people.

Who am I?

What are my duties to myself?

What are my duties towards others?

To what extent, given my capacities, do I fufill

and balance these conflicting extremes?

John Fowles, The Aristos

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Introduction

The present study has grown from the belief that John Fowles is, above all else, a moral artist. While this view is not unfamiliar in Fowles criticism, it seems to me that there have been very few studies that sufficiently explain the way in which his fiction is moral. The reasons for this state of affairs are many, but I believe one important reason is the inordinate amount of critical discussion devoted to his existential tendencies. In a century in which the meaning and significance of the word "moral"--in art as in other areas--has become associated with embarrassment and a quaint naïveté, and in which the intellectual milieu has been commanded by those *soi-disant* existentialists from the post-war years whose reforming cry was freedom, freedom and ever more freedom, it is not surprising that Fowles should have been considered so overwhelmingly from this one vantage.

One goal of this thesis is to show the unique way in which the fictions are moral. By moral, however, I do not mean to imply that Fowles is moral in a narrow or prescriptive way. Instead, what we find reflected in his fiction is a broad concern with what constitutes a good life and satisfying relationships amongst people.

Even so, Fowles's philosophical maturation did coincide with post-war existentialism, and any study that attempts seriously to discuss his influences must in some manner come to terms with this influence. My particular impression is that Fowles's debt to modern existentialism should be seen as more emotional than doctrinal. My reason for thinking so is this: while Fowles does draw upon existentialist themes as they were articulated around the middle of this century, his solutions to the problems they raised are, in significant ways, different from those offered

by many of this century's existentialist philosophers. Rather, Fowles draws his solutions to the problems raised by modern existentialism by harking back to an ancient pre-Socratic thinker, Heraclitus of Ephesus. This move is not so strange as it at first appears, especially when we consider that behind this century's most distinguished existentialist voices, that is, behind the voices of Soren Kierkegarrd, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre, is the seminal voice of Heraclitus himself. This, then, is another goal of this thesis: to re-evaluate the influence of Heraclitus.

As I have said, the view that Fowles is a moral writer is not entirely unfamiliar. In fact, some may consider it to be so evident that they will greet this statement with the same benevolently amused smile reserved for the man who claims, prophet-like, that the sun will rise tomorrow. But the question of the matter is, if this view is in fact so embarrassingly evident, why-- in either the extant criticism or in the continual and what can only be called voluminous flow of criticism from the academy--is it so proportionately under-represented?

I believe that part of the reason for this state of affairs rests with Fowles himself. As have few other authors in recent times, Fowles has engaged himself in the critical discussion of his own work to a surprising degree. In fact, the only thing more surprising is the extent to which he has been responsible for the direction of much of that criticism. Throughout his publishing career he has given interviews and written prefaces and articles that have encouraged critics to see in his work myriad influences: among these, Jungian and Freudian psychology, biography, all manner of post-modern critical theories, and most importantly, contemporary existentialism. While much of this direction

has been helpful, other comments--particularly his comments leading in the direction of Sartre--have only succeeded in running critics too far down one path. Part of the blame must rest with critics themselves. While there can be little doubt that Sartre figures into Fowles's beliefs, it should have been only too evident that much of Sartre's thinking is antithetical to a great deal of Fowles's thought. This issue has been inadequately understood, and, I believe, there is a real need to re-evaluate the earliest critical assumptions. In other words, we need to ask ourselves whether we have Fowles right. A look at the criticism surrounding the publication of Fowles's first novel will serve to illustrate the need to ask this question.

It is now a notorious part of the Fowlesian critical legend that The Collector was initially so little understood that it was first reviewed as a thriller, and not, according to some, as an exceedingly good one at that. Although most of the "serious" critics saw that there was more to the novel, their humanistic sensibilities were nonetheless offended by what they saw as Fowles "crypto-fascism" in his treatment of Clegg and Miranda.

In the oft quoted preface to the 1968 edition of The Aristos, Fowles had to defend himself from the charge of elitism by explaining--as he would have to do often--what it was he was trying to do in his fiction. "The principal theme in this book," he said, "as also in The Collector--has been similarly misunderstood. In essence it comes from a Greek philosopher, Heraclitus"(9). Fowles went on to explain that, indeed, the theme of The Collector was about the differences--moral and intellectual and not, as was supposed, class differences--between a thinking Few and an unthinking Many. But it was not, as so many thought, a fascist

sentiment. The fact that the difference between the Few and the Many is "biologically irrefutable," does not, Fowles said, warrant the "jump from that to the conclusion that mankind can be split into two clearly defined groups, a Few that is excellent and a Many that is despicable." Rather, he said, "[t]he gradations are infinite; and if you carry no other idea away from this book I hope you will understand what I mean when I say that the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals" (9-10, the emphasis is original). With this we might have supposed that the critical train would realign itself and, regarding this issue, run smoothly thereafter.

In many ways, criticism has fared better since that time, and there have been many fine discussions. There can be no question that we now have a much better understanding of Fowles's work than we did in those early days, when criticism seemed always to be one step behind the magus himself. But today, when criticism has traversed a long road and become more sophisticated, and when we find ourselves enmeshed in the sticky nets of semiotics, might we not ask the basic question again? How far have we got Fowles right?

It is my suggestion that in fact we have not heeded the advice given us by Fowles in the preface to The Aristos. This is evident in that, in spite of Fowles's express mention of Heraclitus as the source of much of his thinking, and in spite of his caveat that we read his distinction between the Few and the Many in the proper spirit, we still have had no major discussion that sufficiently relates Heraclitus to Fowles. This has led to a state of affairs that has located Fowles's existential impulse almost exclusively in contemporary existentialism, and in doing so, has not provided sufficient context in which to understand Fowles's very

strong moral impulse. Another consequence is that even today, we have no clear expression of the way the Few and the Many is played out in the fiction.

As the title of this study suggests, I feel that in the fiction of John Fowles there is an inherent tension: on the one hand, there is his overt existentialism; on the other, his morality, or what I will hereafter call his moral impulse. These two impulses, existential and moral, and the tension between them, are at the centre of almost all Fowles's fiction, and will be seen as the foremost dynamic informing the three fictions that I have chosen to examine: The Collector , The Magus , and "The Ebony Tower." While consideration of the limitations of space has restricted the number of fictions I can examine, I believe this approach would also be valid for other fictions by Fowles. The selection of the above three fictions, however, was far more within my power to determine, and there was a rationale behind their choosing.

For readers familiar with Fowles's fictions, my choice of The Magus in light of my thesis should be clear enough. The long and, for Nicholas, tortuous path to enlightenment has seemingly been undertaken to bring him to one simple understanding: that he should find in Alison all he needs. That this is in many ways a moral understanding should not, I think, raise too many critical eyebrows. What may raise a few eyebrows is my decision to examine The Collector and "The Ebony Tower" from the same paradigm. Both fictions are generally seen to be anomalies, especially from the perspective of protagonists who successfully integrate and act upon their newly-acquired insight. The full explanation of how these fictions do so must remain for the chapters to explore, except to say here that the fact that I felt these fictions conformed

to the paradigm, and that this fact seemed to be almost completely unrepresented in the criticism, accounted for at least part of my motivation to include them in this study.

While it is true that in almost every story Fowles has written there is the movement of the protagonist into a new awareness of the self, what has not been equally expressed is that besides this inward movement, there is a movement outward: there is in the protagonist the growing understanding of the need to go beyond the self. In almost all of Fowles's fiction there is this bi-directional movement: protagonists first inwardly learning the responsibilities to the self, and then, from this, learning the responsibilities beyond the self; first the existential impulse toward selfhood, then the moral impulse toward society. I see this as Fowles's tensional nature: the tension between living as a fully authentic and responsible individual and balancing that individuality with one's responsibility to the community. For Fowles, being human, living authentically, is the constant creative struggle to balance and harmonize these two impulses. It is the outward movement that, while never discussed as such, is almost certainly responsible for what critics have called Fowles's moral outlook. In the parable of Plato's cave, just as those prisoners who have freed themselves (and are thus able to see more) must then descend back into the cave in order to share their knowledge with those who are still chained to their illusions, so too Fowles's characters, having first been freed from their own illusions, must expend the moral effort to reconnect with their community. In the fictions that I discuss, this outward movement into community is most often seen as an expression of love. In The Collector , Miranda feels the need to love G.P. and the need to help Clegg, in The Magus, Nicholas feels the

need to connect with Alison, and David of "The Ebony Tower" feels the need to honour the love for his wife.

The critic William Palmer was early aware of the moral impulse in Fowles's fiction. In his study The Fiction of John Fowles, he claims that in each of the novels "[t]he liberation of the self can only be accomplished by means of moral, human action in the outer world" (80). I would add to this one word: the full liberation of the self, for it can be argued that all Fowles's characters have achieved some measure of self-knowledge or liberation before they look outward; without this initial insight, they would not have perceived the need to get beyond the self. In ignoring the relationship between the inner and outer dramas, Palmer does not sufficiently account for the moral impulse.

Another critic who has written about Fowles and who has placed him within the moral tradition is John Gardner. In his book On Moral Fiction, Gardner sees the capacity to love as a yard-stick for moral art. "Great art," he says, "celebrates life's potential, offering a vision unmistakably and unsentimentally rooted in love" (83). He continues a little further on. "In art, morality and love are inextricably bound: we affirm what is good--for the characters in particular and for humanity in general--because we care" (84). It is this capacity to love that Gardner sees in Fowles's fiction. He quotes Fowles in Daniel Martin : "No true compassion without will, no true will without compassion" (84).

If Fowles has been praised by some for his serious moral approach, others have felt his didacticism to be a flaw. Bruce Bawer, in an article in the late 1980's, "John Fowles and his Big Ideas", offers this judgement:

> If at times, then, his love of ideas seems an asset, at other times--namely, when he allows it to undermine his narrative, and to obscure his very considerable gifts for language and storytelling and his innate sense of human character--his philosophical promiscuity seems by far his greatest liability. (22)

While Bawer may quibble as to the correct balance, he must surely admit that the "innate sense of human character" that we sense in all of Fowles's novels has a very great deal to do with his deep commitment to the ideas that are central to and that motivate his characters' lives. This seriousness of the writer's intention was made explicit by Fowles in an interview with Roy Newquist.

> All good books are distilled experience. . . . I think the serious writer has to have his view of the purpose of literature clear. I don't see that you can write seriously without having a philosophy of both life and literature to back you. Some philosophy of life is a property of all better writers. (220)

Clearly, Fowles defends the need to write serious, didactic (and by this I interpret moral) fiction. This is as close as Fowles gets to championing the moral impulse outright. However, we need not look for direct statements from the author himself; we need only look to the fiction to find a clear and unambiguous purpose.

In a way, it is not surprising that few studies have attempted to deal with Fowles's moral impulse; for, while even the most casual acquaintance with the fiction yields unmistakenly the sense of a broader moral purpose, there remains the difficult issue of the nature of this morality, and its relation to his existentialism. If we accept the existential foundation of much of Fowles's thought, as indeed we must, we must also accept that its essential nature inheres in a thoroughgoing relativism. "Existentialism," as Fowles says in The Aristos, "is a theory of

relativity among theories of absolute truth" (123). But what kind of a world does a philosophic relativism create, and upon what do the values it holds to--providing it holds to some values--rest?

Aside from the lack of full explication of the relationship between the existential and the moral, there has existed another problem with the extant criticism. Ever since those earliest full-length studies that identified Fowles's existential influences, there has been what one must suppose is a silent consensus that nothing more need be said. Yet there has been up to this point no overt recognition of the irreconcilability between some of the claimed existential influences, most notably Sartre, and the very strong moral current evident in the fictions.

Fowles's existential impulse has been more widely written on, and, I suspect, ostensibly better understood than his moral impulse. Once again William Palmer was the earliest critic to have offered a protracted discussion of the existential influence. In his study, Palmer identifies Fowles's influences as deriving primarily from Sartre and Dostoyevsky. Two years later, in 1978, another full-length study appeared, Peter Wolfe's John Fowles: Magus and Moralist. Like Palmer, Wolfe too sees contemporary existentialism as the primary influence on Fowles, particularly the Sartrean school of existentialism. It was not until a few years later, with James Baker's article, "Fowles and the Struggle of the English *Aristoi*," that a critic tempered the enthusiasm to align Fowles with one particular voice in contemporary existentialism. "We have decided it is valid to call him an existentialist," said Baker. "While this designation does have a kind of functional accuracy in describing his philosophical posture, it is misleading if we take it to mean perfect

alignment with or dependence upon any one school in that tradition" (164).

This is not to say that Sartre's influence is not present in the fiction. Fowles does echo Sartre in some ways, particularly on the theme of freedom. Fowles himself, moreover, has encouraged us to think along these lines. But as Baker implies, existentialism has many voices. This is Kurt Reinhardt's point as well when, in The Existentialist Revolt, he reminds us that "existentialism" is merely a new name applied to a kind of thinking that has been evident at various times throughout the long history of philosophical thought (22). It is therefore a puzzling fact that no major critical discussion exists concerning the Heraclitean influence--that is, beyond the mere mention of Heraclitus as Fowles's source for the ideas of *hoi aristoi* and *hoi polloi*, the Few and the Many. It is still further puzzling when we remember that it is Fowles himself who, in The Aristos, pointed to Heraclitus as the seminal influence on many of the ideas contained in that book.

I contend that there is much to be gained by going back to Heraclitus to determine the full measure of his influence on Fowles. As mentioned above, one issue that will be reconciled--even if not fully understood as problematic at the present--is the over-insistence on Fowles's relationship to contemporary existentialism, in particular, that of Sartre. By viewing Heraclitus in a "proto-existentialist" light, we will see that Fowles derives much more than the simple and oft-noted notion of the Few and the Many. We will see in Heraclitus's thinking the origin of many of Fowles's most central ideas: the conception of a universe ruled by chance, or hazard; ideas about counter-supporting and counter-poles; the importance of justice and equality; and the necessity to balance and

harmonize the whole. But most significantly, we will see that Heraclitus's thinking is existentialist in the truest sense: the human being is at the center of his philosophic quest. Thus, we will free ourselves from the over-insistence upon contemporary existentialism by locating the source and character of many of Fowles's existentialist ideas in Heraclitus.

Yet the present study goes further. What is unique is the identification and explication of Heraclitus's moral nature. In recovering this moral dimension in his thinking, we will see united in his thought the existential impulse and the moral impulse, and we will see that in him they are harmonized in a tensional unity. It is by looking more closely at Heraclitus that we will be able to see the way in which Fowles manages to be both an existentialist and a moralist.

We will not, however, see Fowles reproduce Heraclitean ideas slavishly. Though we will see that certain ideas in Fowles derive their essential character from Heraclitus, Fowles transmutes these ideas in order that they speak more clearly to a post-Darwinian world. Where we see both thinkers closest to each other is in their motive and method. Both Heraclitus and Fowles see humans beset by illusions that prevent them from leading richer lives, and both thinkers offer a pattern for living that will lead people to be more authentic and more humane.

The last issue that will be resolved--an issue perhaps small but equally unsounded--is the meaning behind an extraordinarily curious statement by Fowles in The Aristos . In that work Fowles says of his attitude to God: "I do not consider myself an atheist, yet this concept of 'God' and our necessary masterlessness obliges me to behave in all public matters as if I were" (28).

In its literal sense, atheism, from the Greek *atheos* , means "without God". What Fowles says then is that he is not "without God," but that outwardly, he must act as if he were. This raises two questions. Firstly, what can he mean by saying that he is not "without God" when part of The Aristos is a concerted effort to say that "God" does not exist; and secondly, why must he act as if he were "without God"? The answers to these questions only become obvious if we are aware of Fowles's Greek influence, and equally aware of the significance of such an influence. Heraclitus, living in a pre-Christian world, seeks to free his fellow citizens from a reliance upon the old Greek gods who prevent them from obtaining a consciousness of their own selfhood in relation to a larger cosmos. Fowles, living in a post-Christian world, seeks to do the same, only Fowles seeks to free his fellow citizens from a personal, Christian god. Yet in the same way that Heraclitus feels the need to acknowledge a purpose behind the cosmos, a purpose which he is both willing and unwilling to call by the name God (Fragment 32, Robinson), so too Fowles, although he must behave as though he were without "God," seems to imply that he believes in a purpose that he is both willing and unwilling to call God.

In recovering the existential, theological, and moral nature behind Heraclitus's thinking, we will be better able to understand both the existential and moral impulse in John Fowles's fiction. We will see that Heraclitus's philosophy preserves the spirit of individualism without losing the larger context in which increased individualism is made meaningful.

In a genuine sense, then, each fiction is a microcosm of the utopian adventure. How, via better individuals and better communities,

will we achieve a better world? A full reading and understanding of Fowles's fiction unmistakably reveals his broadest aim as educative, thus resembling that of history's greatest utopist, Plato--with this one all important difference. Where in the Republic Plato builds a better world upon the individual's knowledge of the absolute--the Platonic ideal--Fowles, beginning from the individual also, builds a better world from the foundation of existential relativity.

Finally, it is with some trepidation that anyone desiring to write upon John Fowles begins. Certainly the intellectualism that characterizes all Fowles's writing is demanding in its scope; but that must appear to the critic only as a challenge, not a menace. And certainly his avowed suspicion--if not dislike--of much effort that flows from the academy gives pause for thoughtful consideration. In the face of this, the critic must firmly believe his contribution valuable. But these concerns are not in themselves strong reasons to question the worth of the undertaking.

All critics, provided their aim be true and honest, attempt to explain the work of art before them. Their business is to increase the understanding in the reader of the work of art itself. However, and in a thought that Fowles might even like, in order to say something about anything implies that we do not say something about many other things; that is, our very way of thinking, of communicating, necessitates that we choose to say one from among a possible many things. In this sense all acts of explanation are limiting at the same time that they are liberating. As a writer and thinker who is acutely aware of any kind of circumscribing force, Fowles presents an obvious caution.

To make this clearer, let us look at Fowles's thoughts on mystery. As Fowles says in The Aristos , "Mystery, or unknowing, is energy. As soon as a mystery is explained, it ceases to be a source of energy. If we question deep enough there comes a point where answers, if answers could be given, would kill"(28). To borrow a metaphor from Fowles, if we as critics (collectors) see Fowles and his work (a butterfly) merely as something to be pinned-down, limited, and ultimately explained (killed), we diminish the power of the work while at the same time violating a basic teaching of its author.

My purpose in this thesis is surely not to destroy any mystery there may be in Fowles's thinking while in the very act of trying to account for it. Though it is true that mystery is energy, it is also true that something is gained--an energy or power--through de-mystification. And as any good seeker knows, answers inevitably lead to further questions and more mystery.

Chapter One: Pre-Socratic Parallels

Thinking well is the greatest excellence and wisdom:
to act and speak what is true, perceiving things according to their nature.

Thinking is shared by all.

Heraclitus, XXXII, XXXI

Before we can talk about the ways in which Fowles imports Heraclitus's thinking, we must first talk about Heraclitus. And before we can begin a discussion of the ideas and meaning of Heraclitus's thought, we need to talk about the tradition to which he is responding--and in the very act of that response--transforming.

As with all philosophical writing before Plato, the original text of Heraclitus is lost. What we know of Heraclitus--and for that matter all the pre-Socratic philosophers--has come to us through a great many intervening authors in the form of quotations, paraphrases and reports.* Thus, it is impossible to know with absolute certainty what he thought, for we cannot know how much of the original we possess or fail to possess.

Another issue is the reliability of those who have preserved his teachings. This issue has shown itself to be the greatest obstacle to Heraclitus's philosophy, for his doctrine has been altered according to the bias of those who cite him. Indeed, it has been the work of Heraclitean scholarship to separate the bias in previous sources and commentators from what genuinely can be said to be Heraclitus's own thought.

Still another obstacle, and this no doubt has contributed to the one above, is the highly paradoxical nature of Heraclitus's writing style. What follows from this is that Heraclitus's thinking is very difficult to penetrate. This is particularly the case if we should try to examine his thinking from too small a number of fragments. As Kathleen Freeman has observed:

> If then the original was difficult of interpretation to ancient readers, our own mutilated version is very much more so;

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* My understanding of pre-Socratic philosophy has been drawn from many Greek scholars, among them Kathleen Freeman, Charles Kahn, T. M. Robinson, and especially Werner Jaeger.

> this must be read and reread many times in order to obtain even a dim conception of the whole. (108)

Consequently, while it is possible to extract from the surviving *testimonia* views about specific areas of the thought, for example ideas about the the Few and the Many, and about the logos, in doing so we inevitably sacrifice the true nature of the thought, which is essentially organic and unified. As with all Greek thinking, it is best to approach Heraclitus by seeing the whole of his thought. It is therefore necessary--if we are to recover not only the existential and moral aspects of his thinking, but the true relation of *hoi aristoi* to the *hoi polloi* as well--that we place as much of his thinking as possible in the widest of contexts.

To that end, we must first situate Heraclitus in his own time, and see him as a bridge between two important traditions. The first of these is the older, popular tradition of wisdom represented by the poets and sages of the early sixth century (Kahn 12). It is from this tradition that Heraclitus derives his oracular style and, as we will shortly see, the moral conception behind the good man, or *hoi aristoi.* The other influence, without which the full fruition of his thinking could not have been possible, is that of the new scientific culture that was emerging around him. It was Heraclitus's special genius that he was able to unite these two traditions, and his ability to find unity in all things will be seen as central to all his thinking.

I will first explain the moral thinking present in the popular tradition, and in doing so I will discuss two Greek ideals. The first of these is the Greek ideal of *areté* , the ideal of human excellence held by the Greek citizen and preserved for us in the literature of the popular tradition.

As both Jaeger and Kahn state, the conception of *areté* appears first for us in the poetry of Homer. Both commentators point to the same work to elucidate this notion. In The Illiad (VI. 208), a father says to his son: "'Always be first and best, and ahead of everyone else'" (Kahn 12). As Kahn notes, this statement is striking in its unabashed call for individual preeminence (12). The ideal is most often realized by a warrior who achieves it through some combination of physical prowess, heroic valour and courage. Significantly, the ideal in its earliest stage is understood almost exclusively as something to be won through action. In other words, this conception of excellence lacks any notion of intellectual or moral excellence. According to Homeric *areté* , an action is judged wrong, shameful or foolish only if it leads to failure in the projects of the agent (12).

But, as with any Greek ideal, *areté* could not and did not .remain static over time. As the poets of a newer spirit emerged, newer ideas of what constituted human perfection required that the old notion of *areté* be enlarged, to include, along with nobility of action, nobility of mind (Jaeger, Theology 8). This is the spirit behind the ancient dictum, "be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds." In the widening of this ideal, we can see a distinction between "the 'competitive' excellences and other more 'quiet' or 'cooperative' virtues" (Kahn 13). In this newer notion of *areté* , there is what can be described as an opposition between between virtues of "achievement" and those of "restraint", or, variously, a tension between individual and social values (13).

The other Greek ideal we need to be aware of is *sophrosyne*. *Sophrosyne*, an ideal behind the utterances of the Seven Sages, had originally the meaning of "good sense" or "soundness of mind" (13). Just

as with the ideal of *areté* , it was originally understood in relation to practical action and was equally free from any moral considerations. Yet like *areté* , the meaning of *sophrosyne* became increasing enlarged, until a word that originally meant "good sense" came to mean something like "temperance" (13). This sense of restraint is evident in the famous aphorisms that have come to us from the Seven Sages: 'Know thyself', 'Nothing in excess', and 'measure is best' (13).

What is clear, then, is that there was a shift in the ideological notion of human excellence. Heraclitus's inheritance was this widening moral sense in human speech and human action, bequeathed him in the literature of the old popular tradition.

The other tradition that Heraclitus drew upon was the newly-emerging scientific culture. To appreciate this influence, we must look at those thinkers of Miletus who preceded Heraclitus and who ushered into Greek thought (and therefore Western thought) a method and spirit of critical inquiry that in many respects can be called scientific.

The three thinkers who comprise the anachronistically named "Milesian school" are Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes. It is with these thinkers that investigation into nature moves out of the stage where it is still encumbered by mythology into a more objective way of questioning based upon principles of reason alone. As Kahn has noted, their thinking ". . . is not so much a revolution <u>within</u> science as a revolution <u>into</u> science. . ." (16). It was these early Milesians who, through ever-refined geometric models, empirical observations and measurements, and the notion of physical change as a conflict of opposing powers, conceived of the natural world as a *Kosmos* : that is, an orderly arrangement whose structure can be rationally understood

(19). These philosophers were concerned with physical investigations, investigations into nature, investigations which led them eventually into a search for the origin of things, or what came to be known as the search for first principles. But to see them strictly as natural scientists is to obscure a very significant aspect of their thinking.

One of the earliest scholars to recover the theological nature in the thinking of the early Milesian scientists was the German philologist Werner Jaeger. In Theology of the Early Greeks , he makes the persuasive case that, although in looking at their world the Milesians employed a more scientific and empirical method than had the older poets and sages, they were essentially motivated in their quest by the desire to understand the beginning of things. They were, he claims, practising natural theology. "Greek philosophy is genuine natural theology," he says, "because it is based on rational insight into the nature of reality itself" (3). In turning to the early Milesians, those first scientists and, as Jaeger contends, those earliest practitioners of natural theology, we will be able to trace those elements of their thought that influence Heraclitus.

Although it is with Thales that Milesian rational enquiry begins, it is with his successor, Anaximander, that we can most easily see the moral nature in the physical conception, and thus the heritage Heraclitus draws upon.

Anaximander holds as the first principle something he calls *apeiron* . The logical manner by which he came to conceive *apeiron* becomes evident once we understand that he was reacting to what he felt was a limitation in the conception of his predecessor, Thales. Thales had held that the origin of everything was water. Yet in looking about him

at the world, Anaximander could not understand how one substance could give rise to all the different substances he perceived. He came to the conclusion that the stuff which composes the world must be like none of the substances which he could see, but must be something which underlies and is common to all the other substances and is found everywhere. In other words, it must be common enough to compose all substances, but distinct in that it could account for an infinite number of substances. What he hit upon was that this stuff, whatever it was, must be unbounded. The word for unbounded in Greek is *apeiron* , and this is the name he gives to his first principle (Theology 24). As Jaeger explains, although this word in its ancient context is used in many ways, scholarship is in general agreement that it denotes "the endless, inexhaustible reservoir or stock from which all Becoming draws its nourishment. . . "(Theology 24).

There is some question, however, as to how we are to interpret this concept. Is Anaximander truly forwarding a first principle? Aristotle, writing about two centuries after Anaximander, evidently thought as much, for in the third book of his Physics, he ascribes to Anaximander just such a logical step (Theology 24). Aristotle says: "Everything either is itself a beginning or has a beginning. The Boundless, however, has no beginning, for otherwise it would have a boundary" (Theology 24). According to Aristotle, any being without a beginning is a beginning in itself. It seems that Anaximander, by making his first principle *apeiron* or the unbounded, is positing a beginning. According to a fragment ascribed to Anaximander, his *apeiron* is "that from which everything takes rise and to which everything returns. It is thus the beginning (αρχη) and end (τελευτη) of everything that exists" (Theology 28). It is not

hard to see how this idea becomes connected with the idea of the Divine, or god. A being with neither beginning nor end must be the beginning and end of everything (29). Another fragment ascribed to Anaximander, and again this comes to us via Aristotle, says of the *apeiron* that "it encompasses all things and governs all things" (Theology 29). Jaeger points out that the two predicates, "governing" and "encompassing," are used continually throughout pre-Socratic philosophy to describe the activity of the highest principle (Theology 30). When Anaximander characterizes his unbounded by the two predicates above, Jaeger says that "he is satisfying the loftiest demands which religious thought has required of divinity from time immemorial; for he makes it the bearer of supreme power and dominion" (Theology 31). Thus, the ontological considerations which underlie Anaximander's *apeiron* possess theological significance.

The other idea we must look at in Anaximander is the metaphor he conceives to explain the coming-to-be and passing-away, the rise and return that characterize the 'unbounded.' In a fragment of Anaximander's that comes to us from a later Greek thinker, Simplicius, we read the following:

> Out of the *apeiron* . . . the worlds arise. But from whatever things is the genesis of the things that are, into these they must pass away according to necessity; for they must pay the penalty and make atonement to one another for their injustice according to Time's decree. (Theology 34)

After the concept of *apeiron* this idea of "penalty and atonement" is the most important element in the Anaximandrian philosophy. As Jaeger explains, it involves the image of a scene from the courtroom. When two parties are in dispute, "the one who has taken more than his share. . .

must pay damages for his *pleonexy* to the party he has wronged" (Theology 35). The Greek word *pleonexy* does not translate directly into English, but it means something close to "over-reaching greed." For the Greeks, the just means the equal, and inequality becomes the very essence of injustice. The idea of Time as a judge is to be found in the writing of Anaximander's contemporaries, chief among them Solon, "who defends himself before the 'bench of Time'" (Theology 35). Yet it is important that we do not interpret this "penalty and atonement" idea only as metaphor, for it is central to an understanding of Anaximander's theology that we see that within the metaphor "lies a philosophical interpretation of the *rationale* of the world" (Theology 34). That is, the universe is truly a *kosmos* in the Greek sense of the word: it is an ordered phenomenon because it is inherently just.

It was at this time that the Greeks were forming city-states and developing the ideas of civil law which would govern the community. It is from this realm that the idea of justice is derived. But Anaximander's idea of justice, or *Diké* , goes beyond mere human justice. It is a universal justice. The power of *Diké* is derived from the process by which all inequalities compensate themselves in time. What Anaximander implies is that the idea of justice applies not only in the city-state but in the universe as well. We are ready to state finally what it is that Anaximander achieves by this principle. According to Jaeger, Anaximander is "formulating a moral, not a physical law of nature. There is a deeply religious meaning in his conception that natural phenomena are governed by a moral standard" (Paideia 160).

Anaximander, then, has not only given us the first principle of the universe, but he has conceived of that universe as an inherent morality.

No longer do we have the mountains and streams of *Hellas* peopled with a number of gods. One force alone guides or steers the cosmos. We must be careful not to be unhistorical in our interpretation. Just because this one force is not in any way a personal god in no way diminishes its theological significance or its importance as standing for the Divine, for as we said above, Anaximander's conception meets all the criteria that the Greeks required in their conception of Divine. No less important is the revolutionary idea that, in Anaximander's conception of the cosmos as a process of coming-to-be and passing-away, there is an inherently moral dimension. What Anaximander does not do, nor do any of the Milesian philosophers for that matter, is relate this Divine cosmos in any way to human life. As Jaeger says, "It would not have occurred to them to do so, because their investigations were concerned not with humanity but with the eternal scheme of things" (Paideia 161). It remains for succeeding philosophers, foremost among them Heraclitus, to relate eternal Being to human life and human values.

II

As was expressed at the very outset of this discussion, by the time we reach Heraclitus and his immediate predecessors, Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Parmenides, we meet a style of expression very different from that of the early Milesian thinkers. The Milesians, led by reason and the spirit of discovery, searched earnestly but soberly for the meaning behind the things they saw in the world. With Heraclitus and the others we have for the first time in history a kind of philosophical

thinking that bears the stamp of individual personality. Their investigations are pursued personally and passionately.

Yet this way of viewing the pre-Socratic philosophers, and Heraclitus in particular, is only comparatively recent. Earlier interpretations tended to view all of these early thinkers from the perspective of the two thinkers from whom much of what we know about them comes: Plato and Aristotle. This view focused upon the works of the pre-Socratics from that narrow perspective of natural philosophy which we discussed earlier. Not only did this diminish the real value of their thought but sacrificed as well the implicit theological and moral thinking we have spent some time here trying to recover. The new picture fortunately allows us not only to understand them better, but also to appreciate and understand anew the metaphoric and connotational levels their thinking suggests.

Heraclitus especially benefits from this new approach since he is by far the most enigmatic, because the most metaphoric, both in his thought and in the form of his thought. Again and again throughout the sources, Heraclitus is referred to as "the Dark" or "the Obscure." The epithets are not inappropriate, for the style of his thought is not only metaphorical but highly paradoxical as well. We need only think of utterances such as "We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not"; and "A road up <and> down <is> one and the same <road>" (Fragments 49a, 60 Robinson), to conclude that the author must have admired a style of teaching and expression that is anything but straightforward. We should not be surprised then to find that within the fragments themselves there are many allusions to mystical teachings. In Fragment 92 he refers to the "Sibyl... uttering with raving mouth...," and in

Fragment 56 he mentions how Homer himself was deceived by the riddling boys. But it is in Fragment 93 from which we might infer one possible reason for Heraclitus's preference for this style: "The Lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither indicates clearly nor conceals but gives a sign" (Fragment 93, Robinson). Heraclitus is alluding to the Delphic practice of giving advice in indirect form, by riddle or ambiguity. What this implies is that all such oracular knowledge requires interpretation. Even if the surface meaning appears to be clear, one must be willing to look for a second meaning underneath. This is the proper way to understand Heraclitus's fragments as well. We will not gain insight into his teaching without careful thought and introspection. The above fragment also shows a profound respect in Heraclitus for mystery. There is in oracular statements which neither "indicate" nor "conceal" a suggestion that some mystery is good for the seeker. This is an idea that returns in Fowles and bears heavily upon his ideas of both the nature of the universe and the degree of meaning we can find in it.

What Heraclitus felt most acutely was the void the new Milesian conception of the universe created for the individual. Where is there a place for the individual in Anaximander's cosmic coming-to-be and passing-away? Heraclitus felt that he was connected to the world, that things also happened or were caused to happen through and by him. His thinking begins then partly in a rejection of a cosmic system that does not include human beings and partly in the impulse to re-introduce human beings back into the scheme of things; to give them a place in the cosmic universe. He begins with the individual. This is the spirit of adventurous thinking and self-possession behind the fragment, "I made enquiry of myself " (Fragment 101, Robinson). Not only does he seek for

himself, but he begins with himself. He does so not by abandoning rational inquiry; he merely begins with himself by refocusing the aim of speculative thinking to consider in what way he, and therefore all humankind, are a part of things. Though Heraclitus gives it the inspiration and direction of his unique thought, this spirit of thinking is not his alone. It is the true genius of all Greece, and of the Greek mind.

> The unique position of Hellenism in the history of education depends on the same peculiar characteristic, the supreme instinct to regard every part as subordinate and relative to an ideal whole-for the Greeks carried that point of view into life as well as art-- and also on their philosophical sense of the universal, their perception of the profoundest laws of human nature, and of the standards based on them which govern the spiritual life of the individual and the structure of society. (Jaeger, Paideia I: xxii, the emphasis is mine)

Heraclitus points the way to a whole new world of knowledge via the human soul contemplating itself.

The continuity from the early Milesians to Heraclitus is preserved by the image Anaximander used to help describe his conception of the universe: that is, the resolution of *pleonexy* before the judge of Time. Heraclitus too envisions the universe as an infinite process of coming-to-be and passing-away, yet in him this process becomes merely a point of departure. Heraclitus modifies this idea into what is known as the Doctrine of the Unity-of-Opposites. This in turn leads to the original and fruitful idea of tension, which we will see is given special emphasis by Fowles. We will come to this whole aspect of Heraclitus's thought further on. First we must examine the one other central idea that characterizes Heraclitus's outlook and that truly marks out his genius.

It is via the idea of the logos that Heraclitus is able to conceive of a schema that gives man a place in the cosmic dialectic. Heraclitus begins his thought with the following fragment.

> But of this account [logos], which holds forever, people forever prove uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. For, although all things happen in accordance with this account, they are like people *without* experience when they experience words and deeds such as I set forth, distinguishing < as I do> each thing according to its> real constitution, i.e., pointing out how it *is* . The rest of mankind, however, fail to be aware of what they do after they wake up just as they forget what they do while asleep. (Fragment 1, Robinson; square brackets are my interpolations, and pointed brackets contain Robinson's)

It is important to understand the full significance of Heraclitus's logos. As Jaeger says, "logos for Heraclitus was not the conceptual thinking (νοειν , νόημα) of Parmenides, whose pure analytical logic would not admit the metaphorical idea that the soul is boundless." Rather, "it was a form of knowledge, the origin of both 'action and speech'" (Paideia 180). From the very outset, then, logos for Heraclitus has an application to practical life. It has been pointed out by Jaeger, in both Paideia and Theology , that when Heraclitus wants to refer to the way in which knowledge of the logos affects man, he often uses the word φρόνησις (phronesis). Jaeger defines phronesis as follows. "It may be interpreted as the creative apprehension of pure goodness through the inner intuition of the soul and at the same time as an apprehension of pure being, and also as the derivation of valuable activity and true knowledge from one and the same fundamental power of the mind" (Aristotle 81). In *phronesis* , human being and human values are conceived together, and knowledge of this is apprehended "through the inner intuition of the soul." Clearly,

Heraclitus has in mind a logos that if comprehended leads the individual to that most enshrined of all Greek ideals, articulated as early as Homer, of 'right thinking and right action'. But Heraclitus goes further. He makes this logos the law of the entire cosmos. He does so in Fragment 114, by means of the metaphor we first saw in Anaximander.

> Those who <would> speak with insight must base themselves firmly on that which is common to all, as a city does upon <its> law--and much *more* firmly. For all human laws are nourished by one <law>; the divine <law>. For it holds sway to the extent that it wishes, and suffices for all, and is still left over. (Fragment 114, Robinson)

There is a law in the universe, just as there is a law in the city, and this law--even more important than the law in the city--is universal or common to all people, and must be followed by all people. We notice that the metaphor is similar to Anaximander's, only whereas in him it is used metaphorically to explain the universe, in Heraclitus it is used metaphorically to explain the individual's place in the universe. The logos is divine, and an understanding of it will inevitably lead men into *phronesis* : right thinking and right action. It affects all people because it is common.

> That is why one must follow that which is <common> [i.e. universal. For 'common' means 'universal']. Though the account is common, the many live, however, as though they had a private understanding (Fragment 2, Robinson)

We must recognize the full significance of what Heraclitus means by the word "common". He uses it in the sense of "community." As Jaeger tells us elsewhere, community is of tremendous importance to the Greeks.

> Community is the highest good known to the moral code of the city-state: it takes up and transforms the private existence of each individual. . .[But]. . .[t]he logos is a still

> higher and more universal 'community' than the law of the city; and upon it men can support their lives and their thoughts, and 'strengthen' themselves with it, 'as a city strengthens itself with law'. (Paideia 181)

It is via the logos that Heraclitus is able to link the microcosmic world of human life with the macrocosmic norm of the universe. The metaphor of the city enables Heraclitus to develop the distinction between the individual and the community. The community or *polis* had a tremendous influence upon the individual because it was a Greek ideal. "The state was a spiritual entity, which assimilated all the loftiest aspects of human life and gave them out as its own gifts" (Paideia 108). Community, then, aside from functioning in the larger metaphor of the city in communicating the idea that the logos is common, also carries significance for Heraclitus on its own. It is a Greek ideal, of which whole the individual is merely a part. By identifying his logos with that which is common, Heraclitus makes the connection between the individual and the community.

This obviously has significance in turn for the Greek idea of the individual. The individual, and his freedom are defined by and arise from a submission to the city-state and its law. The contemporary idea of individualistic freedom is very different. In that freedom, the individual preserves himself against all those forces that would claim him, including, and perhaps especially, those forces of the state. But Heraclitus's philosophical liberty never conflicts with the Greek's allegiance to his *polis*. Rather, Heraclitus says that there is a universal community and a Divine law to which all are subjected: "that is why one must follow that which is <common>" (Fragment 2, Robinson). For Heraclitus, then, there is no conflict between the individual and the

community because the needs of the one are identical with the needs of the other.

The discussion between the individual and the community, between the Few who heed the logos and the Many who do not, brings into focus the distinction between the Few and the Many. This distinction is also expressed by another metaphor Heraclitus uses throughout his thought--the metaphor of those who are asleep and those who are awake. In the use of this metaphor, we can see that Heraclitus is aware that not all people will hear the truth of the logos. Let us quote again the last part of Fragment 1:

> The rest of mankind, however, fail to be aware of what they do after they wake up just as they forget what they do while asleep. (Robinson)

It is instructive to read this Fragment in conjunction with another Fragment.

> Uncomprehending, <even> when they have heard <the truth about things?>, they are. . . absent while present. . . .(Fragment 34, Robinson)

Most people, Heraclitus is saying, have little awareness in waking life just as in their sleep they have dreams and then cannot recollect those dreams. What the logos does then is clear: it inspires those awake to it to a new self-consciousness. These, Heraclitus acknowledges, will be the Few; the Many will not comprehend the logos. They will live lives without its understanding, and therefore lack true *phronesis*. They will be "absent while present." This is part of the meaning of the Few and the Many that Fowles imports into his thinking as well. But the point must not be missed: in understanding the logos and living a life in *phronesis*, we participate in what is common. What is best for the self is one and the

same with what will be best for the community. Translated into twentieth-century existential language, when we inwardly pursue selfhood (are awake to the logos), we realize more profoundly that we must move beyond the self (become part of the community). Knowledge of the self engenders a knowledge of the self as part of the greater whole.

We have said that Heraclitus inherits the Milesian conception of the universe. By tracing the cosmological thinking of the Milesians, specifically Anaximander, we have seen that the cosmological model is infused by a theological and moral dimension. The idea that the universe is inherently just is behind Heraclitus's thought as well. "Only the logos can comprehend the law that Heraclitus calls divine, the law by which 'all human laws are nourished" (Paideia 181). Heraclitus claims that it is through an understanding of the logos, the divine wisdom, that men are taught to follow in 'speech and action' the truth of nature and its divine law (Paideia 182). In other words, Heraclitus not only draws upon but strengthens the Milesian conception of a universe that is infused with a profound morality, but, as well, he strengthens this moral sense of wisdom by making his logos Divine.

It is in the Doctrine of the Unity-of-Opposites that Heraclitus makes explicit use of the old Milesian conception of the cosmos, but in a refined way. Heraclitus saw in his own life the apparently contradictory nature of all things in existence. For Anaximander, the process of coming-to-be and passing-away was evidence of an inherently just universe. Heraclitus saw this universal process in terms of human life: the law in the universe is the same as the law in life. Does Heraclitus also see the universe as just?

The answer, as we might expect from a philosopher of paradox, is both yes and no. Most people, because they do not know the logos, do not understand that the universe is just. What they see is the one term of the equation that most thwarts their projects, that most interrupts their lives: they see the passing-away or the destroying aspect of life. Heraclitus tries to teach them, via the logos (which is at once his discourse, the Divine wisdom, and the nature of language) that the pattern of human life and the pattern of the cosmic process are one and the same (Kahn 22). Therefore, while Chaos is part of the nature of reality, it is only one part, and insight into the logos will teach people this truth.

In his statement that conflict is "the father of all" (Fragment 53, Robinson), Heraclitus saw that it was only in conflict that *Diké* or justice could establish herself. This law holds in the entire Cosmos. Abundance and lack and all other opposites become merely opposite poles in what is really a unified system.

> The totality of things, [says Heraclitus] is an exchange for fire, and fire an exchange for all things, in the way goods <are an exchange> for gold, and gold for goods (Fragment 90, Robinson).

This system of compensation, this interchange, is merely the flux of an underlying unity; "while changing, it rests" (Fragment 84a, Robinson).

Yet this is a special kind of unity. Heraclitean unity is full of tension. To imply this, Heraclitus makes use of the metaphors of the bow and the lyre. Just as with the logos, the many will not perceive this.

> They do not understand how, while differing from (or: being at variance), <it> is in agreement with itself. <There is> a back-turning connection, like <that> of a bow or lyre. (Fragment 51, Robinson)

The metaphor of the bow and the lyre is very striking and gets very close to what Heraclitus has been at pains to convey. The bow and lyre suggest partly the balanced state of things in the tension of the string and the wood, but these relationships--even while they change, for instance as the string is drawn from the bow--themselves remain changeless. In the state of tension between string and bow there is a "back-turning" or return to the place at which it began. This further implies the underlying unity, the oneness in the apparent clash and contradictoriness of events both in human life and the life of the cosmos.

> "Not after listening to me, but after listening to the account [logos], one does wisely in agreeing that all things are <in fact?> one <thing> (Fragment 50, Robinson).

Another metaphor Heraclitus uses to express movement within the tensional nature of opposite states is the metaphor of fire.

> <The ordered?> world, the same for all, no god or man made, but always was, is, and will be, an everliving fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures. (Fragment 30, Robinson)

Here fire is the metaphor for movement or change existing within the tension of "kindling" and "putting out". Implied once again is the underlying "oneness" of all things arising from a tensional nature.

We have seen in Heraclitus's call that people must look within themselves for an understanding of the logos, a cardinal point in all existential thinking. But Heraclitus makes his logos common--in understanding the logos we are led into *phronesis* (right thinking and right acting) and gain possession of the knowledge that the individual is part of a higher community. In Heraclitus, then, there is no conflict beween the individual and the community, since the self is recognized as co-extensive with the universe in general and the political community in

particular. Finally, then, although there are only a small number of people who are awake to the logos (the Few), and although it is beginning with themselves that they can become cognizant of the logos, when once so awakened, they must follow that which is common (universal). In other words, they become members of a higher community.

III

We are now in position to view some of Fowles's ideas. I will show that some of these ideas he borrows directly from Heraclitus, while others he transmutes into his own expression. We shall see that by importing in many ways Heraclitus's understanding of the world, Fowles necessarily imports both the existential impulse that requires us to look inward, and the moral impulse that directs us to look outward into community.

A full reading and complete discussion of The Aristos would be necessary to appreciate the full importance that Heraclitus's thinking has had upon Fowles. My purpose here requires that we need only direct our interest to Fowles's appropriation of two central ideas from Heraclitus: Heraclitus's conception of the universe, and the moral character of that conception. My examination will show that the moral conception of the universe that runs from Anaximander through to Heraclitus is preserved and transmuted by Fowles into what we have termed his moral impulse. The moral impulse is manifested in Fowles's fiction in the journey the characters undergo. If they initiate the inward journey (Heraclitus's understanding of the logos), they then recognize the need to transcend themselves and merge into community via a commitment to others.

What we said of Heraclitus so too must hold for Fowles: we cannot easily separate his cosmology from his theology and his morality. Although Fowles does not use these terms, we can see cosmological, theological, and moral aspects in his conception of the universe.

Fowles conceives the universe in essentially the same way as Heraclitus.

> Matter in time appears to us, with our vested interest in survival, to be governed by two opposing principles: Law, or the organizing principle, and Chaos, or the disintegrating one. These two, the one to us sorting and erecting, the other to us demolishing and causing havoc, are in eternal conflict. This conflict is existence.(The Aristos 14)

There are two ideas introduced here: there are two opposing forces, and there is the conflict between them. Let us begin by looking at the first.

Where Heraclitus conceived coming-to-be and passing-away in the Anaximandrian conception of *pleonexy* before the judge of Time, in like manner, Fowles sees Law and Chaos as the two forces that comprise the reality of the universe. "The known universe," he says, "is uniform in its constituents and its laws" (14); and further on: "In the whole, nothing is unjust" (The Aristos 14). Once again we encounter the conception of a universe as two opposing forces, and once again, the emphasis that this universe is just.

But what is only implicit in Heraclitus becomes explicit and, we will see, of central importance in Fowles. We remember that behind the idea of justice lies the concept of equality. Heraclitus never says much about this, probably because it was an obvious aspect of the Greek ideal of justice, which, as the foundation of their law, was taken for granted. *

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* I am not unaware of the fact that slavery in Greek society makes this statement seem nonsensical. This anomaly, to my knowledge, is not recognized by Heraclitus in his utterances, nor is it addressed by any of

Thus, the notion of equality was inherent in Heraclitus's notion of a cosmic norm. We might also see in Heraclitus's silence on equality another reason. In Heraclitus's society, there was, at least in theory, little conflict between the individual and the community. What was good for the one was good for the other, and *vice versa* .We have elsewhere talked about this aspect of life in the Greek city-state. For Fowles, however, and therefore our own age, the conflict between individual freedom and social responsibility has reached a critical point. In Fowles, the concept of equality becomes very explicit in all his thinking. It most often appears under the guise of social equality, and becomes the *modus operandi* for much of his moral thinking. It is also the necessary condition or state of mind needed before one can move beyond the egocentrism of the individual to amelioration in community.

> If one word could sum up all that is wrong with our world, it is surely inequality. . . . Hazard, the great factor we shall never be able to control, will always infest life with inequality. And it seems madness that man himself should continue blindly to propagate this vicious virus in our world instead of trying to limit it. (The Aristos 11)

This is one of Fowles's larger purposes. A universe that is inherently just is a universe that balances, based upon the concept of equality. People must learn to balance their selfish and individual caprice against social responsibility. What is equality if not a balancing in all areas of life? But how are we to divine this purpose? We do so the way Heraclitus showed us: we participate in a higher wisdom when we initiate the inward journey into authentic selfhood.

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the interpreters on him that I have read. In my opinion, it seems quite clear that in the fragments that have come down to us, Heraclitus means his words to be taken for universal norms and values that hold for all humankind.

It is to the eradication of inequality that The Aristos is in part addressed. People must be led into an awareness of the inequality in the social realm. Fowles's characters, when sufficiently educated to go beyond the self, ultimately perceive the need to respect and promote equality and freedom in the outer world. Fowles emphasizes this when he sums up our purpose, our reason for living.

> Each form of animate matter is given a reason for living; and our human reason is the establishment of equality of recompense of living. Since in our present world unnecessary inequalities are ubiquitous, a proper synoptic education must lead to a sense of discontentment that is also a sense of moral purpose. (The Aristos 182-3)

It should not be difficult to see how the concept of equality leads easily to other Fowlesian ideas as well, among them freedom. Fowles has repeatedly said that it is freedom that all his novels attempt to explore. But freedom is one of those very large words that, unless limited, tends to be meaningless. Fowles, it would seem, is talking about several different ideas of freedom.

First, because he is an existentialist, freedom in this context takes on special meaning. Because Fowles holds with Sartre that the great spectre to being is non-being, this places upon man the burden of freedom; the responsibility for freely making himself. But whereas for Sartre this freedom is *in toto* , and therefore a terrible freedom, in Fowles it is a relative freedom. "All our 'free' choices may be finally attributable to some conditioning over which we have no control. Even if we could establish the contrary--total free will--we are still limited," he says, "since to be completely free we should need an absolutely free field of choice as well as the freedom to choose in it" (The Aristos 68). Nevertheless,

freedom--relative or not--is a condition that must be protected and promoted if our existence is to be meaningful.

Yet another meaning of freedom we find used in Fowles is freedom in the philosophically negative sense, or freedom from. This kind of freedom necessitates the elimination of factors that prevent someone from exercising free choice. This is the sense of freedom Fowles has in mind when he says in The Aristos, "Freedom of will is strictly related to freedom of living condition" (70). To increase freedom in this realm, the social realm, requires the promotion of greater social equality.

We said that there were two aspects in Fowles's cosmological statement. The first aspect is the opposing of forces. The second aspect is the conflict between them. Let us remind ourselves of the quotation.

> These two [forces], the one to us sorting and erecting, the other to us demolishing and causing havoc, are in eternal conflict. This conflict is existence. (The Aristos 14)

We will immediately notice, remembering our discussion of Heraclitus, that the ideas contained in this statement parallel Heraclitus's almost exactly. Heraclitus used the metaphor of the scene from a courtroom to realize his conception of a universe that is balanced in the process of coming-to-be and passing-away. He used the metaphor of war to help articulate his idea of the unity in the clash of opposing forces. Fowles sees the universe in terms of Law and Chaos, and for him it is the conflict between these two that characterizes their unity. Heraclitus says "war" and Fowles says "conflict." They are talking about the same thing. Yet just as there is a subtle difference in Fowles's conception of the opposing forces, so too does he conceive differently the unity-of-opposites

doctrine, and in the process achieves what we may consider to be a subtle but compelling refinement. Heraclitus claimed that in the clash of opposites, which he saw all around him, was to be found the one major principle underlying all reality. "War is father of all and king of all" (Fragment 53, Robinson). In another fragment Heraclitus identifies this underlying principle, war or strife, with God.

> God<is> day <and> night, winter <and> summer, war <and> peace, satiety <and> famine, and undergoes change in the way that <fire?>, whenever it is mixed with spices, gets called by the name that accords with <the> bouquet of each <spice>. (Fragment 67, Robinson)

What is important is that behind all these opposites is a single something which men give different names to but which is always the same thing. This one thing that underlies all pairs of opposites, and that therefore really unites them, Heraclitus calls divine, and in another fragment this divine force becomes Zeus.

> One thing, the only wise thing, is willing and unwilling to be called by the name Zeus. (Fragment 32, Robinson)

Heraclitus says "unwilling" because he is sensitive to the anthropomorphic tradition, and does not want his meaning of Zeus to be confused with the old Zeus; "willing", because his Zeus is identical with the religious impulse that spawned the old Zeus (Robinson, 102). As Robinson remarks, Heraclitus quite clearly means to imply by the use of the word Zeus "supreme divinity" (102). What Heraclitus does then is identify 'strife' or 'change' with God, the "one" behind all reality.

> Things grasped together: things whole, things not whole; <something> being brought together, <something> being separated; <something> consonant, <something> dissonant. Out of all things <comes?> one thing, and out of one thing all things. (Fragment 10, Robinson)

Here we see once again that what is essentially a cosmological idea transforms and renews the basis for a theological conclusion. The idea that all the opposites in life are explained by the one concept of strife, and that in strife there is a unity, one single thing, has obvious theological overtones in Heraclitus's philosophy.

Fowles's parallel idea, that of the tensional nature of the universe (which as in Heraclitus derives from his previously held model of cosmic justice), at first glance does not achieve quite the same theological overtones. Whereas in Heraclitus the relationship between pairs of opposites is essentially one of unity, in Fowles the opposites stand forever apart, but the relationship between them takes on the dynamic of mutual support. Each idea, or in Fowlesian terminology, counterpole, exists in its opposition to other counterpoles. The noun is plural here, as Fowles says that each idea has more than one counterpole.

> The obvious counterpole of an idea is the contrary idea. *The world is round*; the world *is not round*. But whatever else stands between my mind and its continuous concentration on the idea (The world is round) is also a counterpole. (The Aristos 83)

Besides the basic antinomy between two poles, there exists a similar antinomy among many other poles. This is Fowles's own refinement. He multiplies infinitely the original two forces. He uses a metaphor to explain this tensional state.

> Between all these counterpoles, both choosable and inevitable, and the 'I' pole there exists a relationship; but since the counterpoles are in themselves poles and have their own counterpoles (one of which is constituted by 'I') the situation of the 'I' pole is analogous to a kind of complex tug-of-war. We must imagine countless teams all of whose ropes are knotted at a centre; of differing strength, some directly combining, others obliquely affecting, many diametrically opposed. This central knot is the 'I'; and the

> diverse forces pulling at it make the state of tension. (The Aristos 87)

At first glance, the Heraclitean unity-of-opposites doctrine and the Fowlesian tensional nature appear very different. However, this may owe more to a rigidly held conception of the unity-of-opposites doctrine than is warranted. If we look more closely at Heraclitus's doctrine we may find a more flexible interpretation. Jaeger says at one point in his discussion, "At bottom Heraclitus's unity cannot strictly be perceived in any of the visual forms he uses for illustration" (Theology 120). Indeed, many of the fragments, although translated essentially the same, can and do yield subtle and different interpretations. For instance Fragment 50, the fragment that makes use of the metaphor of the bow and the lyre, has often been used to introduce the idea of harmony, which becomes a created third force arising from the unity of things diverse. Let us look at it more closely. It appears like this in Jaeger:

> They [the Many] do not understand how that which draws apart agrees with itself: a fitting together with counter-tension, as of the bow and the lyre. (Fragment 50, in Theology 120)

How shall we interpret the word "agrees"? It seems that most commentators interpret this to mean unity. That is, something that appears to be disunited, "that which draws apart", is really the same, "agrees with itself", or is a unity. But can we not see in "agree" an interpretation something like Fowles's? That is, is there not a sense of agreement between two ideas, or rather an idea and its counterpole, each one deriving definition and support from the other? This situation would be a "fitting together" of sorts, with "counter-tension" between the poles, which can be seen as a kind of harmony in their relationship to

each other. Thus there is a unity in the relationship between the idea and its poles.

Although in these two ideas of unity there are slight differences, their significance is the same. In the relationship between things diverse there is an explanation of the reality of the universe. This is the meaning and significance that Fowles derives from the Heraclitean doctrine, and it just so happens that it is similar to what Heraclitus, in the vast richness of his allusive language, was pointing toward all along.

By way of conclusion, it is important to reiterate the process by which ideas (profoundly theological in nature) are transformed from early Greek philosophy through Heraclitus until we see them again, in their own character but stamped inevitably by their intellectual and philosophical heritage, informing the fiction of John Fowles.

With the aid of modern scholarship and fresh perspective, Werner Jaeger advances a thesis--one that interprets ancient pre-Socratic thinking and restores to it a profound theological nature--that challenges the ideological hegemony surrounding pre-Socratic thought. By means of Jaeger's argument, we have traced the thinking of the early Milesians through Heraclitus to Fowles, and have said that, with a new understanding of the theological nature of early Greek philosophy, and particularly Heraclitus, we can see when we come to Fowles the origin of his moral impulse. We have done this primarily by taking our instruction, as so many commentators have done, from Fowles himself. We have seen how the theological thinking of the early Greeks is not pure abstract reasoning, but, as we should expect from the Greek mind, an organic outgrowth from the very way they see all things: as one part of a greater whole. Thus, we see how their idea of the divine is related to all men,

because it is common, and how following the common, that which is communal, we are led into 'right thinking and right action'. The community then is both the *alpha* and *omega* of our moral impulse.

Finally, we see how Fowles draws upon these ideas, and thus understand in a more complete way the origin of his moral impulse. This understanding gives us a new perspective upon his fiction, and we can better account for the important idea of community that all his fictions seem inevitably to build. At the same time, we see resolved the apparent contradictoriness of his existential position with his moral impulse. We see how he can be at the same time an existential relativist and a profound ethicist. We see, finally, a way to balance the lonely call of the individual with the absolutely necessary answer of social responsibility.

It remains only to say something about Fowles's concept of "God." It is worth quoting again what he had to say about this issue. In The Aristos , he says: "I do not consider myself an atheist, yet this concept of 'God' and our necessary masterlessness obliges me to behave in all public matters as if I were" (28). When Fowles says "this concept of 'God'" he is referring to the Christian concept of a personal God. In other words, although he is definitely not thinking of a Christian 'God,' might he be thinking of a God more like Heraclitus's? As well as describing war as the oppositional clash, Heraclitus also described it as the "thunderbolt." As Robinson points out, the allusions to Zeus would have been in his mind. Zeus was often portrayed with a thunderbolt in his hand (Robinson 126). Heraclitus further endows the "thunderbolt" with divinity when he says, "And the thunderbolt steers the totality of things" (Fragment 64, Robinson). We explained earlier how important the "steering" metaphor is for divinity. Now, Fowles chooses a different word to describe what the

conflict is for him: he calls it "hazard." In The Aristos, he translates the same fragment above in this way: "The keraunos [the thunderbolt, chaos, hazard] steers all things" (215). Are we to see then in Fowles's hazard something divine? The answer must be yes. To say "hazard" steers all, as Fowles interprets Heraclitus's fragment 64, carries the same ideas of divinity as saying, "God" steers all. Just as Heraclitus's conception of the "divine" or "God" is free from any personal attributes, so is Fowles's. But this does not prevent it from being divine. Just as Heraclitus's divine is full of mystery for man, so too is Fowles's. And for Fowles, we will never know the mystery from which hazard (God) derives. We will never know the ultimate meaning of why we are here. It is enough to know that we are.

Before we leave his cosmology, we should say something more about his "God". We must understand the great gulf that exists between the Greek mind and the modern mind upon the idea of God. What we are talking about really is the gulf between the pre- and post-Christian world. For the Greeks, and thus for Heraclitus, the idea of one god was the idea of the Divine, and it was conceived of not so much as form as it was force (Theology 169). It is from the early Christian era that the idea of a personal God catches on and with a good deal of help from the Christian theologians of the day holds the imagination of people. Fowles's conception of "God" is essentially Greek, and it is very possible that it derives, as I have shown above, from his pre-Socratic source. He makes in The Aristos a cosmological statement that we can take to be a clear statement of his idea of God: "There can be no power or god in the whole that is concerned for any one thing, though there may be a power concerned for the whole" (15). The "God" we find in the above statement

is one that rules out any active interest in human beings as individuals or in human affairs. Rather, for Fowles, "God", if it must be conceived of as anything, is conceived of as merely an impersonal force in the universe, very often as mystery. As such, this is not so different from Heraclitus's divine *nomos* , or mind.

Conflict, or the tensional nature of the universe, was for Heraclitus the one truth behind human existence. Heraclitus saw in this tensional conflict a unity like the tensional unity achieved in the bow and the lyre. Such was the nature of the human condition. Fowles too sees conflict as the one true reality in life. He employs, much as Heraclitus did, various metaphors to explain this. We are like a man on a tightrope that must balance. But he tells us, there is no such thing as a state of perfect balance. "For us, the only perfect balance can be the living balance" (88). In other words, life is a constant struggle for balance. But this condition is the best of all possible worlds for mankind. Fowles's unity in the tensional nature of reality is our continuing necessity to balance and thereby harmonize the tensions. Both Heraclitus and Fowles see this tensional state as man's ultimate existential condition. As Fowles says, the ultimate tension--between what we know and what we will never know--cannot be transposed; it is the source of human being (100-1).

Chapter Two: The Collector

Eyes and ears are poor witnesses for men if
their souls do not understand the language.

Heraclitus, XVI

Of the many studies that are now in existence on John Fowles, there seems to be a discernible trend as to the ordering of the works. Many of the earliest studies began by examining the fictions in the order that they were published. This meant that The Collector was dealt with first, followed by the The Magus. Fowles then let it be known that, although The Collector was first published, The Magus was in fact first written. As a consequence, most studies that were issued after this revelation reversed the original trend, and dealt first with The Magus, then with The Collector . The motive that they were following, presumably, is that there is an aesthetic development in an author's career, and therefore order of publication becomes less critical than the order of composition. I have chosen to run counter to the prevailing trend, and therefore begin my study with The Collector. My reason for doing so is that, unlike the other fictions I will examine, The Collector manifests the thesis of the present study in a unique way.

I have argued in the first chapter that Fowles's fiction shows the development of a moral impulse that he derived from the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus. Heraclitus believed that through introspection people would become aware of a wisdom, the *logos* , the knowledge of which would lead them to a deeper understanding of the world and their place in it. Engendered in this deeper awareness is the insight that caring for the self means caring for the other, since the individual and the community become one and the same.

In the character of Frederick Clegg we see a person who fails to initiate the first stage of the journey. Clegg is existentially inauthentic, and being so, will never gain the insight of the need to move beyond the self. By contrast, in the character of Miranda Richardson we see a person

who embarks upon the journey of self-discovery and, in doing so, is able to attain the knowledge that she must act beyond the self. She achieves some measure of both existential authenticity and moral awareness.

My examination, then, sees The Collector as a story with two protagonists, or we might say, a story in which each character becomes the other's antagonist. Either way, this view is different from most critical interpretations. The most conventional of these see Miranda as the protagonist who, in her confinement and ultimate death, fails to achieve any kind of meaningful liberation. A different interpretation, offered by Carol Barnum, essentially sees Clegg as the protagonist. Argued in a Jungian context, Barnum's claim is that The Collector must be considered an anti-myth, since Frederick Clegg fails utterly in his journey toward individuation.

My view, then, sees The Collector as neither anti-myth nor journey-myth alone: rather, it is both.

A profoundly repressed and lonely young man becomes obsessed with a young, beautiful, and popular girl. Conveyed by a tone that we cannot fail to miss, he feels her to be, in all likelihood, unattainable. This situation is suddenly altered when the young man wins a considerable sum of money in a lottery. He then begins a daydream in which the young girl might one day love him. The reality, he knows, is that she will probably never do so. They are from different social classes, which, at least in his mind, is tantamount to being from different worlds. In order to bridge this seemingly impossible gulf, he kidnaps and imprisons her, hoping that she will learn to love him.

Such, in its barest essence, is the plot of The Collector. Although the story does move to a resolution, and with a minor twist (when Clegg

decides not to commit suicide), from this point on there is very little physical action. One suspects that this fact alone would have seriously taxed the patience of the average reader of thrillers. In actuality, the majority of the novel is concerned with the psychological confrontation between Clegg and Miranda. The plot proper, then, in a novel with more than three-hundred pages, happens in the first twenty-seven pages. This fact makes it all the more surprising that John Fowles's first published novel should have been reviewed as a thriller, at least initially.

But of course the novel was more than just a simple thriller. Fowles, in the preface to the second edition of The Aristos , found it necessary to explain his deeper intentions.

> History. . . shows that society has persistently seen life in terms of a struggle between the Few and the Many, between 'Them' and 'Us'. My purpose in The Collector was to attempt to analyse, through a parable, some of the results of this confrontation. (10)

The antiphonal structure of the novel, where first Frederick Clegg and then Miranda Grey give--in a retrospective account and a diary respectively--their thoughts during Miranda's confinement, should have been an obvious clue that something further was intended. From this seemingly simple structure Fowles derives no small number of achievements.

Firstly, the situation of imprisoner and imprisoned is dramatically heightened. If we had been given only Clegg's version of events, we would be in the comfortable world of the conventional thriller. We would need only to sit back safely and view the machinations of a sinister mind. We would be concerned simply with what he might do to the girl and how he would do it. This is the kind of writing that, Fowles claims, makes for a

reading experience that is entirely too passive. Instead, by placing us inside the mind of the victim as well as the victimizer, Fowles has dramatically doubled the reading experience.

More significantly, the structure works to draw us into the story futher, because by being presented with two different psychological interpretations of the same event, it is impossible for us to remain passive. Rather, we are compelled to a more active role as judge of the characters' thoughts and actions. But judgement is difficult because, as Kerry McSweeney points out, the characterization is subtly drawn (131). Although Clegg must surely be seen as monstrous, the facts of his mean upbringing elicit some measure of sympathy. Likewise Miranda, although assuredly an innocent victim, is presented in such a way that we do not fail to see that she is, at least initially, snobbish and shallow. That neither Clegg nor Miranda is drawn so as to weaken the story into a simple allegory is a delicate and fine achievement.

Finally, the structure achieves the creation of what I call an existential window. At the heart of modern existentialism is the primacy of choice. We are and will become the people we choose to be. The Collector , by presenting, as it were, a retrospective interior monologue of each character's thinking in and around significant events throughout the imprisonment, allows us to witness the thinking behind the choices each makes. We are allowed to see where they go and why they go there. This crystallizes the fact that their end, whatever it may be, is the result of a series of personal choices. At the end of the novel, both Clegg and Miranda are responsible for the state of their existential and moral souls.

Let us turn to the novel to assess the success or failure of their existential and moral journeys.

Fowles first gives us Clegg's perspective. From the outset, Fowles takes care to show us Clegg's background. Clegg is the product of the lower middle class, who, orphaned as a young child, is raised by a suffocatingly dull and narrow aunt. As a clerk in a menial job, Clegg has few friends. Those people who might be called friends are held by Clegg to be beneath him. The window of the Town Hall Annex, then, from which Clegg first views Miranda, is a potent symbol: Clegg is an outsider not only to Miranda's world, but in many ways, to the world in general.

Yet, even though Fowles has given us the details of Clegg's social status, we must not overly emphasize the significance of this fact. Fowles's parable is primarily about a confrontation between people from different intellectual and moral classes. While Clegg's social status may have unjustly shaped him, ultimately, we must not lose sight of his intellectual and moral failure.

It is not very far into the novel, only one page, before we get our first insight into Clegg's existential condition. He says of Miranda: "The only time I didn't have nice dreams about her being when I saw her with a certain young man, a loud noisy public-school type who had a sports car" (4). Clegg's resentful tone betrays his feelings of inferiority as an outsider to Miranda and her class. She is his dream, and as he will tell us repeatedly, "I can't ever get to know her in the ordinary way"(14).

Yet Clegg's inferiority, eventually pathological, is only a symptom of his deeper problem. Clegg's real problem is that he is unable to see himself as the principal actor in his own life. From the earliest moment we meet him it is evident to the reader that Clegg does not believe he is able to will and enact choices. He says about his dreams of Miranda: "Those were the days I let myself have the bad dreams" (5). Clegg never

says, "I dreamed," or "my dream," which is the usual way a person talks about his or her dreams. The way that Clegg speaks suggests that the dreams are outside of him, that they are at a remove from him.

The fact that Clegg never seems to make choices is embedded everywhere in his language and thinking. When he alludes to the fact of Miranda's capture, he characteristically says, "What I'm trying to say is that having her as my guest happened suddenly, it wasn't something I planned the moment the money came" (11). Here he ascribes his kidnapping of Miranda to the inscrutable agency of chance. In Fowlesian terminology, Clegg is nemo-tyrannized. As Fowles says, "the nemo gains power over our behavior to the extent that we believe that were it not for the faults of the human condition, or of society, or of our education, or of our economic position, then we might be what we can imagine" (48). It must be evident from the above that nemo-tyrannized persons feel that all the reasons they are what they are lie beyond themselves. They feel that they do not have choice in their lives. In the case of Clegg, this is carefully reinforced by having his fortunes changed not by an act of his own will, but by the potent symbol of chance: he wins the lottery.

That Clegg does not see that he has the ability to make choices is further shown in his response to the statement Miranda makes to him concerning his fortune. "You can change, you're young, you've got money.. You can learn. . . . Only you've got to shake off the past. You've got to kill your aunt and the house you lived in and the people you lived with. You've got to be a new human being" (79). Clegg responds, "Some hope" (79). It is one more irony in a book of ironies that, although it is Clegg who is the collector of butterflies, it is Miranda who has the insight that in order for one to metamorphose something of the old self

must die in order that some aspect of a new self may be born. In these words, as we will see later, Miranda utters the prescription that will enable her to be reborn.

Chance or hazard plays a very large role in Fowles's thinking. As we saw in the last chapter, it is one of the basic constituents of his universe. As such, we must learn to accept it and incorporate it into our conception of reality. But this is not the way that Clegg conceives chance. For him, rather, chance becomes a power upon which he can project his failures and to which he can yield his responsibilities.

The last episode I will discuss in which we see Clegg ascribe his actions to the inscrutable and arbitrary element of chance is the part in his account in which he relates the events leading up to the moment of Miranda's capture.

> I took a risk, perhaps I wanted to give fate a chance to stop me. I went into the cafe and had my supper. Then I went to my van and parked where I could see the cinema. I didn't know what to expect, perhaps she was meeting a friend. I mean I felt I was swept on, like down rapids, I might hit something, I might get through.(23)

Clegg's real problem is that he lets life happen to him and that he never consciously acts in his own life. Further, Clegg's refusal to see himself as an agent making choices contributes to his overwhelming feelings of inferiority. In relinquishing to the agent of chance his own power for choosing, Clegg unwittingly undermines his own identity. I said earlier that Clegg reveals himself as having feelings of inferiority. The more Clegg attributes his choices to chance, the less he sees himself as making choices and the more inferior he feels. In his circular pattern of neuroses, Clegg is the victim of a tragedy of his own making.

We might locate in Clegg's refusal to see that he has choices, another theme prominent in existential thought often closely related to the theme of choice : the theme of responsibility.

Of course, the fact that Clegg sees the power of choice as lying beyond him enables him to commit actions without having to face responsibility for those actions. There is an amusing scene, if in such a dark work we can call it such, where Miranda and Clegg meet for the first time. She is much sharper than Clegg expects, and with pointed questions, gets Clegg stumbling after her. What is interesting is that when confronted with Miranda's questions, Clegg, clearly not prepared for her frontal attack, claims he is not responsible. "Suddenly I saw a way out. I said, I'm only obeying orders"(29). As Miranda questions Clegg further, her initial skepticism--at Clegg's suggestion that he is under the orders of the bank manager from Barclays--turns to sarcasm, and she verbally corners Clegg a second time. This time Clegg feebly counters with, "There's other things I can't tell you. I'm in his power"(31). At this point, the reader is aware that Clegg is lying, Miranda suspects that he is lying, and obviously Clegg himself knows that he's lying. Clegg's tragicomic disavowal of responsibility in this scene serves only to heighten those places in the remainder of his account where he either absolves himself from or fails even to recognize his responsibility. To echo a term suggested by Dwight Eddins, Clegg fails to claim any "authorship" in the events that constitute his life (38-54).

Another belief espoused by the existentialist credo is dedication to reality. Thus far in our discussion, we can see that Clegg is quite far from reality. Of his earliest fantasies about Miranda, the fantasies where he and Miranda live in a big modern house in which she draws pictures and

he looks after his collection, Clegg comments, "Of course I am not mad, I knew it was just a dream and always would have been if it hadn't been for the money" (4). But Clegg is mad, and his capture of Miranda, more than mere dream. Very early we are aware that Clegg has problems distinguishing reality from fantasy, or what he refers to as "dreams." Fowles develops the motif of dream/illusion versus reality throughout the novel, and we shall see that he makes use of it again, though in a different way, in The Magus. The confusion in Clegg between the two is made evident in the following passage:

> That was the day I first gave myself the dream that came true. It began where she [Miranda] was being attacked by a man and I ran up and rescued her, only I didn't hurt; I captured her and drove her off in the van to a remote house and there I kept her captive in a nice way. . . . It kept me awake at nights, it made me forget what I was doing during the day. . . . It stopped being a dream, it began to be what I pretended was really going to happen (of course, I thought it was only pretending). . . .(14)

Clegg's reality--bitter, cramped, and solitary--gives way to dream fantasy, where he can have all he lacks: self-worth, companionship, and of course Miranda.

That Clegg refuses to see himself as making choices, and further, that he refuses to accept responsibility for the choices he nevertheless makes underscores the fact that Frederick Clegg, as the novel opens, is essentially an inauthentic individual. In the paradigm that I have been suggesting, Clegg must be seen as failing completely. There is in Clegg no Heraclitean journey into selfhood, and therefore there can be no understanding that he has a responsibility to Miranda. Clegg's inability to turn outward morally to the community, because of his failure to make the inward journey, is shown in his wholly isolated existence. In fact, this

is what he uses his wealth to do: to retreat to a fortress where he can live without social obligations. What is absolutely clear is that Miranda's fate, dependent upon Clegg's existential insight, is tenuous from the beginning. Although she does try to reach Clegg, Clegg is far too inauthentic to be reached.

We first meet Miranda in Clegg's account, through his eyes, and it is only later we meet her through her own diary. Since all Clegg's thoughts about Miranda are colored by the fact that he is infatuated with her, it behooves us to look only to the factual details he gives us, and not his rapturous, subjective observations, as revealing as those may be. Fowles has Clegg relate that Miranda is more than beautiful; she is also clever and talented, and has won a scholarship to a prestigious London art school. With nothing more to go on than this, we have already contrasted before us two very different people. Clegg is a young man who is an undistinguished, inauthentic, and lonely outsider. Miranda is plainly everything Clegg is not. From Clegg's account of his early spying upon her, we know that she has many friends. Miranda has obviously made choices, and no doubt sacrifices, that have led her to distinguish herself; she has even been awarded a scholarship. Where Clegg has led a dull and suffocating life, both publicly and privately, Miranda has made choices and taken actions that have broadened her world. She has had some hand in shaping her destiny. Yet it is not until we reach the point in the novel where we are presented with her diary that we can truly "wonder at" Miranda.

As soon as we begin part two, which is the record of Miranda's diary, we are immediately overwhelmed by the change in atmosphere. In what is surely the greatest irony in the novel (and just as certainly

Fowles's larger purpose), we see that Clegg's account--in its narrow focus, stilted language, and confused and halting syntax--is reflective of his narrow, unimaginative and mean life. Miranda's world, by contrast, veritably explodes. We read her diary and feel at once that we, as readers, have been liberated from a small, suffocating, confinement into a place of fresh air, open spaces, and sunshine. We could find many examples in Miranda's diary of movement that Dwight Eddins, in his article "Existence as Authorship," has called "liberator" behaviour (38-43). Let us tune our ears to the opening words of her diary, where we hear the power, the purpose, and the authorship of her mind and life.

> It's the seventh night.
> I keep on thinking the same things. If only they knew. If only they knew.
> Share the outrage.
> So now I'm trying to tell it to this pad he bought me this morning. His kindness.
> Calmly.
> Deep down I get more and more frightened. It's only surface calm.
> No nastiness, no sex thing. But his eyes are mad. Grey with a grey lost light in them. To begin with I watched him all the time. I thought it must be sex, if I turned my back I did it where he couldn't spring at me, and I listened. I had to know exactly where he was in the room.
> Power. It's become so real. (123)

We could say much about these few words, so revealing are they of Miranda. She begins immediately with time and place. She orients herself, naturally, and so too the reader feels oriented. We leave behind the grey, static, past tense of Clegg's narrative and world for Miranda's dynamic now. The sentences rush, at first short, chopped, quick, but soon lengthen and, as they do, draw us along. She writes--has waited for pen and paper to do so--and as we read her thoughts, we become aware of how at home she is in the realm of speech, thought, and idea.

The portrait she draws in words is vivid and articulate, and her mind is always going, framing hypotheses, strategies, and evaluations.

The fact that the characters shape their lives, or fail to do so, is one way we can assess their growth. Dwight Eddins argues that the characters' ability to fashion their lives through a creative balancing between the eidetic and contingent categories of reality is one of Fowles's central concerns (38-53). In light of this, we can see that Miranda is learning what it means to be the author of her own life. Miranda, primarily through her intellectual capacity, has the ability and the power to transcend herself. Whereas Clegg--intellectually and imaginatively handicapped--is a "Collector," able only to reify life into a series of collectibles, Miranda achieves the status of "Liberator" in her creative juxtaposition of the eidetic and contingent.

Yet another test of each character is how much each learns or tries to learn and understand the other.

Clegg makes no real effort to learn from or understand Miranda. Clegg is most content when she is silent, merely around to be looked at, admired, but not heard. From his first face to face meeting with Miranda ("It's funny, she didn't look quite like I'd always remembered her"[28]), Clegg must continually look away from Miranda because she looks at him. Clegg does not want real communication with anyone, because he feels small and insignificant. As he himself has said earlier, when he speaks he gives himself away, or he doesn't act right (4). Clegg is not interested in Miranda as a human being. He wants, rather, to reduce her to something static, pinned, like a specimen in his butterfly collection. In this way, there is no risk that she will be different from the image of the

way he wants her to be. Clegg himself admits as much when he says, "the photographs didn't talk back at me" (109).

Whenever Miranda confronts Clegg his fear is so great that he must look away. "I wanted to look at her face" he says, "at her lovely hair, all of her all small and pretty, but I couldn't, she stared so at me"(29). Clegg avoids her eyes because he does not want to see her as a person, does not want to see who and what she really is, as this would destroy his "dream" version, his fantasy. This is what Fowles must have meant when he claimed, in The Magus, that collecting extinguishes the moral instinct (178). When a person collects something, the fact that he has it, possesses it, is more important than what the collected thing is in itself. Collecting requires no effort beyond the mere getting, no understanding of the thing collected on its own terms, be it a painting or whatever. The process is immoral because entirely onanistic--masturbatory. Collecting is a step into the abyss of narcissism because it makes no effort to reach out beyond the self.

It has been noted that masturbation is prevalent in many of Fowles's fictions. In The Magus , Nicholas too is seen masturbating often. Roger Scruton, in a philosophical discussion about sexual desire, talks about the necessity of "interpersonal union" in a discussion that attempts to situate erotic love in a moral realm. Erotic love, he claims, is a phenomenological experience. It is phenomenal because we can experience it only through the phenomenon of the other. This phenomenal experience is corrupted if either person reifies the other. (We can easily see in this a criticism of Sartre's warped conception of love.) When Scruton moves on to talk about masturbation, he divides it into two kinds.

> In some such way one might also distinguish the thoughts of the 'normal', from those of the 'perverted', masturbator. The latter uses representations which are purged of their imaginative challenge, and of all the dangers and difficulties that surround the sexual encounter. The sexual activity of the 'normal' masturbator is, primarily, a re-creation in memory or imagination of the act towards which his body tends. The 'perverted' masturbator, by contrast, uses images as a substitute for the real thing: realistic representations of the body, purged of the dangers and difficulties presented by the human soul. (Sexual Desire 318-19)

In other words, a "collector consciousness," by making the other an object, perverts everything decent about sexual love. Miranda will say something very close to this when Clegg asks her to pose for nude photographs. "You're breaking every decent human law, every decent human relationship, every decent thing that's ever happened between your sex and mine" (114).

Carol Barnum, in a Jungian interpretation of The Collector, offers what is a very insightful discussion of all the characters, including, Clegg. In holding fast to his dream version of Miranda and refusing to see her as a person, Clegg is what Barnum calls "anima-fixated"(44). Barnum believes that Miranda is Clegg's ideal feminine archetype, and that Clegg is frustrated in his attempts to make his idealization real. While this sounds plausible enough within a Jungian context, it is perhaps a little too deterministic within the context of the novel. Fowles's point in all his fiction is that we possess a certain amount of free will. If we consider Clegg's monomania, a nearer truth would be that he will not see Miranda as she is. Clegg's desire is to have Miranda not as a person, but as a thing. Therefore, he does not want to make her real. This point is made by Robert Campbell when he says of Clegg, "He won't, refuses,

to see her as a conscious subject who is constituted as a subject of her world; instead she is, for him, only an object in his" (quoted in Nodelman, 334).

Although it must be clear by now that Clegg is thoroughly inauthentic, and further that he fails to grow existentially or morally, Fowles does show that Clegg is capable of some insight, even if he is unable to recognize the value of that insight and act upon it. One instance of this insight occurs in the passage where Miranda is suggesting to Clegg the uses to which he could put his money. Miranda, recognizing through his butterfly collection that Clegg is a collector, suggests to him that with her tutelage he could learn to collect paintings. And Clegg, with surprising insight--considering how thoroughly inauthentic he has been in so much else--reflects shortly after.

> What she was asking for was someone different to me, someone I could never be. For instance, all that night after she said I could collect pictures, I thought about it; I dreamed myself collecting pictures, having a big house with famous pictures hanging on the walls, and people coming to see them. Miranda there, too of course. But I knew all the time it was silly: I'd never collect anything but butterflies. Pictures don't mean anything to me. I wouldn't be doing it because I wanted, so there wouldn't be any point. She could never see that.
> (80, the emphasis is mine)

We must conclude that, for Clegg, this is insight on an enormous scale. In essence, Clegg understands at least one aspect of what it means to be authentic. He understands that one must be committed sincerely to any endeavor. It is part of the tragedy in The Collector that Clegg is never able to employ this insight in his own life. Nor, for that matter, is he able to see these words and this truth as they apply to Miranda. In her situation she can never love Clegg because she would not be loving

because she wanted to. For Miranda's part, while it is true that she never does accept Clegg as he is, in her defense we can say that she is equally unwilling to accept the person that she has discovered herself to be. Ironically, when she tells Clegg that he must kill off his old life, she is articulating the cure that, in her confinement, she herself will undergo.

Miranda tries to understand Clegg, not only who he is, but who he was, and who he might become. We remember that Miranda asks Clegg about his family. She wants Clegg to talk about them because she wants to try to understand him better. She even asks Clegg to read her a letter he has received from his aunt. Although in this episode she does make harsh judgements about his aunt, and although many of those judgements reveal Miranda's own prejudices and limitations, her ultimate motive is to help Clegg.

One very sincere moment occurs when Miranda gives Clegg the novel The Catcher in the Rye. When she asks him his opinion of the book, Clegg's response reveals that he has missed the point. Miranda's disappointment is clearly evident. "I gave you that book to read," she says, "because I thought you would feel identified with him. You're a Holden Caulfield. He doesn't fit anywhere and you don't" (219). Although we see Miranda often "lame-duck" Clegg, and although she does admit that escape is never very far from her mind, these moments by no means outweigh those times when her actions show her to be sincere in wanting to help Clegg in spite of everything. In reaching out to Clegg, Miranda is transcending her prejudiced cultural conditioning and acting upon a deeper motive that I have called a moral impulse. This is the Heraclitean insight, echoed by every great existentialist and humanist thinker from St. Augustine through to Jung and Maslow. When once we

begin the journey into selfhood, we end that journey with a moral awareness that takes us beyond ourselves.

Miranda does understand Clegg, for from the very beginning, Miranda has correctly identified Clegg's problem when she thinks that "it must be sex "(123). To say, as does Perry Nodelman, that Clegg primarily desires "spiritual love" (341) from Miranda is to mistake what Clegg says he wants for what Clegg does. Clegg is a young man who is profoundly sexually repressed. In The Collector , this fact is never very far from the narrative. It runs through all the nice/naughty allusions, through Clegg's "books," and through Clegg's photography. When Miranda tries to seduce Clegg, to teach him that sex is another form of communication, of play, she is making a great sacrifice. She is giving herself not only physically, but emotionally. Clegg, having been brought to the very center of his weakness, cannot bear to face it. Rather than risk the sex act with Miranda, he will, a little later, ask her to pose for pornographic photographs instead. When, a few days after this episode, Miranda identifies Clegg for what he is, "a dirty little masturbating worm"(116), she follows this statement with another ("Oh, God, you're not a man"[117],) that accurately intuits Clegg's own deepest fears. While there can be little doubt that Miranda is being insensitive when she says this, she nevertheless has accurately located the source of Clegg's problem. Clegg is afraid to risk himself for fear that he will fail, for fear that he might not be "a man." It is only the static, lifeless photographs (not surprisingly he likes the ones best that cut off her face) with which Clegg can deal because they do not require interaction with a real, live person. With a real, live woman, Clegg is reminded of his failures, his inadequacies, and his fears.

From the earliest introduction of Miranda right up to the point where she lies near death, Fowles shows us a human being who is struggling to grow, existentially and ethically. Miranda tells us almost as much at the beginning of her diary: "I love life so passionately, I never knew how much I wanted to live before. If I get out of this, I shall never be the same (124). Perry Nodelman, in an argument that at times seems to have been written merely to offer a crosscurrent to the critical tide, claims that this and other statements Miranda makes are clichés, and reflect not her sincerity but her shallowness, her "snobbish disdain for just about everything "(335). Aside from the fact that such an interpretation seems unfair, it seems to me that such an attitude is not consistent with the context of the story as we have it. We have a young girl who has been brutally kidnapped, and who has a reasonable fear that she may die at the hands of the madman who could do such a thing. Surely we must read the above words--if perhaps clichéd in the quotidian world--as achingly sincere in her present, fearsome one.

Miranda begins to change very soon. Early in her diary she says, "Everything in my life seemed fine" (125). This is the kind of passage that those who wish to show Miranda's shallow complacency are most often apt to quote. But in the very same diary entry, the first diary entry, she begins by questioning her belief in God. "I don't know if I believe in God. . . . But praying makes things easier" (126). What is immediately evident in the voice (and the thinking behind the voice) is its balance. It is indicative of a mind that is used to carrying on an internal critical dialogue. This capacity for internal critical debate, for the weighing and balancing of motives (those of the self and those of others) is, it would seem, a precondition for self-growth. This again, is the Heraclitean

insight necessary before a person can move beyond the self. While we see Miranda engage in this debate from the very beginning of her diary, we never see Clegg do so. The fact that Miranda carries on an internal debate, believing first one thing, then something else, is in fact the best argument against those critics who would say Miranda does not grow. Miranda's growth is not linear, unendingly upward, or without fault. Fowles takes great care to show us that Miranda's thinking, her interior life (as revealed to us in her diary passages), ebbs and flows, moves forward then retreats. Her process of growth and understanding is, in short, natural. We none of us learn in a perfectly linear fashion. We change our minds, our ideas, and our learned conventions in a halting, grudging fashion. Thus, Miranda can say on one page of her diary, the following: "I'm so superior to him. I know this sounds wickedly conceited. But I am . And so it's Ladymont and Boadicaea and *noblesse oblige* all over again" (137). Then, on the next page, she can change her mind: "I'm so far from everything. . . . From what I want to be"(138).

Another instance where Miranda displays this critical self-dialogue is when she shows Clegg various drawings of fruit in the attempt to teach him about art. She reflects on this failed attempt shortly afterwards. "My fault. I was showing off. How could he see the magic and importance of art (not my art, art) when I was so vain"(139)? Once again we see Miranda's capacity for self-criticism. Nodelman argues that we can no more trust Miranda's diary than we can Clegg's account, but to arrive at this statement ignores too much (332 passim). It must be clear that the element of self-criticism evident in Miranda and so obviously lacking in Clegg gives us sufficient grounds to trust the one record more than the other. In one of her many diary entries about G.P., Miranda concludes,

"everything's changing. . .I'm growing up so quickly down here. Like a mushroom. Or is it that I've lost my sense of balance" (165)? It should be evident from the discussion so far that the case is just the opposite: Miranda is just beginning to find her balance. She is undergoing the movement from an understanding of the self to an understanding beyond the self. She is learning to balance her selfish desires against a growing moral impulse that teaches her of the need to reach out to others.

In spite of those critics who claim that Miranda does not grow (Allen, Kennedy, Nodelman), I have argued that Miranda clearly exhibits behavior that leads to a deeper understanding of both self and other. In Miranda's repeated attempts to teach Clegg, she is reaching out to him. This kind of action is quite different from what we could have expected of her before her confinement. Both my argument thus far and the growing critical consensus on this question must be taken as strong evidence that Miranda does in fact grow.

There are no doubt many ways in which we can detect growth or change in fictional characters. As readers, we bring with us to the work certain expectations. While it may be desirable that we suspend these expectations, at least provisionally, nonetheless they do exist and eventually come to the fore. Another way we detect growth is by comparing one character with another. The Collector allows us to do this quite efficiently, since it is structured in such a way that we enter into both characters' minds, and, as it were, into their thought processes and choices. Thus, we cannot help but judge. Still another way is to compare characters against themselves as they evolve over the course of a story.

By the time we come to read Miranda's diary, we are able to measure her growth in all of the above ways. It can be argued that the structure of The Collector is such that, while we are able to measure Miranda against Clegg from the very beginning of her diary, we cannot measure Clegg against Miranda until after we have read Miranda's entire account. Our initial judgement of Clegg then is without the ambiguity in Miranda's character that might mitigate in some way our utter revulsion of Clegg. Because throughout his account Clegg is concerned with justifying his actions rather than discovering what they might mean, we conclude that Clegg fails utterly to grow. On the other hand, because we can measure Miranda against Clegg, we are even more aware of Miranda's growth in relation to Clegg's stasis. But most importantly for the purposes here, we are also able to measure Miranda against herself. I will now argue that she grows considerably over the course of her confinement.

The way to do this, of course, is to record accurately the distance she changes by looking at her thinking as it evolves over the course of her confinement. This, however, would be exhaustive. Rather, let us look at a few episodes that clearly show Miranda's growing awareness of both life's limitations and her responsibilities. There are three really significant ways in which we can measure Miranda's progress: her attitudes toward God, toward sex, and toward community.

Before we examine these three themes in Miranda's diary, there is one point, perhaps a bit esoteric, that will frame our discussion. At a point in her diary, Miranda mentions the following. "We've been playing the records he [Clegg] bought. Bartók's Music for Percussion and Celesta" (212). This piece of music is sometimes described by the word

"palindrome". A palindrome is a word or poem reading the same backwards as forwards. In music, it signifies a piece constructed in the same way, more or less loosely. In a 1937 essay on the Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, Bartók used the term "*Brucken* form" (bridge form) to describe the palindromic structure of the third movement. "The essence of this form, which customarily follows the five-component scheme ABCBA, is that the fourth and fifth sections are not just variations on the second and first but are recast to produce something aesthetically conclusive. For this structure, containing so much quasi-geometrical symmetry, is not static: it does not return to its origins but progresses towards a cathartic outcome. Thus the nature of the central section is all important" (Groves 2: 214).

What is important for us is the emphasis upon the central movement being the "bridge," after which we find not simple retrograde or simple palindrome, but a new progression. Perhaps Fowles's placement of this allusion to Bartók was entirely arbitrary, but it is fascinating nonetheless that its placement is almost exactly halfway in Miranda's diary. Is the central part of her diary a bridge, after which we are to expect a new transformation? Discussion of the three above-noted themes--God, sex, and community--seems to bear this out, for in every theme we have a reversal of Miranda's thinking, a reversal that signifies a maturation in her understanding.*

Perry Nodelman has felt that the fact that Miranda prays to a God that she does not believe in should be counted as a limitation in her

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* Miranda's diary begins on page 123. The Bartók allusion is on page 212. Miranda's diary ends on page 279. All Miranda's transformations begin after page 212.

character (343). Yet surely it is obvious in the novel, and if we count what Fowles says in The Aristos , that Miranda's questioning and groping about such an enormous issue is to her credit. We need only look at the passage to place it in its proper context. It is interesting to note as well what it is for which she prays.

> Every night I do something I haven't done for years. I lie and pray. I don't kneel, I know God despises kneelers. I lie and ask him to comfort M and D and Minny, and Caroline who must feel so guilty and everyone else." (125)

She even prays that God help Clegg ("this misery who has me under his power") before she asks for help for herself. And after telling us she prayed, she herself tells us of her insincerity:

> I don't know if I believe in God. I prayed to him furiously in the van when I thought I was going to die (that's a proof against, I hear G. P. saying). But praying makes things easier. (126)

Only the most uncharitable reader (or one whose concern would be to prove Miranda a hypocrite) would, under the circumstances of her confinement, see this as Miranda's insincerity. Further proof yet that this passage bespeaks her merit rather than otherwise is presaged in her final thoughts in the first diary entry. "It's all bits and pieces. I can't concentrate. I've thought so many things, and now I can't think of one" (126). Though we do not know that Miranda will undergo significant changes at the point when she says these words, we can see upon reflection that they are tragically ironic in the sense that it will be as a result of her confinement that she will be able to concentrate, and come to terms with her ideas about God.

It is twenty-five pages after the Bartók allusion that Miranda resolves her mind concerning God. "I've been sitting here and thinking

about God. I don't think I believe in God anymore. . . . What I feel I know now is that God doesn't intervene. . . . I see that we have to live as if there is no God" (239). She utters Fowles's credo here, but the important thing is that she chooses: she has been able to concentrate ("I've felt cleaner, less muddled, less blind" (239). This quite clearly shows development in what Kerry McSweeney has called the "metaphysical dimension to her growth" (135).

The same halting and grudging development is evident in what I call the sex theme. In his treatment of this theme Fowles draws both characters into one "climactic episode," and in the blatant juxtaposition we are able to see Miranda's change all the more clearly, set, as it is, against Clegg's stasis.

It is not too far into Clegg's memoir that we are shown that his only contact with the sexual is through magazines, those voyeuristic occasions while he is out collecting specimens, and his one night with a prostitute. At an early point in the novel Clegg confesses in his account that he fears he can never say or do the right thing (4). It is clear that his fear of failure, while no doubt in some way responsible for the stunting in other areas of his life, is responsible as well for his stunted sexual life. Fowles suggests that Clegg's neurosis in this area is compounded by what Miranda calls that "weird male thing. . . . They sulk if you don't give, and hate you when you do" (262), what Karen Lever has identified as the "madonna/whore complex" (90). There can be no doubt that there is something of this neurosis in Clegg. Moreover, our earlier comments about Clegg as a 'perverted masturbator' carry much truth here as well. That is, it is not really Miranda that Clegg wants at all but only a substitute. Yet might we not wonder whether his failure with Miranda is

simply another resort to convention in order to disguise his fear of life in almost any manifestation? We should remember all the occasions in the novel when Clegg has resorted to or relied upon cliché in order to disguise both his ignorance of something and his fear of his ignorance. The episode that shows this best--although it is not the clearest--is Miranda's attempted seduction of Clegg.

Most commentators feel that Clegg is sexually impotent. One can either do it or one cannot, and ultimately, Clegg cannot. I cannot agree with this interpretation. Perry Nodelman makes a most useful point in an article I have referred to previously, when he suggests that Clegg is not physically impotent at all. We know he is not impotent, argues Nodelman, because in obeying the dim notion he has that a gentleman controls himself right up to the moment (as a virgin Clegg has no conception of what this might mean), he stands behind a curtain to hide his arousal. This accords with the clinical definition of impotence, which is the inability to achieve arousal in the presence of another. Clegg does achieve arousal in the presence of Miranda. If, then, Clegg is not physically impotent, why is he unable to consummate his passion for Miranda? Clearly, it must be because Clegg is psychologically and mentally impotent. In other words, Clegg's real problem is his crippling fear. That this indeed is Clegg's real problem is borne out by the events following Miranda's attempted seduction. Clegg's problem stems not from the fact the he is impotent, but from his fear that he is impotent. This fear extends, as I have suggested, beyond the sexual.

In contrast to Clegg's unhealthy perversions, Miranda's attitudes towards sex, although ill-informed and immature, are representative of her age, her social class, and her experience; what she repeatedly refers

to as "the Ladymont me." As Kerry McSweeney rightly points out, by the end of her diary Miranda has become very different "from the trendy twenty-five-year-old whom Clegg kidnapped" (134). Although Miranda finds thoughts of sex almost as abhorrent to her sensibilities as does Clegg, Fowles takes care to show us that Miranda transcends these early attitudes.

We see this done through Miranda's re-appraisal of her relationship with the painter George Paston. When Miranda first begins to talk about G.P., we are made aware of her faults, her silliness, and her immaturity. At this early stage, G.P. is important to Miranda less for himself than for his flattering interest in her. In her silly, school-girlish way, she still finds the thought of sex with him abhorrent. She tells herself that it is the age difference. Yet, it is not very long before she amends this evaluation. But it is an episode after the Bartók allusion that is most indicative of her growing maturity.

The episode is the last meeting between Miranda and G.P., after she has come back from France and he from the Hebrides. G.P. tells her that he cannot see her anymore, that his peace of mind requires that he never see her again. The reason, he tells her, is that he is in love with her. In the following pages, Miranda analyses her feelings, revealing the following thoughts. "I thought I knew I didn't love him. I'd won that game. And what has happened since?" (233). On the next page she says, "All that time I kept thinking, do I love him? Then, obviously, there was so much doubt, I couldn't. And now I have to write down what I feel now. Because I have changed again. I know it. I feel it" (234). What is interesting is the way in which her transformation takes place. Miranda does not deliberately try to see G.P. in a new light. It is as a result of the

insight she gains into herself, into her ideas and into what is newly important to her that allows her to begin to think of G.P. in a new way. Fowles's handling of this is masterful. Miranda's acceptance of G.P. is symbolic of her growing moral awareness and her maturing vision of life.

Before we leave the discussion of the sex theme, I want to shed light on what we might call a shadow discussion of the sex theme. Fowles has Miranda relate a conversation she has had with her sister Minny while they were on a summer holiday in Spain. The discussion centers on Miranda's boyfriend Piers, and about what a shame it is that he has a beautiful body but a rotten mind. We must ask ourselves in what way this seemingly trite discussion is relevant to the story. I believe that in this episode Fowles is making a statement about art. After some jesting, Minny, offers Miranda the following words: "Bodies beat minds" (214). She is here being purposefully ironic, for what she really means, and what Miranda sees, is that they both value minds over bodies. In her reflection, which is her diary, Miranda realizes that she could never love someone for just the body; for her it must be, "minds beat bodies." If we let these words run free a little from their tenor, the vehicle might say something about art. In both life and art, content matters as much as or perhaps more than form. What we say and what we do should in some way ennoble life. We can hear in this the not too distant echo of a moral prescription. Miranda's ultimate acceptance of G.P., ("I shall be hurt, battered and buffeted. But it will be like being in a gale of light, after this black hole" [266]), is symbolic of Miranda's maturation in the sex theme.

Although I am going to close this discussion with some final remarks about the community theme, it should be obvious that much of

this chapter has, in one way and another, been a discussion about this theme.

Miranda, from the earliest period of her confinement, seeks to teach Clegg. According to the Heraclitean paradigm I have been suggesting, this behavior of Miranda's typifies an outward movement into community that is arrived at only after an inward movement toward selfhood. In her attempts to teach Clegg, Miranda displays a burgeoning awareness of the moral impulse. Through her discussion of books, of drawings and paintings, of music, and of ideas, Miranda attempts to reach out to Clegg. Tragically for them both, Clegg will not be reached by any of these means. In a final attempt to bridge the gulf between them that she has not been able to bridge by any other means, Miranda decides through self-sacrifice to try to teach Clegg the difference between love and sex. It should not escape us that in the very act of doing so, she is teaching herself. We might see in the climax of this episode the climax of both the the sex theme and the community theme.

Miranda, with a mixture of pity, charity and responsibility (this last to herself as much as to Clegg), makes the physical offering of herself: she tries physically to bridge the gulf between them that she has not been able to bridge mentally. This point is absolutely certain if we have been sensitive to her growing maturity. She confronts all her own fears about sex in order to help Clegg confront his own about the same. While doing so, she reaches out to Clegg as never before. As she says herself, "Nobody could ever understand how much I put into yesterday. The effort of giving, of risking, of understanding" (262). We see Miranda succeed while in the same moment we see Clegg fail. Clegg, fearful that he does not know what to do, what to feel, or how to act, ultimately breaks away

from contact with Miranda, and just as earlier in the novel when he lies in order to hide from the responsibility of her capture, he lies again (telling the story about the war psychiatrist) to hide the truth of his crippling fear. Clegg is not so much physically impotent as he is mentally impotent.

In all the themes, the God theme, the sex theme, and the community theme, Miranda's new attitudes follow the Bartók quotation. They all change dramatically and are resolved, as Bartók stated they should be, in an aesthetic conclusiveness that does not merely invert what went before, but presents something new. Miranda, journeying into selfhood, has recognized and acted upon the moral impulse to move beyond herself. The great tragedy of The Collector is that Clegg has not.

Chapter Three: The Magus

I went in search of myself.

It belongs to all men to know themselves and to think well.

Heraclitus, XXVIII, XXIV

The Magus is one of those novels that conform to Nabokov's widely known dictum: it is a novel that cannot be read, only re-read. It is hard to imagine even a very good reader being able to assimilate all that there is in the novel in only one reading. Ultimately, the myriad stories and masques, allusions and metaphors become too much, and the reader is simply overwhelmed. Perhaps this is one kind of reading experience that The Magus seeks to provide, for one of the themes in the novel concerns the destruction of a naive belief in a completely ordered reality and the need to accept life as more contingent than many of us would like to believe.

Yet anyone who has had either the leisure or necessity to reread The Magus soon begins to be aware that there is some sense of coherency to all the various stories in the novel, and further that as these various episodes begin to cohere, they add considerably to the overall meaning of the novel in general, and to the process of enlightenment of the main protagonist in particular.

While much of the early criticism on The Magus concentrated upon exegesis of the many events of the Phraxos section of the novel, recent criticism has tended to view these events with greater reference to the relationship between Nicholas and Alison. Both Kerry McSweeney (123) and Simon Loveday (29 passim) have emphasized that the most important story in The Magus is the story of Nicholas and Alison's relationship. I concur with this emphasis. I shall therefore look not only at the ways in which Nicholas is inauthentic, but also at the way Conchis's four stories influence his development, and lead him, by the end of the story, to appreciate Alison. This is the Heraclitean paradigm:

Nicholas makes the inward movement first, and then gains the awareness to make the outward movement.

When we first meet Nicholas, he is the epitome of the inauthentic person. His little learning has given him the assumption of belonging to a unique caste. Not only is Nicholas not very authentic; he has accumulated a number of attitudes and poses which effectively prevent him from achieving any kind of real meaning in his life. Fowles underscores Nicholas's inauthenticity by involving him romantically with someone of very opposite character. Alison Kelly, the Australian girl that Nicholas meets in the first part of the novel, functions not only as a contrast to Nicholas but as a kind of test as well: ultimately, we measure Nicholas's growth by the degree that he is able to connect with her.

There is an important point central to the discussion of Nicholas's authenticity. While much of what Nicholas needs to learn is conveyed to us in the language and concepts of contemporary existentialism, we must not see in this, as have some critics, an uncritical endorsement of modern existentialism. Nicholas's misunderstanding of modern existentialist doctrine can in fact be seen as a criticism of both the danger inherent in the modern expression of existentialism and its limitations. The modern existentialist expression is too unbalanced; it emphasizes the expression of the self at the expense of or without regard to the other. In this there is the danger of falling prey to the very real narcissistic abyss that opens before us. Too few critics have sufficiently seen The Magus from this perspective. This is especially true concerning the concept of freedom. David Walker is almost alone in not identifying Fowles's very real concerns about the nature of freedom with the kinds of freedom explored in the novel, especially Conchis's freedom. Conchis's expression of

freedom in the Eleutheria episode must not be seen as normative, which is the way it has often been discussed. Conchis sacrifices the lives of eighty hostages and even risks his own life for the principle of absolute freedom. Should we not question the foundation of such an absolute principle? Conchis himself claims that the weight of those eighty lives has come back to him again and again. I suggest that they should, and that, equally, they should weigh upon the mind of the reader. A statement by Fowles himself in the preface to the revised edition of The Magus seems to suggest that Conchis's kind of freedom is far less unequivocal than has been presumed. He says, "I do not defend Conchis's decision at the execution, but I defend the reality of the dilemma" (10).

The Magus, then, is not so much an endorsement of its many themes but a forum where values such as freedom and reason, and concepts of self and other can be explored. The Magus is as much a journey for Fowles's readers as it is his inauthentic characters. The novel teaches us to balance the needs of the self against the needs of others. In my discussion of The Magus I will show that Nicholas moves toward a greater understanding of the need for this balance, first by understanding himself--curbing his individual and selfish caprice--and then by understanding his need to go beyond the self, shown by his desire to reconnect with Alison.

Nicholas is introduced to us as a middle-class young man who, with his Oxbridge education and his social and cultural refinement, quite plainly sees himself as one of the Few in human society, a member of the "dominant hundred-thousand" (16). Behind Nicholas's conception is the distinction between the Few and the Many. We will see in the person of

Nicholas proof of Fowles's injunction that "the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals" (The Aristos 9-10, the emphasis is mine). Socially and intellectually, Nicholas may belong to the Few, but morally, as he quickly reveals to us in his behaviour, he is of the Many. In this he is similar to Miranda. In order to become a better person, he too must kill much of his past, transcend his "smog of opinions" (The Aristos 53). Yet there is a difference between Miranda and Nicholas, and this difference underscores the danger and the difficulty of killing the past. Miranda, as she begins to gain awareness, is able to recall from memory the lessons that G. P. had been trying to teach her. Nicholas has not yet met his G. P.--he has not yet met Conchis. As The Magus opens, Nicholas tells us that he had killed his family in a psychological sense, eradicated the opinions and conventions that they stood for, but he does not know what to replace them with. As he says early on, "I had got away from what I hated, but I hadn't found where I loved, and so I pretended that there was nowhere to love" (17).

In the absence of meaningful values, Nicholas makes a value out of style. This strategy is very evident in the short chapter in which he recounts for us something of his personal history. Of his days as a student at Oxford, he tells us that he tried to create an identity.

> I was strong on the discipline in vogue.
> At least, along with a group of fellow odd men out at Magdalen, I thought I was so. We formed a small club called *Les Hommes Revoltes* , drank very dry sherry, and (as a protest against those shabby duffle-coated last years of the 'forties) wore dark-grey suits and black ties for our meetings. There we argued about being and nothingness and called a certain type of inconsequential behavior 'existentialist'. Less enlightened people would have called it capricious or just plain selfish; but we didn't understand

> that the heroes, or anti-heroes, of the French existentialist novels we read were not supposed to be realistic. We tried to imitate them, mistaking metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behaviour. We duly felt the right anguishes. Most of us, true to the eternal dandyism of Oxford, simply wanted to look different. In our club, we did.(17)

The first aspect about this passage that we should notice is the tone. The story is told by Nicholas retrospectively, and the tone reveals that as he speaks these words he has considerable insight into the person he used to be. Ironically, Nicholas was thoroughly inauthentic in his attempt to be authentic, because as he tells us, he had confused "descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behaviour." Nicholas is acting a role, pretending to be something he is not. He has developed a persona that allows him to feel that he has an identity.

Let us compare this aspect of Nicholas with a passage from The Aristos. In that book Fowles says,

> The nemo is a man's sense of his own futility and ephemerality. . . . I can counter my nemo by conflicting, by adopting my own special style of life. I build up an elaborate unique *persona* , I defy the mass. I am the bohemian, the dandy, the outsider, the hippy. (49-50)

In light of this passage, it appears that Nicholas may be trying to defeat his sense of the nemo. This is confirmed by another passage where, once again, Nicholas retrospectively reveals that he has emphasized form over content.

> At school I got a small reputation as a wartime aesthete and cynic. . . . I acquired expensive habits and affected manners. I got a third-class degree and a first-class illusion: that I was a poet. But nothing could have been less poetic than my seeing-through-all boredom with life in general and with making a living in particular. I was too green to know that all cynicism masks a failure to cope--an impotence, in short, and that to despise all effort is the greatest of all. . . . In truth I was not a cynic by nature; only by revolt. (16-17)

We gain several important insights into Nicholas's character from this passage. Firstly, Nicholas's impotence derives from a place similar to Clegg's: it is an impotence derived in part by fear. Nicholas is a young man who does not know where he is going, and to hide this fact and his anxiety about it, he adopts a pose, a mask. Nicholas claims as well that he was an aesthete and a cynic. The word "aesthete" is of course related to the word "aesthetic." The attitudes of both the aesthete and the cynic require of the bearer to affect a style. One must strike all the right poses and engage in particular, almost ritualized behavior. Ironically, acting within such confines proscribes the very thing that Nicholas claims, as an *Homme Revolté* , he possesses: freedom. Nicholas's existence is an exaggeration of style, and his style is not who he is but his illusions of who he is. In existentialist terms, Nicholas is inauthentic. Yet we must not conclude that in Nicholas's overly-aesthetic sensibility the novel is condemning the aesthetic per se. Frederick M. Holmes, in "Art, Truth, and John Fowles's The Magus," perceptively argues this issue. "Urfe's bad faith," asserts Holmes, "is the result not of a substitution of art for life but of a failure to integrate the various interpretive strategies for making sense of life" (51). One aspect of Nicholas's inauthenticity, then, lies not in his aestheticizing of life but in his compartmentalizing of life. Nicholas's conception of the aesthetic is too narrow, very near that of the "homme sensual," and therefore excludes the moral. Nicholas's aesthetic posturing is irresponsible. In this state, Nicholas falsifies both his experience of the aesthetic and of reality.

Nicholas's character, then, is confirmed for us from the beginning. When we begin to see how he treats Alison in their relationship--as someone or something at a remove--we are little surprised. An episode

that shows Nicholas's inauthentic behaviour in the way we have discussed comes very early in the novel. After having briefly met each other at a party, Nicholas and Alison spend the night together, and must awkwardly face each other in the morning. The conversation reveals much about both characters, but particularly Alison, who initiates real communication (as she had done the previous night : "Let's cut corners. To hell with literature. You're clever and I'm beautiful. Now let's talk about who we really are" [26]), with the following:

> 'You don't know what it's like waking up with a man you didn't even know this time yesterday. It's losing something. Not just what all girls lose.'
> 'Or gaining something.'
> 'God, what can we gain. Tell me.'
> 'Experience. Pleasure.' (30)

Alison has personalized the act of making love so that, for her, to wake up facing someone she does not really know--literally facing a depersonalized situation--causes her anxiety about what kind of person she is. Nicholas, who has a history of depersonalizing his love affairs, sees what has happened between them in objective terms: it was "experience," it was "pleasurable." Nicholas objectifies even human contact and in doing so diminishes genuine meaning by pushing his experience into the aesthetic realm.

Again we see Nicholas existing under the influence of the life-style.

Alison, unlike Nicholas, makes no declaration of life-style to show that she is authentic, is genuinely authentic. Nicholas's lack of knowledge about himself and his illusions about everything else will prevent him from achieving any kind of meaningful relationship with Alison.

This inability of Nicholas's to feel, or rather his habit of not allowing himself to feel, is not unknown to Alison. After having attended Carne's film *Quai des Brumes* , Alison begins to cry, and then cries once again when they are back at their apartment. She senses Nicholas's disapproval and remarks:

> 'You're not me. You can't feel like I feel.'
> 'I can feel.'
> 'No, you can't. You just choose not to feel or something, and everything's fine.' (34)

This is one of many occasions where Alison shows that she knows Nicholas better than he knows himself. The point is that Nicholas does not feel.

When Nicholas does have feelings, he is either unwilling to act upon them or unable to understand them. He shows his unwillingness to act upon his feelings in several scenes where he and Alison are discussing their future plans.

> One day she said, 'I've got to go for my interview tomorrow.'
> 'Do you want to go?'
> 'Do you want me to go?'
> 'It doesn't mean anything. You haven't got to make up your mind.'
> 'It'll do me good if I get accepted. Just to know I'm accepted.'
> She changed the subject; and I could have refused to change the subject. But I didn't. (36-37, the emphasis is mine)

Nicholas is aware of the implications that Alison's interview has for their relationship. But he refuses to confront the real issue of whether they should make a commitment to each other because he is unwilling to make such a commitment. This is confirmed again shortly after.

> I asked her what she'd been doing while I was away.
> 'Writing a letter.'
> 'To them?'

> 'Yes.'
> 'Saying?'
> 'What do you think I said?'
> 'You accepted.'
> There was a difficult pause. I knew what she wanted me to say, but I couldn't say it. I felt as a sleepwalker must feel when he wakes up at the end of the roof parapet. I wasn't ready for marriage, for settling down. I wasn't psychologically close enough to her; something I couldn't define, obscure, monstrous, lay between us, and this obscure monstrous thing emanated from her, not from me. (37)

Nicholas refuses to admit to himself that the "monstrous thing" lying between them is love, never mind admit that it is something that he feels as well. He gives himself away a little later, when, referring to Alison's obviously false but game attempt to be joyful about the news confirming his teaching job, he says, "I was too much of a coward to stop and think why I was secretly hurt by her refusing to take it seriously" (38). Nicholas's cowardice is the cowardice to face up to the reality of his feelings. Nicholas is aware that their relationship has become serious, that Alison loves him, but because he mistakenly thinks love violates the code of behaviour of the existential anti-hero, he has quelled any similar feelings he might have had himself. In other words, in a cowardly and inauthentic way, he avoids the issue of "what next?" in his relationship with Alison.

The episode that shows Nicholas's inauthenticity better than any other is that which depicts him and Alison at the Tate gallery.

> Alison was slightly leaning against me, holding my hand . . . [and] . . . I suddenly had a feeling that we were one body, one person, even there; that if she disappeared it would have been as if I had lost half of myself. A terrible deathlike feeling, which anyone less cerebral and self-absorbed than I was then would have realized was simply love. I thought it was desire. I drove her straight home and tore her clothes off. (35)

Not only does Nicholas not understand or recognize his feelings of love, but he mistakes love for sex. Nicholas's confusion of these two feelings, grounded in his narcissism, prevents him from recognizing Alison's true worth. Later in the story, this same confusion will prevent him from understanding his feelings for Julie (selfishly narcissistic), this time mistaking sex for love.

The final point to note about Nicholas in the context of his inauthenticity is his attitude toward mystery. It is instructive to recall Nicholas's early attitudes toward mystery. The first mention of mystery occurs early in the novel, when he decides to leave the school at which he has been teaching in East Anglia.

> It poured with rain the day I left. But I was filled with excitement, a strange exuberant sense of taking wing. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery. (19)

The main reason he leaves, Nicholas tells us, is that he is surrounded by an atmosphere of failure and people who project an aura of defeat. Almost offhandedly, he mentions that there was also "a girl I was tired of" (18). While we cannot altogether dismiss his other reasons, we need only consider his later treatment of Alison to suspect, upon reflection, that Nicholas is really running away from fear: fear of both the girl and what he might become. Nicholas alleviates this fear by seeking out the new, the virgin experience.

It is not really mystery that Nicholas seeks, but a selfish pursuit of the new, and a running away from the old, the known. We again encounter the same optimism after he has, on Bourani, met Conchis. "The truth" he says, "was that I was full of a green stir. Conchis was no

more than the chance agent, the event that had come at the right time; just as in the old days I might, after a celibate term at Oxford, have met a girl and begun an affair with her, I had begun something exciting with him" (102). Again, we see that Nicholas surrounds mystery with a sense of benevolent adventure. We must see in his actions not only a selfishness, but a smug complacency about mystery, especially when the mystery is under his control. Nicholas always looks favorably upon mystery when he is looking at it from solid ground. In his relationships with women, he either falsifies his feelings, or, as in the case of Alison, refuses even to admit to his real feelings. Nicholas withholds his feelings, shifting the solitary heart, keeping power in order to keep control. With Conchis, he initially enjoys the mysteries with a sense that the mounting of the illusions is a flattering tribute.

As the events on Bourani become more elaborate (and to Nicholas less benevolent), he becomes less sure that he is in control. This sense of not being in control brings out Nicholas's true feelings before mystery: he, like humankind, is fearful of mystery. In fact, Nicholas is so ill at ease that, when the events of Conchis's masques become too much for his reason, he reacts time and again with aggression. Nicholas continually wants to know what is behind everything on Bourani, what it all means. He wants always to know why. "I'd enjoy it all the more," he says to Conchis, "if I knew what it all meant" (185). Rationalism seeks to destroy not only mystery but hazard as well. Nicholas clings to his reason because he wants his absolutes. In this, Fowles suggests that Nicholas is very similar to many people. We enjoy mystery as long as we feel that we have some control over it; that it is in bounds. But mystery, by its nature, is full of possibility, full of hazard.

They are at times, almost the same. "Unknowing, or hazard, is as vital to man as water," Fowles says in The Aristos (27). Nicholas's insistent rationalism, and his false notions of mystery, are aspects of his personality that Conchis tries, through his Godgame, to amend. The theme of reason versus mystery focuses much of the action in The Magus, and becomes one of the cardinal lessons in Conchis's four life-stories.

In talking about Nicholas's inauthenticity, I have discussed it primarily by looking at Nicholas's actions on their own. We might also contrast his inauthenticity with Alison's authenticity. One episode where this contrast is very clear is in the narration of their respective moments of existential angst.

In the first few months of his teaching term on the island of Phraxos, Nicholas becomes despondent and feels that his life is worthless. The primary reason for his despondency is the realization that he is not a poet. But though this is perhaps his most recent failure, he brings to rollcall many other failures that contribute to his despair: his syphilis, his failed past romances, and all the death that has marked his family. In high dramatic fashion, Nicholas goes alone into the Greek hills with the notion of committing suicide. The entire scene has an intense literary quality. At first Nicholas places the loaded gun against his eye, methodically rehearsing the gruesome act. Next, with the gun unloaded, he tests the firing mechanism. Once again he loads the gun and points it at his head. The gunbarrel itself becomes the "black O" of his non-existence. With the gun pointed at his head, he waits for the black moment. As he waits, he hears the siren of an Athens boat that recalls the earlier voice of the young peasant girl singing. Ultimately, Nicholas

waits too long; the moment is lost, or rather it is transformed from an existential moment to a literary one.

> I waited for the will, the black moment, to come to raise my feet and kick down; and I could not. All the time I felt I was being watched, that I was not alone, that I was putting on an act for the benefit of someone. . . . I was trying to commit not a moral action, but a fundamentally aesthetic one; to do something that would end my life sensationally, significantly, consistently" (62, the emphasis is mine).

Even Nicholas's existential angst is theatrical, a mere pose, an aesthetic impulse. As he himself says, "I had been, and remained, intensely depressed, but I had also been, and always would be, intensely false; in existentialist terms, inauthentic" (62). It is not so much the meaninglessness of existence that drives Nicholas to attempt the act of suicide as it is his failure to cope with quotidian existence. His final words are revealing. He sees in the fact that he tries to commit not a moral action but a fundamentally aesthetic one a consistency in his character.

With Alison, we have this process related much differently. Whereas the episode of Nicholas's existential despair is highly literary and described over several pages, Alison's is rather short, and done in dialogue. Instead of highly orchestrated art, we have described a subtle and genuine moment from reality.

> One evening we went to see Carne's old film *Quai des Brumes*. She was crying when we came out and she began to cry again when we were in bed. She sensed my disapproval.
> 'You're not me. You can't feel like I feel.'
> 'I can feel.'
> 'No, you can't. You just choose not to feel or something, and everything's fine.'
> 'It's not fine. It's just not so bad.'

> 'That film made me feel what I feel about everything. There isn't any meaning. You try and try to be happy and then something chance happens and it's all gone. It's because we don't believe in a life after death.'
> 'Not don't. Can't.'
> 'Every time you go out and I'm not with you I think you may die. I think about dying every day. Every time I have you, I think this is one in the eye for death. You know, you've got a lot of money and the shops are going to shut in an hour. It's sick, but you've got to spend. Does that make sense?'
> 'Of course. The bomb.'
> 'It's not the bomb. It's us.' (34)

Alison's "It's us" is open to at least two interpretations, possibly more. In one sense, she is referring to their relationship. Alison is aware of the connections between people, and the tenuity of such connections, in light of her profoundly-felt sense of human contingency, makes those connections all the much more precious. The second sense is that she is referring to the human condition in general. In this sense, Alison is aware of the ephemerality of human existence. Regardless of which way we read it, what is clear is that she feels genuine angst here, a sense of the hazardousness of existence. She also feels, on some intuitive level, the need to preserve the one true connection that enables human beings to mitigate this anxiety. She understands that although the human condition is one of ultimate existential aloneness, a balm to this aloneness is the bridges we build through love.

Aside from showing Alison to be more genuine and more in touch with herself and her feelings than Nicholas, this episode is also an example of the theme of self and other, individual and community. Nicholas, at this stage of the novel, does not understand the need to balance these because he is as yet unaware of his own selfishness.

As I have shown, when Nicholas has insight into his feelings, or when he begins to feel, he always brushes these feelings aside or refuses to act upon them. The times when his feelings are genuine, he deceives himself about their meaning. At his initial meeting with Alison, we notice he talks about her qualities, her candor, her ability to flash out some truth, some seriousness (27), but although aware of these, he apparently gives them small currency in his thoughts for her.

Alison, when we first meet her, is shown to us as someone who is aware of her feelings. She may not be able to articulate her deeper emotions or even understand them in the existential language that Nicholas has adopted, but she always follows her feelings through a kind of intuitive wisdom. From what is said by Conchis elsewhere in the novel, we might conclude that ways of knowing that fall outside the parameters of logic and reason are at times more valid than reason (the limitations of which Nicholas is yet to learn). We see her also as someone who is aware--again, perhaps on not a completely conscious level--of the need to build relationships beyond the self. She feels the need to make genuine connections with others.

Quite clearly, Nicholas is a man who is under many illusions, both about himself and about the world. His "existential" seriousness is a pose. He avoids love and any kind of connection with others as he avoids so much else in life. Instead, he turns reality into false art, and real feelings into artifice.

The first section of The Magus has shown us who and what Nicholas is. It is the second section, long and convoluted,that has always attracted the most commentary from critics. The tripartite design of The Magus suggests a magic metaphor. We are first shown Nicholas as he is

(London); then, as in a magic act, we witness a considerable amount of hocus-pocus and smoke (Greece and the Bourani experience); and finally, we are presented with Nicholas changed by his experience (London). The hocus-pocus part in any conjuror's act is the magic, and we risk spoiling the trick for the truth if we are too intent on peeking behind the wizard's curtain. But this is not to say that we should refrain from speaking about the events on Phraxos altogether, only that we should recognize that their first importance must be considered in relation to Nicholas's heuristic education.

Simon Loveday, in The Romances of John Fowles, has suggested an elaborate schema for The Magus . In this schema, he identifies the four stories or experiences of life that Conchis relates to Nicholas as central to the story (47). The stories comprise events from the following four episodes in Conchis's life: Neuve Chapelle, de Deukans, Seidevarre, and the Eleutheria man. The two stories from the wars--the two most significant events affecting humankind in this century--provide for Conchis (and Fowles) events around which to develop a discussion of several important human issues: existence, mortality, hazard or chance, and morality. The other two stories, de Deukans and Seidevarre, express ideas that are close to Fowles personally: collector consciousness and respect for mystery.

Aside from these stories that Conchis tells, there is the Bourani experience. Although there are several masques, and although they each are intended to teach Nicholas different aspects about himself or his situation, I include them under the general term since they all have one thing in common: they are all illusions. Conchis is Nicholas's reality instructor, and all the masques, while teaching different lessons, amount

to the teaching of one grand lesson: that however much people prefer the illusion, and however much they try to maintain their illusions, the illusions are always destructive if they prevent people from living full lives in a vital reality. People must force themselves, through an exercise of will, everyday, to choose reality. This is precisely what Heraclitus sought to teach as well. In his metaphor of those who are awake and those who are asleep, he correctly divined the condition of the human race. He taught that if we turned inward, we could find our true selves. This was his reveille to all those people, the many, who too often prefer the dream to reality. Time and again we will see Nicholas, like Conchis's octopus, prefer the illusion to reality. For Nicholas, choosing reality is ultimately symbolized by his choosing Alison.

Conchis's first story of his past with Lily and the First World War serves a number of purposes. Conchis, too, knows Nicholas better than Nicholas knows himself. This is aptly demonstrated in the way he uses Lily to seduce Nicholas into the Godgame. We remember that Nicholas, existing as he does in a fashionable *ennuie* , is repelled by the quotidian. We also remember that Lily seduces Nicholas's imagination first. Conchis has Nicholas first meet Julie as Lily, and by doing so, he entrances Nicholas by the one sure way he knows Nicholas cannot resist: he presents Lily in an elaborate Edwardian masque, knowing that this will appeal to Nicholas's exaggeratedly aesthetic mind. He presents Lily to Nicholas as an ideal.

Once Conchis has Nicholas's attention, he begins to teach him, via the stories, lessons he has determined that Nicholas must learn. One purpose of the Neuve Chapelle story is for Conchis to establish the main point in his version of humankind's existential condition. God, Conchis

says, does not exist; all is hazard. We find this idea repeated throughout The Magus. Conchis describes a scene where his regiment has been ordered to attack a German position to gain ground, and the ensuing slaughter of life. The event generates the following thoughts for Conchis.

> I saw that this cataclysm must be an expiation for some barbarous crime of civilization, some terrible human lie. What the lie was, I had too little knowledge of history or science to know then. I know now it was our believing that we were fulfilling some end, serving some plan--that all would come out well in the end, because there was some great plan over all. Instead of the reality. There is no plan. All is hazard. And the only thing that will preserve us is ourselves. (129)

One corollary of the proposition that there is no God is that we are no longer governed. Therefore, we must learn to govern ourselves. The governance of the self becomes then a profound responsibility. That we must enter into the fray and flux of life and that we must make choices that do not betray the responsibilities of self, is Conchis's first lesson. Although Nicholas has adopted the outward guise of the existential man, he has remained inauthentic, in part because he has avoided responsibility.

One example where Nicholas does not understand personal responsibility is revealed in the discussion of self between him and Conchis. Defending his pessimism to Conchis, Nicholas suggests that he and his generation must collectively assume the guilt for Neuve Chapelle and Hiroshima. Conchis points out that this a false assumption of guilt.

> 'But you and I! We live, we are this wonderful age. We are not destroyed. We did not even destroy.'
> 'No man is an island.'
> 'Pah. Rubbish. Every one of us is an island. If it were not so we should go mad at once. Between these islands are

> ships, aeroplanes, telephones, wireless--what you will. But they remain islands. Islands that can sink or disappear for ever. You are an island that has not sunk.' (146)

By combatting Nicholas's false notions of guilt, Conchis tries to make him aware of the true nature of personal responsibility. Later, in another sententious speech, Conchis tries to instill in Nicholas the same lesson. "The human race is unimportant. it is the self that must not be betrayed". Nicholas, like a chess player thinking he has made a good move, answers "I suppose, one could say that Hitler didn't betray his self." Conchis then mates with the following. "You are right. He did not. But millions of Germans did betray their selves. That was the tragedy. Not that one man had the courage to be evil. But that millions had not the courage to be good" (132). The German people relinquished responsibility for their selves by giving it to Hitler, who, though Conchis does not say this, was merely another form of God. Nicholas must learn to separate personal guilt from collective guilt, and then accept responsibility for the self.

Right from the first story, then, Conchis begins to work upon Nicholas, destroying his false illusions and replacing them with the lessons he has determined Nicholas must learn.

It might be worth pointing out here that Conchis's lessons are not sown upon entirely infertile ground. Although it appears that Nicholas learns slowly, and at great pain to himself, he nevertheless does learn. Nicholas is no Clegg. Nicholas does have some understanding of existentialist thought, and he has the capacity of self-criticism. He is aware that he must try to be authentic. Nicholas's problem is that he lacks a comprehension of authenticity and at the same time he is reason-ridden. He has no appreciation of the contingent in life. Nicholas, in his

narcissistic pursuit of the "life-style," has been blind to any vision of the world other than his own.

The next major story which Conchis relates to Nicholas is the story of de Deukans. While critics have always had much to say about the last story, the Eleutheria story, the de Deukans story has often received the least attention. It is in the story of de Deukans that Conchis tries to show Nicholas the danger of a life that is too narrowly aesthetic, and thus a perversion of a necessary and vital aesthetic.

Among the details Conchis gives Nicholas of his early life is the period of his medical school days and his co-founding of the Society for Reason. It was at this time that Conchis first made the acquaintance of the older man, de Deukans. Conchis describes for Nicholas his arrival at de Deukans' chateau--Givray-le-Duc--in the eastern part of France. The description evokes a scene of still perfection, as Conchis calls it, a "*mise en paysage* ," that in the hearing seems almost too idyllic to be real. Conchis tells Nicholas how this scene affected him. He was in two minds: as a socialist, he was shocked, but as a "*homme sensual* " he was ravished (177). Nevertheless, Conchis is able to come to a conclusion about de Deukans and his world. "De Deukans" says Conchis, "by being as he was--certainly not by arguing--raised profound doubts in my philosophy. Doubts he was later to crystallize for me, as I will tell you, in five simple words" (179).

Before we look at the five simple words, we must understand clearly the philosophy that Conchis held at this time, a philosophy, he says, that was put in doubt. Conchis says that he was a "would be socialist." Yet there is something here that is not right. If de Deukans--living in the wealth of an unnatural and impossible perfect world,

oblivious to the natural but possible imperfect world--raises doubts for Conchis the socialist, the selfishness of de Deukans' world should confirm for Conchis his socialist credo. Why then would Conchis say that de Deukans and his world raised in him profound doubts?

To answer this question, we need first to look to what Fowles has said in The Aristos . In the chapter, "Other Philosophies," Fowles discusses socialism in part by contrasting it with Christianity. Earlier he has criticized Christianity for its use and abuse of the notion of an afterlife. He says of socialism:

> Socialism has its afterlife myth, not in a hypothetical other other world, but in a hypothetical future of this world. Marxism and Leninism both proclaim, use and abuse the notion of perfectibility; justifying bad means by good ends. (117)

The goal of socialism is to achieve a perfect world in this world; a heaven on earth. But the danger in this is as Fowles relates in the above quotation is that too often bad means are used to achieve good ends. In his acquaintance with de Deukans and Givray-le-Duc, Conchis has encountered a man trying to maintain a perfect world. But in his attempt to maintain a perfect world, de Deukans has extinguished in himself any vestiges of a moral instinct. In his eyes, peasants toiling on the land become a scene from a Millet painting. Life gets reduced to an aesthetic experience. Life becomes art. When the world is seen as a series of collected things, we too easily objectify not only things, but people too. Any true connection possible between the self and others breaks down. Eventually, everything begins and ends with the self. Conchis's judgement is implicit in the following words.

> And I began to comprehend the selfishness of this solitary man. More and more I came to see that his blindness was a

> pose and yet his pose was an innocence. That he was a man from a perfect world lost in a very imperfect one. And determined, with a monomania as tragic, if not quite so ludicrous, as Don Quixote's, to maintain his perfection. (180)

De Deukans, by trying to create a perfect world on earth, forces Conchis to see that in his own acceptance of socialism he too may be doing the same. What is dangerous is that too often good ends can justify bad means. In the case of de Deukans, this danger has led to a diminished moral sense.

Fowles suggests by the name that he gives to de Deukans' chateau that his world is impossible. "*Givray*" is an archaic French word, now mostly unused, meaning something like "the crystallization of ice," what we would call in English "frost". In naming de Deukans' residence "Givray-le-Duc," Fowles suggests that de Deukans' world is in fact a crystallized world, a world like a frozen tableau which is outside the real world of change. Like all the other illusions in the novel, it is insubstantial. In its ultimate destruction by fire, Fowles further suggests that this kind of isolation from change is not only destructive of personality but impossible to maintain, and so must end in destruction. One may be able to keep one's illusions intact for a time, but the lesson is clear: stasis is a kind of death.

Curiously, de Deukans must have been aware of this himself, for he passes on to Conchis, along with part of his fortune, five Latin words whose meaning is a caution against the very narcissism that has consumed him. Whether or not de Deukans actually exists as a real person is not terribly important. What is important is that he has existed for the purposes of Conchis's moral lesson, which Conchis completes by passing along to Nicholas the five Latin words. "'*Utram bibis? Aquam an*

undam ?' Which are you drinking? The water or the wave"(188)? Nicholas answers immediately: "He drank the wave?" Which prompts Conchis to offer cryptically: "We all drink both. But he meant the question should always be asked. It is not a precept. But a mirror" (188).

The Latin words are a riddle, but one possible interpretation--in light of both de Deukans' character and Nicholas's character--is that the "water" and the "wave" are symbolic of "substance and style," or to use more familiar aesthetic terms, "content and form." Nicholas himself confirms this during a reflection upon Alison's death. He tells us that he began to edge her death out of the moral realm and into the aesthetic, where it was easier to live with (401). But he realizes what he has done: ". . . by this characteristically twentieth-century retreat from content into form, from meaning into appearance, from ethics into aesthetics, from *aqua* into *unda* , I dulled the pain of that accusing death" (402). We have thus far been shown that Nicholas is a shallow, inauthentic young man, living a highly stylized existence. We have been shown that de Deukans as well has existed in an exaggeratedly aesthetic realm. De Deukans, in his monomania, becomes a collector, and ultimately becomes possessed by what he possesses. When his perfect world, his palace of art, is destroyed by fire, he too is destroyed. He takes his own life because he has nothing left for which to live. De Deukans has allowed his life to degenerate into mere form, mere style. There is no meaning in his life. Nicholas too has become a collector. The only difference is that Nicholas collects women. Conchis, in passing on these words to Nicholas, is showing Nicholas that he must always ask himself whether he is living with meaning in his life (*Aqua*), or is existing in mere form (*Unda*). Of course, as Conchis reminds us, life is composed of both content and

form, and we must not exaggerate either one. We must strike some kind of a balance. Conchis tries to make Nicholas aware of this self-reflective mirror in order that he not end like de Deukans. The message is that we must continually evaluate the self. It is very like the Delphic Oracle's "Know Thyself." We must see that this is no different from the initial stage of Heraclitus's teaching as well. De Deukans did not know himself. Despite his possession of the Latin words, he did not ask himself which it was he was drinking, or, if he did, his monomania was so complete that he no longer cared. Nicholas does learn this, as his insight in the above quotation shows, but the insight comes after much pain and only after the revealing and humiliating disintoxication scene.

The third story that Conchis relates to Nicholas is the story of Seidevarre. Outwardly less mysterious than the de Deukans story, its basic meaning is to show Nicholas the limitations of reason and to instill in him a new awareness of the need for mystery.

As we learned in the discussion of the previous story, Conchis was, in his youth, a medical doctor and a founding member of the Society for Reason. We remember that the manifesto of that society, while highly rational and humanistic, strikes at the same time a note of absolutism by holding that reason is supreme. Apparently, like the self, this is another of Conchis's absolutes.

The occasion that prompts Conchis to relate the Seidevarre story is the discussion between Nicholas and Julie (who has been scripted to bring this discussion up) about the existence of God. Nicholas says to Julie that there are more important things to think about than the existence of God. To this, Julie replies: "I should have thought nothing was more important." Nicholas replies, "Than one's attitude to what one

will never know? It seems to me a waste of time" (295). Julie then draws Nicholas deeper into the discussion. Clearly, Conchis has scripted this dialogue in order to teach Nicholas another lesson. As the argument develops, Julie claims that God must be very intelligent since He has given us "no clues. . . No certainties. . . No reasons". Nicholas wryly asks, "very intelligent--or very unkind"? Julie responds, "Very wise. If I prayed, I'd ask God never to reveal Himself to me. Because if He did I should know that He was not God. But a liar" (296). These words have tremendous significance both in the context of Fowles's beliefs as a whole, and also in the context of the story about Seidevarre that Conchis is about to relate for Nicholas's benefit. Behind what Julie says about God is the belief that if He does exist, it is necessary that He exist for us as mystery. To reveal Himself to us, Julie claims, would be to destroy the essential aspect of His power for humankind, which is His mystery.

At this point, Conchis breaks into the conversation, telling Nicholas that even as a much older man, he too thought as Nicholas. He tells him that they are both limited in their thinking because they lack what Julie possesses by gender: the "intuitive humanity of womankind" (296). Conchis then qualifies his own ignorance by relating the Seidevarre story. "But then I had an experience that led me to understand what Julie has just said to you" (296). What Julie has said, simply, is that all thinking about God is really thinking about mystery, about what we will never know. Clearly then, in the Seidevarre story that Conchis is about to tell, he wants to teach Nicholas a greater respect for mystery.

The climax of the story comes when Conchis, at the farm of Gustav Nygaard, witnesses Henrik Nygaard's bizarre behavior. As Henrik stands immersed in water and moonlight, calling to God, Conchis tells

Nicholas that he wished that night that he could have seen what Henrik had seen. "I did not know what he was seeing," says Conchis, "but I knew it was something of such power, such mystery, that it explained all" (308). Conchis then tells Nicholas the lesson he learned that night. "I knew the man out there on the point was having an experience beyond the scope of all my science and all my reason, and I knew that my science and reason would always be defective until they could comprehend what was happening in Henrik's mind" (308). Conchis's insight is not only insight into his own *hubris* in the power of reason, but also humankind's.

> But in a flash, as of lightning, all our explanations, all our classifications and derivations, our aetiologies, suddenly appeared to me like a thin net. That great passive monster, reality, was no longer dead, easy to handle. It was full of mysterious vigor, new forms, new possibilities. The net was nothing, reality burst through it" (309).

Conchis realizes that Henrik has not been waiting for God, but that he has been meeting God in his mind--Henrik has seen his pillar of fire. Conchis's own pillar of fire--his sudden realization-- is that his science cannot explain Henrik's behavior; indeed it is merely one tool among others, useful but not absolute. Conchis's apprehension is that the thin net of science, the rational, cannot contain reality, for reality is both irrational and mysterious.

The final story Conchis tells Nicholas is the story of the Eleutheria man. The chapter in which it occurs in The Magus is fifty-three, the only chapter in the novel to possess its own epigraph. It is given to us in the Greek: Σλενθεριαι --freedom. Athough this would lead us to expect that the primary lesson in this chapter is to be freedom, I will argue that

freedom is only one half of the story. The other value we must append to the story is responsibility.

The Eleutheria story of World War II is related in a special way to Conchis's Neuve Chapelle story of World War I. Both stories, says David Walker, are "provocative overstatements" (57). We remember that in the first story Conchis decided that in order not to betray the self, he must become a war-deserter. His reasoning is that nothing--no value, no convention, no sentiment--must override the preservation of the self. The self is inviolable. So likewise are we to view freedom. It too is inviolable, and, as well, transcendent. The Magus makes it easy to believe that these two values, the self and freedom, are the two themes or truths that the story is most in earnest to establish. From almost the opening of the novel, freedom becomes almost a litany. Yet if we accept this, if we accept that these two themes as they are presented to us are models, then we fail to see the meaning of the two stories which the war stories frame: the de Deukans story and the Seidevarre story. These two stories are placed strategically in between the war stories so as to be seen as cautionary tales of imbalance, the first of the narcissistic self and the second of reason, another supposedly transcendent value. These stories warn us, then, and should lead us to question any kind of absolute, including Conchis's transcendent ones.

The narrative of the World War II story is the most dramatic of all the stories, partly because it describes the event which has the greatest significance for Conchis's life, and partly because it discusses the concept of freedom, which has been almost a leitmotif throughout The Magus.

The climax of the story, and the lesson, is that forced to choose between killing one man, or, by not doing so, forfeiting his own life and eighty other lives, Conchis's decision not to kill the eleutheria man with the butt of a rifle is an affirmation of freedom. As Conchis tells Nicholas, the "defence of that freedom was more important than common sense, self-preservation, yes, than my own life, than the lives of the eighty hostages" (434).

It would be helpful to remind ourselves of the kind of freedom Nicholas believes in. I have mentioned both these examples previously in the discussion of Nicholas's inauthenticity. The first example comes from a point early in the novel, when Nicholas leaves the girl at the university in East Anglia. He says, "I mistook the feeling of relief that dropping a girl always brought for a love of freedom" (21). The second example is again from early in the novel, when Nicholas describes his emotions after leaving Alison. "The thing I felt most clearly, when the first corner was turned, was that I had escaped. . . I began to hum, and it was not a brave attempt to hide my grief, but a revoltingly unclouded desire to celebrate my release" (48). Though Nicholas never says the word "freedom" in this second passage, freedom is clearly implied by the words "release" and "escape." What we must notice about both these examples is that they reveal Nicholas's conception of freedom to be essentially selfish. It is evident that Nicholas's conception of freedom is very different from Conchis's. Nicholas's freedom is essentially a selfish narcissism. Conchis's freedom is a transcendent absolute and is surrounded by a kind of inviolability. But what is the lesson? Is Nicholas meant to see Conchis's conception of freedom as normative? David Walker is one critic who does not believe so. In his article "Remorse,

Responsibility, and Moral Dilemmas in Fowles's Fiction," Walker questions Conchis's notion of freedom.

> When commentators concentrate on Conchis's actual choice in this episode, they miss an essential point--that freedom, *eleutheria,* is not a human, or at least not a humane, attribute. Freedom is a biological fact, fundamentally alien to civilized existence, and those like Wimmel or the *kapetan* , who follow freedom through to its biological extremes, produce a horrifying degradation of humanity.(58)

In light of what Walker says here, we must not see Conchis's kind of freedom as sacrosanct. In its absolutism, it is as suspect as all other absolutes.

If Conchis's conception of freedom is suspect, a particular light is shed upon Nicholas's own decision in the disintoxication scene. Fowles links Conchis's ordeal in the square both structurally and thematically with Nicholas's ordeal of disintoxication. While he seems to invite us to see parallels between them, there are in fact many differences. Walker explains.

> Unlike Julie, whom Nicholas perceives as having cruelly treated him, the *kapetan* had given no offense to Conchis personally and had already suffered atrociously for his deeds. In contrast to Conchis's experience, Nicholas's decision to inflict the "sentence" will not provoke the massacre of eighty innocent bystanders. (61)

So, if the circumstances are really different, why does Fowles make the connection so inviting? One reason for doing so might be to give Nicholas's decision the same degree of heightened drama. In Conchis's decision, we have a sense that the moment of choice carries with it profound significance. It surely qualifies as one of those moments on the point of fulcrum. In like manner we are to see Nicholas's decision as equally profound. But I want to suggest here another reason. In making

the episodes seem to parallel each other, Fowles really does wants to conjoin them in our minds, but he does so in order to contrast the differences between their decisions. If Conchis's decision is no longer viewed as being normative, then we must open our thinking to the possibility that Nicholas reaches this same realization.

It is in the disintoxication scene that we can see Nicholas's growth. Conchis has given Nicholas the opportunity to avenge all his frustrations and all his humiliations as a result of the Godgame upon Julie. He provides Nicholas with a cat-o'-nine-tails with which to whip Julie. Nicholas has absolute freedom. But he refuses to whip Julie. When we ask what is it that prevents him from doing so, the answer must be that Nicholas has learned and assimilated Conchis's paradox: "the better you understand freedom, the less you possess" (518). He has learned to balance absolute freedom, Conchis's freedom in the square, Wimmel's demonic freedom, the freedom that lets an organization "crash through law, through my job, through respect for the dead, through everything that made the world customary and habitable and oriented" (495), with responsibility. We have once again the outward movement of the protagonist, this ethical movement out of the self that recognizes the claims of the community.

Nicholas's return to London is the completion of the Phraxos section both physically--since Nicholas has quit Greece and returned to London--and also in the psychological sense. I want now to discuss his psychological completion.

When critics discuss the Phraxos section of the novel, it is most often characterized as a journey, or quest, or crucible in which Nicholas achieves some measure of insight (see Palmer, Barnum, Loveday). The

question upon which there is considerably less consensus is whether or not the novel ends with the reunion of Nicholas and Alison. I have said earlier that one way we measure Nicholas's growth is determined by his desire to reconnect with Alison. Yet Nicholas could still conceivably desire a reunion and yet not have learned from his experience. I want to discuss one last episode which I believe confirms that Nicholas has learned to balance freedom and responsibility, as argued in my discussion of the Eleutheria story, and shows also that it is this very knowledge, the need to balance a selfish freedom with one's responsibility to others, that enables Nicholas to come to terms with his destiny and to realize that it lies with Alison.

It has been my argument that Fowles's characters achieve enlightenment in a particular way. They first become more existentially authentic, and then they act outwardly beyond themselves, a movement that I have called a moral impulse. By looking at the butcher story we shall see that Nicholas understands the dilemma of self and other, freedom and responsibility, for the butcher story itself suggests that the balancing of the two is a profound but necessary challenge.

The butcher story is first mentioned by Nicholas during his final meeting with Lily de Seitas. The story is no doubt cryptic, but I want to suggest one possible meaning.

As related by Nicholas, it is a story about a butcher and Marie Antoinette. The butcher, brandishing a cleaver, leads a mob into the palace at Versailles. Shouting that he will cut Marie Antoinette's throat, the butcher forces the door of the Royal apartments. When, finally, he comes face to face with the Queen, he falls to his knees and begins to

weep (630). Insight into the meaning of the story is found in the answer to the question, Why does the butcher weep?

While the story is somewhat of an enigma, we divine its meaning best by looking at how it relates to Lily and Nicholas. The story is only an enigma until we have viewed Conchis's four life-stories in the way that I have suggested. We see that the self, while important, is not to be taken as an end in itself. The de Deukans story was a caution against just this. The Seidevarre story shows the limitations of reason . It too is a caution against absolutes.

I suggest that the story of the butcher signifies the impulse of freedom and the impulse of moral responsibility. Free to cut the Queen's throat, the butcher is intoxicated with this thought until the very moment when, confronting the Queen, he must do it. But he cannot bring himself to do so. There is something further in him, some super-commandment that will not allow him to do so, at least not easily. The butcher collapses and weeps in the realization that understanding and managing one's freedom and one's responsibility is no simple business. His actions are different from those of a Wimmel because he is not crying out of fear or impotence, but out of knowledge. Living in reality, in hazard, means that we must confront and balance freedom and responsibility every day.

Why does Lily de Seitas remind Nicholas of this story? She does so because Nicholas before Lily is like the butcher before Marie. Nicholas, if he were to exercise absolute freedom, might desire to strike Lily, to exact some revenge, strike through her expert coolness. But as he showed in the disintoxication scene, he has beginning to learn the self, and this insight is conjoined with the knowledge that he has a responsibility to others. Nicholas is aware of a moral imperative that

forces him to balance the two. This is what he means when he says in the disintoxication scene "I could see it in Conchis's eyes; something besides *eleutheria* had been proved" (519).

Fowles again draws parallel scenes, this time between the butcher story and Nicholas's understanding of and decision to reconnect with Alison. The connection between these two is reinforced by Nicholas's packing episode. After having hurt Jo-Jo and quarrelled with Kemp, Nicholas goes upstairs and begins to pack hurriedly. In the process, he breaks the plate that had been given to him by Lily. Kneeling, holding the broken pieces, Nicholas begins to cry (645). Like the butcher, Nicholas understands the awesome challenge that balancing freedom and responsibility places upon us. The plate symbolizes Nicholas's future, a future that he now understands he wants, but that, as he now realizes, requires constant vigilance. This is Nicholas's point of fulcrum. "Conchis had talked of points of fulcrum, moments when one met one's future. I also knew it was bound up with Alison, with choosing Alison, and having to go on choosing her every day" (641).

Nicholas shows that he understands that true wisdom is the need to balance the self and the other, freedom and responsibility.

Chapter Four: "The Ebony Tower"

It is hard to fight against passion; for whatever
it wants it buys at the expense of soul.

Man's character is his fate.

Heraclitus, CV, CXIV

At first glance, "The Ebony Tower" would appear to have difficulty conforming to the paradigm that I have been advancing, except by negation. The most obvious difficulty concerns the ending. By the story's end, the sense of failure surrounding David Williams is so complete that it is difficult for the reader to see him by any other light. This is further aggravated by the fact that David himself attests to his failure.

The central fact that David fails in his "test" is the most conventional reading, and to my knowledge, it has not been seriously contested. Carol Barnum's remarks in The Fiction of John Fowles are fairly representative of this consensus. "As a source of information, his journey will not be wasted; as a source of psychic growth, not the expressed purpose but the implied opportunity, his journey will be wasted because his rational response will prove insufficient to the challenge" (78). We might recall from my chapter on The Collector that Barnum saw that novel as well from a similar perspective. There, as here, her thesis requires that the protagonists be seen to apply knowledge gained on the quest in their lives. Failing this, the novels are seen to comprise, in the case of The Magus, an anti-myth, and in "The Ebony Tower," a failed quest. But must the novels and stories end positively in order for us to claim that the protagonists in them are successful in learning something about themselves and then are able to apply that knowledge beyond themselves? This after all is the present thesis. Are we able to see in David Williams a protagonist who achieves some measure of insight into his self, an existential awareness, and then from that newly- awakened awareness shows an understanding of the need to balance the self with others, in other words, demonstrates a moral impulse?

While the conventional reading of the novel does carry a certain force, there are at least four points upon which we might base an alternative reading.

The first of these has to do with the perspective of the narrator. "The Ebony Tower" is narrated from a third person omniscient point of view. Given the fact that in many other Fowles fictions (including the other fictions that appear in the collection with "The Ebony Tower") the narratorial voice is often ambiguous, indeed at times ironic, might we not question it in this story as well? Simon Loveday raises a similar question in his discussion of The Magus (38, 39), and there has been some question over how far we can trust the diaries in The Collector, as well as other questions on narratorial veracity (see for example Binns, Eddins, Loveday).

In "A Personal Note," from the same collection as "The Ebony Tower," Fowles reveals that "The Ebony Tower" is thematically and emotionally related to the story "Eliduc." In this story, the protagonist, Eliduc, gets himself into the position where he is confronted by a dilemma which, in the terms presented by the story, is primarily a moral dilemma. He must choose between two women. However, as McSweeney points out, Eliduc is relieved of having to make a decision by a "*deus ex machina*" (119) in the plot. Eliduc is not made to suffer for his moral transgression because his first wife, in a gesture of profound Christian charity, agrees to step aside. As a result, Eliduc does not really have to face the responsibility for his actions. There is no such *deus ex machina* in Fowles's story. All the action in the story brings David to the point where he must make a moral decision. If this is the primary thrust of the story, as I maintain it is, then might not David's actions warrant a

conclusion different from the ones offered by those who see the story from the more conventional perspective?

Third, it is my contention that the story supports a reading in which David Williams's final choice can be seen as a choice that balances freedom with responsibility. David "fails" only in the sense that he fails to understand that Breasley's conception of the artist is flawed. Just as Conchis's conception of freedom is too absolute, too exclusive, so too is Breasley's conception of the artist too narrow, for it excludes the moral. By identifying one kind of art and artist with existential authenticity, Breasley prevents the possibility of other viewpoints, and perverts the creative relationship between the artistic and the existential that Fowles promotes.* I suggest that David has "learned" Breasley too well. Kerry McSweeney, in a different context, makes an intriguing observation seldom noted by other critics, but which tends to support my point. He says that ". . . the thematic thrust of "The Ebony Tower" hinges on the dubious premise 'that a non-conformist personal life is a precondition for great art'" (120). This is precisely the "lesson" David has learned. He subscribes wholly to Breasley's "dubious premise," and as a consequence, dreadfully misconstrues the significance of his "failure" with Diana.

Finally, might we not see in Breasley's "dubious premise" and its corollary, that "nothing stand between self and expression" (108), a similar kind of absolute to Conchis's absolute freedom in the eleutheria

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* For a lucid discussion on this aspect of the fictions, see Frederick M. Holmes in "Art, Truth, and John Fowles's The Magus," also his "The Novelist as Magus: John Fowles and the Function of Narrative;" and Dwight Eddins in "John Fowles: Existence as Authorship."

episode? Both doctrines imply not only an absolutism, but a selfish absolutism. They are exaggerations, imbalances, and as such they need to be balanced in the manner of Heraclitus's paradigm. Balance is effected by an awareness of responsibility that goes beyond the self.

Based on these four considerations, I want to offer a different reading of "The Ebony Tower." In my reading, we shall see the story as conforming more closely to my general argument. David Williams does gain insight into his self, and further, he can be seen to balance his selfish and individual desires with a consideration for others.

I shall first look at the ways in which David is inauthentic. David is a familiar Fowlesian protagonist. Like Nicholas Urfe before him, he has accumulated ideas and opinions about life that actually prevent him from living authentically. His blindness about himself, about mystery, and about the contingent in life is revealed to us in his thinking and in his treatment of the other characters in the story.

David's self-absorption is evident as the story opens. We meet him as he sets upon a journey (one upon which he anticipates pleasure but, as in other Fowles works, one upon which he will painfully learn) to interview an older and famous artist. David's thoughts as he drives towards his meeting with Henry Breasley are reminiscent of Nicholas's feelings of "release" and "escape" as he prepared to go to Greece.

> He felt a little guilty to be enjoying himself so much, to be here so unexpectedly alone, without Beth, and after he had made such a fuss; but the day, the sense of discovery and of course the object of the whole exercise looming formidably and yet agreeably just ahead, everything conspired to give a pleasant illusion of bachelor freedom. (9)

What is immediately evident from this passage is David's sense that he is

initiating an adventure alone. He is "without Beth" and under an "illusion of bachelor freedom." A knowledge of Fowles's previous fiction alerts us to the fact that David appears to be another one of Fowles's inconstant men who confuse true freedom with an individual and selfish notion of escape from responsibility. We also see in David's anticipation, in his "sense of discovery" that looms "agreeably" ahead, an attitude that shows a false understanding of mystery. David's sense of mystery is not the sense of mystery that Fowles says we must preserve. David's mystery is a perverted and egotistical attitude that views mystery very much as a private pleasure. Like Nicholas, David does not appreciate that part of mystery is hazard, and that a proper understanding of mystery requires an appreciation of the necessity of hazard in life. David has no such appreciation; in fact his overly rational approach to life will not allow it. David therefore has no understanding, as yet, that mystery may not be all that agreeable. Both of these attitudes allow David to exist in a contented complacency.

We are given further evidence of the foundation of David's complacency in the narration of his past. We are told that he is *rara avis* : he has a natural talent for colour and line--the gifts of a natural artist--and, unlike the majority, he is highly articulate. These talents enable David to be both a painter and a critic. As a result of the happy marriage of these two talents, David finds himself headed toward *Coëtminais* , commissioned to write the introduction to a book about Henry Breasley. All this leads him to remark of his upcoming assignment that it was "one more sign that things in general were shaping up well" (16). David, we conclude, is a smugly contented young man. He begins to look more and more like one of Fowles's precious Few, one of the "dominant

hundred thousand." But the dividing line, as Fowles claims it does, runs through David. David is possessed of many illusions and false attitudes that he must transcend if he is to become more like the Few than the Many.

One of the more obvious signs of David's smug egocentrism is his quick reckoning of the character and worth of other people. We remember that both Miranda and Nicholas initially judge others, only to have their initial judgements continually usurped and proved wrong by those they judge. We looked at this aspect in the previous fictions, especially The Magus, and saw there that Fowles develops this attitude in his protagonists around the theme of illusion versus reality, or the ideal versus the real. Just as Nicholas begins with many illusions, and must be led from those illusions into a greater appreciation of reality, so it is with David. David judges Diana (the Mouse), Anne (the Freak), and Henry Breasley, and we can chart his existential growth, his understanding of the self, by the degree to which he is able to get beyond his initial judgements and ideas and reevaluate and reassess first principles.

David's initial judgement of Anne is the harshest and shows David at his shallowest. From the time he first meets her until well into the story, she is seen through David's eyes as indeed "freakish". Described variously by terms such as "preposterous" (25), "neurotic golliwog" (25), "absurd sex-doll" (36), "monkeyish" and "artificial" (39), she seems almost beneath David's notice. Aroused by Diana's more refined and sibylline aspects, David will go out of his way to "learn" her. Anne, however, is afforded no such charity. Well into the story, even as late as the picnic scene, we have revealed to us David's shallow and judgmental nature:

"What he had to learn about her, beyond a little ability to debunk, a trendily shallow narcissism, a life-stye that patently hid a life-failure, he could not imagine"(62). Besides the tone, which immediately reveals a smug superiority, we recognize the too-hasty reckoning of another's character. David has not known Anne long enough, nor has he had the opportunity to get to know her, and yet he does not hesitate to form an ill-opinion of her.

When it comes to the Mouse, David's initial judgement is equally skewed. From the moment he first meets her--when she admits him into the *Manoir*--David attempts to assay her character from his initial impressions. He describes her variously as "bizzarely modest and handmaidenly"(13), "like a *patronne* " (14), "preternaturally grave. . . almost Victorian" (14), "muselike" (14), "cool and sibylline" (14), and self-possessed (34). Captivated by his own narcissistic and ideal conception of her, David desires to "learn" her. While more infatuated by Diana than by Anne, and therefore less cruel in his judgements, David is no more correct in his initial assumptions about her character.

David's shallow complacency, both in his life and his ideas, is nowhere more evident than in his relationship with Breasley. We remember that before he has even met Breasley, David's smug assuredness is revealed in his thoughts that the trip to *Coëtminais* is not really necessary. "He had already drafted the introduction, he knew pretty well what he was going to say" (16). David assumes that he understands Breasley's work and that nothing much else is needed, except perhaps a few biographical facts. We might point out here that David's view is formed from a purely intellectual, art-critic perspective. David views Breasley's development as an artist in a rational and causal

way, as one period or style developing from another which then leads to another. As the story develops, it is this kind of rational certainty that David will find undermined again and again.

Another situation where David jumps to conclusion is upon his arrival at the *Manoir.* He sees the girls sun-bathing in the nude and assumes that this is proof of Breasley's infamous life-style: "the wicked old faun and his famous afternoons" (12). It is only later that David is told, by Breasley himself, that through their youth the girls provide him with mostly an emotional kind of vitality, which Breasley refers to as "Roman Charity" (30). But the most serious--and ironic--misunderstanding of David's is his under-estimation of Henry as an intellectual force.

David begins his journey thinking he is going to interview an old artist, perhaps clear up a few biographical details, but in the main, to meet him for the fun of it (16). Ever true to his superficial and hasty assumptions, David, after his first afternoon with Breasley, writes him off as an old sham.

> David began to suspect he was dealing with a paper tiger; or certainly one still living in a world before he himself was born. The occasional hint of aggression was based on such ludicrously old-fashioned notions of what shocked people, what red rags could infuriate them; to reverse the simile, it was rather like playing matador to a blind bull. Only the pompous fool could let himself be caught on such obvious horns.(32)

David, however, will prove himself to be just such a fool, as the dinner ordeal that same evening will bear out. The cumulative effect of David's mis-judgements in all these cases prepares us for his eventual fall.

As with other Fowlesian protagonists, David is in desperate need of enlightenment as to the true nature of his own self. And like other Fowlesian characters who likewise exist in a kind of Heraclitean slumber,

he does not realize that in his complacency, he is living half a life. This is the main reason why the existential moment is so significant and transforming for all the inauthentic men in Fowles's fiction: after having lived half-lives, they find that the reality of living full-lives is extraordinarily liberating. In David's case, the obvious horns are his own false illusions that make him inauthentic, and his goring during the dinner ordeal awakens him from his existential slumbers.

In the larger novels, the enlightenment of the protagonists is given considerable time in which to develop, usually several hundred pages. As McSweeney implies, Fowles has no such luxury in "The Ebony Tower." Here, "he needs every bit of the timeless ambiance of romance he can generate in order to depict convincingly in the space of a few fictional hours and in only a hundred pages the same complex process of sexual attraction, awareness of deprivation, apprehension of mystery, suspicion of deception, and arrival of the crunch. . . " (120). In "The Ebony Tower," Fowles accomplishes much of this in the two episodes in which David has extended conversations with Breasley. The first of these conversations is over dinner on the first evening of David's arrival. The second is when Breasley shows David his work. It is only after these encounters with Breasley that David begins to be less sure of his judgements, his ideas and his life. Only after this will David be sufficiently sensitized to his own nature, his own self and be able to go beyond appearances and his own preconceived ideas. He will have been sensitized into a new awareness of reality. In a sense, the encounters with Breasley function almost like a disintoxication, purging David of his illusions.

Before we discuss the dinner scenes and the manner of their

significance to Nicholas's growing existential understanding, we must be aware of another function that these scenes have in the story. It is primarily in the dinner scene and the scene between Breasley and David that follows the next day that Fowles develops the aesthetic theme, or more accurately, grafts the aesthetic theme to the existential theme. It is the joining of these themes, and David's resultant confusion between them that lead him to confuse his artistic self with his existential self.

If the story is seen primarily from the artistic perspective, then David's own estimation of his failure with Diana becomes valid, and symbolic of his existential failure. This is in fact the conventional reading of the story. We accept David's judgement of himself in his own terms and we are swept along with him into seeing his failure with Diana as a complete existential failure. But, as in many of Fowles's other novels, is there in this story as well a dominant narratorial irony? Ought we to trust the narrator completely? Must we as readers be oblivious of what David himself has been oblivious? In seeing his failure with Diana as something more than "bungling the adventure of the body" (109), and in his confusion of his artistic self with his existential self, David has transformed what is merely a physical failure (Diana) and an artistic failure (his desire for "lastingness") into a metaphysical failure of his existential self. I want to argue that while it may be true that David fails as an artist, it does not follow that he fails "existentially" as well. Rather, David is confronted with painful choice and in his actions shows himself to be existentially true.

There are several reasons that account for David's confusion: his youth relative to Breasley, his confusion of the real world with *Coëtminais's* faintly mythic one, and his wanting and needing adventure.

All these factors lead David to overvalue the meaning of his relationship with Diana. But this confusion of David's need be only his, not the readers' as well.

The real question that the story presents is a moral one. It is similar to Eliduc's. Which loyalty, when both claim allegiance, does one honor? In the terms of Fowles's story, does one choose absolute personal freedom (Diana) or does one choose a relative freedom (Beth), a freedom in responsibility?

We must see here, as we did in The Magus, that for Fowles, the morality in a situation lies not so much in which choice is made, as in the nature of choice and the way it is made. Fowles's kind of morality is very rarely prescriptive. Concerning David's choice in this story, Carol Barnum has quoted Fowles from The Aristos to show that David's decision is not a moral one ("Quest Motif" 146). She means by this that Fowles does not necessarily consider whether or not David and Diana have sex to be a moral issue. She is probably correct. But, while Fowles might not be concerned with the moral issue of sex , he is concerned with the moral issue of balancing selfish freedom with responsibility.

David does learn lessons which he is in need of learning. He has glimpsed a view of the "green freedom" that his overly-rational approach to life has denied him. He sees that he has been too cerebral, that art is not only about theories in the head but is connected to the physical world, to the body. There is in David a newly-discovered awareness that Diana is symbolic of freedom; that she represents a freedom that he has not reckoned before his experience at *Coëtminais*. But we must not confuse the fact that because Breasley teaches some lessons David needs to learn, that everything Breasley teaches David must learn.

David demonstrates an understanding in his trial scene similar to the understanding Nicholas demonstrated in his trial scene. Nicholas refuses to use the "cat" because he understands that Conchis's freedom is not a desirable freedom because absolute and selfish. David refuses to consummate the passion between him and Diana as a result of the same understanding. We recall that Nicholas does not realize this insight at the time. I suggest that David not only does not realize this insight at the time, but does not even realize this insight by the end of the story. Just as Nicholas requires many months in which to absorb fully his experience of Bourani, so too will David require time before he can fully absorb the meaning of his experience. Therefore, we must see David's reflective self-castigation at the end of the story as a post-operational state in which he is not fully lucid.

That David himself fails to recognize the importance of his ordeal at the time is revealed to us in his analysis of events at the story's end. He says that the first evening was "that preposterously obvious reef" (108), and that the real rock of truth was the knowledge he learned about himself that comes as a result of his existential choice concerning Diana. While it is true that all choice is to some degree existentially significant, we need not view David's choice in David's terms. David sees his choice in this way: either he chooses to sin, to break his loyalty to Beth and consummate his passion for Diana, thereby fulfilling his corrupted notion of the artistic soul, or he honors his commitment to Beth, refuses Diana, and remains what he is and has always been: "a decent man and eternal also-ran" (112). It is this very fact, David's confusion of his desire for Diana and his buried desire to be a "lasting" artist, that results in his overwhelming despair at the story's end. Without the knowledge gained

by the first reef, without the disruption of his smug complacency, he would not have sailed on to reach any rock of truth. It is only when he begins to understand Breasley's work and question his own, that his real existential choice--between Diana and Beth--is given meaning. And this is the point: we must view this story primarily as a crisis of David's artistic soul, not his existential or moral one. David fails only in the first instance, not in the second.

David learns through the art debate with Henry that he is disconnected from a vitality that is necessary to him not only as an artist but as a man. It is this debate that shocks David out of his old complacency. Breasley's attack then is more than just bile. While it is a condemnation both of David's life and art, it suggests at the same time an art and way of life that is more inclusive and more accommodating of the mysterious. This provides David with the knowledge that is necessary for his growth.

When we first meet David he is driving through the French countryside on his way to meet Breasley at Coëtminais. Fowles gives us David's character not so much through direct description as through the oblique method of identifying David as an abstract painter. As David travels through the countryside, he makes notes on what he sees:

> Twice he stopped and noted down particularly pleasing conjunctions of tone and depth--parallel stripes of watercolor with penciled notes of amplification in his neat hand. Though there was some indication of the formal origin in these verbal notes--that a stripe of color was associated with a field, a sunlit wall, a distant hill--he drew nothing. (9)

David's character is defined partly through his artistic stance. The "stripes of color" and "conjunctions of tone and depth" along with the fact

that "he drew nothing" are hints that David is an abstractionist.

As the story develops, Fowles sets David Williams's aesthetic creed against Henry Breasley's. Breasley, we learn, paints in a more representational style. We might immediately think that Fowles is contrasting the cold and aloof style of abstractionism with the warm-blooded humanism of representational art. This is, however, only partly true. Breasley's aesthetic has gone through several styles and it was only fairly late in his career that he discovered his own style. "There was a feeling. . . of a fully absorbed eclecticism, something that had been evidenced all through his career, but not really come to terms with before *Coëtminais* (18). As an artist, he has lived through many periods and styles, and his "genius" has been to take from them, on both emotional and technical levels, what he has needed to express his own vision. Breasley has achieved what Fowles has claimed the true artist should: he must not "turn artistic creation into a morass of pastiche; if the artist has any genuine originality it will pierce through all its disguises" (The Aristos 203). Breasley has a connection to the past, but it does not dominate the individual in him. Thus Fowles supplies the reader with the artistic differences between Breasley and Williams. It is in this difference that David is able to learn something about himself.

Breasley's attack on David's art has two aspects. By identifying what abstract art lacks, it points to what is needed in art. Breasley begins by equating David's art with mathematics: "Footsteps of Pythagoras, that right"(41)? David looks to the Mouse for the meaning in this and she tells David that Henry is asking if he paints abstracts. "Obstructs," Breasley quickly interjects. In these two brief comments are contained the kernel of Breasley's dissatisfaction with abstractionist art. The Pythagoras

allusion hints at where Henry feels abstract art finds its soul: in the head, not the heart. Geometry, line, color--the idea--become more important than the human fact. Abstract ideas "obstruct" art from conveying anything humanly meaningful. "Ideas. Can't care"(50). Without connection to the real, without nature, art ceases to be a means of communication. As it becomes less visceral and more cerebral, it becomes merely a game played by artists and critics. This is what happened in the case of *Guernica* . The audience was lost as to its meaning, and it became merely a cerebral exercise between painter and critic, an empty expression of sympathy. As David reveals in his anagnorisis: "Turning away from nature and reality had atrociously distorted the relationship between painter and audience" (110).

The other thing that is "obstructed" is the human form itself. Breasley's emphasis on the importance of all aspects of the human body is underscored in his championing of how art is made. "Not oil. Pigment. All shit. If it's any good. *Merde* . Human excrement. *Excrementum* . That which grows out"(47). This fair-needs-foul philosophy, essential to good art, is partly responsible for the equation David will make later: to sleep with Diana is to make better art. The corollary is that not to sleep with her is to make weak art. This is the conclusion that seems warranted by the logic of the conventional reading. But is David's further abstraction, that he fails in his existential moment, true as well? To answer this question we need to examine David's actions and his reflection on his actions in the episode with Diana in the garden.

David claims that his crime lay in his "fatal indecision"(107). But is this true? Does David, as he believes, decide by not deciding? And what exactly is the nature of his crime? Evidence within the story denies

that David is indecisive. In truth, David does choose.

There are several moments in his meeting with Diana where David specifically chooses: he makes the choice for non-involvement. The first comes when they are still in Diana's room, talking. David remains, after Diana has tied up her portfolio, and he becomes aware of the "truth" between them. "A pretense, the undeclared knowledge of a shared imagination, hung in the air"(95). David's response is to reject the opportunity. He murmurs, "It's time I went" (96). At this point Diana suggests a walk in the garden. Again David senses another opportunity, and again he dismisses it. He questions whether he has imagined the sexual tension between them back in the room. "But he had not imagined. It was here, now, the unsaid. He knew it in every nerve and premonitory fiber. His move: he drew back into speech"(97). Shortly after this, David feels the impulse to reach out and take her hand, but he defeats this impulse by suggesting that she will meet another. "The last effort to distance. 'He will turn up. The knight errant'"(97). It is clear up to this point that David has chosen to disallow any involvement. Interestingly, Beth enters his thinking, and David tries to fool himself that his thoughts about Beth at this moment are not morally motivated, by recalling to mind a pact he and Beth made. "[I]f they were against anything, it was having a general opinion on such matters, judging them morally"(98). But why then has he hesitated?

It is at this point that David is affected by Henry's example and by his own artistic desire. To confound his hesitation, he trumps his feelings with the following thoughts:

> So why make an exception of this? Why deny experience, his artistic soul's sake, why ignore the burden of the old

> man's entire life? And so little: a warmth, a clinging, a brief entry into another body. One small releasing act. (98)

This is the one sure spur that will motivate David: his desire to be *artistically* authentic. Although this thought stirs him to kiss Diana, he retracts immediately what the kiss might imply. He says, "I'm sorry," meaning not just the kiss, but "everything"(99). This shows that David has in fact chosen. He is apologizing to her out of a kind of honor for the fact that he cannot allow himself to consummate their passion. That not even David is aware of what stops him at this juncture is made plain in his reflection a paragraph later. "He searched for words, but found none; or none that explained him"(99).

From this point on it is Diana that is resolved to respect David's resolve. We remember that the story has suggested that David and Diana are similar. Diana, like David, is essentially conventional. Diana believes, or wants to believe, in the fairy tale. There is an important exchange between them on this point.

> She said, "It's my fault. I . . . "
> "You?"
> "Fairy tales. About sleeping princesses."
> "They could live together. Afterward." (98)

Here, David utters the words that are in Diana's mind. To live "afterwards" with the Princess is to live happily ever after. When the full realization of this impossibility takes hold, Diana is as opposed to any involvement as was David before her. As they walk back from the orchard, they pass by Breasley's studio where David takes notice of Breasley's unfinished canvas, *Kermesse* . In the few steps it takes them to get to the door, David wants desperately now to consummate the passion that exists between them. I suggest that it is the artist in him,

recalled by Breasley's canvas, that is a spur to David here. It is the tyranny of his artistic self, schooled in the Breasley academy where true artists are not afraid of the body, that motivates David. When, later, David tries to force the consummation, it is evidence of the tyranny of his monomania for artistic authenticity. But it is a feeble wish brought about by David's ever-increasing sense of failure in that realm. The further Diana retreats, the more desperate is David to regain the chance for his artistic soul's sake. The more that this becomes an impossibility, the more David imbues the missed opportunity with significance--a significance that is concerned primarily with his artistic stature. This confusion of his existential authenticity with his artistic authenticity is made plain in the following passage.

> But he had never really had, or even attempted to give himself, the far greater existential chance. He had had doubts about his work before; but not about his fundamental nature, or at any rate that there was not in it the potential wherewithal to lay the ghost that profoundly haunts every artist: his lastingness. (109, the emphasis is mine)

In other words, David feels that his inability to sin prevents him from becoming a better artist. He says of Breasley: "Henry knew sin was a challenge to life; not an unreason, but an act of courage and imagination. He sinned out of need and instinct" (107).

The final proof that David confuses his failure as an artist with his complete existential failure is evident in David's following reflection. "[H]e had refused (and even if he had never seen her again) a chance of a new existence, and the ultimate quality and enduringness of his work had rested on acceptance"(112). At the end, David is concerned with his "lastingness" as an artist. He has learned one of Breasley's lessons--

nothing must come between the self and expression--and has made his failure with Diana into a failure of his fundamental nature. In these terms, his failure is the failure to deny himself nothing. He fails to be as selfish as Breasley. David accepts this judgement as his final truth. Since he cannot exercise Breasley's kind of selfish freedom, he condemns himself as an "eternal also-ran." But where Breasley's triumph is as an artist, David's triumph is as a decent man. That David never sees this as a triumph indicates the degree to which he has interpreted his failure from the corrupted artistic perspective.

Freedom, as Fowles has tried to show in all his fiction, is never absolute. Breasley's kind of selfishness may in fact be the high price of great art. But there is something perverted about his ideal. David, early in the story, has unknowingly intuited the truth about Breasley: he had achieved the "freedom to be exactly as he always had been, a halo around his selfishness" (56). Contrastingly, David's choice shows that true freedom, responsible freedom, is only possible between two people and can never be realized by one person alone. There is a balance implied in freedom: between the needs of the self and the needs of others. The achievement of this knowledge is sometimes arrived at only through painful choice. Ultimately, this is the drama in this fiction, as in all of Fowles's fictions. The conflict is between modern day loyalties, between a selfish and absolute freedom and a responsible and relative one.

The story is written in such a way, that is, with the artistic theme constantly before us, that it is difficult to see David Williams's choice--his fidelity to his wife--as anything but complete failure. But Fowles says that we must always make choices for ever greater freedom both for the self

and for others. What I have been trying to show is that it is never absolute , unmitigated freedom; it is always a freedom with responsibility. David never fully credits himself for what he does achieve: he has balanced desire for absolute personal freedom with his commitment to those outside the self: namely Beth. David exercises freedom with responsibility by honoring his commitment to her. He chooses to temper personal freedom with responsibility to the other. What makes David choose this way is the ethical impulse behind all Fowles's work: the impulse to be just.

Consequently, David is another of Fowles's slightly tarnished heroes. As with Miranda and Nicholas before him, his journey becomes a crucible in which he gains an expanded knowledge of the self. If David as hero has any boon to share with the community, it is his knowledge that the better he understands the self, the more he sees he is part of the community.

Conclusion

In the course of this study I have argued that all of Fowles's protagonists can be seen to undergo a journey. But, the journey is very specific. It is an inward journey first, a journey toward self, and then an outward journey, a journey toward others. The two doctrines that promote these kinds of movements are existential and moral.

This journey, as existential humanists throughout the ages have attested, begins with the self. The "journey" is, of course, a metaphor. While many of Fowles's fictions do describe physical journeys--The Magus, "The Ebony Tower," A Maggot--as many have no physical journey--The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman, and Mantissa; or, rather, the journeys of these last works are journeys of the mind. In this sense, all the fictions are journeys of the mind, because they all require their protagonists to travel inward.

Fowles has made use of a metaphor from an ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, to suggest that the reality of human nature is that very few people understand the need to initiate this journey, and fewer still undertake it. Sadly, for humankind, most people do not want to be roused from their unthinking complacency. This situation has been true since humankind has existed.

An unfortunate consequence of this biological division, says Fowles, is that the distinction between a Few who struggle to understand themselves and their society, to evolve, and a Many who avoid this struggle, is a notion that has been abused by reactionaries of all stripes. It has been abused because the abusers assume that the line that distinguishes these two groups runs between individuals, when in fact, as Fowles says, the line runs through each individual. We are all at times like the Few, at other times like the Many.

This is the truth behind the philosophy of the first thinker to articulate this struggle. Heraclitus saw humankind divided between people who struggled to understand themselves and people who did not. Yet a closer reading of Heraclitus reveals that this idea is not divisive, but unifying. The Few who struggle to understand themselves gain the insight that they are not separate from the others but bound more universally than they suspected before their insight. The logos is common. To care for the self, then, is to care for the other. In Heraclitus's philosophy, selfishness and selflessness are, paradoxically, one and the same. But the selfish turning inward is very different from the shallow, egotistic selfishness of the person who lacks an understanding of the *logos* , the person who has not learned the truth that is revealed in self-knowledge. This, then, is the broader moral aspect to Heraclitus's thought: knowing the self engenders an understanding that we care for the other as we would care for the self.

This paradoxical connection between the self and the other is constructive. This is the difference between Heraclitus and modern existentialists. In thinkers such a Sartre, the self becomes an inviolable entity. Everything, including the other, is hostile to it. The relationship between the self and the other is destructive. Sartre's anthropology of humankind is a perversion of reality.

Just as commentators associate Fowles with modern existentialism, so too they associate his concept of freedom with the freedom of modern existentialists, in particular, Sartre. This is a mistake. Sartre's particular ontology generates a radical view of freedom. He says in essence, "Man is his freedom, . . . and therefore his freedom is absolute" (Reinhardt 161). This absolute freedom becomes even more

perverted in his discussion of "*l'être pour-autrui*," "being-for-others." In the final analysis, either I annihilate the freedom of the other, or they annihilate mine. The relationship is therefore not one of love, but of hate (162-63).

In light of the obvious differences between Heraclitus's view of humankind and Sartre's, and the differences between Fowles's relative freedom and Sartre's absolute freedom, it is odd that the association of Fowles's very Heraclitean existentialism with Sartre's existentialism should have existed as long as it has.

I have tried to show that in the fiction Fowles's freedom is a relative freedom and a freedom with responsibility. Fowles makes this very plain in an interview with Katherine Tarbox, published as part of her book The Art of John Fowles. When asked whether he was interested in political freedom, Fowles insisted that freedom must be understood very carefully. "The first thing, if you do have a sense of freedom, is that in a way it is very limiting. That is, if you gain a sense of freedom and you believe in it and wish to act on it, then you realize it puts appalling limitations on you" (183). Tarbox then suggests to Fowles that in his fiction he seems "to assume that there is some sort of innate goodness or right sense about people that will guide their freedom" (184).Fowles's answer, in light of my entire argument, is extremely interesting. He says, "Freedom for me is inalienably bound up with self-knowledge. I would say the two words are almost synonymous in this context. . . . that's certainly how I see political freedom. It's more self-knowledge, and thus knowledge of others, too . . ." (184).

One aspect of my argument has been to say exactly what Fowles says above. This sentiment, that self-knowledge engenders a

knowledge and ultimately a concern for others, cannot be found in much of the contemporary existential literature. It is found in the source that Fowles has claimed was the genesis of many of his ideas. The Few and the Many, the individual and the community, the self and society: the earliest attempt to understand these in an existential way is made in Heraclitus's thought.

In The Collector, we saw that Frederick Clegg fails to understand his self in any meaningful way. Miranda Richardson, in obvious contrast, is a person who makes the inward journey, and is then able to love G.P. and reach out to Clegg. In The Magus, we saw a person much like Miranda was before her growth. Nicholas Urfe's *hubris* , both in his life and in his person, is destructive. Through Conchis's Godgame, Nicholas is able to undergo the sloughing of his old self and to realize the beginning of a new self. By the end of the story, he is able to reach out to Alison and understand her word. David Williams is very much like Nicholas. He needs to slough his over-rational self and his false aestheticism. While he does learn these lessons, I have argued that at the close of the novel, he has learned them too well. He sees himself an existentially failed man, when, in truth, he has in his decision exemplified the ability that Fowles prizes in his characters above all: he has learned to balance his new understanding of freedom with a moral responsibility. This is the tension that all Fowles's characters exist in. By their example, Fowles suggests that we too must learn to understand our selves ever better, and by doing so, learn to live equably in this world with others.

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