Andre Gide, the nonconformist

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ANDRE GIDE
THE NONCONFORMIST

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Language Department
The College of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Edwa Langdon McDonald
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

André Gide, the nonconformist, "epitomizes the tensions of our time: between tradition and science, culture and progress, bourgeoisie and proletariat, past and future," writes Van Meter Ames. Gide has reached the highest degree of culture by thinking for himself, though not a model citizen, and by his own explorations reaching a thoroughly personal conception of the world, from both a material and spiritual standpoint. In his writings which cover a large range--novels, criticisms, essays, dramas, translations--he introduces his philosophy of religion, ethics, and progress. The reader is usually forced to read his works several times before understanding his complete message; often Gide examines a problem from every side leaving the reader to make his own conclusions. This ambivalence is considered by some critics as a sign of weakness, but perhaps it is one of the reasons why Gide has such an appeal for the young people. According to Justin O'Brien, who has recently translated the Journals of André Gide, there is no writer in all French literature who knows better how to talk to the adolescent heart

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than André Gide. In The Fruits of the Earth it is easy to see Gide's appeal:

All our life long we have been tormented by the uncertainty of our paths. How can I put it? All choice, when one comes to think of it, is terrifying; liberty, when there is no duty to guide it, terrifying. The path that has to be chosen lies through wholly unexplored country, where each one makes his own discoveries.

Gide, unlike many writers has never let himself grow rigid and is always anxious for change. There is no doubt that Gide has kept himself young as seen in his Journal on March 6, 1941:

Mon âme est demeuré jeune à ce point qu'il me semble sans cesse que, le septuagénaire que je suis indubitablement, c'est un rôle que j'assume; et les infirmités, les défaillances qui me rappellent mon âge, viennent à la manière du souffleur . . . il me serait beaucoup plus naturel de m'abandonner au printemps qui vient; simplement je sens que je n'ai plus le costume qu'il faut pour cela.

Gide has confessed himself over and over again in his Journals and autobiographical works allowing the reader to gain an intimate insight into his soul.

According to Leon Pierre Quint:

Between the work and the life of André Gide there is a closer connection than between the work and life of

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any other writer. His ethic is continuously illuminated by his life, his evolution, the discussions going forward within his consciousness, and the characteristic shades of his personality.\(^5\)

Many critics have not always been so understanding as, like any original thinker and artist, he scandalized many when he expressed his belief in the doctrine of supreme individualism. He has been criticized for his views of religion which to many have seemed sacrilegious or at least disturbing. But probably his "honeymoon" with communism, as he called it, and his views on homosexuality brought forth the most storms of protest. Gide always saved the criticisms of himself, and in December 1921 he quoted from a comment by Rene Johannet, which is his 208th clipping:

M. Gide does not even represent a literary school, not even the review in which he writes. His work is the most flagrantly unpunished intellectual and moral scandal of the century.\(^6\)

Gide's answer to this statement is "... in addition to advertisements I receive nothing but savage attacks."\(^7\) Gide has always resented the comments of critics and states in his Journals in 1927:

With one or two exceptions when a French critic wants to write an article about me, he strives not to explain

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7 Loc. cit.
or understand me, but to take up and maintain a position against me.9

There is no doubt, however, that Gide, the nonconformer, has a wide-spread influence in France; and according to Mr. Justin O'Brien, it is the greatest since Baudelaire.9 Through the organization of *La Nouvelle Revue*, Gide sponsored many young writers who wrote for the joy of writing. Among those who in the opinion of Mr. Justin O'Brien have been influenced by Gide are: André Maurois, Jacques de Lacretelle, François Mauriac, Roger Martin du Gard, Julien Green, Malraux, Saint Exupery, and Giono. Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot, Rilke, Thomas Mann, and many younger writers in various countries have been touched by Gide's ideas.10

Gide's efforts have not been confined just to writing as he has formed a multitude of international contacts and has participated in cosmopolitan conferences and symposiums.

It may be that, as Gide has stated many times, his works will be better understood and appreciated in the future. However he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1947 and since that time seems to be finally seeing the fruits of his labor being recognized. Although he has not

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been elected to the French Academy, he has been considered by some critics as the greatest literary genius today; but there is little doubt that Gide is one of the most challenging of the modern writers, truly representing the twentieth century, the period of nonconforming.
CHAPTER II

LIFE OF ANDRE GIDE

The life of André Gide is divided into four periods: his early life which he considered his period of darkness, his adolescence which was his period of mental confusion, his early mature years which was his period of defiance, and his later years which was his period of leadership. By studying his life the growth of his individualistic approach to everything and his reasons for not conforming to the pattern established by tradition will be traced.

Gide speaks of his birth in Paris in 1869 in his Journal showing that his ambivalent feelings started with his heritage:

I have discovered quite by chance and without much believing in astrology that it just happens that on the 21st of November, my birthday, our earth leaves the influence of Scorpio to enter that of Sagittarius.

Is it my fault if your God took such great care to have me born between two stars, the fruit of two races, of two provinces, and of two faiths?

His father's family were strict Protestants, who lived in the austere region of Uzes in southern France. For them life was a struggle to overcome the weaknesses of human nature and to observe God's Law in righteous living. His mother's family, on the other hand, were recent Protestant converts. She was

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reared and still lived in the beautiful province of Normandy in northern France. Their life was easier, and pleasures were enjoyed. Thus Gide had in him this combined heritage which has apparently always been a source of conflict urging him at times to enjoy the pleasures of life and at other times to refrain sternly from these pleasures and to think only of his duty.

Gide's father was a professor in the Faculty of Law at the University of Paris and apparently had little direct influence on his son, as he died when Gide was eleven. Gide remarked about his father's death:

As for my grief, how should I have realized it? I would speak of my grief if I could, but alas! what I was most sensible of was the kind of prestige my bereavement gave me in my school fellows' eyes.2

However his father did introduce him to the Arabian Nights, whose oriental inventiveness and imagery delighted the young boy; perhaps its acceptance of sin helped develop the conflict which has obsessed him almost from infancy because of his puritanical background.

Gide's mother, who had kept in the background, took over when his father died. Gide remarked on his father's death October 28, 1880, that he suddenly felt his mother's love unfold him—her love, which henceforth would have no

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one but him to brood over. She was a pious woman with full faith in God, a great admirer for anything intellectual, and uncompromising in her sense of duty. Because she was over anxious of her one child, it was but natural that he should rebel from her authority in any way he could. Eventually she turned her son against her form of religion; however throughout his life he felt his sense of duty—duty to his work, duty to his mother, and duty to his wife. Perhaps because of her craving for intellectual achievements Gide became eventually a writer. The attempt to discard principles his mother instilled in him resulted in guilt feelings, such as headaches, insomnia, and nervous disorders. Gide spoke of his mother as never sparing herself pains and of bringing unre-laxed diligence to all she did. He felt his mother was always striving after what was good, after what was better, and was never content to rest in a state of self-satisfaction. This is a pattern which Gide himself has followed in his writings and his life. He further remarked that it was not enough for his mother to be modest; she was continually trying to diminish her imperfections, or the imperfections

3 André Gide, If It Dies, p. 79.
4 Ibid., p. 139.
5 Ibid., p. 145.
she discovered in others. Many years later Gide wrote in his *Journal* in 1918:

*I inherit from my mother that mania for always wanting to improve those I love. And yet what attracts me in M. is his shortcomings: thoughtlessness, turbulence, forgetfulness of the hour, complete surrender of the moment.*

Gide apparently still could not relax and enjoy himself because he was always trying to improve. Gide felt that in these early years his mother exacted from him all the submission she had formerly shown his father with the result that conflicts arose which helped to convince him that his only likeness was to his father; however he later realized that the deepest seated ancestral resemblances do not show themselves sometimes till late in life.

Gide considered these early years as his period of darkness when he was asleep, unwakened, unborn. There was very little challenge in his life at home with three older women who wanted above all to conform with existing standards for the bourgeois class. Though his mother believed in education, Gide was not much interested as he was dismissed from school for his bad behavior; his series of tutors proved most unsatisfactory since they had little to offer him. His punctilious Aunt Clair who regarded him as an irresponsible

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6 André Gide, *If It Die*, p. 145.

child restricted his life greatly. But Anna Shackleton of Scotland, who had lived with his mother since she was married, was a great inspiration to Gide. She was warm-hearted and merry and brought laughter and gaiety to this gloomy atmosphere. She sketched, did water colors, translated literature from various languages into French, and studied botany. She imbued in Gide a love for science which was to be most important later in his writings as he never had any alienation between art and science. He wrote in many of his books of his love of science as he wrote here:

I doubt whether I ever extracted as much or as keen joy from anything later on, be it from books, music or painting, as I did in those days from the play of living matter... I had succeeded in getting Suzanne to share my passion for entomology; at any rate she would accompany me on my hunting expeditions and was not too much disgusted at turning up bits of dung and carrion in the search for dung-beetles, burying-beetles and devil's coach-horses.8

Gide also received some respect as a child for his interest in science. This apparently was the only field in which he did command respect. As Anna was responsible for giving him an interest and challenge in life, it is but natural that he should write this about her:

Anna Shackleton! I recall your calm face and pure brow, the slight severity of your mouth, your smiling eyes that showered such loving-kindness on my childhood. I wish I could invent fresh words in which to speak of you—more moving, more respectful, tenderer words.

8 André Gide, If It Die, p. 85.
Shall I some day tell the story of your modest life? I should like your humility to shine as resplendently in my story as it will shine before God on the day the mighty are cast down and the lowly magnified. It is not the great and glorious of this world that I have ever felt inclined to portray—no, but those whose truer glory is hidden from sight.  

What Gide needed during these years was affection, but his mother was so anxious not to spoil him that she deprived him of his basic need. Although Gide was spoilt in a way, in that he never knew what it was to be poor and need money; yet his mother did not give him more than his friends had. Gide never had the incentive of having to earn a living; so it is difficult to judge what his life would have been if he had not been born rich.

There has been much discussion of his "bad habits" as he later called them. However it is now recognized as a perfectly normal step in the sex development of little boys. Unfortunately he was unable to outgrow these habits perhaps partly because his cousin Emmanuelle refused to marry him when he was twenty, although he insisted that he was always more interested in boys than girls. Sometimes this arrested sex development has been noticed in boys who have over-anxious mothers, and this may have been the case with Gide. The important thing is that it developed in him a conflict between his religious principles and his physical desires.

9 André Gide, If It Die, p. 21.
How he resolved his conflict will be seen later.

When he was twelve, he already had a great love of poetry but was taunted by his schoolmates when the professor complimented him on his recitation. He was chased and attacked by the boys at school; finally after an attack of smallpox, he was afraid to go back to school. He developed a nervous malady which his Uncle Charles thought he was faking, and for this Gide, of course, detested him. However Gide remarked in his autobiography that he would leave it to neurologists to disentangle what was real and what was assumed in his nervous malady that followed his smallpox.10

Gide was then sent to the Ecole Alsacienne, and within two weeks he had added headaches to his repertory of nervous troubles. When he was 46 Gide wrote about his headaches:

As these headaches left me completely after the age of 20 I looked upon them for some time with great severity and accused them of being if not altogether feigned at any rate greatly exaggerated. But now that they have begun again, I recognize them, at 46 years old, as being exactly what they were when I was 13, and I admit they might very well have paralyzed my efforts to work. In truth I was not lazy. "André will always love work," Uncle Emile said.11

Gide looked on this period of his life as one of darkness, ugliness, and deception. Rebelling against the convention pattern constantly held out to him, Gide himself stated what

10 André Gide, If It Dies, p. 98
11 Ibid., p. 104.
a nasty, sly little boy he was. His cousin, Albert, whom he admired greatly, told him he did not see what interest he had in life beyond himself; that that was the mark of an egoist, and he had a strong suspicion that was what he was.\(^{12}\)

Gide accepted this reproof, but unfortunately Albert was so dominated by his mother that he was of little assistance to Gide in breaking away from his mother.

At about sixteen a sudden change took place in Gide probably because of his adolescence. Gide wrote in his autobiography:

> Sympathy may awaken many dormant qualities; I have often thought that the worst rascals must be those who have had to do without kindness and affection in their youth. It is no doubt strange that my parents did not suffice me.\(^{13}\)

Perhaps his feeling for his cousin Emmanuele was at this time sympathy, but at any rate he thought it was love. She was his elder by two years, and he had written in his diary before this time:

> She was too quiet for my taste. She never quarrelled it was so natural for her to give up her turn or her place that one wondered whether it was not her pleasure rather than her virtue that made her act so.\(^{14}\)

There is very little in Gide's *Journals* about Em. who later

\(^{12}\) André Gide, *If It Die*, p. 32.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 67.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 79.
became his wife, but this quality of resignation which she had as a girl stayed with her all her life. Otherwise why were most of the women Gide wrote about resigned? For some reason he was always impressed by a woman who was resigned. Em. and Gide during this period were much interested in religion which drew them closer together. Gide described his first "schandern" which occurred during the height of his religious fervor. He talked in glowing terms of the Gospels stating: "Ah, at last I found the reason, the occupation, the inexhaustible spring of love."15 However at the same time he got into the habit of keeping a diary "from a desire to give some form to his vague agitations."16

Gide finally awakened to the joys of music during this period under the instruction of M. de la Nux. Gide wrote many times that Chopin taught him his technique as an artist. At one time M. de la Nux approached his mother concerning a career as a concert pianist, but his mother refused to consider such a career stating that her son had something better to do in life than interpret other people's works.17 Gide was not informed of his mother's decision till much later; however if he had had to earn a living, he wrote he would

15 André Gide, If It Dies, p. 189.
16 Ibid., p. 198.
17 Ibid., pp. 209-10.
have become a piano teacher and stated:

I have a passion for teaching and inexhaustible patience. I have more than once made the experiment and am vain enough to believe that my lessons were as good as those of the best masters.\textsuperscript{18}

To this day very few have heard Gide play though he often noted that he had been able to give two hours to daily practice without reading or meditation having to suffer too much. He felt he was unable to play in public as his playing would immediately become frozen.\textsuperscript{19} Gide was also very timid about speaking and often stated that he was too shy to make a good impression. That is one reason he wrote—an outlet for his thoughts.

Gide at last found someone worthy of his admiration in M. de la Nux who received from Gide a kind of worship, the same respectful, humble affection which he had a little later for Mallarmé, and which he said he never felt for any but these two. Both the one and the other were in his eyes the personification of saintliness in one of its rarest forms. He looked up to them with all the ingenious reverence of youth.\textsuperscript{20}

Besides his interest in his cousin Em., his religious fervor, and his music, he was beginning to branch out and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} André Gide, \textit{If It Die}, p. 209.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} André Gide, \textit{Journals}, II, p. 43.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 79.
\end{itemize}
meet other young writers and painters. He wrote of visiting Jean Paul Laurens with his cousin Albert:

That day, my eyes were suddenly opened, and I then and there realized the ugliness of my mother's rooms; I felt as if some of it must be clinging about me, and the sensation of my unworthiness was so strong that I believe I should have fainted from shame and shyness if it had not been for my old school fellow, Laurens' eldest son, who with greatest cordiality tried to put me at my ease. I was certainly glad to meet him, but I was still more tormented by the fear that he would take me for a bourgeoise. Since sitting for Albert I had become very much taken with my personal appearance; my desire to look exactly what I felt myself to be, what I wanted myself to be—namely, an artist—was so great that it prevented me from having any existence of my own and turned me into a poseur. Above all things, I wished to make myself loved; I gave my soul in exchange. In those days, I could not write—I had almost said think—or so I fancied, apart from this mirror; in order to become aware of my emotions, of my thoughts even, I must first, I fancied, read them in my eyes.21

It was Gide's friend, Pierre Louis, who introduced him to Mallarmé and the symbolist group. As Gide was very shy, he might have continued to live within himself if it had not been for the bond he felt coming together with Mallarmé. Among those in the group were: Henri de Regnier, Ferdinand Herold, Pierre Quillard, Bernard Lazare, André Fontaines, Pierre Louis, Robert de Bonières, and André de Guerne. The habitués were usually poets or sometimes painters such as Gauguin and Whistler. Under the symbolist influence he wrote Le Traité du Narcisse, La Tentative Amoureuse, Le Voyage d'Uirien. "During these years," wrote Leon Pierre Quint,

21 André Gide, If It Dies, pp. 207-8.
"Gide lived in a state of gloomy, superficial agitation. He was a tall, thin, young man, chaste, sober, affected, with rather colourless eyes, the abundant curly hair of a poet, and an absurd, almost black beard." Gide had difficulty making friends as he was unable to be natural. Mallarmé on his "Tuesdays" at home would give a dissertation which would thrill Gide and the other writers. In Mallarmé Gide saw a man who did not participate in events around him and who had turned his back on the realities of life. In 1918 Gide wrote in his Journal: "To tell the truth, political questions do not much interest me; I have trouble convincing myself that one regime is preferable in itself." Gide was also interested in the symbolists theory that life was usually tentative with much to learn from the metaphysical vista beyond reality.

Gide felt that this was the most confused period of his life from which he disengaged himself only when he left for Africa with Paul Laurens, an artist friend. He could not find out why Emmanuelle had refused to marry him after he published his Cahiers, nor would she write to him. Although he filled his time with writing and new friendships, he was

finding it difficult to resist the demands of his body; eventually the moral crisis began to tell on him. He decided to get away from everything and everyone; so he left for Africa leaving his Bible, which had been his constant companion, behind him. In his Journal in 1893 he wrote:

The turmoil of my conscience which gave to my sorry joys, to each one of them, all the bitterness of sin . . . and my greatest joys were solitary and laden with care. I lived until the age of twenty-three completely virgin and utterly depraved . . . and my soul, ever more inclined to adoration, became daily more silent . . . the saddest of my thoughts.24

It was time for Gide to leave his family and friends. At Biskra Gide became critically ill; and when he recovered, he changed his way of living and his attitude toward life. He felt as if he had been reborn, and from now on he decided to believe what seemed right to him instead of accepting the prejudices and ideas of his family, his religion, and his education. When his mother, alarmed because of his health, came to Biskra, she found him sharing a native girl, Meriem, with his friend Paul. Horrified she returned immediately to Paris. If Gide had quietly sowed his wild oats and returned to Paris, no one would have thought much about it. But Gide wanted everyone to know of his metamorphosis, and from this time on he was considered a nonconformist.

Gide came under the influence of Oscar Wilde who con-

24 André Gide, Journals, I, p. 23.
vinced him that his fundamental nature was not like that of normal men. In The Fruits of the Earth he wrote of his convalescence when he became attracted to young native boys:

White robed Arabs flit about, and young boys—too young (weren't they?) to be acquainted with love. (There were some whose lips were hotter than little unfledged birds.)

Gide received a great deal of criticism for his writings about the "hot lipped" native boys.

In L'Immoraliste which was also written about this period of his life, though written as a novel, Michel said:

Je ne pensais point, ne m'examinais point; une fatalité heureuse me guidait... je me livrai voluptueusement à moi-même, aux choses, au tout, qui me parut divin. J'étais un nouvel être!

Gide was himself giving way to pleasure and forgetting his duty. He wrote in The Fruits of the Earth:

Every perfect action is accompanied by pleasure. By that you can tell that you ought to do it. I don't like people who pride themselves on working painfully. If their work was painful, they would better have done something else. The delight one takes in one's work is the sign of its fittingness, and the sincerity of my pleasures, Nathaniel, is the most important of my guides.

Gide also began to realize that there were two sides to every question and wrote:

27 André Gide, op. cit., p. 33.
Every argument may be opposed by a contrary one which needs only to be found, I set about looking for it, sometimes, in the course of my long journeyings. I lived in the perpetual, delicious expectation of the future, no matter what it might be. I taught myself that, like expectant questions in face of their answers, the thirst that arises in face of every pleasure must be swiftly to precede its enjoyment.28

With this new approach to life Gide returned to Paris anxious to change his friends. He published his *Faludes*, in which he satirized his former friends and expressed his disappointment in society as he found it. But his book was not received favorably, and he was no longer welcomed by the symbolist group. Suddenly his mother died, and while kneeling at her side he decided to marry his cousin, Emmanuelle. "He thought he could make her happy by devoting himself to her, protecting her, and showing her what he had found happiness to really be,"29 according to Leon Pierre Quint. Why Em. decided to marry him is not known as he rarely discussed her in his *Journals*, but she was no longer young and may have felt her cousin, if left to his own devices, would not follow the path leading to sanctity. In *La Porte étroite* Alissa, who was supposed to represent Em., did not marry her cousin, first, because she felt her younger sister should marry first, and, secondly, because she had a fixation about marri-

age. Em. was a devout Protestant throughout her life, and evidently she found her religion her salvation.

At any rate, the day after their marriage they went to Africa, but Gide found everything changed in the fall. He wrote Les Nourritures Terrestres that year, and in the preface to the new edition in 1927 he said:

I wrote this book at a moment when I had just settled my life by marrying; at a moment when I had voluntarily surrendered a liberty that my book, a work of art, immediately laid claim to with all the greater resolution. And in writing it I was, needless to say, perfectly sincere; but equally sincere in my heart's repudiation of it.30

Although he had surrendered his liberty, he thought when he married, he could not help expressing it in his writings. Soon he published L'Immoraliste in 1902 which was also a failure. During this period he became interested in Nietzsche but refused to state he influenced him. In July 1922 he commented in his diary:

If those in whom I recognize my thought had not been there, I doubt whether it would have been much hampered—but its expression would perhaps have been different. It is useless to go back over what has been well said by others.—Nothing is so absurd as that accusation of influence (in which certain critics excel every time they note a resemblance).—How many things, on the contrary, I have not said because I later discovered them in others! Nietzsche's influence on me? . . . I was already writing L'Immoraliste when I discovered him. Who could say how much he got in my way . . . ? How my book was shorn of all I disliked to repeat.31

30 André Gide, The Fruits of the Earth, p. 4.
Gide evidently thought a great deal about the question of "influences" as in November 1927 he wrote in his diary:

Daniel Simond, from Lausanne, whom I met the day before yesterday on the boulevards and invited to lunch this noon, tells me that his professor has suggested to him as a thesis-subject: the influence of Nietzsche on my work. It is flattering; but to what can it lead? To seeking out in my Immoralistes for example, everything that might recall Zarathustra and paying no attention to what life itself taught me.

The book was entirely composed in my head and I had begun to write it when I made my encounter with Nietzsche, who at first got in my way. I found in him, not an investigation, but rather on the contrary a hindrance. If Nietzsche stood me in good stead in this case, it was subsequently by purging my book of a whole theoretical side that could not but have over-weighted it.

I have reflected considerably about this question of "influences" and believe that very gross errors are committed in this regard. The only thing that is worth anything in literature is what life teaches us. Everything we learn only from books remains abstract, a dead letter. Had I not encountered Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Blake, or Browning, I cannot believe that my work would have been any different. At the most they helped me to disentangle my thought. And even then? I took pleasure in hailing those in whom I recognized my thought. But that thought was mine, and it is not to them that I owe it. Otherwise it would be valueless. The great influence perhaps that I have really undergone is that of Goethe, and even then I am not sure whether or not my admiration for Greek literature and Hellenism would not have sufficed to counter-balance my original Christian formation. Furthermore, I feel rich enough never to have tried to pass off as mine the thoughts that belonged to someone else.  

Nietzsche was a thinker who had resolutely cast off the conventional pattern of morality, advocating the glorious principle that the individual should live fully, intensely, dangerously, glorifying the present moment and singing a lyric

32 André Gide, Journals, III, pp. 419-20.
hymn to vital and intoxicating joy. He undermined outworn structures and fashioned no new ones; instead Gide fashioned the worker. Michel, in the Immoraliste, showed a horror of sympathy stating that one should only sympathize with the strong; this was a Nietzschean sentiment. However Michel let himself go forgetting all obligations in order to be free and masterful, but Nietzsche did not mean the exemption from responsibility, as he felt the stronger one was, the more one had duties toward oneself and others. According to Van Meter Ames:

Michel is like Nietzsche in the thing Gide is characteristically eager about: the thing he wanted so much to say that he resented finding much of it said in German: that men should face forward. Nietzsche's own doctrine of eternal return was incompatible with this, though Gide thought the explanation lay in the need to wipe out regret. He would rather overcome it with optimism about the future.

Although Gide was interested in the superman of Nietzsche, he was also fascinated by Dostoyevsky and his writings concerning the relation of the individual to God. In him Gide found an example of a conscience in distress, laden with a feeling of sin—unavoidable sin—and yet at the same time a truly noble conscience longing for salvation. He had humility, resignation, and renunciation.

33 Van Meter Ames, André Gide, p. 51.
34 Loc. cit.
Van Meter Ames discussed Gide’s relationship with Dostoyevsky:

Dostoyevsky had compassion amounting to that, despite his prejudices. He was Gide’s “imperfect innovator” heralding the future in store for what may be enduring traits of human nature in Shakespeare’s characters.

Transference of his artistic allegiance from Flaubert to Dostoyevsky is the key to the new esthetic. Flaubert suppressed life to do his work. Dostoyevsky suppressed nothing: “he has wife and children, he loves them; he does not disdain life; he writes upon leaving prison: ‘At least I have lived . . .’” All that he felt, thought, did and suffered went into his art. The complexity of his experience was one with integrity he could not omit. Gide speaks of how human and anxious this complexity was. The characters of Dostoyevsky are made vivid by their problems, and the problems are incompatible with a definition of art as cleaving to formal excellence and shutting out life-situations. The characters may be fictitious and their difficulties may be called imaginary, but are none the less representative of those which beset real men and women who feel conflict between traditional ideals and new techniques. As Gide points out, he presents people not only as having the gamut of social relations but as having deep wells of intimate life and God-yearning.

Gide analyzed Dostoyevsky’s philosophy as meaning that individualism is devotion to others. Gide felt that the personal and private self was social if developed at all. Dostoyevsky knocked the snobbishness out of Gide, as he was humble—no super man—and was interested in his inferiors out of the goodness of his heart.

Gide was also influenced by Goethe who showed him a possible way to acquire a more balanced mental equilibrium.

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When young he knew all the extremities of moral restlessness. He was in search of his own conception of the truth. He experienced "schaudern" which he considered an indication of a man's great personal worth which held a promise of noble fulfillment. He came to think that it represented the best that is man. Goethe discovered in art the solution of his problem.

Gide wrote in his diary in September 1893:

Goethe preferred to pay no attention to the cause of sorrows; to achieve happiness he turned away from misfortunes. At first one holds this against him because one thinks it was easy, but it is easy only for dried-up souls (and they have no happiness in them). Goethe was not such a soul and he did not do what he did out of harshness. He thought that the sight of his happiness would contribute more to the happiness of others than hard and painful struggles against their misfortune.36

Gide wrote in 1895 in his diary: "Nothing has ever served to calm me more in life so much as the contemplation of that great figure."37 Throughout his diary he continually referred to Goethe and compared his opinions with Goethe's.

After L'Immoraliste, Gide published in 1909, La Porte étroite in which was portrayed Alissa's aspirations after holiness. Gide withdrew into complete silence after this book as he found his works were receiving no recognition. Unexpectantly he found himself the spiritual guide of a num-

36 André Gide, Journals, I, p. 32.

37 Ibid., p. 44.
ber of young men scattered throughout France. The realization that he was understood by some pacified him and gave him new confidence with which to face his own problems. According to Leon Pierre Quint:

His direct, personal influence on his friends was even more astonishing than that of his books. He had passion for teaching:—I shall read you pen in hand, he would say when a manuscript was brought to him, and he would return it with marginal annotations, suppressing above all useless words. If his ascendancy and his actions as a writer now and again reduced the already feeble to powerlessness, how much, on the other hand, did creative minds profit by his discipline?

It was but natural that Gide and his friends should begin writing for a magazine, and in 1896 Gide became a regular contributor to the L'Ermitage along with his friends: Jammes, Gheon, Copeau Emmanuel Signoret, Claudel, and Paul Valéry. Soon Gide became the guiding spirit of the paper, and under his influence L'Ermitage was the best poetic review of the period. Curiously the Dreyfus affair brought no reaction or comments from the contributors to the review, though Gide had definite views on the matter. The Dreyfus affair brought defeat for the enemies of the republic in the army and the clergy, resulting in the separation of the church and the state. According to Van Meter Ames:

A letter Gide wrote in 1898 painfully reflects the hysteria: “If to save an innocent Dreyfus would be the undoing of a guilty France, it is necessary for Dreyfus to become guilty and for France to be made innocent.”

But this would require acting with authority and not letting the ranting begin. Now that it has begun you cannot stop it... I don't like the Jews and never thought them more dangerous. But when authority is lacking, a formidable cleverness is necessary—and the clever thing now would be at least to simulate frankness if one does not dare to have it—if it is too dangerous to have it. 39

Gide's youthful sentiments in connection with the Dreyfus case show that his experiences in Africa for freedom from tradition and his narrow code had not broadened him as much as he thought.

In 1908 L'Ermitage folded, and in 1909 the Nouvelle Revue Francaise began. The managing committee were: Jacques Copeau, Jean Schlumberger, and Andre Ruyters. Gheon and Michel Arnauld also helped. Gide and Schlumberger supplied the necessary financial funds. The main idea of the Nouvelle Revue was a return to true classicism and to the desire for inward perfection. The contributors met frequently and criticized each other's articles. All had a common ideal of artistic sincerity and morality. They wanted to fight against the commercialization of literature, against syndicates of writers for reciprocal praise and advertisement; they were for directness and simplicity of expression, and against artificiality and oversophistication. Art was put before friendship, and the spirit of self-abnegation and devotion to art met with success. In 1911 a

publishing enterprise was begun in connection with the magazine and soon became one of the most thriving and influential centres of literary life in France. Gaston Gallimard put his money into the publishing house and has printed Gide's books and others of the group.

Soon Gallimard sent to Gide Jean Barois by Roger Martin du Gard, and Gide gave his approval. He became one of Gide's best friends though an atheist and a hearty materialist. So Jules Romains, Alain Fournier, Jean Giraudoux, Henri Frank all joined the group as their writings were approved by Gide. Proust however tried unsuccessfully to join this privileged group, much to the group's later embarrassment for not recognizing his worth.

Jacques Copeau in 1913 tried to bring to the theater this same movement of reform. The View-Colombier was, indeed, an honest playhouse. The vital theater of today originated more or less directly in the N. R. F. group.

By 1914 the review had three thousand regular subscribers, and under the direction of Riviere, Copeau's successor, it expanded more fully and became better known to the public. Gide became less directly interested in it now that

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40 Leon Pierre Quint, André Gide, p. 56.
41 Ibid., p. 57.
it was a success and turned to other matters.\footnote{42 Leon Pierre Quint, André Gide, p. 56.}

In 1914 Gide published \textit{Les Caves du Vatican} in which he depicted the social and religious hypocrisy of contemporary bourgeois society. Claudel was greatly upset and tried to convert Gide to Catholicism. The next few years during World War I many of his friends were converted to Catholicism, and Gide considered being converted himself. Gide commented in his \textit{Journal} of February 1917:

\begin{quote}
It strikes me that I was foolish and guilty to bend my mind artificially so as to make it better understand the Catholic teaching. That is where the real impiety lies. I recognize that tendency toward veneration, which was doubtless a fortunate attitude in my youth but which is quite out of place today. There is no question of humility before god, but rather of that humility before men which has always been my secret malady, which moreover, I find likewise in Dostoyevsky and Baudelaire.\footnote{43 André Gide, \textit{Journals}, III, p. 199.}
\end{quote}

For a year and a half during the war Gide worked for the Red Cross in Paris. He then returned to Cuverville and helped Em. distribute food to the poor children each day. Throughout this time he read avidly and wrote many criticisms of authors in his \textit{Journal} such as the following in 1918:

\begin{quote}
Obviously what shocks me in the case of Romain Rolland is that he has nothing to lose as a result of the war: his book (Jean-Christophe) never seems better than when translated. I shall go further: he can only gain by the disaster of France, by the disappearance of the
\end{quote}
Right after the war Gide published *Numquid et tu?*, a book of exalted religious mysticism. Gide had finally resolved his conflict of religion and morality, as he felt that man had the right to live his own life in whatever way he chose and still be perfectly acceptable in the eyes of God. Gide also published his very frank autobiography, *Si le Grain ne meurt*, in which he confessed his life until marriage. Shortly afterwards he published *La Symphonie pastorale*. According to Georges LeMaitre, "The war had given Gide both a creed and a balanced perspective."\(^{45}\)

In the years right after the war Gide wrote with renewed vigor. He had resolved his conflict and no longer felt embarrassed. He encouraged the "Dadaists" in their efforts for freedom from existing literary practices. The *Nouvelle Revue* had resumed after the war and was extremely popular. Gide had practically organized a "brain trust" consisting of Marcel Proust, Paul Morand, Jean Giraudoux, and Paul Valéry.

However in 1924 Gide found himself the center of an attack from two sides. Henri Massis, a Catholic critic,

\(^{44}\) André Gide, *Journals*, III, p. 199.

stated that Gide was corrupting the youth by his views; at the same time Henri Beraud, another critic, stated that Gide had become successful through the political pressure of Jean Giraudoux, then an official in the Ministry of 'Affaires Etrangeres.46

Gide replied by having published thousands of copies of Corydon, his book defending homosexuality, and Si le Grain ne meurt, his frank autobiography. Gide found to his disgust that he was completely deserted by his friends who did not defend him. It was at this time that he sold his books in his library. Klaus Mann remarked on this incident as he happened to visit him at the time:

As for the books, they were destined to be sold at auction, I opened one of them at random, and was surprised to find it adorned with a cordial dedication autographed by the author, a well-known, respected man. Wouldn't the writer in question be rather hurt, I dared ask, by such an obvious lack of esteem and courtesy? Marc's smile was wry and not without bitterness. Precisely, this he told me, was what his friend was driving at. He meant to shock some of his dear colleagues and to teach them a lesson. For most of them had let him down, in the most weak-spirited way, when it would have behooved them, as friends and as intellectuals, to defend the author of Corydon against the insults of half-wits and hypocrites.47

Klaus Mann recalled that Gide appeared as a "quaint, haggard wanderer striding by his side."

\[46\] Georges LeMaitre, Four French Novelists, p. 139.
\[48\] Ibid., p. 24.
such as a frequent snuffing and his constant smoking of cigarettes, betrayed the tension behind his conscious and consistent self control." Gide has often remarked in his Journal on his efforts to stop smoking. He advised Klaus Mann:

Cigarettes are devilish. I don't have the fortitude to resist evil. Yes, in wanting things I am strong, and I usually get what I want. But when it comes to rejecting temptation . . . alors ça, c'est une autre histoire . . .

Klaus Mann related an incident which occurred when he and Gide were lunching together. A young boy came in selling violets, and Gide gave him some money but did not take the violets which obviously surprised the boy. Gide remarked knowingly:

Did you notice the wry glance he gave me? He is profoundly shocked. How extraordinary! Of course, he stole the flowers, and he would steal my money if he had the opportunity. But no charity! A helpful, disinterested gesture upsets his philosophy and even offends his honor. C'est bien curieux ça! C'est tout à fait remarquable.

So Gide, who was extremely curious, liked to upset people just to see what they would do.

In 1925 Gide set off for the Congo of Central Africa. He became upset with the treatment that the natives were re-

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49 Klaus Mann, André Gide, p. 23.
50 Ibid., p. 25.
ceiling at the hands of the colonial administration, and he felt that there should be an end to such abuses of fellow human beings. In 1927 he published his *Voyage au Congo* which resulted in a public scandal, but little came of it. He began to turn towards communism, and in 1932 he shocked the world by declaring himself a communist. According to Georges LeMaitre:

Gide turned his eyes towards the future; he began to hope that eventually Sovietism would give the masses genuine culture and intellectual freedom. Then communion between the people and an artist like himself would become a reality.52

As Gide became interested in communism, he lost his creative power. He apparently never joined the Party as his habitual individualism and independence were against that. He wrote in his *Journal* in January 1933:

*It seems to me very unjust to reproach the U.S.S.R. with being anxious only about material interests; but she is utterly right to take care of them first. And by ensuring education to all her people, by favoring and filling their leisure hours, she certainly shows that her aims do not stop there. But in order to rebuild anew, one has to start from the ground itself.*53

Gide became very popular in Russia, and his books were widely read. In 1936 he went to Russia and failed to find his expectations fulfilled. When he wrote of his disillusionment, he was banned from Russia. However he wrote in

52 Georges LeMaitre, *André Gide*, p. 142.
his diary in 1937:

The Marxist idea misleads us by exalting the illusion that a better social state can ever overcome poverty. And that idea even favors, in those it misleads, a certain poverty of heart, a drying up. So that I wonder which would be the more harmful to itself and to others, to humanity: a charity resigned to injustice or a justice having dispensed with love, a loveless impartiality? I feel a brother solely to those who have come to Communism through love, through a great exigence of love.54

Thus Gide examined both sides of the communistic question.

In June 1933 he wrote in his diary:

By mood and temperament I am not at all revolutionary. Furthermore, I personally have every reason to be pleased with the state of things. But you see what bothers me is just being in a position to be pleased with it; telling myself that if you were not born on the right side, you would perhaps not think the same; having to think: if you are a conservative, it is your advantage that you want to conserve and hand on.55

After a visit to Em. at Cuverville, Gide wrote in his diary his ambivalent feelings towards his wife. During these years although they had apparently had many happy times together, yet Gide had found it impossible to stay with her for any length of time. He had always traveled widely thus achieving his freedom. Although he later disclosed the existence of his illegitimate daughter, he was very careful about this affair until Em. died in 1938. However his thoughts concerning Em. in 1933 recurred over and over in

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54 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 378.
55 Ibid., p. 275.
his diary:

The truth is that I cannot resign myself to staying away from Em., nor dissociate my brain from my heart. This is the secret of my indecisions; my very reticences are the most passionate. Every time that I see her again I recognize anew that I have never really loved anyone but her. And it is because it takes me away from her that every step forward is so painful to me. I can no longer think without cruelty, a "condition of anxiety" sufficient to explain many sleepless nights. Probably because I feel her suffer from each attack on Christ that it hurts me so painfully. Maybe if it is not also because, without wanting to admit this to myself, without even knowing it or being exactly aware of it, I never completely ceased believing in him. 56

Em. had been forced into the role of the ideal he imagined. In his writings each heroine was sacrificed to a man whose incompatibility with her blocked her natural development. It is doubtful whether Gide's important books could have been written without Em. as they were all done in protest. He apparently had a horror of Em.'s spirit of sacrifice and natural humility and condemned her for doing ordinary tasks and ruining her hands. Although Gide wanted his independence from Em., at the same time he liked to come back to her when things went wrong and become dependent again.

In 1940 Gide reminisced about his life stating:

J'ai été plus courageux dans mes écrits que dans ma vie, respectant maintes choses qui n'étaient sans doute pas tellement respectables et faisant cas beaucoup trop important du jugement d'autrui. Ah! quel bon Mento je serais aujourd'hui pour celui que j'étais dans ma jeunesse! Comme je saurais bien me pousser à bout! Si

je m'étais écouté, j'aurais fait quatre tours du monde...
et je ne me serais pas marié. En écrivant ces mots j'en tremble comme d'une impiété. C'est que je suis resté malgré tout très amoureux de ce qui m'a le plus géné et que je ne puis pas jurer que cette gêne même n'ait pas obtenu de moi le meilleur. Je crois qu'il est plus difficile encore d'être juste envers soi-même qu'envers autrui. 57

Gide finally admitted that if he had his life to live over, he would not marry and would travel around the world. For some reason, although his books have received favorable comment from America, he has never been to the United States.

During the second World War Gide stayed in seclusion and did not join the underground movement. He has been severely criticized for being so passive, but after all he was over seventy and not well. In his Journal he wrote in October 1939:

Si je me tais, ce n'est point par orgueil; pour un peu je dirais que c'est au contraire par modestie et plutôt encore incertitude. Je puis être, et je suis souvent, d'accord avec le plus grand nombre; mais l'approbation du plus grand nombre ne peut devenir à mes yeux une preuve de vérité. 58

According to Van Meter Ames in discussing the war years, he felt the fall of France had a very depressing effect on Gide:

How could he have the egoism to worry about the shortness of his days and his inability to fill them? to wonder whether his trouble was just a matter of growing

57 André Gide, Journal, 1939-42, p. 94.

58 Ibid., p. 13.
old, and to be wishing he could "harness himself to a long project". To remark that the war had precipitated the ruin of a state already worm-eaten was not treasonable.59

Gide spent his time in reading to forget the war and wrote in his diary of making progress in his mastery of German. He wrote when France fell that he was relatively untouched and this troubled him. He felt: "Nous entrons dans une époque où le liberalisme va devenir la plus suspecte et la moins praticable des vertus."60 Gide seemed resigned that France was to be suppressed, yet he did not turn collaborator as some of those who criticized him so freely did. In 1941 he withdrew from La Nouvelle Revue because he felt the editor was pro-Nazi.

Since the last war Gide has again renewed his writing and has become even better known. He has been very interested during the last year or two in the theater and has had his translation of Hamlet performed at the Vieux Colombier. Recently many of his books have been translated by his good friend, Dorothy Bussy, into English; thus his reading public has grown.

The pattern of Gide's life as a nonconformist will be more apparent as some of his writings are discussed in the

next chapter. The fine line between his life and his writings will become evident.
CHAPTER III

WORKS OF ANDRE GIDE

Gide is a prolific writer whose works fall into five main groups: novels, essays, plays, travel books, and autobiographical writings. Some critics believe that Gide will be important because of novels; others laud his essays and criticisms; still others feel his *Journals* will be his outstanding contribution. However, it is necessary to read all his works in order to understand his message, as no one book gives a complete picture of his thought. Gide's simple classical style of prose has brought the admiration of all his critics, and his technique of writing is excellent.

His works will be discussed according to the group rather than the date of publication. Before looking at Gide's writings, the reader should note the reason Gide gave in his diary for writing:

> The reasons that impel me to write are multiple and the most important ones, it seems to me, are the most secret. Perhaps this one above all: to have something secure against death—and this is what makes me, in my writings, seek among all other qualities those upon which time has the least grasp and by which they escape all passing fads. In order to appear affected there is nothing like trying to be sincere.¹

Gide's life and works are so intimately connected

¹ Andre Gide, *Journals*, III, p. 306
that it is difficult to separate them. As F. P. Alibert has so ably stated:

Pas Plus qu'André Gide, je ne puis dissocier l'homme et l'oeuvre, ni considérer chacun à part. Il se peut même que l'homme m'intéresse plus que l'oeuvre, ou du moins tout autant; et dans la mesure où l'homme explique l'oeuvre, et où l'oeuvre à son tour, se réfléchit dans l'homme qui l'a mise au jour, le renforce, le façonne, en fait son propre héros, le traine à la remorque, l'oblige à lui ressembler, sinon l'intoxique.2

Through his Journals Gide has revealed to his readers why he wrote and his technique. He stated in his Journal of January 9, 1930:

I have never considered impersonality as a particularly classical virtue. On the contrary, I have always striven to give to each of my books the least impersonal character possible, the least objective, the most penetrating.3

Gide also confided in his Journal on December 31, 1929, that a book really interested him only if he felt it born of some inner necessity and if that necessity could find some echo in him.4

Gide has always received condemnation from some critics and wrote in his Journal of August 1, 1930:

I owe it to myself to invent everything. At times it is an immense groping toward an almost imperceptible


4 Ibid., p. 87.
light. They must, of necessity, consider my books vicious, and vicious the lesson they teach, since those books do not reflect their tendencies, since that lesson does not lead in their direction. And the more vicious, the more successful they are, the more convincing; and the more necessary it consequently appears to them to combat them.⁵

Gide had an instinctive distrust for anything ready made and a predilection for personal discovery. It took him many years to come to a conclusion; after considering some matter from one angle, he would turn to observe it from the opposite point of view. These apparently disconcerting jumps from one point of view to another are thoroughly characteristic of the Gidian method. The full development of personality was the ultimate step in the evolution of the Gidian programme. The personality which made contact with all aspects of reality successively had the best chance of realizing all its own potentialities. Gide believed every individual should be himself. He showed in his works that education, family, society, all conspire to mould a man to a conventional pattern so that he cannot be himself. The Creator planned, according to Gide, that each should play a certain definite and original part in the world. He believed further in an unbounded and almost mystic individualism—which involved a knowledge and experience of the world. In his novels Gide had, according to Georges LeMaitre, a

triple program;

Systematic criticism and elimination of ready-made conventional ideas, thorough and impartial examination of each aspect of reality, self-realization implying complete assimilation of all experiences humanly possible in this world.\(^6\)

This trilogy accounted for the classification of Gide's novels into three divisions which Gide himself called "sotie", "recit", and "roman".

The "sotie" followed the lines of the medieval plays putting the objects of his derision on the plane of the ludicrous and absurd. They were not comic and were so utterly stupid and impossible that they almost ceased to be real. The "recit" was an account of an actual experience or life seen from a definite angle. It generally involved two main characters, the protagonist and the necessary partner, usually of the other sex, along with a number of secondary figures. It represented reality as perceived by a certain type of person and often took the form of a confession. Sometimes the partner gave the counterpart of the main point of view in abbreviated form. The "roman" was complex reality grasped as a whole, simultaneously, and taken from every side. To Gide the "roman" was the highest possible achievement of literary art. These three types of work corresponded to the successive stages of Gide's mental

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evolution. Critical "soties" at the beginning, exploratory "recits" in the middle, and the constructive "roman" towards the end of his life. However he liked, after an advance, to retrace his steps and make an almost completely fresh start so that chronological order of compositions and publication mingle the three types.

According to Dennis Saurat in his able analysis of André Gide:

The substance of Gide's writing is, all through, his own self. A MOI which has not achieved any cohesion, and which nevertheless, presents itself on a stage as being everybody's moi. Up to a point this claim is justified. Every reader of Gide finds, and fairly often, much of his own self in what is thus presented: mostly parts of himself that the reader has decided long since had better be kept under, and which have become non important through disuse.7

Gide's first works were poems in prose and verse without the name of the author. At that time he wrote very definitely for the few. He wrote in his Journal May 30, 1930:

As soon as I am inhabited by a character to whom "my noble poetic faculty" obliges me to give life, I owe myself to him and have no opinion of my own. I am with him, I am him. I let myself be led by him where I should not have gone by myself—whether this character be the Immoralist or Alissa or Candaules or Asul of the minister of my Symphonie pastorale, or the Edouard of Les Faux-Monnayeurs, or Eveline or Lafcadio.8


I. SOTIES

The two most important critical soties are Les Caves du Vatican and Le Prométhée mal enchaîné. Les Caves du Vatican, or Lafcadio's Adventures, as it was called in Dorothy Bussy's translation, was published in 1914, and according to Denis Saurat, if it could have been possible not to take it seriously, it would have been a masterpiece. However in Mr. Saurat's opinion there was in the fantastic tale "a moral or rather an immoral theory: how splendid not to exist, how fine to do things without reason". The "act gratuit" was introduced by Gide as the maximum effort of mankind to act without motive and to act so that no one else could act the same way. This book was to lead to Les Faux-Monnayeurs and jump clear over Proust. According to M. Saurat, "Gide stressed that above all things to be a liar—that is truly sublime. If you can—but few can, be a criminal as well, but beware of having a reason for your crime". According to Klaus Mann, however:

A veritable classic in humorous literature, The Vaults of the Vatican, or The Vatican Swindle or Lafcadio's Adventures—refutes once and for all, Gide's reputation of being ponderous and obscure, all heavy weather, no fun.

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9 Denis Saurat, Modern French Literature, p. 125.
10 Loc. cit.
Les Caves du Vatican was written rather late in Gide's career when he was forty-five. The story came from a rumor that the Pope had been made a prisoner by the free masons and that an imposter was in the Vatican. Protos, disguised as a priest, received considerable funds in order presumably to free the real Pope. The plot was complicated with several sub plots carefully woven in and out. Although Les Caves du Vatican was considered a "sotie" by Gide, it could be called a "roman".

Gide depicted the materialism of certain "free-thinkers" characterized by Anthime Armand-Dubois, the free-mason, who dissected rats, believed in progress, and referred to God as "M. le principal". There was no question of his feeling about Catholics as he wrote:

You Catholics aren't above calling in a doctor when one of you falls ill; but when the patient gets well, it's no thanks to science—it's all because of the prayers you said while the doctor was looking after him. You would think it a gross impertinence if a man who didn't go to church got better. 12

Anthime continued in the same bitter condemnation of the Catholic faith, stating:

Don't come bothering me with your miracle! I don't want it—at any price! . . . Because it would force me to believe in God—who doesn't exist. 13

13 Ibid., p. 31.
Yet Anthime became an ardent Catholic that very night. Gide wrote: "Anthime, the atheist, the learned man of science, who for many a long year had bowed neither his stiff knee nor his stubborn will—Anthime was kneeling." However Gide tantalized his Catholic friends by having Anthime become an atheist again in the end, stating bitterly: "If after all I've sacrificed my fortune, my position, my science—if I've consented to be made a fool of." Gide also gave another answer for Anthime's withdrawal from the Catholic church. Anthime's arthritis which left him when he became a Catholic had returned. This is a theme close to Gide's heart as he has continually weighed religion versus science.

As usual one of the characters, Julius de Baraghicoul, was a writer. Gide delighted in analyzing him:

'Julius' temperament was not so intractable nor his intellect so commanding as to have given him hitherto much trouble in conforming to the proprieties. On the whole all that he demanded of life was his comfort—part of which consisted in his being successful as a man of letters. The failure of his last novel was the first experience of his life which had ever upset him.'

It was this Julius who introduced the reader to one of Gide's most delightful, unpredictable characters, a bastard named

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14 André Gide, Lafcadio's Adventures, p. 42.
15 Ibid., p. 264.
16 Ibid., p. 80.
Lafcadio. The character of Lafcadio has been praised by many critics, one of whom, Georges LeMaitre, remarked:

Gide portrays Lafcadio as being full of abounding health and vitality, of love of life, for its own sake, of contempt for the shackles of convention, of desire to be heroic or else very bad, but at all events to do something exciting. All this appealed strongly to a youth that had been thwarted by years of repression and suffering.17

In Lafcadio Gide portrayed a young bastard with no family to warp his growth, no homeland, no education, no religion, and no unselfishness. He had no conscience and acted on impulse. For no reason except the love of danger he pushed Amidee, a poor old man, out the train window to his death. Lafcadio had no remorse and did not confess his crime as he had no conscience. Because of his lack of purpose Lafcadio recognized the dullness around him stating:

What mortal dullness exudes from such places as this! Herds of cattle going through life as if it were a monotonous grind, instead of the entertainment which it is—or which it might be.18

Lafcadio bent on full freedom considered his fellowmen as despicably tame and unimaginative stating: "How few people one meets whose port-manteau one would care to ransack".19

Nevertheless Lafcadio was drawn to his half-brother, Julius although he disliked his book and thought writing a

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17 Georges LeMaitre, André Gide, p. 164.
19 Ibid., p. 200.
terrible bore because of all the scratchings out and touchings up that were necessary. Lafcadio felt writing was not representing life as it was because in life one could correct or improve oneself but one could not correct what one had done. In the end Julius reproached him saying with a discouraged sigh: "And just as I was beginning to love you."20 This is the key to Gide's philosophy. Only through love could Lafcadio have developed into a responsible man. Gide was careful to make it clear that the love of a woman would not suffice Lafcadio. He needed a man such as Julius whom he could emulate.

Although Gide did not criticize Lafcadio for his gratuitous actions, he showed the futility of too great freedom without love and guidance as it only led to selfish acts harmful to others.

Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, was published in 1899 shortly after his marriage and was dedicated to Paul Albert Laurens, who was his traveling companion in Africa before his marriage. Gide wrote that the book was to be considered as a satire and perhaps the comment of Promethee should apply to the reader:

S'il y eut un rapport, vous ne vousiez pas tant ri; ne cherchez pas à tout cela trop grand sens; -- je

voulais surtout vous distraire, et suis heureux d'y être parvenu; vous devais-je cela? Je vous avais tant ennuyés l'autre fois.21

Did the book make sense? The story opened with a gratuitous act performed by a God, Zeus, who stepped from a taxi and dropped a handkerchief. A passerby picked it up and returned it to Zeus who then asked him to write any name on an envelope in which Zeus had put $500. Then for his kindness Gide wrote:

Le Monsieur gras, en guise de remerciement, lui colla brusquement sa main sur la joue; puis sauta dans un fiacre et disparu . . . j'ai su depuis que c'était Zeus, le banquier.22

The person who received the $500 could not find out who sent it to him and finally died of embarrassment because he could not return it. Democles said when he was about to die: "Le devoir, Messieurs, c'est une chose horrible; moi, j'ai pris le parti d'en mourir . . . Combien plus horrible le remords d'avoir voulu se décharger d'un devoir."23 However the slapped person lost an eye yet he profited from the experience and adjusted to the loss. Zeus remarked that only the Gods had a right to the gratuitous act such as he performed:

Moi seul, celui-là seul dont la fortune est infinie peut agir avec un désintéressement absolu; l'homme pas.

22 Ibid., p. 10.
23 Ibid., pp. 122-3.
De la vient mon amour du jeu; non pas du gain, comprenez-moi—du jeu; que pourrai-je gagner que je n'aie pas d'avance?24

There was also the plot concerning Prométhée who stated that at first he loved men, but that now he loved what had devoured them. According to Van Meter Ames: "He confesses he feels responsible for marring their happiness, and that when he thinks about it the eagle comes to feed like a remorse."25 Prométhée gave to man the egg of an eagle like his own stating:

Non satisfait de leur donner la conscience de leur être, je voulus leur donner aussi raison d'être ... La croyance au progrès, Messieurs, c'était leur aigle. Notre aigle est notre raison d'être.26

The eagle represented the belief in progress and the eagle refused to tell Prométhée where he came from and where he was going. Prométhée explains:

L'histoire de l'homme, c'est l'histoire des aigles. If faut aimer son aigle, l'aider pour qu'il devienne beau; car c'est parce qu'il sera beau que vous devrez aimer votre aigle.27

Yet Prométhée killed his eagle and served him for dinner. Prométhée believed in progress which is a theme close to the heart of Gide who wrote in his Journal in 1929:

24 André Gide, Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, p. 112.
25 Van Meter Ames, André Gide, p. 143.
26 André Gide, op. cit., p. 92.
27 Ibid., p. 102.
That idea of humanity's progress which now dominates my life leads us to see that the idea of the good invites to stagnation, to sleep. I believe that often evil has a greater educative and initiatory value than what you call good. We rate humanity much too high; man is not interesting, important, worthy to be adored, for his own sake; what invites humanity to progress is precisely not to consider itself (and its comfort and the satisfaction of its desires) as an end, but rather as a means through which to achieve and realize something. That is what made me say, through the person of my Prometheus: "I do not love man; I love what devours him," and made me put my wisdom in this: knowing how to prefer to man the eagle that feeds on him.28

Gide also explained somewhat why Prométhée killed his eagle stating:

You were told: fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; then, with God missing, the fear remains on your hands. Understand today that wisdom begins where fear ends, that it begins with the revolt of Prometheus.29

Apparently Gide believed that if men have the courage to act, science would take care of them instead of religion which he felt made them helpless. Thus Gide opposed in Le Prométhée mal enchaîné his puritanical background and placed science and progress ahead of religion.

II. RECITS

Perhaps the most famous works of Gide fall into the group which he called "recit", but which most people consider novels. The two best known are L'Immoraliste and La Forêt.

29 Ibid., p. 290.
According to F. P. Alibert:

"J'ai beau m'en défendre, je ne puis rien voir d'autre, dans L'Immoraliste et dans la Porte étroite, que le même livre retourné, et transpose sous sa forme double et contraire, du héros à l'héroïne."30

The two books are usually studied together as they represent two extremes in human behavior. L'Immoraliste was published in 1902 and La Porte étroite in 1909. It is thought that since Gide wrote L'Immoraliste, which depicted a man of immoderate avidity, he wrote La Porte étroite, which portrays an extremely religious woman, to ease his conscience and please his wife. Neither book was very successful for several years, and Gide was especially disheartened after the apparent failure of L'Immoraliste, of which he had only had 300 copies printed.

L'Immoraliste was an excellent title for a novel at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gide as usual refused to come to a conclusion in the book insisting that the reader draw his own conclusions. He wrote in the preface:

"Je n'ai voulu faire en ce livre non plus acte d'accusation qu'apologies, et me suis gardé de juger. Le public ne pardonne plus, aujourd'hui, que l'auteur, après l'action qu'il peint, ne se déclare pas pour ou contre... Je ne pretends pas, certes, que la neutralité (j'allais dire: l'indécision) soit signe sur d'un grand esprit; mais je crois que maints grands

30 F. P. Alibert, En Marge d'André Gide, p. 51.
esprits ont beaucoup. Repugnea—conclure—et que bien poser un problème n’est pas le supposer d’avance résolu.31

Gide examined the actions of Michel from his point of view and from that of Marceline, his wife. Michel destroyed his own happiness and the life of his wife by his extreme behavior, yet Gide in the end allowed Michel to start life anew with no penalty. It is difficult to understand why Gide did this unless he somewhat approved of Michel’s actions. Gide stated himself that Michel represented one side of his nature and Marceline another. The story was very definitely patterned after Gide’s own life.

Michel married Marceline at the request of his father on his death bed. They went to Africa on their wedding trip, and Michel developed tuberculosis, as Gide almost did. Marceline nursed him back to health and also prayed for him. This irritated Michel, who no longer believed in religion, and he said to her as Anthime did in Les Caves du Vatican:

Il ne faut pas prier pour moi, Marceline . . . Je n’aime pas les protections . . . Après il aurait droit à ma reconnaissance. Cela crée des obligations; je n’en veux pas.32

As Marceline became more religious, Michel withdrew from it even as Gide did because of Em. It may be that Gide was even jealous of God who had his wife’s love and whom he

32 Ibid., pp. 50-1.
could not fight. Marceline became concerned because of Michel's interest in the young native boys and was anxious to leave Africa. The gratuitous act which is present in all of Gide's writings again appeared. Michel saw Motkir, a young native boy steal his wife's scissors, but he did not reprimand the boy nor even advise Marceline. Michel, in fact, was delighted with the boy's action as he had no possible use for the scissors and just stole them to be stealing. Thus he acted gratuitously. Gide explained Michel's lack of action as follows:

Les plus sages raisonnements ne purent faire aboutir en moi le moindre sentiment de revolte. Je ne parvins pas à me prouver que le sentiment qui m'emplit alors fut autre chose que de l'amusement, de la joie. A partir de ce jour Motkir devint mon préféré.33

As Michel became stronger, he became a new personality; however he determined to play a game with his wife by pretending to be his old conservative self. Perhaps Gide thought of doing this himself with Em. At least Gide has written many times that he could not help acting as someone wanted him to appear and taking on poses which would please.

Michel showed how easy it was to pretend stating:

J'arrivai vite à comprendre que les choses reçus les pires (le mensonge, pour ne citer que celle-là) ne sont difficiles à faire que tant qu'on ne les a jamais faites; mais qu'elles deviennent chacune, et très vite, aisées, plaisantes, douces, à refaire, et bientôt comme naturelles. Ainsi donc, comme à chaque chose pour

33 André Gide, L'Immoraliste, pp. 72-3.
laquelle un premier dégout est vaincu, je finis par trouver plaisir à cette dissimulation même, à m'y attarder... j'avancais chaque jour, dans une vie plus riche et plus pleine, vers un plus savoureux bonheur. 34

On their way home they stopped in Italy. Michel was bored even as Gide was. Michel reaffirmed the theme present in Les Nourritures that he was intoxicated with the joy of living; he gave way to every desire, every sensation; he became very irreverent and antisocial; he came to scorn any heritage from past generations. Thus he had a disgust for everything which he had not actually found out for himself; it was quite a revolt from his intellectual and protestant background.

For this book to be good Michel had to be bad. It seemed inexcusable that he should have accepted egotistically all the attention and care that Marcelline gave him when he was ill, and that he should then lose all sense of duty and abandon her when she became ill. He became outraged with her illness instead of sympathizing with her as he believed only in sympathizing with the strong.

Gide introduced Menalque, a character who also appeared in Les Nourritures, he has sometimes been identified with Oscar Wilde, but according to Andre Maurois:

34 André Gide, L’Immoraliste, p. 96.
Menalque, m'a dit Gide, n'est nullement Wilde, qui en fait n'est personne, sinon un aspect de Gide lui-même, un des interlocuteurs du dialogue de Gide avec Gide dont est faite sa vie spirituelle.35

However Menalque was no longer respected in Paris by "la bonne société" and no one wanted to be seen with him. Michel went up to him and embraced him stating:

Mais "la bonne société" s'indigna et ceux qui, comme l'on dit, "se respectent" crurent devoir se detourner de lui et lui rendre ainsi son mépris. Ce me fut une raison de plus: attirer vers lui par une secrète influence, je m'approchai et l'embrassai amicalement devant tous.36

When Oscar Wilde was in Paris after his years in prison, Gide sat down with him at a side walk café, although Gide was honest enough to write that he tried to sit with his back to the street so his friends would not recognize him. Menalque encouraged Michel in breaking away from tradition stating:

J'ai le "sens moral" si peu qu'ici, voyez, rien n'est à moi; pas même ou surtout pas le lit ou je me couche. J'ai l'horreur du repos; la possession y encourage et dans la sécurité l'on s'endort; j'aime assez vivre pour prétendre vivre éveillé, et maintens donc, au sein de mes richesses mêmes, ce sentiment d'état précaire par quoi j'exaspère, ou du moins j'exalte ma vie. Je ne peux pas dire que j'aime le danger, mais j'aime la vie hasardeuse et veux qu'elle exige de moi, à chaque instant, tout mon courage, tout mon bonheur et toute ma santé.37

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36 André Gide, L'Immoraliste, p. 147.
37 Ibid., pp. 153-4.
Michel decided that Menalque was happy because he had no ties stating: "Moi c'est parce que je veux conserver que je souffre. Que m'importe au fond tout cela?" Michel decided to sell his property and eventually killed his wife through neglect. He lived by his motto: "Je nais tous les gens a principes."39

Although Michel brought tragedy to his wife and himself through his conduct, the real problem, according to Van Meter Ames was:

The real question, though given the shape of a particular tragic narrative, is whether thinking is morally permissible when it hurts feelings, regardless of whether it is fatal. It is incidental that Michel is a cad and his wife dies. The problem lives. Men, good men, will think, and thinking will cruelly wound those they love unless men and women become critical and scientific enough to see that no value can be saved except as lost and recovered in more viable form.40

Gide's idea of progress was that Michel in trying to find a more satisfying life than which was commonly accepted had to go through a period of losing the joy he had in order to find something better. In the end Michel stated:

Ce qui m'effraie, c'est, je l'avoue, que je suis encore tres jeune. Il me semble parfois que ma vrai vie n'a pas encore commence. Arrachez-moi d'ici a present, et donnez-moi mes raisons d'être. Moi, je ne sais plus en trouver. Je me suis delivre c'est possible; mais qu'importe? Je souffre de cette liberté

38 André Gide, L'Immoraliste, p. 147.
39 Ibid., p. 163.
40 Van Meter Ames, André Gide, p. 54.
sans emploi . . . je dois me prouver à moi-même que je n'ai pas outre-passé mon droit.\textsuperscript{41}

Michel, even as Gide, was afraid of too much liberty and did not know what to do about it. Some critics have considered \textit{L'Immoraliste} as a satire as P. Souday, who stated:

Andre Gide aura voulu montrer avec ironie de pince-sansrire ce que deviendrait l'éthique de Nietzsche pratiquée par des gens d'intelligence mediocre.\textsuperscript{42}

Gide pointed out the dangers inherent in his own doctrines; the story demonstrated the impracticability of absolute liberty and rampant libido. However the story also praised the appeal of lustful and dangerous living.

By the time the proofs of \textit{L'Immoraliste} were ready Gide wrote in his \textit{Journal}: "My \textit{Immoraliste} is already so far behind me that I cannot bring myself to correct the proofs."\textsuperscript{43} Gide gave in his diary with amusement the comment of his friend, Pierre Laurens, about the book:

I am ill, woe to me.
I am cured; woe to her.\textsuperscript{44}

Gide also wrote in his \textit{Journal} about the praise received from another friend:

Mme de R. congratulates me on \textit{L'Immoraliste}, "that book in which there are such beautiful thoughts."

\textsuperscript{41} André Gide, \textit{L'Immoraliste}, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{43} André Gide, \textit{Journals}, I, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 112.
Obviously she thinks they are sprinkled on afterward like nasturtium blossoms on a salad. How uncultivated these women of the south are, and how paradoxical you seem to them when you don't disguise yourself consider-
ably.\textsuperscript{45}

Gide was always more interested in adverse criticism than praise and apparently was not much impressed with the criti-
cal ability of women.

In both \textit{L'Immoraliste} and \textit{La Porte étroite}, which is its counterpart, Gide is preoccupied with self-realization and concern for the nature of virtue. Both books showed what harm resulted from carrying any desire to its full extreme.

In \textit{La Porte étroite} Alissa, a young idealistic puri-
tan girl, fell in love with her cousin, Jerome, who was also an idealistic young puritan boy. They tried to obtain a purely spiritual embrace despite the fact that inwardly each was passionately in love with the other. The novel showed how pathetically they controlled their real feelings and remained embarrassed when together as they could find little to say. Gide and Em. apparently tried as Alissa and Jerome for a love more perfect than ordinary happiness with a similar disillusionment.

Alissa sacrificed her love for Jerome when she found that her sister, Juliette, was in love with him; however it

was a useless sacrifice as Juliette decided to marry someone else, and Jerome was oblivious to Juliette's love since he loved no one but Alissa. Alissa finding her sacrifice unappreciated took refuge in her religion refusing to marry Jerome. She had the distorted idea that God would appreciate her more if she gave up her happiness on earth in order to remain pure and virtuous.

Jerome was a very weak hero who was dependent on affection and love which he was unable to give Alissa and so did not receive from her. Probably she had no intention of clinging to her virtuous ideas, but Jerome took her too seriously for her to give them up. Gide may have taken Émile just as seriously in her religious convictions and forced her to play the role he wanted. Gide explained his title as follows:

Efforcez-vous d'entrer par la porte étroite, car la porte large et le chemin spacieux mènent à la perte; et nombreux sont ceux qui y passent; mais étroite est la porte et resserrée la voie qui conduisent à la vie, et il est peu qui les trouvent.46

Jerome was willing to go with Alissa along the straight and narrow path, but that was not enough for Alissa. He asked Alissa, "Que peut préférer l'âme au bonheur?" and her answer "la sainteté" chilled him.47 Later she wrote him: "La

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47 Ibid., p. 166.
saintete n'est pas un choix: c'est une obligation." In her diary which she left to Jerome when she died, he read her true thoughts:

Je me demande à présent si c'est bien le bonheur que je souhaite ou plutôt l'acheminant vers le bonheur 0 Seigneur! Gardez-moi d'un bonheur que je pourrai trop vite atteindre! Enseignez-moi à différer, à reculer jusqu'à vous mon bonheur.49

Alissa had the puritanical impulse of resisting happiness while enjoying the struggle to attain it. She wrote further on this concerning love and virtue:

Combien heureuse doit être l'âme pour qui vertu se confondrait avec amour! Parfois je doute s'il est d'autre vertu que d'aimer, d'aimer le plus possible et toujours plus... mais certains jours, hélas, la vertu me n'apparait plus que comme une résistance à l'amour. En quoi oserais-je appeler vertu le plus naturel penchant de mon cœur! O sophisme attrayant! invitation specieuse! mirage malicieux du bonheur!50

Alissa found it hard to be the puritanical virtuous girl that Jerome loved. When she was dying, she wrote that despite her attachment to God she felt herself all alone: "Je voudrais mourir à present, vite, avant d'avoir compris de nouveau que je suis seule."51 She finally realized that she was wrong to depend solely on God and that her sacrifice had availed her nothing, just as Michel in the end found his

48 André Gide, La Porte étroite, p. 170.
49 Ibid., p. 213.
50 Ibid., p. 219.
51 Ibid., p. 240.
liberty, which was all he wanted, frightening and not enough.

In *La Porte étroite* Gide again presented his theme of progress. Alissa stated:

> Si bienheureux qu'il soit, je ne puis souhaiter un état sans progrès. Je me figure la joie celeste non comme une confusion en Dieu, mais comme une rapprochement infini, continu et si je ne craignais de jouer sur un mot, je dirais que je ferais fin d'une joie que ne serait pas progressive. 52

In Alissa's effort to find a better love for herself and Jerome she turned to a spiritual love which evidently was not enough. Again Gide showed that progress can hurt those who are brave enough to go forward towards something better. Alissa's gratuitous act of needless sacrifice brought home the fact that gratuitous conduct should be guided. Michel's gratuitous conduct also should have been guided. Gide was still experimenting with the value of the gratuitous act which he continued to develop in his writings. According to Paul Souday:

> *La Porte étroite* nous ramène à l'ascétisme, dont nous avons vu les sources dans André Walter. Le livre est d'une qualité rare, mais un peu décevant, parce que cet ardent piétisme d'Alissa Buocolin ne s'exprime point avec le lyrisme qui conviendrait à un sentiment si puissant, mais dans une langue abstraite, rigide et glacée. C'est tres curieux. 53

Gide himself wrote about his book in his *Journal* in July 1909:

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Georges does not like *La Porte étroite*; he prefers my other books to it; and he is free to do so; but he begins to be wrong when he reproaches this one for not having the qualities that made up the charm of some of the others; I try to make him understand that the important thing, the hard thing, was precisely not putting in here those qualities which were not the ones suited to this novel.\(^54\)

Gide was extremely sensitive to criticisms of his recit and answered the critics, if only in his *Journals*:

> It is hard for them to admit that these different books cohabited, still cohabit, in my mind. They follow one another only on paper and through the great impossibility of letting them be written together. Whatever the book I am writing, I never give myself to it utterly, and the subject that claims me most insistently immediately afterward, develops meanwhile at the other extremity of me.

> It will not be easy to trace the trajectory of my mind; its curve will reveal itself only in my style and will escape most people. If someone, in my latest writing, thinks that he can finally seize my likeness, let him be undeceived: it is always from my last-born that I am most different.\(^55\)

Gide was not afraid to criticize his own book which now struck him as:

> ... a nougat in which the almonds are good (i.e., the letter and journal of Alissa), but in which the filling is pasty, nondescript writing; but it couldn’t have been otherwise with the use of the first person, the flabby character of my Jerome implying flabby prose. So that, all things considered, I think the book well done. But how eager I am to write something different! It will be ten years before I can again use the words: love, heart, soul, etc. . . . \(^56\)

\(^{54}\) André Gide, *Journals*, II, p. 239.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 241.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., p. 240.
According to Van Meter Ames in his criticism:

Allowing for exaggeration in this contention, the critic may see that Le Porte étroite is not antithetic to L'Immoraliiste. In both Gide was carrying on Paludes, Les Nourritures Terrestres, and Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, trying to break from the commonplace of tradition and convention toward further realization of life’s possibilities. 57

Gide, long afterwards, said that he had not realized how much courage Le Porte étroite took when all his literary friends thought religious and moral questions were anti-artistic, and that occupation with them was disqualifying. 58

As he was interested in living more freely and honestly, it was natural for him to be concerned with ethics in his writings.

In 1929 Gide published L’Ecole des Femmes, which was followed shortly afterwards by Robert, and a few years later by Geneviève. Together this trilogy discussed the relationship of a husband and wife of a bourgeois family from the point of view of Eveline, her husband, Robert, and their daughter, the not so innocent Genevieve.

Eveline was very much in love with her husband, Robert, when they were married. According to Robert:

Aussi longtemps qu’elle m’aima, elle s’efforça de ressembler à mon idole et s’orna des vertus que je lui

58 Ibid., p. 227.
croyais, qu'elle savait devoir me plaire. Aussi long-
temps qu'elle m'aima, elle ne s'inquieta pas de se
connaitre.59

Eveline tried to be what Robert thought she was, and Robert
tried to be what Eveline thought he was. Robert realized
this when he said: "Le besoin de ressembler à cet être
meilleur que moi, que d'abord elle avait cru que j'étais,
cette application, ce zèle ne méritaient-ils pas surtout son
amour?"60 Neither was honest with the other, or perhaps
they were both blinded by their love. As Eveline realized
that her husband was not sincere, she became disillusioned
and no longer loved him. She turned against the Catholic
religion feeling that living as she thought right was better
than submitting to the faith. Robert, on the other hand
became more religious and intolerant of her thoughts, stat-
ing:

Cette soumission intellectuelle qui doit être celle
d'un bon catholique, Eveline cessa bientôt d'y
pretendre. Elle pretendit d'avoir suffisament de
jugement personnel pour pouvoir se guider elle-même
et se passer de directeur.61

When he defended the virtues of the home, the greatness of
religion, and patriotism, Eveline thought he was not sin-
cere. She thought that at least her children were sincere,

59 André Gide, Robert, p. 113-4. (Paris: Librairie
Gallimard, 1946).

60 Ibid., p. 149.

61 André Gide, L'Ecole des femmes, p. 124.
and then she found out that even her young son was not sincere. In Eveline's opinion, she had, above all, to develop her own personality even if she became a different person. She hated her husband to such an extent that she cared not what this did to him. He, on the other hand, had no understanding of her. He said:

Le rôle de la femme, dans la famille et dans la civilisation tout entière est et doit être conservateur. Et c'est seulement lorsque la femme prend pleine conscience de ce rôle que la pensée de l'homme libéré peut se permettre d'aller de l'avant. Que de fois j'ai senti que la position prise par Eveline retenait le vrai progrès de sa pensée en me forçant d'assumer dans notre ménage une fonction qui aurait du être la sienne.62

This is one of Gide's favorite themes: that the woman keeps the man from going forward.

However Eveline did not divorce her husband, as it would have been considered wicked. The priest advised her to help her husband hide his mediocrity from the world and his children. L'Abbé Breton told her:

... l'important n'est pas tant de dire ce que l'on pense souvent fort mal que ce que l'on devrait penser; car tout naturellement, et presque malgré soi, on en vient à penser ce que l'on a dit.63

Unfortunately as Gide pointed out, many marriages which start with happiness and mutual love do not so continue,

62 André Gide, L'Ecole des femmes, p. 123.
63 Ibid., pp. 67-8.
yet marriage is an indissoluble tie even though sentiments are changed.

When Geneviève appeared in 1936, the affect of this marriage on the child was apparent. Geneviève, who was a very modern young girl stated:

J’estime que rien ne peut fausser davantage la caractère d’un enfant que de lui imposer un respect de comarade pour des parents, des que ceux-ci ne sont pas respectable.\(^{64}\)

She had no respect for her father stating that: "je cessai vite de la prendre au sérieux."\(^{65}\) She was most anxious to show her rebellion from her narrow bourgeois background and decided the best way was to have a baby; she immediately asked her uncle to be the father which of course shocked him greatly. Geneviève told her mother, who was also shocked; then the child realized she was old enough physically to have a child, but not old enough to discuss such a thing.

Geneviève in discussing her mother’s life with her said that she had a horror of sacrifices and her mother answered: "tu parles comme quelqu’un qui n’a pas encore aimé."\(^{66}\) Geneviève, like Gide, felt that modesty and moral-

\(^{64}\) André Gide, *Geneviève*, p. 177.

\(^{65}\) *Loc. cit.*

ity had kept progress from coming, and she believed that science would replace religion. Despite her rash thoughts, Geneviève realized in the end that her mother had gone through the same problem but with a much subtler approach, and she admired her all the more.

In these three books Gide pointed out what could happen to marriage. He stated:

Marriage becomes an invitation to indolence. The man gives up all efforts to attract: his wife belongs to him. She, too, moreover, has given up.67

Gide showed how much harm the family could do the children in trying to mold them to conform to its bourgeois ideas. Genevieve was fortunate in that her mother insisted she receive a liberal education, but instead of maturing from this experience, Genevieve became more rebellious against her home and religion.

After finishing La Porte étroite, Gide wrote Isabelle, a recit which was published in 1911. Although it was not considered one of his major works, it is a delightful love story which keeps the reader in suspense and finally disappoints him in the ending, a typical Gidean trick.

The story centered around Gerard Lacasse, who went to the Chateau de la Quartfourche to do research on Bossuet. He ran across a love letter written by Isabelle years before,

67 Leon Pierre Quint, André Gide, p. 236.
and he fell in love with a picture of her which her son showed him. He stayed hoping to meet her and find out the mystery of her romance. During this time he took the young boy on scientific excursions even as Ann Shackleton took Gide. Finally he spied her one night as she was begging her aunt for more jewels to sell and found her very pretty in an earthy way.

It was not till the next year that he talked to Isabelle and learned to the reader's surprise that she had her lover killed for no apparent reason and then gave birth to her illegitimate son. She had no regrets for her lover and was happy so long as she had a man; this time she ran away with the coachman to Gerard's dismay. He spoke of her saying:

> Je restais devant elle comme un enfant devant un jouet qu'il a brisé pour en découvrir le mystère; en même l'attrait physique dont encore elle se revêtait m'éveillait plus en ma chair aucun trouble, ni le battement voluptueux de ses paupières, qui tantôt me faisait tressaillir.\(^{68}\)

Thus Gide disappointed the reader with the ending, and M.

Paul Souday remarked:

> En revanche, sur le point capital, c'est à dire la psychologie d'Isabelle, les motifs qui l'ont poussée à faire assassiner un homme qu'elle aimait pourtant, M. André Gide se montre laconique avec excès et il raffine l'ironie jusqu'à nous faire remarquer que

n'etant pas romancier de profession il n'est pas tenu de nous cuisiner des développements.69

The descriptions of the chateau and other properties were probably of Gide's own memories from his childhood, and no doubt he wrote this recit just to show that he could write a pleasant serene novel.

Shortly after World War I Gide published a short recit, *La Symphonie pastorale*, which contained his ultimate view of life, Georges LeMaitre stated: "The idea underlying this tale is that enlightenment, knowledge, and intellectual understanding are the source of all unhappiness."70 In other words, as long as man is genuinely himself, his spiritual and physical self will harmonize, but once he receives moral enlightenment, he will no longer be happy. From then on he has to decide between good and evil.

This story was told in the form of a diary kept by a pastor who befriended a blind girl, Gertrude, who had never even learned to talk. It is similar to the story of *Pygmalion*, in that the pastor fell in love with his creation. He awakened her mind and soul and took infinite patience in presenting new ideas to her. He introduced her to the joys of nature by playing Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. He care-

70 Georges LeMaitre, *André Gide*, p. 163.
fully kept from her any knowledge of evil or sin, remembering the words of Christ:

Et cette parole du Christ, s'êst dressée lumineusement devant moi "Si vous étiez aveugles, vous n'auriez point de peché. Le peché c'est ce qui obscurcit l'âme, c'est ce qui s'oppose à sa joie. Le parfait bonheur de Gertrude qui rayonne de tout son être, vient de ce qu'elle ne connaît point le peché. Il n'y a en elle que de la clarté, de l'amour."

However the pastor's wife was not so pleased with his experiment, and he found it hard to please her. He wrote in his diary, even as Gide may have written in his:

Le seul plaisir que je puisse faire à Amélie c'est de m'abstenir de faire les choses qui lui déplaisent. Ces témoignages d'amour tout négatifs sont les seuls qu'elle me permette. À quel point elle a déjà retrempé ma vie, c'est ce dont elle ne peut se rendre compte.

She was also concerned with his religious instruction of Gertrude as the pastor noted in his diary: "Elle regarde avec inquiétude tout effort de l'âme qui veut voir dans le christianisme autre chose qu'une domestication des instincts." However the pastor believed that the state of joy was an obligation of every Christian as he told her:

L'Etat de joie qu'empêchent notre doute et la dureté de nos coeurs pour le chrétien est un état obligatoire. Chaque être est plus ou moins capable de joie. Chaque être doit tendre à la joie.

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72 Ibid., p. 48.
73 Ibid., p. 49.
74 Ibid., pp. 30-1.
He soon no longer had this joy as reality reared its head. Gertrude through an operation regained her eye sight and was horrified to see that she was ruining the pastor's home. Moreover she found that she was in love with Jacques, his son, whom she had repudiated because she thought it was right for her to love the pastor. Jacques, who had become a priest, then persuaded her to become a Catholic; and shortly after her conversion, she drowned herself for her sins.

Gide wrote in his diary a criticism of this work:

Sheltered from the sight of so much ugliness and misfortune, the blind escape more easily into an imaginary harmony, more easily achieved. I did not make the most of this in my Symphonie pastorale. God can be approached more closely through hearing than through sight.75

This conversion in the end of Jacques and Gertrude brought up the question as to whether Gide approved of this. Mr. Paul Souday commented on this:

M. André Gide entend-il approuver cette double conversion finale et pense-t-il qu'elle soit logiquement exigée par l'aventure, où le père de Jacques n'a pas trouvé dans sa foi trop latitudinaire d'abri contre les faiblesses du cœur? Ce serait une these bien contestable, attendu que les passions ont fait des victimes parmi les fideles de toutes les religions. L'auteur ne se prononce pas expressément: ce n'est pas sa maniere.76

75 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 120.
76 Paul Souday, André Gide, pp. 54-5.
There was no doubt that the pastor tried to defend his guilty love of Gertrude by passages from the gospel on love and joy. According to Van Meter Ames:

Gertrude is symbolic of Gide's or anyone's awakening to the wonders of the earth and human relationships, and the danger of having them warped by religious narrowness which may be selfishly interpreted for the advantage of one person at the expense of others.\textsuperscript{77}

Since this novel has been filmed, it has become better known than many of Gide's more famous works, especially in America.

\textbf{III. ROMAN}

It was not until 1925 that Gide published his only novel, \textit{Les Faux-Monnayeurs}, or The Counterfeiters, as it is known in the English translation. Gide had a very interesting conception of a novel which is the "summa" of modern life encompassing many plots and simulating the confusion of life itself.\textsuperscript{78} In this novel Gide related the thoughts of at least twenty characters who come in contact with each other through a very intricate weaving of the many plots. A good cross-section of the bourgeois class is depicted, and some of the characters seem realistic instead of the usual shadows.

\textsuperscript{77} Van Meter Ames, \textit{André Gide}, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{78} André Gide, \textit{Journaux}, I, p. vii.
Van Meter Ames analyzed the book as follows:

Les Faux Monnayeurs shows that despite bogus values, official and surreptitious, making counterfeiters of young and old, genuine values are still available, real appreciation of them is possible. Further suggestion is that just as the young are thrown on their own resources in the presence of elders they cannot trust, so modern men in general must rely on their own wit and judgment instead of seniority of tradition. Tradition has lost out through the ages in contrast with the growing power and point of the scientific method.  

In order to understand this novel, it is interesting to review it. The main character, Edouard, was a writer, through whose eyes much of the novel was seen. He was in the act of writing a novel, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, so the reader saw how the novel was written as well as experienced the various scenes. Edouard expressed his views about the novel stating:

I should like to strip the novel of every element that does not especially belong to the novel. Outward events, accidents, traumatisms, belong to the cinema. The novel should leave them to it. Even the description of the characters does not seem to me properly to belong to the genre. The novelist as a rule does not rely sufficiently on the reader’s imagination.

Edouard was no doubt giving Gide’s idea of the novel as he wrote further:

The novel has dealt with the contrariness of fate, good or evil fortune, social relationships, the conflicts of passions and of characters—but not with the very essence of man’s being. And yet, the whole effect of Christianity was to transfer the drama on to the moral plane. But properly speaking there are no Chris-

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79 Van Meter Ames, André Gide, p. 55.

tian novels. There are novels whose purpose is edification; but that has nil to do with what I mean. Moral tragedy—the tragedy which gives such terrific meaning to the Gospel text: "If the salt have lost his flavor wherewith shall it be salted?" That is the tragedy with which I am concerned. 81

The story was about Bernard Profitendieu, who left home because he discovered on stealing some of his mother's letters that he was not the son of the judge. Not having any money, Bernard stole Edouard's brief case, containing his intimate journal, which Bernard hastened to read. Edouard caught him, but he thought Bernard was a delightful boy and hired him as a secretary. Edouard was not the extreme Immoral-ist, just partly. He took to Switzerland Bernard and Laura, the wife of a professor Douviers, whom she deceived by having a child with Vincent Moliner, a nephew of Edouard. Bernard finally developed his own philosophy of life and escaped from the charms of Edouard and Laura to return to Paris. He passed his baccalaureate and became the editor of a newspaper. He seemed on his way to success, and Edouard was no longer interested in him, but at the end said he would like to know his younger brother. Meanwhile Vincent left Paris with an American named Lilian Griffith to explore the subterranean fauna. He eventually came to hate Lilian and drowned her in a river in Africa and disappeared in the

81 Andre Gide, The Counterfeiters, pp. 112-3.
desert as Rimbaud did. There was another plot about the members of the pension Azaïs-Vedel, whose protestantism and purity brought calamity to those living there—Rachel, her sister, Laura, Armand, and the old music teacher, La Perouse. There was also the story of Passavant, a writer who bids for the favor of the critics and the public. Gide let himself go in his description of him, as he represented Gide's feeling about some writers. The book was named for a group of small boys about ten or twelve years old who passed counterfeit coins just for the thrill of it. Both Edouard and Passavant corrupted Bernard's closest friend, Oliver, who was also Edouard's nephew, while Bernard won his fight for freedom.

In this story Gide gave his idea of the family and how hideous he thought it was:

True, there exists no prison (intellectual, that is) from which a vigorous mind cannot escape; and all that incites to rebellion is definitely dangerous—although rebellion may in certain cases distort a character—driving it in upon itself, turning it to contradiction and stubbornness, and impiously prompting it to deceit; wears out the first freshness of his energy in the attempt to free himself. But also the education which thwarts a child strengthens him by the very fact of hampering. The most lamentable victims of all are the victims of adulation. What force of character is needed to detect the things that flatter us! How many parents I have seen (the mother in especial) who delight in encouraging their children's silliest repugnances, their most unjust prejudices, their failures to understand, their unreasonable antipathies.

82 André Gide, The Counterfeiters, p. 103.
Gide again expressed his idea of himself when Edouard said:

The only existence that anything (including myself) has for me, is poetical. I restore this word its full signification. It seems to me sometimes that I do not really exist, but that I merely imagine I exist. The thing that I have the greatest difficulty in believing in, is my own reality. I am constantly getting outside myself, as I watch myself act. I cannot understand how a person who acts is the same as the person who is watching him act, and who wonders in astonishment and doubt how he can be actor and watcher at the same time.\(^3\)

Many times Gide has expressed the thought of Edouard in his Journal:

How vexing this question of sincerity is. I am never anything but what I think myself. This varies so incessantly, that often if I were not there to make them acquainted, my morning's self would not recognize my evening's. Nothing could be more different from me than myself . . . My heart beats only out of sympathy. I live on through others--by procuration, so to speak, and by espousals, and I never feel myself living so intensely as when I escape from myself to become no matter who.\(^4\)

In Les Faux-Monnayeurs the characters did not face the facts; therefore hypocrisy and morbidity flourished instead of sincerity. However Bernard when confronted with the evils of the world felt the need for support and went back to take his college examination and led a bourgeois life.

Gide did not receive the approval for this novel that he expected and as usual wrote his defense in his Journal:

\(^3\) André Gide, The Counterfeiters, p. 64.

\(^4\) Loc. cit.
How easy it would have been for me to get the approval of the majority by writing *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* in the accepted fashion of novels, describing persons and places, analyzing emotions, explaining situations, spreading out on the surface everything I hide between the lines, and protecting the reader’s sloth.\(^{35}\)

Although Gide did not wish to conform to the usual standards for a novel, yet he realized later what a success he could have had if he had been willing to develop his picture somewhat. He wrote in his *Journal*:

The extreme conciseness of my notations does not leave the superficial reader time enough to become involved. The book calls for a slow reading and meditation that are not ordinarily granted at once. People do not take the time to read a new book; they skim through it. But if the book is worth going back to, then it is that one really discovers it. I took care to indicate only the significant, the decisive, the indispensable; to avoid everything that was "taken for granted" and where the intelligent reader could fill in for himself (this is what I call the collaboration of the reader).\(^{36}\)

It is this "collaboration of the reader" which Gide demands that brings the criticism that his books are difficult to understand. It is too bad that Gide was not more conventional in writing his one novel as he would have had many more readers. Perhaps he "stretched his nets too high" as Stendhal said. But Gide felt: "only flying fish interest me; and as for catching schools of sardines, whittings, or mackerels ... I am just as happy to leave the advantage to

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others. I write only for those who know how to take a hint."

Gide admitted the failure of his book just as he admitted that he had overreached himself.

IV. ESSAYS

Many critics feel that Gide is at his best when writing essays and criticisms. His essay on Charles Louis Philippe, a fellow writer, who died in 1909 was excellent. After his death, Gide wrote in his diary concerning the article he had promised to write:

Some people only half knew him because they saw only his pity, his affection, and the exquisite qualities of his heart; with that alone he could not have become the wonderful writer that he was. A great writer meets more than one requirement, answers more than one doubt, satisfies various appetites. I have only moderate admiration for those who cannot be seen from all sides, who appear deformed when looked at from an angle. Philippe could be examined from all sides; to each of his friends, of his readers, he seemed very unified; yet no two of them saw the same Philippe. And the various praises addressed to him may well be equally justified, but each one taken alone does not suffice. He has in him the wherewithal to disorient and surprise—that is to say, the wherewithal to endure.

Gide had a great admiration for his friend who resembled Dostoyevsky, because everything he wrote displeased him, but he still loved to write, stating:

Y a-t-il lieu de chercher à connaître d'un écrivain autre chose que ses œuvres? Quel intérêt y a-t-il à savoir avec quelle peine elles ont été faites? A quoi bon ses indiscretions.89

Gide stated compassionately, "Il est miraculeusement doué pour souffrir."90 He was unhappy but was resigned without bitterness and envy like Dostoyevsky. Gide felt, however, "Il n'y a rien de plus contagieux que la tristesse, rien de plus convaincant que la joie." So Philippe went from tearful sentimentality to a passion for joy and justice, and the sense of belonging to a new race to be born of that passion. Philippe had also come across Dostoyevsky and felt: "Le temps de la douceur et du dilettantisme est passé. Maintenant il faut des barbares."91 He also came under the influence of Nietzsche in his passion for joy. Gide felt that his own life paralleled that of his friend in many ways. Both were interested in poetry first and Gide remarked: "Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait d'exemple de grand prosateur qui n'ait pas commence par préférer aux prosateurs les poètes."92

From Philippe Gide said he learned more about the art of writing because he wrote half a dozen versions of one novel, and all versions were equally good. Gide also wrote

90 Ibid., p. 5.
91 Ibid., p. 12.
92 Ibid., p. 11.
many rough drafts of a book and realized now that others did the same.

Another essay of Gide's is Corydon, which was so daring that he published it anonymously in Belgium in 1911. He allowed only a few copies to be published for private circulation. This book, in the form of dialogues between Corydon and a narrator, was the defense of uranism or "homosexuality among males" not only as natural but as conducive to civilization. Gide pointed out that there were "normal homosexuals" who never talked with a doctor who therefore was aware only of the "cases" which had come to him. Gide praised the relationship of an older man for a young boy feeling that it was a wonderful friendship for a young boy:

Rien ne peut se présenter pour lui de meilleur, de préférable qu'un amant. Que cet amant, jalousement, l'entoure, le surveille, et lui-même exalte, purifié par cet amour, le guide vers ces radieux sommets que l'on n'atteint point sans l'amour. Que si tout au contraire cet adolescent tombe entre les mains d'une femme, cela peut lui être funeste. A cet âge trop tendre l'adolescent ne saurait faire encore qu'un assez mediocre amour, il n'est heureusement pas naturel qu'une femme aussitôt s'en empare. De 13 à 22 ans c'est pour les Grecs l'âge de la camaraderie amoureuse, de l'exaltation commune, de la plus noble emulation. Après quoi, le garçon selon leurs voeux "souhaite de devenir un homme", c'est-à-dire, songe à la femme—c'est-à-dire: à se marier.93

Gide would like to show that Corydon's type of love was just as capable of sacrifice and chastity as the heterosexual

93 André Gide, Corydon, p. 185.
love. But according to Van Meter Ames:

To appreciate that a young person may derive inspiration and guidance from the sympathetic interest of an older person is far from justifying homosexuality. Whatever the benefits which Gide wants to attribute to it, he should consider more seriously the social disadvantages and personal maladjustments it is likely to mean especially for the young. He does not seem to advocate seduction, but he fails to recognize the usual legal and moral distinction between homosexual (or other) relations freely entered into by adults and the relation of an adult and a minor. Medical men are not agreed as to whether homosexuality is just an abnormality with no psychopathic dimensions or a form of psychopathology, but the latter may become the settled view. The young are not able to realize the harm that may be done their whole life-structure, and it is certainly wrong to take advantage of them.

However the reader may become more understanding to the problem of the homosexual especially when he realizes there are all degrees. Moreover, according to Gide, heterosexuality is not in itself a guarantee of morals as many homosexuals are both. Although the book is interesting, it would no longer be considered as daring as Gide’s friends thought it was when first published.

Gide was very interested in Oscar Wilde because he was a gifted conversationalist, was a success, and was a pagan at heart. It was natural that Gide should be concerned
over Wilde's trial, prison sentence, and later sad years, as he wrote: "Perhaps some day in the far future it will be seemly to lift this dreadful trial out of the mire." Gide may have thought that he himself was on the same road as Wilde after he allowed Wilde to entice him to unorthodox pleasures.

In 1902 Gide wrote a study of Oscar Wilde for L'Ermitage, a monthly literary review. He later had it reprinted in a volume of critical essays, entitled Prétex tes. This is one of the best studies of the later years of Oscar Wilde, and it was written as a token of respect to him as Gide stated:

Now that every idle rumor connected with his name, so sadly famous, is hushed, now that the mob is at last wearied after having praised, wondered at, and then reviled him, perhaps, a friend may be allowed to lay, like a wreath on a forsaken grave, these lines of affection, admiration, and respectful pity.

Oscar Wilde left his mark on Gide even when he first met him in 1891. At that time he advised Gide never to repeat the absolute truth as it was not important stating:

You must understand that there are two worlds—the one exists and is never talked about, it is called the real world because there is no need to talk about it in

96 Ibid., p. 16.
order to see it. The other is the world of Art; one must talk about that, because otherwise it would not exist.97

He further upset Gide's puritanical feelings by saying frankly:

I do not like your lips; they are quite straight, like the lips of a man who has never told a lie. I want you to learn to lie so that your lips may become beautiful and curved like the lips of an antique mask.98

Gide found in Wilde, however, reassurance of his thoughts about writing. Wilde told him:

There are artists of two kinds: some supply answers, and others ask questions. There are certain works which wait a long time for their interpretation. It is because they are giving answers to questions that have not yet been asked—for the question often comes a terribly long time after the answer.99

Gide has always thought and hoped that his works will be better understood in the future.

In 1894 Gide ran into Wilde in Africa shortly before he returned to England for his trial. Gide saw Wilde's name on the hotel register next to his; embarrassed, he erased his own name and left Blidah, but feeling his act cowardly, Gide returned to the hotel and wrote his name again. It was at this time that Wilde hoped he had demoralized the whole town. He also influenced Gide and encouraged his pagan

97 Andre Gide, Oscar Wilde, p. 28.
98 Ibid., p. 52.
99 Ibid., pp. 39-40.
tendencies.

It was Wilde who later commented on Gide's book: "Les Nourritures Terrestres is good, very good, but promise me you will never write a capital "I" again. In art, you see, there is no first person".\textsuperscript{100} Apparently Gide did not take his advice, as he soon published \textit{L'Immoraliste} in the first person.

Sympathetically Gide wrote of Wilde's last days after his release from prison:

Society well knows what steps to take when it wants to crush a man, and it has means more subtle than death. Wilde had suffered too grievously for the last two years, and in too submissive a manner, and his will had been broken. For the first few months he might still have entertained illusions, but he soon gave them up. It was as though he had signed his abdication. Nothing remained in his sheltered life but a mouldy ruin, painful to contemplate, of his former self.\textsuperscript{101}

This study was simply written giving a sympathetic understanding and appreciation of Oscar Wilde, who for better or for worse helped to mould Andre Gide.

During World War II Gide remained silent until November 1941 when he began contributing to the literary supplement of \textit{Le Figaro}, which was the best and almost the only outlet open to serious writers in the Free Zone. In his \textit{Journal} January 1, 1942 he wrote about his essays:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{100} Andre Gide, \textit{Oscar Wilde}, p. 73.
\item \textsuperscript{101} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 61-2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
J'ai repris gout au travail et gouté un semblant de bonheur devant ma table à écrire. Ma pensée se formule aisément, à condition de n'être pas profonde; or dans mes chroniques, je ne remue que des dessus de pensée. Je demeure sans opinion devant les événements, dormant parfois si je pourrai prendre place et trouver raison d'être dans l'univers nouveau qui se prépare confusément. 

His essays were published in 1943 under the title *Interviews imaginaires et La delivrance de Tunis*. These essays dealt with subjects, such as the supposed responsibility of writers for the French defeat, the amazing revival of poetry in an otherwise decadent age, the rules that might govern the novel, and the decay of the subjunctive mood. He made thrusts at Vichy and the collaborationist through literary allusions that the censors did not catch. In his article on Goethe he praised him but also condemned him for his servility to Napoleon, in words that would apply to any Frenchman who served Hitler. It is difficult to know how many of the French were able to follow his subtle innuendos as they were extremely intellectual. Gide was in Tunis when the Allies came, and his description of the deliverance is most interesting. He gave a detailed account even to describing the drunken Allied soldiers.

These *Interviews imaginaires* are among the most recent of Gide's works; however he has lately been interested in translating, and his translation of *Hamlet* was played in
Paris in the summer of 1949 by Jean Cocteau, who was one of those who apparently collaborated with the Germans. It is interesting to note that Gide is able to forget the past as usual and go ahead to the future.

V. TRAVEL BOOKS

In addition to fiction stories and essays, Gide has written some delightful books about his travels. Among them are Amvytas, Travels in the Congo, Le Retour du Tchad, and Retour de URSS. In Amvytas Gide again pictured that section of Northern Africa which was the setting for L’Immoraliste and Les Nourritures Terrestres. He described his enjoyment of the sand, the sun, the rivers, the trees and the gardens. In fact he let himself go in his appreciation of Africa. There was a buoyancy and love of the country in this writing, as Gide gave way to his love for nature in many descriptions such as the following:

C’est toi, forest aromatique, que ce matin, et pour y respirer, jusqu’au soir, j’ai choisie. O march enor curve; fatigue heureuse de la chair. Dès qu’on s’écarte un peu du pi secret de ce ravin ou l’eau qu’on ne voit pas mais qu’on entend, russelee, ce qu’on appelle encore forest n’est plus qu’une brousse écrasée; cystes, lentisques et palmiers mains.103

There was no particular message or philosophy that he was trying to put over; therefore the book was easy delightful

reading giving one a desire to go to Northern Africa.

Then Gide went to the Congo and to Lake Tchad, and he wrote two most interesting travel books, *Voyage au Congo* and *Retour du Tchad*. Some critics find it hard to believe the same man could have written these books as *Les Caves du Vatican*. According to Denis Saurat:

"Can the man who had preached the gospel of L'Acte gratuit, homicide without cause or reason, be profoundly shocked because Negroes are not well treated... Behind the symbolist poet of Andre Walter, a long-dead romantic humanitarian is resurrected, a man who reads Milton by moonlight on the Congo river—a delightful man who writes like an angel."\(^{104}\)

When Gide took this trip he was sick of women, love and "le moi". He wanted to have a complete change, and certainly these books were different. He received much criticism of them because of his lack of knowledge as a hunter. He wrote in his *Journal*:

"On reading my *Retour de Tchad* told me of his indignation of the disrespectful way in which I speak of *La Mort du loup*. He told me that all domestic animals bellow when killed and that, if I had been a hunter, I should have been struck by the silent agony of wild animals. He went so far as to make me regret having written those lines."\(^{105}\)

He also received criticism for his humanitarian attitude as in the past he had written primarily about himself. Gide wrote in his *Journal* about this:

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The thing against which I find it hard not to protest is the peremptory way they had, at the time of the publication of my *Voyage au Congo*, of establishing the fact that before bumping up against a few sorry exactions in French Equatorial Africa I had never managed to interest myself in men, solely absorbed as I was in contemplation of myself. So that presumably it required that contact with the oppressed black race to tear me away from my "narcissism" and that there was less reason for being grateful to me for finally concerning myself with "social problems" than for holding it against me for not being earlier interested in them.106

In June 1929 Gide wrote in his *Journal* that he had at last received a few copies of the large paper edition of his book, *Voyage au Congo*. It was a great satisfaction to him, and he felt the book was most successfully turned out.107 Gide was always interested in the minute details of the printing of his books.

The same repressed humanitarianism—rather than politics, which are not at all in Gide's sphere—took him later on to the Soviet Union. According to Denis Saurat, "This produced no literature and a decent veil should be drawn over the two contradictory statements about the Soviets that came out of the venture. Let us say these were two acts gratuits, one for, one against, communism."108 In 1936 Gide published *Retour de URSS* after his return from Russia. He

107 Ibid., p. 54.
went to Russia expecting to find Utopia and came back somewhat disillusioned but still feeling that communism could succeed. He was torn between his love of the cause and his desire to be sincere as he wrote:

En déclarant à nouveau mon amour allais-je devoir cacher mes réserves et mentir en approuvant tout? Non; je sens trop qu’en agissant ainsi je desservirais à la fois l’URSS même et la cause qu’elle représente à nos yeux. Mais ce serait une très grave erreur d’attacher l’une à l’autre trop étroitement de sorte que la cause puisse être tenue pour responsable de ce qu’en URSS nous déplorons.109

Gide wrote that there had been a change in Russia meaning by the one who directed it, but he felt that most people refused to see both the good and the bad in Russia’s experiment. Gide felt it his duty to point out the mistakes that had been made by Stalin feeling that "la vérité, fut-elle doureuse, ne peut blesser que pour guérir".110 Gide was introduced to the Russians as a camarade, and though he spoke no Russian, he was delighted with the comradship and joy expressed by the Russians. The children seemed well cared for and happy, although he was a little shocked by their determination to do everything that French children did, and to do it better. He felt the children were being taught to exalt their own virtues instead of trying to de-

110 Ibid., p. 17.
velop them in others. They would say to his group: "Regardez, étrangers, nous sommes meilleurs que vous."

However Gide stated that he was writing this book about psychological questions only. He was disappointed to find that Stalin had reestablished a bourgeois class in Russia with inequalities of salary, property, and privileges. Gide felt that the inertia of the masses was the biggest problem for Stalin and was caused by the establishment of the bourgeois class. Gide felt that eventually the bourgeois class would be the downfall of Stalin as it would be interested only in maintaining the status quo; therefore no progress would be made.

Gide noticed that when he had talked to one Russian, there was no point in talking to any other Russian, as they all had the same opinion; moreover it was simpler just to read it himself in Le Pravda. This conformity of thought was rationalized by Gide at first:

Le bonheur de tous ne s'obtient qu'en desindividualisant chacun. Le bonheur de tous me s'obtient qu'aux dépense de chacun. Pour être heureux, soyez conformes.

But when he found that one had to conform even in sexual questions, he was definitely shocked. At this time a law forbidding abortions had just been passed. Moreover a homo-

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111 André Gide, Retour de URSS, p. 58.
112 Ibid., pp. 47-8.
sexual was sent to prison.

Gide had come to USSR to see everyone happy with no class distinction, no poor people, and no possessions. He found Stalin encouraging the family life and love of possessions instead of the sharing of communal life. He found that in Russia "l'esprit est moins libre, plus courbe, plus craintif (terrorise) plus vassalise".113

He related that he proposed a toast to a group about the "Reds" victory in Spain, and no one applauded because no comment had been received from Pravda on how to respond. Another time a comrade was bragging that a workman could now do in five hours what in the past had taken eight hours, and Gide slyly remarked that maybe before it took eight hours to do five hours work.

Gide was discouraged to find that the young were under the illusion they were thinking freely and did not realize how their thought had been moulded for them. He wondered what would happen to writers, who as a group were nonconformists. If they could not protest about anything, how could they write, he wrote. He could not understand that the young people had no desire to read books they were told were bad for them, and he could not help comparing them unfavorably to most young people. Gide did feel that for

113 André Gide, Retour de URSS, p. 67.
Stalin to try and do away with all thoughts except his would not work because there would be a few who would escape as did the Holy family from Herod.

Although Gide realized that his enemies might use this book to serve their own purposes, nevertheless he published it. Probably it did not have as much influence as credited, but at any rate, France did not join Russia in the war in Spain. Moreover the Nazis used this book for their own propaganda against Stalin.

Some critics feel that Gide's flirtation with communism should be forgotten, but perhaps Gide had a greater influence because of this experience which he discussed sincerely in *Retour de URSS*. Apparently the Russians felt he would have an influence as all his books were immediately banned.

VI. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

Gide's most important autobiographical works are *Les Nourritures Terrestres*, *Les Nouvelles Nourritures*, *Si le grain ne meurt*, and his *Journals*.

In 1897 shortly after his marriage Gide published *Les Nourritures Terrestres*, in which he glorified "l'inquiétude, la ferveur, le deracinement, and la disponibilité". Gide is usually judged by this book written in his youth as if the ethics in it represented the ethics of his life. Yet, Gide,
himself, was the first to follow his own advice:

When you have read me, throw this book away—and go out. May it give you the desire to go out—to go out from wherever you may be, from your town, from your family, from your room, from your thoughts. Do not take my book with you.\textsuperscript{114}

Gide wrote this book when he was still recovering from a serious illness, when life was very precious to him because he had almost lost it. Some see in \textit{Les Nouveautés Terrestres} only a glorification of desire and instinct. He wrote: "Act without judging whether the action is right or wrong. Love without caring whether what you love is good or bad."\textsuperscript{115} Not only did he encourage the shedding of responsibility but also the forgetting of the past as he wrote:

I am afraid that every desire, every energy I have not satisfied during my life may survive to torment me. I hope that after I have expressed on this earth all that was in me waiting to be expressed—I hope that I may die satisfied and utterly hopeless...\textsuperscript{116}

Gide felt that the past had no effect on his life except to give unity to his life and stated: "The past dies before the future comes. We must live in the instant. We mustn't be bound to a wife and children."\textsuperscript{117} This philosophy of living in the present with no thought of the past and

\textsuperscript{114} Andre' Gide, \textit{The Fruits of the Earth}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., p. 85.
the future is tempered by his statement that "liberty which duty does not guide is frightening". Even in 1897 Gide realized that complete liberty was not wise. However he encouraged Nathaniel to break away from his home saying:

Don’t stay near that which resembles you. It is no longer profitable to you. You must leave it. Nothing is more dangerous than your family, your room, your past. Only take from each thing its education. Gide has been condemned for encouraging young people to break away from their family and home and enjoy this apparently selfish “ferveur”. According to Gide, everything should be a projection of one’s fervor which grows from a state of restlessness and dissatisfaction.

This book was written very simply at a time when literature had an artificial atmosphere, and its complete lack of success demonstrated how unready the public was for simple, straightforward literature. Although some see in the book only a glorification of selfish desire and instinct, Gide believed the following lines to be the deeper message of his book:

May my book teach you to care more for yourself than for it—and then more for all the rest than for yourself.120

118 André Gide, Les Nourritures Terrestres, p. 85.
119 Ibid., p. 49.
120 Ibid., p. 7.
In other words, as Gide has written many times, it is through self-denial and losing oneself that one finds one's most perfect self-realization and happiness. This, of course, is the message from the Gospels, which Gide dearly loved.

It was not until 1920 that Gide published his autobiography, *Si je m'en vais je meurs*. He wrote in his diary the comment of one of his friends about his book:

> According to Roger Martin du Gard, I have side-stepped my subject: from fear, modesty, anxiety about the public, I have dared to say nothing really intimate and only succeeded in raising questions. In order to have a somewhat like portrait of you one would have to be able to read them all at once. All of the stages which, out of regard for art, you depict as successive can be simultaneous in you—that is just what your Memoirs do not make one feel.121

According to Denis Saurat, "*Si je m'en vais je meurs* represents Gide's best period as his style is openly declared and most effective."122 Gide wrote his life very simply, honestly, and frankly enough to shock some of his colleagues at the time. He started his story with his birth and related his life until his marriage with, however, few comments on his wife, Em., who was averse to being discussed in any of his writings. Most of the information for the early life of Gide in Chapter One was taken from this book so that it does not need to be discussed in full here.

From time to time Gide has published fragments of his *Journals* but it was not till the thirties that the entire *Journals* appeared. Many names have been masked or appear only by initials. His *Journals* for the first few years were mainly concerned with himself. Notes on his reading, travel descriptions, conversations with friends occupied few of the pages. The pages were concerned mostly with self-scrutiny, emotional unrest, gropings for rules of conduct. Already he had decided to be a writer and wondered why everyone could not tell it.

His *Journals* helped to explain his works, which were so often misinterpreted. It is interesting to see how carefully and painstakingly he has composed some of his books and what trouble he had gone to to try to bring out certain ideas. However, the *Journals* do more than just record the intimate life and thoughts of Gide; they are also a record of the last fifty years including the symbolist movement, the Dreyfus Affair, World Wars I and II, the emergence of Russia bringing Communism in the wake of Fascism. Perhaps of all his works his *Journals* will be the most important as they draw the picture of the innermost thoughts of a remarkable personality.

Gide said that he started his *Journals* as an exercise to keep his style fluid. He tried at times to write hurriedly and spontaneously as he found that so difficult in
his writings. He tried to perfect his sentences and succeeded in securing a pure and simple style devoid of metaphors. The Journals would be of great inspiration to any young writer who had difficulty expressing himself.

As the Journals are quoted frequently throughout these chapters, a detailed discussion of them is unnecessary. In Chapter VII the reader will find of particular interest the selections from the Journals which discuss Gide's contemporary literary friends.

In 1935 Gide published Les Nouvelles Nourritures, The New Fruits, as it is known in the English translation. In this book Gide reaffirmed his joy in living stating:

All nature indeed teaches that man is born for happiness. It is the effort after pleasure that makes the plant germinate, fills the hive with honey, and the human heart with love.

Everything is glad to be and every being rejoices. You call it fruit when joy becomes succulence, bird when it is turned into song.123

Gide was still writing for the youth of tomorrow instead of today and reiterated his philosophy of Les Nourritures Terrestres:

Life might be more beautiful than men consent to make it. Wisdom lies not in reason but in love. Ah! I have hitherto lived over-prudently. One must be lawless to bear aright the new law. O deliverance, O liberty! As far as my desire is able to reach, so far will I go.

0 you whom I love, come with me; thus far I will carry you—so that you may go farther still.  

By this time Gide had his philosophy of religion worked out and felt that God: "permanently present in all that passes, dwells not in the object but in love; and now I know how to enjoy the quiet of eternity in the fleeting moment."  

For Gide there was a definite God of love, and for him it was the love of one's fellow human beings which was most important. A theme close to Gide's heart was again present: "It is renunciation that brings all virtue to perfection. The extreme succulence of the fruit is its effort toward germination."  

However there was another God for Gide beside the God of love, and this God was identical to the laws of nature. Gide explained:

If then I call nature God, it is for simplicity's sake and because it irritates the theologians . . . For you may have noticed that such people shut their eyes to nature, or if they happen to glance at it, they are incapable of observing it.  

Gide felt that in Natural History you must listen to the voice of God, and he insisted that one should put definite questions to God and insist on his answering definitely. Gide stressed that man has outgrown the need for the God of

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125 Ibid., p. 199.
126 Ibid., p. 205.
127 Ibid., p. 287.
the past and that he should interpret God in a new way. It is not God who believed in resignation and acceptance of one’s fate; that was a man made idea. Gide stated:

As soon as you begin to understand that it is not God but man who is responsible for nearly all the ills of life, from that moment you will no longer resign yourself to bearing them. Do not sacrifice to idols. 128

Gide concluded on the optimistic note that life could be better if man was convinced that it could be, and he did not mean by this life in another world.

VII. STYLE OF WRITING

Gide's artistry has sometimes been compared to that of the great writers of the seventeenth century in France. He wrote simply and purely because he wanted his work to last, and this classical characteristic assures his work a permanent place in literature.

Gide wrote in Interviews imaginaires about his style:

It is perfectly and obviously true, that in a fine line of verse, one cannot change or displace a word; but the same is true of fine prose. My sentences have to meet requirements that are as strict, even though they are frequently hidden, and as domineering as are those of the most rigorous prosody. The principal difficulty is that my style continually suggests rather than affirms and proceeds by insinuations—something a little repugnant to the English language, which is more direct than the French. I have always felt that the ideas, in

128 André Gide, The New Fruits, p. 293
my writing, were less important than the movement of ideas. Through reading his Journals, the reader becomes aware of the time Gide took to compose even one sentence. He wrote:

I too often wait for the sentence to have finished taking shape in me before writing it. It is best to take it by the end that first offers itself, head or foot, without yet knowing the rest; then to pull; the rest will follow.

Gide’s style has sudden and unforeseen breaks in many of his phrases. He starts a sentence with one rhythm and changes to another. There will be a change in grammatical construction within one sentence. He writes simply using unpretentious terms and a moderate, concise vocabulary. Many critics hold that Gide is the greatest writer of French of our time. The simplicity, the tranquillity, the calm strength of his style puts him among the highest. His orderly style does not really represent Gide as he has a most disorderly mind. But the same could be said for Anatole France. According to Georges LeMaitre:

Gide’s style is both critical and poetical. It is critical inasmuch as it proceeds cautiously, never hurrying blindly forward but always taking stock of its position ... it is poetical because it keeps in close touch with reality, never allowing abstract intelligence

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to interpose a veil between human personality and the essence of things.131

Gide saved his thoughts on writing stating in his Journals:

There is a certain point of maturity of thought on either side of which the sentence that clothes it overstrains itself or becomes wrinkled. It is essential to gather it at the right moment.132

131 Georges LeMaitre, André Gide, p. 20.6.
132 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 121.
CHAPTER IV

PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Gide's philosophy of life centers around his search for truth, his desire for progress, his interpretation of love. His philosophy is that of a nonconformist, and he has worked out his philosophy through his own ideas without influence from education, religion, or family. At least this is what he claims. He has tried to break away from traditions and conventions in order to realize more of life's possibilities. Self-realization is most important to his happiness, and reliance on himself instead of on tradition, religion, and education.

Gide has spent his life searching for truth. He wrote in his diary:

Everything must be questioned, doubted again; nothing must be accepted as authentic, from which all mysticism is banished. I mean by mysticism: any blind belief.  

Gide was unable to accept anything ready made and lived more freely, more consciously, and honestly. He felt that there was no fine line that could be drawn between good and evil. He wrote:

Man by nature is good. No, I do not believe like Rousseau, that the natural man is always good, nor that all the evil is the result of deformations and deviations brought about later by civilization, society, etc.

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1 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 166.
I am less and less a believer in utopia, a mystic, and think that that belief in an original stage of paradise involves a dose of shocking naivete, but I consider it awkward, unprofitable, uninstructive to stand on the plane of good and evil in order to judge human actions, or, more exactly in order to appreciate their value. The idea of humanity's progress which now dominates my life leads us to see that the idea of the good (comfortable, reassuring as such as the middle class cherish) invites to stagnation, to sleep. I believe that often evil (a certain evil that is not the result of a deficiency, but rather a manifestation of energy) has a greater educative and initiatory value than what you call good.2

Gide thought that evil though temporarily bad for one could ultimately lead to something better. Gide, therefore, believed that continual change was good for man. He felt that the bourgeois class, pleased with the status quo, was a threat to progress. Any change was progress for Gide, but progress did not always go forward. He felt that the present regime in Russia was progress, but that it was reactionary and not forward. However he felt, it resulted in good progress for the rest of the world, as they realized their status quo would have to be improved. It also made the Catholic church, he thought, review its policy and change some of its acts in order to fight against communism. Progress for Gide was the success of the unthinkable. It was the gratuitous act on a large scale. Progress meant, for him, doing what was not done. Gide wondered however whether progress was worth the suffering it involved for others. He

2 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 78.
felt that most men are too dependent on authority and tradition to strike out independently. Although Gide showed the gratuitous act in the behavior of Michel and Alissa, he made clear the frivolity of throwing away obvious values of human love in pursuit of something more. Thus Gide showed the evil of the gratuitous act unless it was controlled and used to go upward. At first he was so fascinated by his emancipation from the past that he did not distinguish between the gratuitous act and progress. However, in old Oedipus, guided by Antigone, Gide showed his symbol of a controlled and chastened gratuitous act.

Gide had two ideas about liberty. He felt that man did nothing worthwhile without constraint and that very few were capable of finding restraint within themselves. This was a negative notion of liberty. Gide apparently forgot completely another idea that individuals and groups should participate democratically in all matters. Gide never refers to the United States and the democratic experiment being experienced there. Gide wrote in his Journal:

The notion of liberty as it is taught us seems to me singularly false and pernicious. And if I approve the Soviet constraint, I must likewise approve the Fascist discipline. I am more and more inclined to believe that the idea of liberty is but a snare. I should like to be sure that I should think the same if I myself were not free, I to cherish above all my own freedom of thought; but I also believe, and more and more so, that man achieves nothing worthwhile without constraint and that very rare are those capable of finding constraint in themselves. I also believe that the authentic color of
an individual thought takes on its full value only when it stands out against a background that is not itself multicolored. It is the uniformity of the masses that allows a few rare individuals to rise in contrast to it.3

One may wonder whether Gide really was interested in improvement of conditions for the masses, or was he thinking mostly of the few intellectual elite? Is he still a snob at heart? Gide felt that the family, the home, and the church were the three enemies of mankind and especially of youth. He encouraged his characters to break away from home and family, and he stated: "prejudices are the props of civilization".4

One should start life away from home and from prejudice. Bernard was delighted to find himself a bastard as he felt free from his family. On the other hand Gide showed the bastard Lafcadio who did a series of irresponsible acts because he had never had a family nor a family's love. Love is most important, but according to Gide there are two types of love. First there is spiritual love such as he had for Em. In Gide's mind the spiritual love should be kept entirely apart from the physical desire. This may have been because he was a homosexual and could not develop a great love freely and naturally with Em.

In his Journal Gide made clear his ideas on sex, stating:

\[\text{3 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 196.}\]
\[\text{4 André Gide, The Counterfeiters, p. 52.}\]
I call a pederast a man who falls in love with young boys. A sodomite a man whose desire is addressed to mature men. An invert a man, who in the comedy of love, assumes the role of a woman and desires to be possessed. These three types of homosexuals are not always clearly distinct; they experience a profound disgust for one another accompanied by a reprobation that in no way yields to that which you (heterosexuals) fiercely show toward all three.

The pederasts, of whom I am one, are much rarer and the sodomites more numerous than I first thought. As to inverts whom I have hardly frequented at all, it has always seemed to me that they alone deserved the reproof of moral or intellectual deformation. Many heterosexuals either through diffidence or through semi-inpotence, behave in relation to the other sex like woman in an apparently "normal" pair, play the role of true inverts. One is tempted to call them male lesbians. Dare I say that I believe them to be very numerous?

Gide discussed quite at length his feelings concerning homosexuality in *Corydon* about which he stated: "I intend that this book should be written coldly, deliberately. I do not want to move to pity; I want to embarrass."6 Perhaps he thought this would bring about a change in society concerning sexual questions. He exalted his feelings:

That such love can spring up—I maintain is good—each finds exaltation, protection, a challenge in relationships and I wonder whether it is for the youth or the elder man that they are more profitable.7

Because of Gide's feelings about sexual questions, he has been considered a moral corrupter of youth, but he definitely did not believe that he was. He felt he was helping youth.

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6 Ibid., p. 247.
7 Ibid., p. 168.
Gide felt that moral standards would change stating:

Favored by a somewhat different social state, a time will come, I fancy when the manifestations of love will be profoundly modified. The chaste reserve of virgins owes its importance in great part to the valuation the male sets upon it; his jealousy maintains its market value. For a Sovietized Russian it may be displeasing (it is displeasing to me) to see a valuable man risk his life for a bit of gristle.

Gide has been accused of chasing after his youth. "This is true," he says, "and not only after my own. Even more than beauty, youth attracts me." 9

Gide has never wanted to grow old although he is now over eighty, and perhaps for that reason also has always been attracted to the young who are still interested "in every road". Gide has always been afraid of death stating that he wanted to write his message before he died. He wrote in his Journal:

The first virtue of man was knowing how to face death; and it is a lamentable thing to as it is less feared by very young men than those who ought to be, if not tired of life, at least, having lived, resigned to death. 10

Yet Gide cannot resign himself to death as he wrote:

Of all the fruitless anxieties there is none more fruitless than that of death (though it constantly pursues me) and that the part of wisdom is to go on living without thinking too much that one must die. That constant idea of death, moreover, does not exactly sadden me; on the contrary, I am unwilling to admit it should

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9 Ibid., p. 205.
10 Ibid., p. 118.
darken my thoughts. But, looking back over my life, what saddens me rather is the thought of the little I have done; the thought of all I might have and should have done.\textsuperscript{11}

Gide has always wanted to learn something and that perhaps has kept him alive; he is almost "trop gourmand" about learning. He stated, however, that one should be realistic about death. In his diary in May 1940 he wrote:

\begin{quote}
Même la mort doit être admise par nous et nous devons nous éléver jusqu'à la comprendre; jusqu'à comprendre que l'émerveillante beauté de ce monde vient de ceci précisément que rien n'y dure et que sans cesse ceci doit ceder place et matière pour permettre à cela, qui n'a pas encore été, de se produire; le même, mais renouvelé rajeuni...\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Gide did not believe in an after life, and this may be one reason he has always been so afraid to die.

Gide has always insisted that he was happy, although his friends have often told him that they did not see how he could be happy. But Gide wrote in his \textit{Journal}:

\begin{quote}
I am not willing to yield to sadness for I see in that surrender a sort of self-indulgence that I deplore, against which I protest and balk just as, when very young, I did against the state of sin. A certain element of resolve enters into this, to be sure, but the state of joy (which I should like always to maintain in me) is the most natural to me and also the state in which I am most happily stretched to my fullest capacity, in which I feel that I am at my best. If I do not succeed in achieving it, the reason is almost always physical.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} André Gide, \textit{Journals}, III, p. 101.
\item \textsuperscript{12} André Gide, \textit{Journal}, 1939-42, p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{13} André Gide, \textit{Journals}, III, p. 67.
\end{itemize}
The love of life in *Les Nourritures Terrestres* made him feel life should be lovable for all while making him realize how far from lovely it was for many. In the *Nouvelles Nourritures* he reaffirmed his joy of living when he had overcome the temptation of the Catholic church and was becoming a communist. In *Les Nourritures Terrestres* God was identified with happiness but happiness was all placed in the moment, as might be possible for a person very fortunate or very selfish. However in *Les Nouvelles Nourritures* God was identified with the joy of helping humanity toward a more generous and shareable well-being.

Gide's philosophy was definitely that of a nonconformer and free thinker. It is a sincere effort to work out for himself what life is all about. He had the courage of his convictions and has felt that his philosophy might be of some help to youth.
CHAPTER V

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Though brought up a strict Protestant, Gide turned from this religion and has at present no orthodox religion. He felt that Christianity consoled but that there were naturally happy spirits who had no need of being consoled. So Christianity had to begin by making these unhappy, having otherwise no hold on them. He commented: "The Christian religion insists on symbols, while the Moslems have no need for them." For many years Gide thought of joining the Catholic Church, as he had nothing but Catholic friends by the end of the World War II. But he said in his Journal:

You asked me to accept what you had accepted yourself, which seemed to me falsehood and seemed to you Truth. It rather soon appeared to me that we could never understand one another. You accused my resistance of pride and this allowed you to condemn it . . . what is to me an indispensable virtue: intellectual honesty, is in your eyes but an obstacle to belief, which it behooves you to overcome.

Gide could not understand how the Church could reproach him with interpreting and adapting the words of the Gospel to himself. He felt those words had dominated his thought in spite of himself and that he had taken the words just as they were given. He wrote:

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1 André Gide, *Journals*, 1939-42, p. 60.
I believe that whoever has never understood, loved, adored Christ and the divine teaching of His Gospel is ill qualified to combat what human discretion has made of it. And yet I can admire that discretion the Church manifested, but generally recognize in it nothing, or very little, of the spirit of Christ. It is a great shame that often that divine teaching and that totally human discretion should have been mingled, confused, to such a point that they cannot be separated without apparent outrage.3

Gide worked out his own philosophy of religion—God, he believed, was perhaps created by man's imaginative intelligence. He believed there were two Gods—one the God of love represented by Christ, and second the God of nature who did not change our life. God was not man's endowment but his possible achievement, to be had only by winning and won only by going ahead. Religion, Gide felt, was an instinctive need to recognize the better self. He felt that Protestantism in its true state was the spirit of progressive liberation as shown by Calvin and Luther. However he reached the conclusion that some of the Protestant religions had become as "status quo" as the Catholic religion. He objected to the Catholic religion because it was institutional authority over personal judgment. However he found on reading Siegried's Les Etats-Unis that Protestantism was capable of distorting the mind as dangerously as Catholicism. Gide still maintained that Protestantism was a virtue in France as it represented a minority group. He decided that any religion

3 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 373.
whatever, as soon as it triumphed and imposed itself, satisfied man and advised against all progress.

Gide felt that many roads led to Rome but that there was only one that led to Christ. He wrote:

That original Christian upbringing, irremediably, detached me from this world, inculcating in me, not so much a disgust for this earth, as rather a disbelief in its reality. I have known subsequently many converts who could not manage, despite the most constant effort, to maintain themselves in that position of the soul which had become natural to me and from which, subsequently, I made an effort to get away. I have never managed to take this life quite seriously, by no means because I have ever been able to believe in eternal life, but rather in another facet of this life which escapes our senses and of which we can have but a very imperfect knowledge.  

Throughout his works Gide discussed religion from various aspects. In La Porte étroite Gide portrayed Alissa who was a devoutly religious person to such an extent that she gave up her lover, Jerome, and her life for her religion. She attempted to be sincere in her belief. Gide then portrayed Eveline in L'Ecole des femmes as turning away from the Catholic religion. She felt the religion to be set up for certain people at the expense of others and could not sincerely resign herself to her unhappy marriage. In La Symphonie pastorale Gide showed the religious narrowness of the Protestant pastor who interpreted his religion to his advantage and to the disadvantage of Gertrude and his son. Although

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4 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 57.
Gide pointed out the failings of both the Protestant and Catholic religions, he still felt religion was necessary. But Gide believed that religion should play a new part. Instead of creating fear and helplessness through reverence of the past, religion should look ahead and develop courage and thoughts of the future. Gide has seen this attitude develop, he said, since the growth of communism, and he feels it is healthy for the various churches. Gide believed the main objective of religion should be to teach man to rely on himself instead of on religion.

The Gospels had a great influence on Gide who decided they did not present any definite commands or prohibitions, but showed the way to mental and physical peace. Gide has credited St. Paul as being the one who has set down the many commands and threats which have been adopted by Christianity. Therefore Christianity should rid itself of St. Paul and his teachings and return to the Gospels. Gide found it difficult to talk to some of his Catholic friends about this, as they had never read the Gospels and were apparently told not to do so by the priest. Gide could not understand why they were unwilling even to consider the worth of the Gospels.

Gide even as late as 1952 did not believe in eternity but believed in eternity of the present. He has contended that anyone who can realize that eternity is in the present will have a wonderful peace of spirit. Gide stated that he
had gained this peace and had no anxiety or doubt and was ideallly happy. If this is so why has Gide always been afraid to die? Perhaps unconsciously he hopes there is an after life. Gide thought that writing was the only thing that was eternal; that is why he has written so much. Everything else he has concluded is temporal, and nothing is permanent. Apparently his philosophy of religion has been satisfactory for him, though many of his friends have been amazed by his nonconforming ideas.
CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Gide believes that social responsibility to one's community and fellowmen is the sign of a mature intelligent person. Gide did not have this belief in his youth when, like most adolescents, he was mostly preoccupied with his own emotions and thoughts. However, as soon as he began to work out his own philosophy of life and religion, he realized that the happiness of some gained at the expense of others was not right. In 1926 his voyage to the Congo and later his trip to U.S.S.R. furthered his broader concept of the responsibilities of men for each other.

Gide was born wealthy and never realized the financial worries nor other problems of many not so fortunate. He was interested always in others after his marriage but only as they affected him personally. In other words, his interest was in individuals rather than mankind in general. Gide wrote in his Journal: "I can refuse myself to society people, to interviewers, but not to those who really come to ask a service of me."\(^1\) Gide discussed in his diary the advisability of helping little Francois who wanted to continue school and become a teacher. Gide decided it was wiser not

\(^1\) André Gide, Journals, III, p. 71.
to help, though he wrote: "Immense desire to help him, which immediately filled my heart and made tears come to my eyes." François’ mother wished to hire him out as a farm hand, and Gide felt it would be wiser for the boy not to try to go beyond his station. This is the same Gide who was writing encouraging youth to escape the bonds of the family. Strangely enough, Gide finally did help the boy to continue school.

Gide often commented that everyone considered him miserly, but he did not feel he was. He quoted in his Journal what the newspapers had related about him:

A friend saw me, contrary to my custom, give fifty centimes to a beggar and heard me whisper, as I leaned toward him: "Yes, but when will you pay them back?"

Gide has done many generous things which probably have not received as much attention. He carefully remarked on this in his Journal:

I have perhaps done a few miserly things in my life; the important thing is having also done some generous and prodigal things; and I could not say of the two which were the more spontaneous (the latter probably) the more natural.

Gide was upset by any unkind treatment of animals and usually had several dogs and birds at his home. One time he cared for a baby sparrow and wrote excitedly in his diary every

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2 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 120.
3 Ibid., p. 86.
4 Ibid., p. 60.
movement of the bird until it was killed by the cat. Another
time he wrote: "Em was not able to sleep last night (nor I
either; moreover) too angered and grieved by the imbecile
cruelty of those children." The children had tied a barb
wire around the leg of a dog.

Gide's keenly sympathetic nature and desire for free-
dom caused him to become increasingly a champion for the op-
pressed. First he was mayor of a commune in Normandy in
1896, later he was a juror in Rouen in 1912, and finally he
was a special envoy of the Colonial ministry in 1925-26 to
the Congo. He had ample opportunity to observe social in-
justice. His Voyage au Congo and Retour du Tchad eventually
brought about a few legal reforms for the exploited negroes
of Central Africa. Gide appealed to pity, fairness, and
fellow-feeling which were ignored by the colonial companies
and their agents.

Gide thought that social and moral questions were more
important than political ones since it was more important to
reform men than a system. Later after his trip to the Congo,
he decided a system could be so bad and so powerful that man
would be helpless until the political system was changed.
He wrote in his Journal after seeing a documentary film by
Dr. Muraz Nosologie about the Congo and the Cameron:

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Frightful image of human suffering. I leave here in a state of moral distress aggravated by the thought that there are very few of those ills that might not have been avoided if only man had used his intelligence and energy to do so. Unfortunate creatures who exist only to suffer, who have not even any idea of a better condition; who can only resign themselves to living as one resigns oneself to dying.6

Gide then recalled his own trip to the Congo when during the first few weeks of his travel he never met a single creature who was not damaged, bruised, tainted, spoiled in some part of his body. Gide commented:

Each one of those unfortunates might think—if indeed those poor creatures were capable of any thought—must have thought that all those blemishes were inherent in human nature, and that, if a healthy man is never found, it is because there cannot be such a thing.7

It was natural that Gide should be incensed by the lack of interest of the colonial government in the negroes; his revolutionary zeal for the rights of man insuring liberty and the pursuit of happiness led him to communism, strangely enough, and not to democracy which apparently never occurred in Gide. Gide suffered to see injustice and felt the regime in France was dead or dying, while the regime in Russia allowed the individual to develop his potentialities more freely than a capitalistic state. When Martin du Gard asked Gide how he could reconcile individualism and communism, Gide did not reply. Martin du Gard said that communism subjugated

6 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 222.
7 Loc. cit.
the minorities; therefore everyone had to think the same, and he thought it a dreary state.

Gide was not to be deterred from his love of Russia and wrote in his diary and said on every occasion:

I should like to cry aloud my affection for Russia; and that my cry should be heard, should have importance. I should like to live long enough to see the success of that tremendous effort; its realization, which I wish with all my soul and for which I should like to work. 8

Gide was delighted with Russia because it was working for progress. He was anxious to see what could be produced by a state that had no religion. Yet Gide tried to reconcile Christianity and communism. He realized that capitalism and Catholicism were bound together because this religion taught man to submit and turn the other cheek, and that Marxist materialism was opposed to Christianity, but Gide believed that the opposition in no wise existed in practice. He thought many young Marxists were close to getting along with socially conscious young Christians—those who came to Marxism through the painful need of justice and through the warmth of heart.

Gide found Marx hard to understand except for his two famous slogans: "Proletarians, unite," and "It is not a question of understanding the world, but of changing it." 9

Gide was upset when his friends thought this was not the way

to change the world. Gide wrote bitterly in his *Journal*:

> There is a great deal of stupidity, a great deal of ignorance, a great deal of stubbornness in their refusal; and also a certain lack of imagination that keeps them from believing that humanity can change, that a society can be built up on different foundations from those they have always known, that the future can be anything but a repetition of reproduction of the past.¹⁰

Gide felt that emotionally, temperamentally, and intellectually he had always been a communist. Yet Gide felt himself utterly unfit for politics and as far as known never joined the party. He did conform to the Russian policy and therefore did not write very much. In 1937 after he was disillusioned with Russia he wrote frankly:

> I care very little whether or not my writings conform to Marxism. The "fear of the Index" that I used to express in the past, the absurd fear of being found in error by the pure communists, bothered me greatly and at length, to such a degree that I no longer dared write—now I am free of that sterilizing fear. That fear has taught me a great deal.¹¹

Did it require the failure of U.S.S.R. to lead him to think thus? Or was Gide's coming to communism a matter of sentiment—of warmth of heart and love, as he called it? Could the answer to Gide's interest and sympathy for Russia be that of an emotional rebound from his near surrender to the Catholic Church after World War I? Since it was always difficult for Gide to continue in one direction, it was natural

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that he should turn from communism. His break was as pronounced as his acceptance when he published his *Retour de URSS*, which has been discussed in Chapter III. Gide was shocked to discover when he visited Russia in 1936 the lack of personal liberty and the intellectual regimentation. He must have recalled his earlier statement in his *Journal*:

A well-understood communism needs to favor worthwhile individuals, to take advantage of all the individual's values, to get the best output from everyone. And well-understood individualism has no reason to be opposed to what would put everything in its place and bring out its value.\(^{12}\)

Gide's idea of communism was quite different in theory to what he saw in practice. Gide was amazed at the depersonalization which he had applauded earlier stating:

I admire nothing so much in the U.S.S.R. as the organization of leisure, of education, of culture. The feeling that work, thought, though it becomes a necessity for every man, is nevertheless not the end of man, and that every man must have his share of that leisure which in our time is still the privilege of the few.\(^{13}\)

It was difficult for Gide to believe there were inherent differences in man, such that they ought to have differential security, comfort, and opportunity; yet he found the communists had not done away with those differences. There was still poverty and social classes which he had hoped had been abolished forever.


\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 245.
In 1937 Gide reached the conclusion there was no difference between fascism and communism. He felt the fundamental aim of each was the same. Yet in 1932 he wrote in his diary: "Fascism strikes me as a return to the past, whereas the Soviets seem as a tremendous effort toward the future." Is Gide the only one wondering whether there is any difference between communism and fascism except the name?

Gide’s devotion to the truth made him refuse to rely on second hand evidence, and when he had seen Russia for himself, he hastened to revoke his adherence to a cause he could no longer approve completely. He frankly wrote many times that political questions did not interest him much and that he had trouble convincing himself that one regime was preferable to another. He felt that social and moral questions were more important than political ones. Gide now smiles about his flirtation with communism, but he still believes that one world with one government will come. He hopes the frightful means which seem necessary for communism to succeed will not be the answer.

Gide should not be reproached for working for the betterment of mankind and the emancipation of the mind. A new social order seems possible to him since the advance of science. This social order will be developed from common interests instead of from pride in tradition. Men will have

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14 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 197.
to come out of their corners and form a common conscience which will do good for the world. Gide’s idealism has led him to believe that each man should be his brother’s keeper, as he learned in the Gospels.
Gide's direct personal influence on his friends has been great as he has a passion for teaching. He also had friendships with contemporary writers. Many of those who came to him profited by the discipline he gave their creative minds; others however went into oblivion. Many young writers from various parts of France read with enthusiasm his works and wrote him. He was delighted with letters from the young and usually managed to see them. He has been especially interested in Jean Schlumberger, Jean Cocteau, Chéon, Julien Green, Paul Valéry, and Roger Martin du Gard and has recorded many interesting discussions with them.

Chéon wrote of Gide:

At the age of twenty I was writing just anyhow, ceaselessly pouring out poems, plays, and criticisms... I met Gide; and then understood the meaning of effort, difficulty, art. For years afterwards I scarcely wrote anything at all. Now my pen goes straight ahead; my instrument is fashioned.1

Jean Schlumberger also wrote:

When I gave Gide my first book, a bad novel by a very young man, I knew nothing of literature. I had read Loti, d'Annunzio, and haphazard, a few fashionable novelists. It was Gide who set me on the right path and gave me new literary horizons.2

1 Pierre Leon Quint, André Gide, p. 40.
2 Ibid., p. 40.
Gide was also anxious to enlighten writers of the younger generation and often wrote reviews pointing out the writer’s errors sympathetically.

Jean Cocteau wrote:

I had just published La Danse de Sophocle when I got to know Gide. Together with Cheon, he had amused himself by writing, for the N.R.F., a very severe criticism, which nevertheless expressed on the whole a certain sympathy. To reply would be to show that I understood. So I wrote, thanking him. Gide and Cheon came to see me in the rue d’Anjou. I was completely ignorant. It is Gide who has shown me art and the modern world, who enabled me to discover Rimbaud, and style. What do I not owe to Gide? 3

With the establishment of the N.R.F. Gide was in a position to review books by young writers who wished to have them published. It was in this way that he met Roger Martin du Gard, after reading his Jean Baroïs, which later won the Nobel prize. He soon became one of his closest friends. In November, 1931 Gide commented:

With Roger Martin du Gard I can let myself go and be natural. There is no one today whose presence is a greater comfort and consolation to me. With him I never feel that I am wasting my time; our conversation never seems to me idle. 4

In Jean Baroïs Martin du Gard portrays most effectively an intellectual’s revolt against Catholicism. Gide admired him for his materialistic view of life. In this novel Jean struggles to affirm his authentic self in an era of intel-

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3 Pierre Leon Quint, André Gide, p. 11.
4 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 208.
The conflict between science and religion are sharply drawn. This was Gide's own philosophy, so it was natural that he should be drawn to this dynamic young man.

Roger Martin du Gard became most interested in homosexuality and took a poll in Berlin in 1932. Almost all the young men he talked to professed to be homosexuals, but Gide felt that Roger lacked the true scientific spirit. He thought that each young man was trying to please Roger and so answered the way his questioner wanted him to. When Roger wrote a play about a homosexual he had great difficulty in finding an actor who could portray the part. Of course, there were many angry comments about the play:

At Roger's play, rather lively protests were heard. In regard to sexual questions, I am filled with wonder when they shout, like Sunday: "That's the limit!" when the subject is just beginning to be timidly treated. Claudel naturally was opposed to the play and wrote a letter to Jouvet, another strong Catholic:

Roger Martin du Gard is deeply struck by a letter from Claudel that Jouvet had just received. The letter culminates against a "filthy" writer, the author of a play, that it is enough for him to know through an article of Brisson to be able to judge abominable. There is no occasion whatever to try to "excuse" Claudel. I like him and want him thus, scolding easy, lukewarm Catholics who try to compromise. We can admit him, admire him; he owes it to himself to vomit us.6

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5 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 199.
6 Ibid., p. 206.
Gide was much interested in this subject of homosexuality, and he had many interesting conversations with Roger about it. Gide explained to him, he wrote in his diary, the new laws in U.S.S.R. They discussed the merits of the law which claims to protect the family. Gide again stated that a libertine and debauched heterosexual could bring more trouble into a family than a pederast. Gide analyzed his friend's reactions to any subject stating:

Roger, for any psychological question whatsoever, intentionally eliminates the exception, and even the minority. Whence a certain banalization of his characters. He is constantly asking himself: what takes place, in this given case, most generally? The "one in a thousand" does not claim his attention. But it is in order to discover that general law that the exception, quite on the contrary, concerns me.7

Gide was always more interested in the exceptional person who did not conform to the standards of the majority, probably because of his own nonconforming attitude.

Another young writer, Julian Green, who was half American, was devoted to Gide. Gide delighted in criticizing his writings and was most helpful to him. Gide discussed one of their many conversations about Leviathan, one of Green's books, in his Journal:

He is one of those for whom one would demand the best oneself. Without beating about the bush I was able to tell him everything I have written regarding Leviathan;

but adding at once that I consider as a proof of value
the very shortcomings of his book, and not having spent
time or effort in trying to correct them.\(^8\)

Green accepted Gide's criticism and discussed with him his
method of writing which was so different from Gide's. Of
course, Gide analyzed their conversation:

He told me again that he had begun this book without
a plan, without a definite outline, without at all know-
ing how his characters were going to act; that they sur-
prised him and that, as soon as they began to live in
him, he ceased to feel himself their master and could
not foresee the outcome of the drama into which their
passions hurled them.\(^9\)

However, Gide believed that unconsciously Green knew what
his characters would do, as he commented:

That subconscious logic on which the automatism of
his characters depends eludes him, and I believe it is
better so. But from the point of view of Freud, here is
something of greatest interest. The characters of
Leviathan, the plot of the novel, everything is of the
same stuff as our dreams and the projection on a back-
ground of everything that does not come to light in
life.\(^10\)

Gide has always been interested in Freud and was sure that
a person's writings were just a part of his life which he
did not disclose in other ways. Gide admired the evenness
of the flow of Green's writing and naturally had to find a
reason for it. He decided: "It is explained by his method
of work and the fear he has, if he drops his characters for
a moment of not being able to find them readily. He dares

\(^8\) André Gide, *Journaux*, III, p. 50.


not and cannot leave them. But that is why the reader cannot leave them either."

Gide decided that Green is a great writer because he knows how to turn even his shortcomings to advantage and to transform all the cards in his hand into trumps.

In 1924, Julian Green published *Pamphlet against the Catholics of France* which received a great deal of criticism. Gide likewise wrote his comment in his diary:

"I like its extravagance, its intentional refusal to adapt to contingencies, its protest against lukewarmness and mediocrity. A mind incapable of revolt and indignation is a mind without value.

But what does this pamphlet prove? That despite their gown, priests are men, and that the Holy Sacrament itself can do nothing against mediocrity."

Gide admired Green, but felt that he was conforming a little too much to the taste of his public in writing his novels in the traditional manner. Yet on speaking of him he wrote wistfully: "Yesterday spent almost three hours with Green. How I should have been attached to him if I had met him in my youth! I like everything in him."

Gide was famous for his gatherings with young writers and wrote in his journal of many discussions with them such

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12 Ibid., p. 47.
13 Ibid., p. 49.
as the following:

At that gathering yesterday at Blacque-Belair's, Roger Martin du Gard, A. Maurois, J. Romain, Schlumberger, Blacque himself, and Marc, I felt for each of them in turn a very urgent sympathy that filled me with joy as would have a heady wine.14

Gide found all his guests charming, but was especially drawn to Andre Maurois, as he said:

A. Maurois (who can be excessively bright, but yesterday was reserved, full of hidden qualities, and almost shy; oh, I liked him very much!)15

Gide was quite interested in the conversion of Gheon, one of his followers, whom he thought now resembled a monk since he had become a Catholic. On reading one of his new books,

Gide wrote:

Abject is the only word that comes to mind as I read in "La Nouvelle Revue des jeunes" the fragment of Gheon's long novel. Certainly he appreciates in Catholicism that illusory permission to create without effort. I say, illusory, for he does not create anything at all, and thank God! he is not even aware that he is merely discrediting. Faith involves a certain blindness in which the devout soul delights; when it escapes the shackles of reason, it seems to itself to be at its height.16

Gide also commented acidly concerning Cocteau's new writing. In this book, Le Livre blanc, are recounted the homosexual experiences of the author. Gide was naturally much inter-

14 Andre Gide, Journals, III, p. 89.
15 Ibid., p. 90.
16 Ibid., p. 49.
ested and wrote in his *Journal* in October, 1929:

What empty agitation in the tales he relates! What affectation in his style! What a play to the gallery in the poses he strikes! What artifice! Yet certain obscenities are related in a charming way. What is shocking, and greatly so, is the pseudo-religious sophistries.17

Although Gide was very helpful to many young writers, he also enjoyed his contemporaries in literature. In his *Journals* he recorded many an interview with Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, and Marcel Proust to only mention a few. However, sometimes unfortunately Gide would merely write that he was too tired to discuss his conversation and would write it later. Of course, this he never did. Yet from the interviews recorded an impression of the important figures of the twentieth century can be glimpsed through Gide's eyes.

In Gide's *Journals* he records many interesting conversations with Paul Valéry, one of the outstanding modern French poets. Valéry was the only friend Gide had who was also his friend during his symbolist period. Both were devoted to Mallarmé and yet went on to a different type of writing. Valéry occasionally wrote for the N.R.F. at Gide's insistence and for more than twenty years he did not write but concentrated on mathematics. Gide admired Valéry greatly and wrote that he felt in awe of his mind. He felt he had difficulty in following his conversation as he wrote:

Met Valéry that last day of July. More intelligent, more charming more affectionate than ever. Yet I leave this meeting rather depressed, as from almost all other meetings with Valéry. But this time it is not so much feeling an intelligence so incomparably superior to mine attach no value to the commodities I can supply, accept only the coin of which I am most bereft.18

Gide admired Valéry because he was so alive. He associated with the important, political, musical, and literary figures of the day. Gide felt that Valéry was closely attached to life, while he was somewhat detached. Until rather late in life Gide constantly agreed with Valéry and subscribed to almost everything he wrote, for which he had unlimited admiration. If Valéry criticized something Gide wrote, it was immediately changed. Gide revelled in Valéry's passion for purity, and his quasi-religious fervor of the artistic, more-than-artistic, conscientiousness.19 He felt very inferior and was very pleased when Valéry followed some of his recommendations. Gide wrote in his Journal in January, 1933:

And yet it happened to Valéry to follow some of my "recommendations" as it happened to me to listen to those of Drouin, of Schlumberger, of Martin du Gard; but never without having meditated over them at length and only when I felt that they went in my direction.20

Gide enjoyed Valery because he wrote quality instead of

18 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 58.
19 Klaus Mann, André Gide, p. 8.
quantity. He realized he had a clever construction of mind and an organized life which was so different from Gide's.

In October, 1928 Gide learned from Valéry that he wrote nothing from pleasure but on order and for money. This was difficult for Gide to understand as he always had sufficient money and wrote only to please himself. He began to note in Valéry a certain desire to conciliate, a certain fear of displeasing. He analyzed Valéry stating:

He is playing his life like a chess game that it is important to win, and as he writes his poems, placing just the right word, as one moves up a pawn, in just the right place. He has managed his life so well that mine, in comparison seems to me but a sorry succession of blunders.

Gide recalled that Valéry when quite young had said that if he wanted to be rich, it would be in order to be able, always and in any society or circumstances whatever, to wear the appropriate costume. This, of course, was not at all Gide's thought and now Valéry's frankness appealed to him. Although Gide knew that Valéry had in his heart true friendship for him, he did not like his interpretation of him. To him Gide represented the Protestant, the moralist, the Puritan, the sacrificer of form to idea, the anti-artist, the enemy, or so Gide recorded in his diary.

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Perhaps Gide saw in Valéry the qualities he missed in himself and for this reason was drawn to him. Valéry seemed superior and Gide enjoyed being with someone who would help him to improve himself.

Another friend whom Gide admired was Paul Claudel, who was the champion of the Catholic faith. He was continually preoccupied with his thoughts about God which made his work important and yet limited. He was continually chastising the writers who were only lukewarm in their faith. Gide felt that Claudel was honest and was drawn to the Catholic faith partly because of his belief; however, Gide never became a Catholic. He and Claudel have remained friends despite their opposing philosophies, and during World War II Claudel came to see him occasionally.

In September, 1929 Gide wrote in his Journal that Claudel was going to found and edit a review which would compete with the N.R.F. "There will remain, for the N.R.F. only the freethinking elements after which people will be surprised that it seems tendentious." When Claudel wrote one of his several letters calling down curses on Goethe, Gide commented:

Claudel (who "cannot be wrong") Claudel—a superior mind so much voluntary (and instinctive) lack of intel-

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lignence, that set purpose to reject what cannot be annexed, gives extraordinary encouragement to my resistance.  

Claudel not only thought Goethe was "evil" but also Gide whose work he condemned. Perhaps Gide in resisting this strong Catholic man was able to find his own religion.

Another friend of Gide's was Marcel Proust, who was interested in the innermost secrets of our mind and soul. Through his book, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, the reader can recognize the most minute details and implications of his own experience. Proust seemed the only novelist of the twentieth century—except Conrad—perhaps—in whose work Gide took a lasting and intensive interest and by whose example he could really profit according to Klaus Mann.  

Certain parts of Proust's style and character repelled Gide. He disapproved of him when he came to Mallarmé's gatherings under the auspices of Anatole France and was instrumental in keeping him from joining the N.R.F. group to his later embarrassment. He disliked his fawning and snobbishness. However when Gide read his novel, he immediately recognized its worth. It was different as Gide thought the novel of the twentieth century should be different. Gide wrote in his diary that he read him with rapture:

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26 Klaus Mann, *André Gide*, p. 177.
I even like the fact that the point of his scalpel attacks everything that offers itself to his mind, to his memory, to everything and to anything whatever. Often one follows attentively, not so much the matter on which he is operating, as the minute work of the instrument and the slow patience of his operation.27

Gide was more interested in the method that Proust used in his writing than in the result of the analysis. However, Gide felt that Proust tried to be too subtle at times and found that completely useless. His analysis was, at times, of no value and yet, at other times, led to extraordinary discoveries. Gide felt that Proust discussed the general composition of his work because he was aware that it would not be obvious. Gide enjoyed trying to understand Proust although he was constantly distracted by the detail which often assumed more importance than the general composition.

In his Journal Gide relates of his visits to Proust in his corked room, when he was ill:

Although it is stifling in the room in which he receives me, he is shivering; he complains that his life is nothing but a slow agony, and although having begun, as soon as I arrived, to talk of homosexuality, he asked me to enlighten him as to the teaching of the Gospels. He hopes to find some support and relief for his sufferings. He is fat, or rather puffy.28

Gide and Proust discussed homosexuality, and Gide was amazed that Proust boasted of being a homosexual. He

27 André Gide, Journals, III, p. 405.
28 André Gide, Journals, II, p. 265.
told Gide that he had never loved women save spiritually and claimed he had never known love except with men. Gide asked him if the women in his stories were really young men disguised which Proust readily admitted:

In order to fill out the heterosexual part of his book, he transposed "a l'ombre des jeunes filles" all the attractive, affectionate, and charming elements contained in his homosexual recollections, so that for Sodome he left nothing but the grotesque and the abs-

ject. 29

Gide reprimanded him feeling that he must have wanted to stigmatize homosexuality, but Proust protested as he wrote his books for the public and knew its taste. Gide did not believe that Proust was sincere; and although he admired his works, he apparently never was too friendly with him.

Only a few of the many interesting literary figures of the twentieth century who knew Gide have been discussed; however, it is easy to see that they as well as others thought highly of Gide and valued his opinion either as a teacher or a friend. Gide was happy in the role of a teacher and was always ready to help his friends.

CHAPTER VIII

GIDE’S CONTRIBUTION

What is Gide’s contribution to French literature and the twentieth century? It is difficult to evaluate Gide, the man, or Gide, the writer, while he is still living; but there is no doubt he will be important because of his so-called nonconforming ideas and ethics, his writings and especially his style, and his influence on other writers.

In his life Gide questioned many things in a way which others have thought but not dared to write. He questioned religion and was not satisfied until he worked out his own solution. He was not afraid to accept the innovations brought about through science and welcomed progress. He despised tradition and worked for a new society built on common interest rather than tradition. He brought into the open the problem of a homosexual and frankly questioned society’s right to determine what was morally correct. Throughout Gide reiterated his belief that what seemed normal to a person could not be as wrong as society chose to state. Gide became involved, like so many in this century, in the struggle for communism. He went through all the emotions to the final disillusionment which has also been experienced by others. Although Gide could not be considered a typical person of the twentieth century, he did experience many of
the emotions and intellectual wonderings that seem to go with this century.

In his works Gide will be considered influential from several points of view. Gide's idea of a novel is interesting. He felt a novel should contain the lives of many people who by chance come in contact with one another; all the plots should be considered simultaneously. His only novel, Les Faux-Monnayeurs, was not received with enthusiasm. Gide's essays and criticisms were beautifully written, and he will no doubt receive fame for his scrutinizing analysis of Oscar Wilde, Montaigne, Dostoyevsky, Chopin, and others. Gide is considered by many critics to be at his best in this field. Gide is fascinated by literature and has often considered writing his views of French literature.

For some Gide's books on the Congo and Amyntas are the most interesting since they are devoted primarily to description of the country without much philosophy. Gide seemed to be an entirely different person in these books as he chased butterflies and bugs.

Perhaps most critics feel that Gide will be remembered for his Journals, depicting the life of a great man during the past fifty years. In it he depicted his continual dialogue within himself. He lived in perpetual expectation afraid to take sides for fear that some new phase would be coming that he would want. In his diary he revealed his sub-
conscious longings finding an outlet in his abnormal physical pleasures. In all his writings Gide transposed his own intimate experiences, many of which he discussed first in his Journals. In his Journals Gide discussed in a subdued manner his marital problems and referred to his liaison with Elizabeth. He berated his daughter for thinking only of herself instead of him, although in his younger days he advocated that youth forget the family. It would seem from his diary that Gide often did not practice what he preached in his books. In his diary he struggled with real problems; it was not just a way to pass the time when he could not work on what was at hand, nor a discipline to keep his skill from rusting, nor a method for heating his ideas for final casting. Here he did not need a precise form. He jotted down his thoughts too fugitive, homely, intimate and pressing to be expressed appropriately. Personal observations of current problems and their solution make the Journals most interesting and worthwhile.

Gide's verbal gift enabled him to make his ideas viable. Although his mind is very disorganized, his style is simple and austere. He wrote with difficulty weighing each word and sentence. He did this because he wanted his writings to last and realized a classical style would be an asset. Even those who are not in sympathy with his message admire his classical style.
Gide introduced two new thoughts in his writings which have brought him much criticism. Gide said that Socrates always gave both sides of the question, and Gide has done likewise. His usual procedure in a novel is to have one main character give one side of the problem, while the other brings out the opposite point of view. This is called the Gidean Thought Process. As Gide had ambivalent feelings about everything, this was very easy for him; but the reader sometimes objected as there is never a conclusion to his books. Gide made no attempt to write for the lazy reader who was unwilling to work out a solution to the problem from the facts given.

When Gide introduced the "acte gratuite", some critics thought it was the action of the devil. The "acte gratuite" meant acting without thought of the consequence. Lafcadio, the hero in Les Caves du Vatican, was admired by many of the young men after World War I because of his zest for life with no regard for anything or anyone. Some critics blamed Gide for corrupting the youth of France because of this idea. Gide later decided that the "acte gratuite" should be modified and interpreted to mean action unpremeditated provided it was for the good of mankind.

Many French writers will remember Gide for the inspiration and help he gave them. As head of the Nouvelle Revue Française he encouraged good writing among the younger men.
without care for the public opinion. He was a strict teacher and taught many a man how to write concisely and fluently. Gide felt a good teacher was one who could teach the students to get along without him. Julian Green, Roger Martin du Gard, Jean Cocteau, and many others feel that Gide was a great influence on them, but Gide insists that he has never influenced anyone.

Gide brought about a healthy change in French literature when he broke from symbolism and courageously wrote about the problem of ethics which was taboo. As a moral philosopher he was interested in the individual and in what kept him from being himself. For Gide sincerity was the most important virtue, although he tempered this by saying that one should tell only one's own truth. On searching for sincerity he found that most people were insincere first, because of the traditional moral code, and second, because of their unconscious thoughts. Gide hoped that traditional morality could be changed so that one did not have to act contrary to one's natural wishes. As the bourgeois class, the family, and church represented to him the mainstays of the "status quo", he felt they should be done away with. This was one reason, of course, why he turned toward communism. Gide then decided that it was not enough to change tradition but that also the depths of the unconscious should be explored. He wondered why passions that most men had should be wrong
if they were natural; he concluded these passions should not be repressed. Gide came to the conclusion which is now generally accepted that the mind is made up of the conscious and the subconscious. It is the fusing of the two that brought Gide serenity and perfect harmony which he says he now has.

Whether the reader agrees with Gide in his ideas or not, there can be little question of his sincerity. He is only one of the many people of the twentieth century who are trying to find the answers in this changing world. Despite the feelings of the critics about Gide, one can not help but sympathize with him after writing this discussion and understand his comments:

You meditate for months, in you an idea becomes flesh; it palpitates, it lives, you caress it; you adopt it intimately; you know its contours, its limits, its deficiencies, its reliefs, its recesses; as soon as you present it to the public—immediately a critic rises up to declare in peremptory fashion that you know nothing about it.1

A. WORKS OF ANDRE GIDE

French Texts


Translations


Si le grain ne meurt, translated by Dorothy Bussy, with the title If It Dies. New York: Random House, 1935. 331 pp.


B. CRITICISMS OF GIDE BY OTHER WRITERS


