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The philosophy of Walter Pater

Rees, Bethana Andeline

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Thesis

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WALTER PATER

by

Bethana Angeline Rees

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Master of Arts

1937
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INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Every man, whether he knows it or not, has a philosophy of life. Each one of us on our way through this world has certain beliefs which govern our acts. Some people write down these beliefs, record their beliefs for themselves and others. But the great majority of us never stop long enough in the whirl of existence to do so.

Walter Pater, an English scholar and writer of the nineteenth century, belongs to that group of people, small as it is, who do express in writing their life philosophy. By this I do not mean that he wrote a separate book entitled "My Philosophy of Life". Had he only done so, how much easier it would have been for those of us who are interested in his creed! Instead, he inserted his beliefs here and there in his literary work. To find them one must search through his art criticism, his literary criticism, his imaginary portraits, with a keen eye and a tireless energy.

I undertook such a search. And now at the completion there is a certain satisfaction in the feeling that, while perhaps I may not have discovered all the tenets of Pater's philosophy, yet I am certain that I have found the most important ones. In writing this thesis on the philosophy of Walter Pater my intention is not so much to criticize Pater's concepts as it is to record them in such a manner that others may know what he really believed. Criticism, however, of necessity will enter in to a certain extent.

As I planned the writing of my thesis, the material divided itself
quite naturally into five parts, each one of which will form the nucleus for a separate chapter. The parts in the order of treatment are these: Pater's life, his metaphysics, his aestheticism and epicureanism, his ethics, and his religion. My first chapter, "The Life of Walter Pater", will have little to do with his philosophy. It will be primarily a chronological tabulation of the most important events in his life, followed by a list of his outstanding books. While such a knowledge of a man's life is not, of course, absolutely necessary for an understanding of his philosophy, nevertheless I feel that the philosophy becomes more interesting, if one has in his mind's eye a picture of the man.

If the remaining four chapters were to be arranged according to importance, the chapter on aesthetics and epicureanism would come next. Because, however, Pater was interested in metaphysics prior to his interest in aesthetics, I have planned to devote chapter two to the former and chapter three to the latter. The third chapter will be the longest of the five, for it is around aesthetics that Pater's philosophy is built. The chapter on ethics, which will follow that on aesthetics and epicureanism, will be comparatively short. Pater's ethics, as I shall show later, is an integral part of his aesthetics, and pure ethical ideas are difficult to find in his writings. Lastly, the chapter on religion will reveal the early scepticism of Pater and, then, his gradual turning again toward religion.

The material for these chapters has been obtained from various sources. Most important, of course, were Pater's own books, especially The Renaissance and Marius the Epicurean. The numerous magazine articles by Pater, mostly book reviews, proved of little value, as they are generally very impersonal. Then, besides the primary sources, there was a
host of secondary material to draw from—biographies, theses, critical essays, and magazine articles. Of the biographies those by A. C. Benson and Ferris Greenslet were the most valuable to me: of the theses, that of Helen H. Young. As for the critical essays and magazine articles, most of them were too short and inadequate to be of much importance.
CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF WALTER PATER
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THE LIFE OF WALTER PATER

On August 4, 1839, the fourth child, a son, was born to Dr. Richard Globe Pater and his wife, the former Maria Hill. They christened this child Walter Horatio Pater, never thinking at the time that this tiny baby was to become prominent in the literary field. Of Walter Horatio Pater's ancestry his biographers have little to say. We do know that the Paters were of Dutch extraction, coming from Holland to England in the eighteenth century. In England they became known as a highly respectable family of the middle class. Evidently one branch of the Pater family journeyed to America, for Richard Pater, Walter's father, was born in New York early in the nineteenth century. As a boy, however, he was taken back to England, where in due time he married a north country girl, and settled down as a physician.

At the time of Walter Pater's birth, Richard Pater and his family were living at Shadwell in the East of London. The sudden death of Dr. Pater in 1844, however, caused the family to move to Enfield in Middlesex. It was in Enfield that Walter Pater spent the greater part of his childhood. Strangely enough, when one considers that Pater lived less than one hundred years ago, little information is available concerning his

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2 Ibid., p. 6.
early years. We do know that he was a quiet, grave child, given much to playing by himself. His favorite games were of a religious nature. Dressed himself in pretended clerical robes, the young Walter loved to play at being a bishop. He loved to lead a mock ceremony, which even in its aspect of make-believe showed a fondness for ritual.

Walter Pater's early education was doubtlessly supervised by his mother at home. At the age of fourteen, however, the lad was sent to King's School, Canterbury, as a day pupil. Here the boy gained the reputation of being an idler and a dreamer. Yet, in spite of his slowness, his seriousness, and his dislike of sports, he was popular among his schoolfellows. Two boys in particular were attracted to him, Dombrain and McQueen. A triumvirate was formed and all through the King's School days Pater, Dombrain, and McQueen were to be found together. The common bond between these three was their devotion to religion. Their spare time was spent in attending church services; their spare pennies in buying religious books. Pater even cherished the idea of taking church orders.

All too soon, we can imagine, these happy days at King's School and the close companionship with Dombrain and McQueen were over for Pater. At the age of nineteen, in June, 1858, to be exact, he matriculated at Queen's College, Oxford, becoming an undergraduate along with A. C. Swinburne and John Addington Symonds of Balliol College and John Richard Green

of Jesus College. Although Pater did not realize it at the time, Oxford was to be his home for almost all the rest of his life.

Pater entered into the life at Oxford unobtrusively, secluding himself for the most part and limiting himself to a few, close friends. His studies he pursued with only a moderate diligence, preferring to follow his own interests rather than those prescribed for him. He gave much time to the study of philosophy, especially to the tenets of Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Plato, Schelling, and Hegel. Then, by 1859, he had become ardently devoted to Ruskin and Goethe.

Pater received his B.A. degree from Queen's College in 1862. For the next two years, he earned his living by being a private tutor. Then in 1864 he was offered a Fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford, which he immediately accepted. As Mr. Wright says of Pater in regard to this opportunity, "He was a happy man in the sense that he had fallen into precisely the niche that was most suited for his peculiar genius."

By this time Pater had decided that literature was to be his sole aim in life. He had come to this decision after being prevented from taking church orders because of the atheistic tendencies he had developed at Oxford. As fellow, Pater was both a lecturer and a reader of essays. He was evidently successful, for, when he received his M.A. degree in 1865, he was made a permanent Fellow of Brasenose.

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1 Thomas Wright, op. cit., vol. I, p. 149.
2 Ibid., p. 170.
3 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 18.
The year after his permanent appointment at Oxford was an important one for Pater. It was in the summer of 1866 that he took his first trip to Italy in the company of Mr. Charles L. Shadwell. This trip brought Pater in personal contact with the great art of the Italian Renaissance. 1 The impression made upon Pater by such a contact was so great that from this time on "art became for him the chief occupation of his inner life." 2 From this time on Pater renounced his interest in metaphysics, which he had acquired during his undergraduate days at Queen's College, and joined with the aesthetic movement started by Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. 3

Back at Oxford from his Italian sojourn, life flowed on much as usual. Indeed, from then until 1866, Pater continued to live the more or less cloistered life of a University Fellow. Shy and reserved as he was, such an existence did not disturb him in the least. In fact, he revelled in quiet, meditative hours spent among his books. His life had a sameness about it which would have wearied many another man. During the school year he spent his mornings in lecturing or writing; the afternoons in correcting the composition of the morning. 4 And at night he closed his books entirely, preferring to spend these evening hours in conversation or in a visit to one of the few places which really interested him, the Roman Catholic Chapel, for instance. The summers were different. Then it was that he took frequent walking tours on the Continent—tours which

1 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 22.
3 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 23.
4 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 19.
were always a source of joy and pleasure to him.\footnote{Ferris Greenslet, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 32.}

These quiet, uneventful years spent mostly at Oxford were very conducive to the literary work to which Pater had decided to devote his life. Between 1870 and 1880 he wrote most of his critical essays. These essays were not at first incorporated into book form, but were, rather, printed separately in magazines. Indeed, the only book by Pater published before 1880 was \textit{The Renaissance}, which appeared in 1873. After 1880 the bulk of Pater's writing consisted of only three books: \textit{Marius the Epicurean}, which he took four years to write, \textit{Plato and Platonism}, and \textit{Imaginary Portraits}. Of these books, as well as the others by Pater, a word will be said at the end of this chapter.

In 1886, the year after he finished his master work, \textit{Marius the Epicurean}, Pater took a house in London---on Earl's Terrace in Kensington. While he retained his rooms at Oxford, he nevertheless spent all his vacations, as well as much of his spare time during the school year, in the city.\footnote{A. C. Benson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 117.} Such a move was made easy for him by the fact that his duties at the university were now greatly lightened. As early as 1880 he had given up his tutorship, and by 1886 his work consisted entirely of lecturing. He did hold also the office of Dean of Brasenose---an honorary position which required only one official duty, the presenting of men for their degrees.

The seven years during which Pater maintained his town house in Kensington, from 1886 to 1893, were the gayest ones of his life. Greatly to the surprise of everyone he went much into society, probably due
in part to the great demand made upon him as a lecturer. At this time, also, he was called upon frequently to write book reviews. During his seven years in the city he contributed about twenty long, careful review articles to The Guardian, The Nineteenth Century, The Pall Mall Gazette, and The Athenaeum. As a reviewer Pater was far too kind-hearted and sympathetic. Always genial, he was quick to praise and loath to censure, a fact which makes his reviews of little value.

The year 1893 found Pater giving up his home in Kensington and moving his household back again to Oxford.\(^1\) This time he did not go to his old rooms at Brasenose but took a house with his sisters on St. Giles' Street. Here it was that less than a year later death came to him—a sudden death at the end caused by rheumatic fever from which he thought he was recovering. He was buried in Holywell Cemetery, Oxford, close to the scenes where most of his life drama had been played.

Of Pater's literary work there should be something said at this time. In spite of the years which he spent at his writing, his actual output was comparatively small. He preferred to work slowly and painstakingly at the perfecting of a few essays, rather than to compose a greater number of inferior ones. The grand total of books by Pater, which have come down to us, is only ten. And of those several are less than three hundred pages in length. I shall name these books in the order of their publication, even though some were not printed until after Pater's death. A list of the separate essays of which many of these books are composed would be both tedious and uninteresting.

As has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, Pater's first book

\(^{1}\) Ferris Greenslet, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
appeared in 1873—*The Renaissance.* This book, a series of essays in which Pater tried "to present a summary of the humanistic tendencies of the Renaissance,"¹ is the most popular of his books, having been printed in at least eight editions. Strangely enough, it was more than ten years before another book by Pater came off the press. In 1885, *Marius the Epicurean,* a philosophical novel dealing with the life of a Roman lad in the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, appeared. Pater had been working on this book since 1881.

Two years after the publication of *Marius,* came *Imaginary Portraits* and, then, in 1889 *Appreciations* with an "Essay on Style". After *Appreciations,* only one other of Pater's books was printed during his lifetime. In 1888, the year before he died, *Plato and Platonism* was published. This book is composed of a series of lectures delivered by Pater at Oxford in 1891 and 1892 to young philosophy students. After Pater's death in 1894, four other books by him were compiled: *Miscellaneous Studies* and *Greek Studies* in 1895, and *Essays from the Guardian* and *Gaston de Latour—An Unfinished Romance* in 1896. The first five chapters of the latter work had been published in *Macmillan's Magazine* from June to October, 1888.

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CHAPTER II

THE METAPHYSICS OF PATER
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THE METAPHYSICS OF PATER

Most serious-minded people, and especially those who are philosophically inclined, probably concern themselves at one time or another with metaphysics. For all people of this type would like to feel that they have settled successfully both the ultimate problems of Being or reality, and the ultimate problems of human knowledge—the two principal concerns of metaphysical inquiry. Through implicit faith, some are led to believe that they have found the absolute solution to these weighty questions; through scepticism, others are led to believe that no solution is possible—that the study of metaphysics as such is both useless and worthless. With this latter group of sceptics, Walter Horatio Pater, the Oxford professor of the late nineteenth century, would doubtlessly have classed himself. And, indeed, Pater did repudiate metaphysics. Yet, in spite of his condemnation of metaphysics, Pater may be rightfully said to have had a metaphysical philosophy. It is this latter point which I especially hope to make clear in this chapter dealing with Pater's metaphysical ideas.

Walter Pater, being even in youth serious-minded and thoughtful, became interested in metaphysics at an early age—that is, during his first years at Queen's College, Oxford. When most boys were participating in youthful sports and college pranks, Pater was delving into the works of

such philosophers as Pythagoras, Plato, and Hegel. Metaphysics was not, however, his only interest. Likewise, during those first years at Oxford, there was perceptible in him a marked concern for the literary and the artistic. This latter interest grew stronger each year, and by the time of Pater's graduation from Queen's College in 1862 already seemed to have taken precedence over metaphysics. An "Essay on Coleridge", written by Pater for the Westminster Review four years later, bears out this assumption. Here Pater is definitely troubled over metaphysics and is already asking himself the question, later to be repeated by Oscar Wilde, "Who would change the colour or curve of a roseleaf for that colourless, formless, intangible, being Plato put so high?"¹

Finally, around the year 1867, Pater did make a definite break with metaphysical speculation in favor of aesthetics, or the artistic way of life. This break was actuated by two forces—his first trip to Italy in the company of Mr. Shadwell, and his discovery of Otto Jahn's Life of Winckelmann. The influence of the Italian trip upon Pater—his introduction to the classical culture and Renaissance art—has already been commented upon in Chapter I. As for Winckelmann, in him Pater saw the exact image of himself. Winckelmann, like Pater, had become suddenly aware of the beauty of Greek art. Its effect upon him was immediate and overwhelming. Unhesitatingly, Winckelmann gave up his interest in metaphysics and legal studies, in both of which he had made outstanding progress, and from then on concerned himself exclusively with the study of art and of literature.² Pater doubtlessly saw himself as a second Winckelmann, de-

²A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 29.
voted to one ideal of life, and that an artistic one.

In this way, then, did Pater turn his back upon the abstraction of metaphysics and face toward the aesthetic ideal. And, having once decided against metaphysical study, he lost no opportunity to speak disparagingly of it. As if he were trying to justify to himself the step he had taken, he inserted into his books and essays numerous condemnatory statements concerning metaphysics. For instance, in his book Marius the Epicurean he speaks of men's minds being oppressed and wearied by metaphysical speculation. When this happens, he says, a sense of ennui becomes evident and the quite natural result is an ensuing reaction. Such a reaction Pater compares to a sort of suicide—a suicide in that now this ardent metaphysical acumen is devoted to the end of proving metaphysical speculation impossible, or useless.

Again in Plato and Platonism Pater reiterates the same idea, when he says that men are not by nature attracted toward the abstract. According to Pater, none of us can live upon genus or species, accident or substance, to the exclusion of all else. Both physically and mentally we all need "an orchard or a garden, with fruit and roses." In other words, mere abstraction is not enough. For mere abstraction excludes from our lives those elements of beauty and sense which are so essential for health of body and soul.

Pater illustrates this last point by reference to a seed. Our interest in the common garden seed, he says, lies in our consciousness of the

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2 Ibid., p. 99.
possible differentiation to come—the many leaves, the bright flowers, and then the many new seeds in turn. Abstraction, or the introduction of general ideas, in regard to the seed seems to impede our interest in it, reducing "flower and fruit, odour and savour, back again into the dry and worthless seed."

Pater then goes on to speak with sadness of this modern world in which classification and analysis have gone so far. This modern world of the scientific spirit he contrasts regretfully with the Homeric world. To Pater the world of Homer seemed a delightful place. In those olden days, Pater felt, life must have been a continuous surprise, every object unique, and all knowledge still that of the concrete and of the particular.

A third repudiation of metaphysics is also found in Plato and Platonism. Here Pater admits that in every age some people will, of course, eagerly search for ultimate Being—the One, the Absolute. Then, he goes on to say, most of these seekers will never attain the goal which they have set for themselves. Instead, they will meet with frustration and discouragement. Their endeavor, says Pater, is comparable to zero, and a "mere algebraic symbol for nothingness." Coleridge, according to Pater's essay on him written in 1866, was one of those looking for the true Substance. His striving is called an effort of sickly thought.

In expressing such ideas against metaphysical speculation, Walter Pater

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1 Ibid., p. 139.
2 Ibid., p. 139.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 32.
5 Ibid.
6 Walter Pater, Appreciations, op. cit., p. 68.
followed directly in the steps of the old Greek philosopher, Aristippus of Cyrene—Aristippus, who had such an influence upon the later Epicurean school. Aristippus's reception of life was said to be accomplished in a perfect manner. Very noteworthy in this perfect manner was the almost complete repudiation, the strict limitation, of metaphysical inquiry. For Aristippus felt that the study of metaphysics bewildered one methodically and should, therefore, claim little of a man's time. In the school of Cyrene, abstraction was valued only for giving a groundwork to the Cyrenaic concern with practical ethics. It was, then, upon the Cyrenaic school that Pater relied for partial justification of the stand he had taken.

Another way in which Pater tried to prove that his repudiation of metaphysics was just was by stressing his belief in the subjectivity of knowledge. Each one of us, he says, is sure only of his own feelings. He maintains that all philosophical theories of the universe are subjective, and therein lies the flaw at the basis of each. Although this fact is apprehended by philosophers, it has never been dealt with conclusively. Those who are not philosophers expel it either by common, unphilosophical sense or by religious faith. Indeed, the reception, or repudiation, of any theory depends upon temperament, or will, in the receiver.

An excellent illustration of Pater's attitude toward the abstract is his discussion of Beauty—Beauty, the focal point in his chosen aesthetic way of life. According to him, Beauty is relative and, therefore, the definition of it should be concrete, not abstract. When looking at an object, Pater feels, one must see it as it really is. One must know his just

1Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, p. 139.
2Ibid., Marius the Epicurean, p. 99.
3Ibid., p. 97.
impression of it. One must ask himself this question over and over again: "What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book to me?" The person, Pater maintains, who experiences strong impressions of things and who takes pains to analyse and examine critically these impressions does not need to trouble himself either with beauty in the abstract, or with beauty in its exact relation to truth or to experience.

These latter problems are metaphysical ones and are, Pater says, as unprofitable as metaphysical problems elsewhere. Consequently, let such problems be passed by as uninteresting and boring! Especially upon the artist does the idea of an abstract and disembodied beauty have a chilling effect.

As an illustration of what may happen to the person who disregards the concrete and devotes his entire life to the consideration of metaphysical problems, Pater pictures for us the young Sebastian von Storck in his book *Imaginary Portraits*. Sebastian, a youth with an awful coldness about him, had one interest only in life—the abstract. "He seemed, if one may say so, in love with death; preferring winter to summer; finding only a tranquillising influence in the thought of the earth beneath our feet cooling down for ever from its old cosmic heat; watching pleasurably how their colours fled out of things, and the long sand-bank in the sea, which had been the rampart of a town, was washed slowly down in its turn."

The 'Infinite' was his one and all. The little pleasantries, the realities, of the delightful life of Holland, which flowed about him, were

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2Ibid.
5Ibid., p. 113.
irritations to him. He hated every one of them. Nothing, in truth, could deter him from his determination to sacrifice the richness of existence possible for him. He was resolved to devote himself exclusively to the queries of metaphysics—to find out, if possible, the basic principles of the universe. Such a determination on the part of Sebastian, Pater points out, indicated a diseased and unsound mind. Sebastian never paused long enough in his metaphysical pursuit to reflect that if others had used their lives as he was using his, the world could never have come so far at all. The very fact that the world had advanced and progressed to so great an extent was an outstanding exception to his hypothesis.

No, the world could never have come so far if all people had concerned themselves entirely with metaphysical inquiry, as had the Dutch Sebastian van Storck. What Pater advocates in place of the adherence to metaphysics, as perhaps the paragraph concerning beauty has already shown, is the interest in direct experience and sensation. For, unlike many critics who trample down ideas, Pater had plans for the reconstruction of the damage he had done. "But our own impressions!", he said, "The light and heat of that blue veil over our heads, the heavens spread out, perhaps not like a curtain over anything!—How reassuring, after so long a debate over rival criteria of truth, to fall back upon direct sensation, to limit one's aspirations after knowledge to that!"

Direct sensation, then, the 'here and now' of existence, was all-important to Pater. Live in the present, he constantly admonishes his readers in *Marius the Epicurean*, live in the present with senses alert to every great impression of reality. For our lives, he says, are but a moment

in the perpetual flux of things around us. Therefore, it behooves us all to make the most of that short moment—to crowd as many sensations as possible into that given time.

While Pater did not realize it himself, these very ideas—ideas which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter—make his essentially epicurean and aesthetic philosophy also metaphysical. Although Pater would have staunchly declared that he had renounced metaphysics entirely, these ideas nevertheless formulate a practical metaphysical epicureanism. Pater's metaphysics, which he established in spite of himself, is a material metaphysics with its reliance upon the senses and the 'here and now'. It is a metaphysics influenced tremendously by modern scientific thought and its attendant relative spirit. With such a metaphysics it is not surprising that Pater misunderstood the old Greek philosopher Plato. As is so evident in his Plato and Platonism, Pater, being a materialist, could not comprehend Plato's principle concept—the world of Ideas. Plato's world of Ideas, of which he thought this world was only an imperfect copy, was too abstract and visionary for one such as Pater to understand. Unlike Plato, Pater believe that the only reality was this world which one can actually see.

Thus, in spite of himself, in spite of his repudiation and condemnation of metaphysics, Pater did set up a practical metaphysical epicureanism. This conclusion finds support in the occasional statements in favor of metaphysics discovered in Pater's books. These statements are, of course,

1 Ibid., p. 91.
2 Walter Pater, Appreciations, p. 66.
contradictory to those repudiating metaphysics, which were dealt with at the beginning of this chapter.

An example of Pater's favorable criticism of metaphysics is the statement in Marius the Epicurean which maintains that abstract metaphysical ideas have a true significance when these ideas are translated in terms of sentiment. "The metaphysical principle, in itself, as it were, without hands or feet, becomes impressive, fascinating, of effect, when translated into a precept as to how it were best to feel and act; in other words, under its sentimental or ethical equivalent."

A similar idea is expressed in Plato and Platonism. Pater says here that the metaphysical formulae always have their practical equivalents. To prove this point, he gives several illustrations. Among them is that which shows the Cynic or Stoic ideal of static calm to be in truth the moral or practical equivalent of the Parmenidean doctrine of the One. Then, he goes on to say that what often seems utterly unreasonable as a metaphysics for the understanding is found to be realisable enough as one of many phases of our so pliant human feeling.

Pater goes so far as to admit in his essay "Sebastian van Storck" that there are people in whom the study of metaphysical theory has aroused a keener sense of worth for the infinite interests which are ever within us and without. When this happens, Pater says, the metaphysical urge has joined forces with the poetical or artistic sympathy. One wonders if Pater was wholly unaware that this was just what had happened to himself.

1 Walter Pater, Marius the Epicurean, p. 95.
3 Walter Pater, Imaginary Portraits, p. 124.
In him, indeed, the metaphysical had joined with the artistic, and the logical result was the enhanced regard for sensation and experience.

To go back to Plato and Platonism, one finds here another testimony to the value of metaphysics. Pater believes that the search after abstract truths may promote in some people fine intellectual qualities. These, in turn, may be valuable to those who benefit by the spectacle of an enthusiasm which is not meant for them.

Then, in Marius the Epicurean, Pater says that metaphysical speculation may be esteemed in proportion as it rids the mind of half-realisable and visionary suppositions.

Pater also expresses the belief in Marius that, in the reception of metaphysical formulae, "the pre-existent qualities of that soil of human nature into which they fall" determine the actual ulterior result. That is, if the formulae find that they have fallen upon favourable ground, they immediately take root and flourish. If, however, they fall upon ground unfavourable to them, they soon grow weak and die. After all, as has been said before, it is the individual will which counts.

Lastly, Pater contradicts himself most noticeably by defending the process of generalisation which he connects so closely with the interest in abstract theory, and against which, as I have pointed out before, he sometimes speaks so bitterly. In Plato and Platonism he contends that people are becoming increasingly attracted to and interested in the concrete. Generalisation and the process of reduction to class and generic

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3 Ibid., p. 96.
type, Pater says, have played a part in this growing concern for the concrete.

He illustrates this statement by speaking of a common seashell, as seen first by the layman and then by the naturalist. When the layman finds a shell upon the shore, it is to him merely a dainty and destructible toy. But, says Pater, let the layman become a schoolboy about it, so to speak, and study both that particular shell and all shells in general. He will be forced by such study to relinquish his idea that the shell is but a toy. He must learn about the shell in all its phases, about its relationship to other shells and, perforce, about the general laws of life. So comprehensive will be his study that for a time, at least, it will seem to him as though he were sacrificing the precious concrete, the real and vital product of nature, to a dry and abstract product of the mind. But, when he has finished his schooling and, walking again upon the beach, finds another shell, he will realise that his general study has, in truth, enhanced the concrete. He will find that the particular is more interesting and valuable to him because, with his broad knowledge, he is now better able to determine its worth.

Thus, Pater says, by comparing an object with its perfect type and by contrasting it with the world around, the object becomes more meaningful. He reiterates again the enriching power of generalisation, maintaining that it makes for understanding and so for retention by the memory. Then, he ends the discussion with these words—words also appropriate for the ending of this chapter: "So much by way of apology for general ideas—abstruse, or intangible, or dry and seedy and wooden, as we may sometimes think them."

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2 Ibid., p. 141.
3 Ibid., p. 142.
CHAPTER III

THE AESTHETICISM AND EPICUREANISM OF PATER
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The dominating interest of Pater's life, as perhaps the first two chapters of this thesis have already indicated, was the pursuit of the beautiful and of the pleasant. The former classes him primarily with the aesthetes; the latter primarily with the Epicureans. His Epicureanism was not, however, identical with that of the founder of the school, the Greek Epicurus. Pater's Epicureanism drew from the teachings of both Aristippus of Cyrene and Epicurus of Athens, as well as having qualities peculiar to itself. But neither comparison nor synthesis is the purpose of this chapter. Our interest in the aesthetic and Epicurean ideas of Pater is, rather, for their own intrinsic values. It is with this in mind that a more or less detailed discussion of the outstanding principles of these two forces, which influenced Pater's life so strongly, will be carried on. Their importance cannot be overemphasised, for it is just here that the centre of his philosophy lies.

First of all, in discussing the aesthetic and Epicurean views of Walter Pater, it is important to determine when he became interested in beauty as such and exactly what his ideas were concerning it. Pater tells us himself through the autobiographical material inserted into the essay "The Child in the House" that he was as a boy strangely sensitive to beautiful objects and sights. One finds throughout "The Child in the House" numberless illustrations of this early love for the beautiful. One of the most outstanding of these illustrations is that which
describes Florian Deleal's reaction to the sight of some red hawthorne flowers:

Also, then, for the first time, he seemed to experience a passionateness in his relation to fair outward objects, an inexplicable excitement in their presence, which disturbed him, and from which he half longed to be free. A touch of regret or desire mingled all night with the remembered presence of the red flowers, and their perfume in the darkness about him; and the longing for some undivined, entire possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him, growing ever clearer, with the coming of the gracious summer guise of fields and trees and persons in each succeeding year, of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him.²

It is in this same essay that Pater declares that a child's sense of beauty is independent of any "choiceness or special fineness in the objects which present themselves to it, though this indeed comes to be the rule with most of us in later life." He also says here that in childhood the sensible things of the environment seem very insignificant. In reality, however, they have a very indelible effect, both on feeling and thought. "With what capricious attractions and associations," he says, "they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax, of our ingenuous souls, as 'with lead in the rock for ever,' giving form and feature, and as it were assigned house-room in our memory, to early experiences of feeling and thought, which abide with us ever afterwards, thus, and not otherwise."³

² Ibid., p. 150.
³ Ibid., p. 152.
This early concern of Pater for the beautiful and his youthful sensibility to it became rather submerged during his years at King's School and at Oxford. This can be explained by his overwhelming interest in religion at the former place and by his overwhelming interest in philosophy and metaphysics at the latter. But after he was definitely prohibited from entering the church and after his first trip to Italy with Mr. Shadwell, beauty became again his chief interest and it was to remain so. When he returned in 1867 from that first trip to the Continent, he definitely allied himself to the aesthetic movement begun by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite group. According to Ferris Greenslet Pater strove "by close and sympathetic study of the humanities, as the ground for the humanisation and realisation of aesthetic theory, to give to that movement great consideration and wider acceptance."

Thus, from 1867 on, Pater devoted himself almost exclusively to literature and art. He became, indeed, an aesthetic critic, setting up in due time a definite number of aesthetic principles. "It was, in fact, a practical personal application of those aesthetic principles which dominated his whole outlook upon life, upon men, and upon opinions."

Foremost among those principles of aesthetics which Pater formulated for himself was his belief that the aesthetic critic needs no abstract definition of beauty. "Pater will have none of any aesthetic

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theory which may tend to fix too stolidly the sly spirit of beauty," says Ferris Greenslet in his biography, Walter Pater. Nor could he, nor would he discuss the ultimate metaphysical theories of beauty. Because he believed that beauty was relative, Pater felt that its definition should be concrete. "To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics."

Secondly, Pater felt that it was important for the aesthetic critic to have a certain kind of temperament—"the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects". Such a temperament he believed would help the aesthetic critic "to see the object as in itself it really is"—something which he must do. And not only must the aesthetic critic see the object as it actually is, he must also know his own impression of it. In viewing all objects, antiquarian or modern, the question which it is most important that the aesthetic critic should ask himself is this: "What, precisely what, is this to me?" In emphasising this point, Pater makes manifest his belief in the subjective treatment of art. To him impersonality in art was ab-

1 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 43.
2 Ibid., p. 45.
4 Ibid., p. xii.
5 The Renaissance, p. x.
solubly impossible.

Pater also believed that the aesthetic critic should regard "all objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasureable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind". In doing this Pater says that the critic must remember that the sensuous material of each art has its own special phase or quality of beauty.

Each art, indeed, has a unique sensuous charm. That which makes each object valuable, he maintains, is the "property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure". "Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety."

Pater felt that it was the function of the aesthetic critic "to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced". When he has discovered that virtue and noted it, his end is reached.

Another belief of Pater was that in the judging and in the appreciating of an object the aesthetic critic should guard "against the

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2 The Renaissance, p. xi.
3 Ibid., p. 156.
4 Ibid., p. xi.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
confusion of mere curiosity or antiquity with beauty in art". In The
Renaissance Pater emphasises the fact that a "real, direct, aesthetic
charm" is essential to things antiquarian. "Unless it has that charm,
unless some purely artistic quality went to its original making, no
merely antiquarian effort can ever give it an aesthetic value, or make
it a proper subject of aesthetic criticism."

Pater goes on to say that in viewing antiquarian things one must
remember that he looks upon them with different eyes from those men
who first created or first appreciated them. He cites in particular,
as illustration of this point of view, the field of architecture, saying
that "in architecture, close as it is to men's lives and their
history, the visible result of time is a large factor in the realised
aesthetic value".

Pater also felt that in judging and appreciating the critic should
realise that beauty exists not merely in one form but in many. J. Gor-
don Eaker in his thesis, Walter Pater, a Study in Methods and Effects,
points out that the variousness of Pater's subjects illustrates well
his consciousness of the different kinds or degrees, of beauty. For
example, in writing of the Pleiade and of Prosper Merimee, Pater shows
us beauty used as an escape from actuality. Then, again, in his essay
on Winckelmann, Pater speaks of a much higher beauty—

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2. The Renaissance, p. 20.
3. Ibid.
5. The Renaissance, p. xii.
that takes hold of one's complete being and draws him closer to life in all its fulness. "Such a beauty, Pater discovered, was approached by Winckelmann, whose work was neither pure emotion nor pure intellect, but whose appreciation of art came from an enthusiasm which depended to a large degree on bodily temperament, re-enforcing 'the purer emotions of the intellect with an almost physical excitement'.'

It was in Winckelmann and the type of beauty which he stood for that Pater saw a picture of himself. When he discovered Winckelmann, he felt that he had at last "found one who could devote himself to passionate contemplation of beauty, without any taint or grossness of sense: who was penetrated by fiery emotion, but without any dalliance with feminine sentiment". He saw in him "his own identical self—an impassioned, flashing soul who flung off without hesitation anything and everything that seemed likely to interfere with his one great aim in life—'to attain the knowledge of beauty'!".

So, following in the steps of Winckelmann, Pater, too, came to devote his life to the pursuit of beauty. Serious and sober of intent, this man, so sensitive to even the slightest intimation of beauty, set out to discover the essential charm of things and not merely their external elements. Although he was attracted toward "precise and definite forms of beauty", it was nevertheless the remote and symbolical

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1J. Gordon Eaker, op. cit., p. 39.
2Ibid.
4Thomas Wright, op. cit., I, 232.
beauty, and not just the beauty of nature, for which he searched.

"Beauty", he says in Appreciations, "all beauty is in the long run
only fineness of truth, or what we call expression." Through this
sense of beauty Pater, who had a deep-seated realisation of the "myste-
rious inner relation of things", hoped to penetrate and to disentangle
the "bare essential motives of life".

Beauty seemed to him, indeed, to be the most important and the
most significant thing in the world. It became at times for him al-
most a religion. Mr. Wright and Mr. Benson, two of Pater's biographers,
have both stressed this last point. The former says that Pater ele-
vated "the pursuit of beauty to the rank of a religion", while the
latter gives us this statement: "Yet the beauty of which he takes
account is essentially of a religious kind; it draws the mind to the
further issue, the inner spirit."

Mingled with beauty, as he perceived it, Pater felt there was an
element of strangeness and mystery, suggesting "an inner and a deeper
principle behind, intermingled with a sadness, a melancholy that is
itself akin to beauty". In art, Pater saw this fusion of beauty and
strangeness as the romantic character of art. It was his ardent
desire to penetrate this strangeness, to trace it back to primal
emotion.

2 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 164.
3 Thomas Wright, op. cit., I, 252.
4 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 216.
5 Ibid.
6 Appreciations, p. 246.
7 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 164.
Besides sensing an inner relationship between beauty and strangeness, Pater also felt there was a vital and real connection between beauty and pain. As a child, he tells us in "The Child in the House", he became aware of this affinity. The idea did not fade with the progress of the years and throughout all his works the elements of beauty and pain are closely allied. An illustration of this is to be found in a rather long passage from his book, *Gaston de Latour*, which describes part of Gaston’s journey to France:

> It was pleasant to sleep as if in the sea's arms, amid the low murmurs, the salt odour mingled with the wild garden scents of a little inn or farm, forlorn in the wide enclosure of an ancient manor, deserted as the sea encroached—long ago, for the fig-trees in the riven walls were tough and old. Next morning he must turn his back betimes, with the freshness of the outlook still undimmed, all colours turning to white on the shell-beach, the wrecks, the children at play on it, the boat with its gay streamers dancing in the foam. Bright as the scene of his journey had been, it had had from time to time its grisly touches; a forbidden fortress with its steel-clad inmates thrust itself upon the way; the village church had been ruined too recently to count as picturesque; and at last, at the meeting point of five long causeways across a wide expanse of marshland, where the wholesome sea turned stagnant, La Rochelle itself scowled through the heavy air, the dark ramparts still rising higher around its dark townsfolk.

Again, in the same book we find this passage:

> Sorrow came along with beauty, a rival of its intricate omnipresence in life. In the sudden tremor of an aged voice, the handling of a forgotten toy, a childish drawing, in the tacit observance of a day, he became

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2 J. Gordon Eaker, op. cit., p. 27.
aware suddenly of the great stream of human tears falling always through the shadows of the world.¹

Even though, however, Pater sensed this close connection between beauty and pain, he firmly believed that beauty itself was the great anodyne for sorrow. As J. Gordon Eaker points out, Pater makes manifest this belief in the consoling power of both beauty and art by "pointing out how Coleridge and Lamb, to relieve the sorrow of their lives, turned to the pleasures of writing, and how Richard II, facing the greatest of all calamities, gave utterance to some of the finest poetry".²

The most perfect union, or relationship, of beauty and sorrow, however, Pater found in music. Music, in truth, became for him the ideally consummate art—the norm of art. All art, he says in the chapter "The School of Giorgione" of The Renaissance, constantly aspires towards the condition of music. "For while in all other kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it."

Art, he goes on to say, is constantly to become a matter of pure perception and to become independent of mere intelligence. Music

² J. Gordon Eaker, op. cit., p. 39.
³ Walter Pater, Miscellaneous Studies, p. 155.
⁴ Walter Pater, The Renaissance, p. 140.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid., p. 144.
is the highest of all arts because in it one finds the most perfect 
identification of matter and form. "In its consummate moments, the 
end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the 
subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate 
each other; and to it, therefore, to the condition of its perfect 
moments, all the arts may be supposed constantly to tend and aspire."

Pater not only believed in all arts aspiring toward the condition 
of music, but he also put this theory into practice in his writing. 
Of all his essays "The Child in the House", included in Misselaneous 
Studies, approaches "most nearly to a kind of music". In its style 
it gives us a perfect example of a kind of poetical prose. Of this 
quality of Pater's style Arthur Symons says, "In the prose of Pater, 
thought moves to music, and he seems to listen for the thought, and 
to overhear it, as the poet overhears the song in the air."

Concerning art, aside from its ideal consummation in music, Pater 
felt that it had no end but its own perfection. "The love of art 
for its own sake", he says in the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance.

1 The Renaissance, p. 144.
2 Robert Sechler, George Moore: A Disciple of Walter Pater 
3 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 79.
4 Ibid., p. 82.
5 Arthur Symons, A Study of Walter Pater (London: Charles J. 
Sawyer, 1932), p. 89.
6 Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, p. 241.
And believing this to have the most to offer, he set it before love, philosophy, and the various forms of enthusiastic activity. "Art", he held, "is the expression of the beauty which is found in the world by the imaginative vision; its purpose is the enrichment of life."

To art in all its forms, he maintained, scholars and all disinterested lovers of books would turn for a refuge from the vulgarity of the world. The purpose of art was by no means to be astonishment. Pater felt that the descriptions of violent incidents did not serve the purpose of art. The object of art is to help us to forget the crude and the violent, to lead us toward certain normal aspects of nature.

Pater earnestly believed that the informing spirit of human intelligence was to be found exclusively in art. As Robert Sechler says in his work, George Moore: A Disciple of Walter Pater, Pater thought that "through the statue, the painting, the music, the architecture of a people, the secret of the soul is revealed". To one's moments as they pass, art, he held, gives the highest quality. Therefore, he tried to interpret the common, everyday life in the spirit of art. Of life itself he tried to make an art—hardly distinguishing between the two.

2 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 45.
3 Thomas Wright, op. cit., II, p. 96.
4 Robert Sechler, op. cit., p. 70.
6 Edward Thomas, op. cit., p. 73.
In living his life in search of beauty and in the spirit of art, Pater, as has doubtless been implied, stressed the importance of the senses and sensation. The sense which seemed to him to be the most important was sight. Mr. Thomas maintains in his biography of Pater that he had no sense but vision—vision which he could adapt to "all things presented to him". Although Mr. Thomas probably exaggerated somewhat in making this statement, yet it is true, as Pater says of Marius the Epicurean, that "he had always set vision above the having, or even the doing, of anything". One wonders if Pater did not have a similar experience in his own youth to that which he assigns to Marius. When Marius was little more than a boy, he was taken ill and was forced to go to a distant temple to be cured. There, in a dream, a priest appeared to him and made certain recommendations. "The sum of them, through various forgotten intervals of argument, as might have happened in a dream, was the precept, repeated many times under slightly varied aspects, of a diligent promotion of the capacity of the eye, inasmuch as in the eye would lie for him the determining influence of life: he was one of the number of those who, in the words of a poet who came long after, must be "made perfect by the love of visible beauty."

Thus, it was chiefly with the eye, the eye aided by imagination, that Pater sought truth. "The visible", as Ferris Greenslet says, "is everywhere dominant in his pages. Beautiful objects, landscapes,

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1 Edward Thomas, _op. cit._, p. 79.
2 Walter Pater, _Marius the Epicurean_, p. 327.
3 _Ibid._, p. 25.
persons are always his primary interest.\(^1\) So important was vision and also the other senses to Pater that he felt all knowledge was limited to what we actually feel. In other words, knowledge was to him subjective. Repeatedly in Marius he admonishes one in the true Epicurean style to rely upon direct sensation, to limit one's aspiration after knowledge to that. Even thought was, according to his belief, fused with sensation. What he said of the age of Marius concerning these ideas is easily applicable to his own age:

In an age still materially so brilliant, so expert in the artistic handling of material things, with sensible capacities still in undiminished vigour, with the whole world of classic art and poetry outspread before it, and where there was more than eye or ear could well take in—how natural the determination to rely exclusively upon the phenomena of the senses, which certainly never deceive us about themselves, about which alone we can never deceive ourselves.\(^2\)

One fact especially in favour of the senses, he thought, was that they are free from the tyranny of mere theories.

As already indicated, Pater was following directly in the steps of Aristippus of Cyrene and Epicurus of Athens by stressing the all-importance of the senses. Aristippus himself stated that the senses only give us knowledge. Unlike these men, however, Pater admitted a danger in such a belief. Through the person of Marius he speaks of himself, saying, *"Some cramping, narrowing, costly preference of one*

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1 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 94.
2 Walter Pater, Marius the Epicurean, p. 97.
3 Helen H. Young, The Writings of Walter Pater, op. cit., p. 54.
4 Marius the Epicurean, p. 98.
5 Ibid., p. 100.
part of his own nature, and of the nature of things, to another, Marius seemed to have detected in himself, meantime,—in himself, as also in those old masters of Cyrenaic philosophy”. In the sacrifice of everything to sensation, Pater realised that something else was undoubtedly lost. He realised that an inner life would undoubtedly be the result.

It is also in Marius the Epicurean that Pater asks himself whether we can be sure that things are really like our feelings. He goes so far as to admit that matter may be distorted by peculiarities in the instruments of our cognition, just as imperfections on the surface of a mirror may distort the matter they seem but to represent. And here again he reiterated the fact that we by no means can know the feelings of others.

Even though Pater was aware of these disadvantages in a life dedicated to the senses and sensation, yet he persisted in living such a life himself. As he says in Marius, he demanded culture—a wide complete education. Such a culture would partially be negative in that it would recognise the true limits of man’s capacities, but for the most part positive. It would be directed primarily to the development and refinement of the receptive power, in particular the powers of emotion and sense. A similar idea is also found expressed in The Renaissance. Pater says here that the aim of our culture should be the attainment of as complete a life as possible. An intense life is not enough.

1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 138.
2 Ibid., p. 97.
3 Ibid., p. 97.
4 Ibid., p. 104.
5 The Renaissance, p. 198.
This culture or wide, complete education, Pater tells us in *Marius*, is an "aesthetic" education, occupying itself almost exclusively with the aspect of things which affects us pleasurably through sensation.

It is here in discussing his attitude toward culture that Pater expresses his idealism. He admits that the products of the imagination present to us the most perfect forms of life. The effect of this belief was toward a life of meditation rather than one of action. Perhaps he referred to his own boyhood when he spoke thus of the boy *Marius*, saying, "Already he lived much in the realm of the imagination, and became betimes, as he was to continue all through life, something of an idealist, constructing the world for himself in great measure from within, by the exercise of meditative power." Elsewhere in *Marius* Pater speaks of idealism as being constitutional with him—his inborn and constant longing for a much fairer world than that which in reality was.

Coming quite naturally out of his belief in the senses and sensation, as well as his desire for a wide, complete education, is his emphasis upon experience. Experience he deemed one of the chief points for consideration in the conduct of life. "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end", he said in his famous "Conclusion"

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1 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 104.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 18.
4 Ibid., p. 32.
5 Ibid.
to The Renaissance. What is important in the pursuit of experience
is that experience be kept free—unimpeded by prejudice of any kind.
Through experience, aided by clearness of observation and careful
analysis, Pater declared, we must make the most of our relations to
nature and to society.

The motivating force behind this stress which Pater put upon ex-
perience was Aristippus of Cyrene, and so it is here that Pater’s Epi-
cureanism is especially seen. One finds this statement in Marius the
Epicurean, which expresses Pater’s own point of view:

The persuasion that all is vanity, with this hap-
pily constituted Greek [Aristippus of Cyrene], who
had been a genuine disciple of Socrates and reflected,
presumably, something of his blitheness in the face
of the world, his happy way of taking chances, gener-
at- neither frivolity nor sourness, but induced, rather,
an impression, just serious enough, of the call upon
men’s attention of the crisis in which they find them-
-selves. It became the stimulus towards every kind of
activity, and prompted a perpetual, inextinguishable
thirst after experience.

Before discussing Pater’s ideas concerning experience at greater
length, it seems well to speak briefly here of his exact relationship
with the Cyrenaic school of thought. According to Edward Thomas, the
Cyrenaic philosophy was the only one which touched Pater closely. The
more doctrinaire philosophies of the day he esteemed as nothing more
than poetry sophisticated. The poetic or suggestive philosophies

2 Helen Young, op. cit., p. 21.
4 Edward Thomas, op. cit., p. 151.
5 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 43.
were the ones which attracted him. It is easy for us to see just why Epicureanism and its predecessor, Cyrenaicism, touched Pater most closely. In these philosophies were found those tenets of living by the senses, experience for its own sake, and the pursuit of beauty, pleasure, and happiness—all integral parts of Pater's belief. Pater did not look upon Cyrenaicism as by any means a perfect or infallible philosophy. He speaks of it in *Marius* as the philosophy characteristic of youth—a philosophy ardent and sincere, but at the same time narrow in its survey and prone to become one-sided and fanatical. When Cyrenaicism does become one-sided and fanatical, then we have the jaded Epicureanism. Realised as a motive of strenuousness and enthusiasm, however, the Cyrenaic doctrine is the expression of the eager youth who in his freshness and alertness is anxious to try out this daring theory of life. "He discovers a great new poem every spring, with a hundred delightful things he too has felt, but which have never been expressed, or at least never so truly, before."

The doctrine of experience for experience's sake, which was held alike by Cyrenaics, Epicureans, and Pater, finds expression most completely in *The Renaissance* and in *Marius the Epicurean*. In the former book Pater says that experience at first seems to bury us under a deluge of external objects. By reflection, however, these objects can be dissipated and the result is that each object becomes in the mind

2 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 133.
of the observer a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture. Then
Pater goes on to speak of the subjectivity of knowledge. "Every one
of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isola-
tion, each mind keeping as solitary prisoner its own dream of a world."

In discussing experience in detail, Pater stresses especially its
characteristics of change and instability—the perpetual flux of ex-
perience. According to him, all is moving; nothing is durable. He
says that our life has a flame-like quality in that each moment forces
are both occurring and parting on their way. Pater was not the first
man to express this belief. Back in early Greek times a certain philoso-
pher called Heraclitus had originated this theory. It was he whom
Pater followed. The primary appeal which the old Greek philosopher
made, Pater tells us in Marius, was from confused to unconfused sensa-
tion.

Pater says in the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance that the sense
of the awful brevity of our experience and of its great splendour
leaves us no time to make theories about what we see and touch. No
theory, idea, or system interested Pater which required him to sacri-
ifice any part of this precious experience. What Pater bids us all
do is to test constantly new opinions and to court new impressions.

1 The Renaissance, p. 248.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 247.
4 Marius the Epicurean, p. 91.
5 The Renaissance, p. 251.
6 Ibid., p. 250.
He would have us grasp at any exquisite passion, at any stirring of the senses, or at any "contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment". "Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening."

Believing as he did in the constant flux of things, Pater laid great emphasis upon the present moment—the here and now of existence. The present moment, he reiterates in *Marius*, alone really is. Therefore, one should exclude regret and desire, yielding oneself, instead, to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind. As he says:

Given, that we are never to get beyond the walls of the closely shut cell of one's own personality; that the ideas we are somehow impelled to form of an outer world, and of other minds akin to our own, are, it may be, but a day-dream, and the thought of any world beyond, a day-dream perhaps idler still: then, he, at least, in whom those fleeting impressions—faces, voices, material sunshine—were very real and imperious, might well set himself to the consideration, how such actual moments as they passed might be made to yield their utmost, by the most dextrous training of capacity.

To be perfect in regard to what is here and now was something for which to work.

While speaking of the reality of the present only, Pater expresses his belief in the shortness of life, calling it an interval in the

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1 *The Renaissance*, p. 250.
3 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 98.
passage of time. The wisest, he says in the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, spend that interval in art and song. We must expand that interval, filling it with as many pulsations as possible.

To get those pulsations Pater believes that grand passions are needed—passions which will give us a quickened sense of life. Especially important in this respect is the poetic passion, the desire for beauty, the love of art for art's sake. To give only the highest quality to the passing moments and simply for those moments' sake is the spirit in which art comes to all of us. Yes, Pater says, we must train our emotional nature to seek out grand passions. "To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life."

It was in the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance that Pater made that famous, much-quoted statement which I have just given. One can well imagine the consternation which such a doctrine created when it first came to the notice of the reading public. The first edition of The Renaissance brought on a storm of comment—some of it favourable, but the greater part of a disparaging nature. Because Pater advocated the pursuit of beauty in the spirit of great passions he was termed both an aesthete and a hedonist. Some even accused him of creating

1 The Renaissance, p. 252.  
2 Ibid.  
3 Ibid.  
4 Ibid., p. 250.
the disease of Aestheticism. There was danger, to be sure, in such a doctrine, perhaps not for Pater who, as we shall see in the chapter on his ethics, had will-power enough to exercise moderation, but surely for those who were less strong-minded. How easy it would be for men of the latter type to indulge themselves in the grosser and more sensuous pleasures!

No one was more surprised or more hurt than Pater at the reception of his Renaissance. The fact that he withdrew the "Conclusion" from the second edition of the book is proof enough that he did not want the misunderstanding regarding his creed to spread. When he published Marius the Epicurean some years later, he expressed the same general ideas, only they were softened and less startling. While in The Renaissance he seemed to make pleasure the end of life, in Marius he stressed fullness of life as the end. It is also in Marius that he comes out strongly against such inclusive terms as hedonism. "Words like 'hedonism'", he says, "terms of large and vague comprehension—above all when used for a purpose avowedly controversial, have ever been the worst examples of what are called 'question-begging terms'."

As an example, he shows how the term hedonism may include the diverse pleasures of wine and love, art and science, religious enthusiasm and political enterprise, as well as "that taste or curiosity which satisfied itself with long days of serious study".

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1 Cuthbert Wright, "Out of Harm's Way" (Some Notes on the Esthetic Movement of the Nineties), The Bookman, LXX (November, 1929), 256.
2 Marius the Epicurean, p. 106.
3 Ibid., p. 107.
Thus, in this rather long discussion I have quite thoroughly covered those philosophic ideas of Pater which may be classed under aestheticism and Epicureanism. I have seen how he searched for beauty in the spirit of an aesthetic critic, how he desired to live mainly through the senses and in the present, and how he wanted experience of all kinds and the most pleasurable, perfect life possible. That his philosophy was not to him a philosophy of hedonism, I have also seen. In closing the chapter it seems appropriate to quote from Pater himself—words which were written of Leonardo da Vinci, but which are applicable to the author:

Out of the secret places of a unique temperament he brought strange blossoms and fruits hitherto unknown; and for him, the novel impression conveyed, the exquisite effect woven, counted as an end in itself—a perfect end.¹

¹ The Renaissance, p. 121.
CHAPTER IV

THE ETHICS OF PATER
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The ethical beliefs of Walter Pater are an integral part of his aestheticism. If one went to Pater's books in hope of finding a separate chapter, or even part of a chapter, devoted exclusively to ethics, he would fail in his search. For nowhere in his books does Pater treat ethics as a separate problem. His ethical beliefs are, rather, implied in his aesthetic beliefs. Therefore, it takes careful scrutiny and an unfailing patience to find these beliefs at all.

That tenet of Pater which ranks foremost in importance in his ethics is his belief in perfection. Such a belief establishes him as a perfectionist and frees him from the charges of those who maintain that he is an aesthete and nothing more. Yes, those who maintain that Pater is merely an aesthete will have to admit, when faced by his belief in perfection, that they have misunderstood Pater and have drawn wrong implications from his work.

It is in Marius the Epicurean and through the person of Marius that Pater states this doctrine of perfection. He gives people no chance here to accuse him of making pleasure the end of life, as he did in The Renaissance. Instead, he repeatedly says that completeness of life, fulness of life, is the end to be attained. As applied to

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1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 100.
Pater's aesthetic tenets of living by the senses, this desire for perfection meant living a life of various, yet select, sensations. It meant, also, a complete and entire development of man's entire organism. As Pater said himself in 1891, "The true Epicureanism seeks the harmonious development of the whole being. To be bent on losing the moral sense...is to lose or lower organism, to become less complex, to sink in the scale of being". Through such a harmonious development Pater felt it would be possible to live in the present in such a way that existence would become like a well-executed piece of music. That everyone has this desire for harmonious development and for a perfect, full life, Pater felt there was no doubt. To him, such a desire was universal.

I think we would all agree with Pater that everyone—or at least the majority of people—earnestly desires to lead the best and most perfect life possible. But is it as easy to do as Pater apparently thinks? Alas, most of us must sadly admit that it is not. When reading Pater, it would seem the easiest thing in the world to reach that perfection and harmony of which he speaks. But, when we turn from him and face things as they are, we find quite a different situation. We find that most of us are lop-sided, so to speak, and thus cannot realise a complete, harmonious development of all sides of our nature. We find also that for most of us the cares and sorrows of the world are too

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1 Anna K. Tuell, "Introduction", Marius the Epicurean by Walter Pater, p. xiii.
2 Marius the Epicurean, p. 105.
3 Ibid., p. 69.
great. They press upon us and impede our approach to perfection. Pater, living secluded and sheltered for the greater part of his life at Oxford, probably did not realise how hard life for the majority of people really is. His chance for reaching the perfection of which he speaks was better than it is for most of us.

In *Marius the Epicurean*, however, Pater does admit a certain amount of difficulty in the struggle for the attainment of determined ends, in the struggle for perfection. He says that the ends, while desirable and real, are yet distant and vague. Furthermore, the path between the means and ends is dim and uncertain. Even so, he declares, we can make sure that the means have something of both finality and perfection about them. They should "themselves partake, in a measure of the more excellent nature of ends—that the means should justify the end". Although the ends may never be attained, still the means can be made as nearly perfect as possible.

Too many people, Pater maintains in *Appreciations*, approach the ends which they have established for themselves—even great ends—with sad countenances and hurried, ignoble gait. So intent and over-anxious are they to reach their goal that they become thin and impoverished in spirit and temper, thus lessening the amount of perfection in the world. In other words, in their anxiety they pay too little attention to the means, to their manner as they move through life.

1 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 104.
2 *Appreciations*, p. 60.
Pater also emphasised the fact that it is bad morality to say that the end justifies the means. Surely the right-minded of us would not dispute this matter with him. We would agree with Pater that doing evil in order that good may come is certainly unethical. In such a situation, he says, dark, mistaken eagerness stands against rectitude of soul and fairness.

Pater has still another idea concerning means and ends. He maintains that for most of us the conception of means and ends covers the whole of life, becoming "the exclusive type of figure under which we represent our lives to ourselves". All things are reduced to machinery by this figure. Such a figure is, as Pater says, too realistic, too like a description of men's lives as they truly are, to be a foundation for the higher ethics. Such an inclusive concern with the means and ends puts too great an emphasis upon the element of doing; not enough upon the element of being. And, after all, it is the latter which is most important. Pater's own life is exemplary of this element of being about which he speaks. He certainly did not become overwhelmed to the exclusion of all else by doing. Few men have probably led such an uneventful life as did this man of the nineteenth century. Yes, we say, in action his life was uneventful; but yet how active and productive was the mental life of Pater!

In discussing his desire for perfection and, in connection with

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1 Appreciations, p. 60.
2 Ibid., p. 61.
3 Ibid.
this, the means and ends of life, Pater sets forth some very explicit precepts. The most important of these precepts is the one which stresses moderation and temperance. Those books in which Pater states most emphatically his theory of moderation in all things are Marius the Epicurean and Gaston de Latour. The reason for this is quite easy to see. Both Marius, published in 1885, and Gaston, the first five chapters printed in 1888, came after The Renaissance. As has been said before, Pater's "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, in which he set forth the major tenets of his philosophy, had been misconstrued by the majority of his readers. He was, therefore, in Marius and in Gaston, defending and expanding those previously expressed beliefs. It was, I think, quite natural for him to put particular emphasis upon moderation and restraint. He, too, no doubt realised that one of his main lines of defense lay just here.

Especially in Marius the Epicurean does Pater admonish one to exercise severe self-discipline and moderation. Only this will make the life dedicated to the senses and emotion a success. Discipline and moderation, Pater says elsewhere, are two forces in man making for virtue—discipline and moderation, aided by a good natural disposition, and, to a certain extent, the good pleasure of the heavens.

In speaking of the value of discipline, Pater also makes several references to the Platonic word asēsia—a word implying abstinence and

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2 Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, op. cit., p. 53.
strenuous self-control. "Self-restraint, a skilful economy of means, ascesis, that too has a beauty of its own."

Representative of this theory of restraint is Marius the Epicurean, Pater's ideal young man. In the life of this Roman youth, who lived at the time of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, there is apparent a definite asceticism. As Pater says of him, "It had always been his policy, through all his pursuit of 'experience', to take flight in time from any too disturbing passion, from any sort of affectation likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable". This quotation, while spoken by Pater of another, yet suggests strangely the author himself. In the actual life of Pater, as in the fictitious life of Marius, temperance, restraint, moderation, were prevalent forces. Therefore, it is not surprising to find in the life of both the real and the unreal an emphasis upon fastidious discrimination and distinction. Discriminate in regard to all things, Pater says in Marius,—discriminate, avoid jealousy, meditate much on beautiful objects, and live with a peaceful heart toward your fellows.

Pater apparently felt that one important reason for the exercising of restraint in the conduct of life was the impression for the memory. "How will it look to me, at what will I value it, this day next year?" This is a question which he puts into the mouth of Marius.

1 *Appreciations*, p. 17.
2 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 306.
Living an inner, secluded life as he did, it is not surprising that Pater did not wish to offend the inward impressions.

Besides this precept of moderation and restraint, the other tenets important in the perfectionist Pater's ethical scheme are these: his belief in chastity, his desire to maintain self-respect, his belief in a life of industry, and his determination not to add to the unhappiness of others. Concerning chastity, the lives of both Pater and Marius again illustrate this doctrine. It is in Marius the Epicurean that one finds the idea expressed that chastity of men and women is the most beautiful thing in the world. Whether Pater means by the chastity of which he speaks the abstinence from marriage, he does not make clear. I should be inclined to say that for himself he did carry his doctrine of chasteness to such extremes, especially if one is to judge by his own life of singleness and essential purity. I do not believe, however, that he advocated such extreme chastity for men in general.

The creed of self-respect is also to be found in Marius. In the chapter entitled "Animula Vagula" Pater says that even though life may be hard and our days but an interval in time we may, nevertheless, "adorn and beautify, in scrupulous self-respect, our souls, and whatever our souls touch upon". By practicing self-respect, Pater evidently felt that the inner conscience would be satisfied and that he would become more perfect in regard to what is here and now. To maintain this self-respect Pater believed that a life of industry and in-

1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 251.
2 Ibid., p. 96.
dustrious study were necessary—a life only possible through healthy body rule. And if the body was kept free from disease and corruption, it would follow naturally that the soul would also be free. How true this is! He who busies himself with constructive work and is careful about his bodily welfare will generally find that his spiritual nature is composed and sound.

According to evidence taken from *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater was determined in living such a life as has just been described to add not even the slightest quantity to the great total of men's unhappiness in the world. Make sure, he admonishes elsewhere in the book, that you make the people with whom you come in contact happier by your very presence. Pater did, indeed, practice this doctrine in his own life. Especially is it evident in his relationships with the students at Oxford. When sought out by one of them for help or criticism, Pater always found some good in the lad's word for which to praise him. Never did he send a student away discouraged and despondent. Such a quality is praiseworthy in any person, but one has the feeling that Pater carried it too far in his work of criticism. So anxious was he not to cause unhappiness, that he was neither severe nor fault-finding enough.

Pater's desire to avoid adding to the unhappiness of others implies an element of sympathy—an element which was truly an important one in his ethics. In *Marius* he speaks of sympathy in connection with

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1 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 110.
2 Ibid.
evil and sorrow—especially the great universal sorrow caused by old age and death. Both the power of evil and sorrow over one, he maintains, is felt in proportion to the moral or nervous perfection which men have reached. But regardless of whether men are affected in a greater or lesser degree by evil or sorrow, what is generally needed in the world is compassion or sympathy. We must all, according to Pater, foster and manifest a ready sympathy with visible pain. This power of sympathy in men will constitute the practical, or effective, difference between them. Upon those who have most of it the future will depend. And, in the present, those who have much of it have something to cling to among the certain dissolution of things. The element of sympathy in Pater's philosophy has been called the most fruitful of his ethical concepts, mainly because it recognises the social nature of mind and counsels the individual always to nurture pity in his soul. It seems to me that this single concept of Pater goes a long way toward making his extremely self-centred philosophy less so. It shows that while he was essentially an introvert, he was yet interested to a certain extent in his fellow men.

One notices that, in speaking of these concepts which he feels will help make a life of perfection, Pater seldom gives utterance to any statement concerning actual right and wrong. One of his few state-

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1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 301.
2 Ibid., 302.
3 Helen H. Young, The Writings of Walter Pater, p. 67.
ments pertaining to such matters is that in which he says that right and wrong are often determined by custom. Such a statement, to my mind, is only too true. So also is the idea which Pater expresses in Gaston de Latour, when he says that both custom and opinion are diverse in nature. Therefore, if custom, as well as opinion, is important in judging right and wrong, we should bear in mind this element of diversity.

Such, then, is the ethics of Walter Pater—an artistic ethics, to be sure, closely bound up with aestheticism. For most people such a system of ethical concepts would not have been positive or strict enough. It was, in fact, too personal an ethics for others to follow successfully. But for Pater such a system was sufficient. In the spirit of the noble aesthete, he had no trouble in living up to the ideas expressed in this chapter. Yes, he lived up to them well, and, because he did, no one can censure him too severely.

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1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 179.
2 Walter Pater, Gaston de Latour, p. 117.
CHAPTER V

PATER AND RELIGION
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Critics have long disagreed over the attitude of Walter Horatio Pater toward religion. Some have called him an atheist and a pragmaticist of the worst type; others have vehemently declared that he was an avowed Christian—a High Church Christian with leanings toward Roman Catholicism. Which group of critics is correct in its judgment of Pater's religious views, it is difficult to say. Each, of course, has a right to its own opinion, and, indeed, any classification of Pater's religion is a matter of pure opinion. After a careful study of Pater's works, however, as well as the works of his major commentators, I am inclined to disagree strongly with the critics of the first type. Although Pater did go through a period of the darkest skepticism, I do not think that he ever became a confirmed atheist. Even during those years of skepticism I feel that Pater cherished in his innermost soul a few vestiges of faith. If he had not, he would never have turned away from skepticism in his later years and faced toward Christianity. For I am a firm believer that Pater did acknowledge Christianity during the last part of his life. It is this point which I hope to make clear in the course of this chapter.

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1 Thomas Wright, op. cit., II, 169.
2 Ibid., 204.
Like so many children, Walter Pater was as a boy extremely interested in religion. Too young to reason, he probably accepted through faith the religious teachings of his parents. As has already been pointed out in Chapter I, his favourite childhood games were religious in nature. Nothing pleased him better than to dress up as a priest, to lead a make-believe ceremony. And, even at this early age, he had a secret hope that some day he might take orders.

This early interest of Pater in religion was strengthened during his first years at King's School, Canterbury, where he went at the age of fourteen. Here, he and two other boys, Dombrain and McQueen, spent most of their spare moments reading religious books and attending the services at nearby churches. Pater desired more and more at this period of his life to make the church his profession. This desire was intensified considerably during those years at King's School by his meeting in 1854 with Keble—one of the leaders of the High Church movement. Even before Pater left King's School, however, doubt and confusion had begun to encroach upon his hitherto firm beliefs.

This doubt was to increase tremendously during the years he spent at Queen's College, Oxford, probably due in part to his introduction to philosophy and to his ardent interest in it. Pater became an avowed skeptic, earning for himself the title of "scoffer at religion".

1 Thomas Wright, op. cit., I, 21.
2 Ibid., 109.
3 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 4.
4 Edward Thomas, op. cit., p. 25.
Because of this attitude in him, the friendship with Dombrain and McQueen, which had survived the King's School days, was broken.

Although Pater and McQueen renewed their friendship later, after Pater had promised never to attack or jeer at the Christian religion, when with his friend, yet the relationship was never the same. It was completely ended when McQueen, Dombrain, and Reverend J. B. Kearney prevented his final taking of church orders by exposing his religious views to the Bishop of London. It seems strange, does it not, that Pater, an unbeliever as he was at this time, should have even desired to enter the ministry? Indeed, by 1860, it is said by some, he had completely lost his faith.

Few have spoken in defense of Pater's youthful atheistic viewpoint which is, I think, doing the man a grave injustice. We should all bear in mind that, when Pater came out so strongly against religious faith, he was little more than a boy. Then, too, the tendency to treat religion flippantly was prevalent among the thinkers of the day. Pater was undoubtedly, as youth is so apt to be, caught up in the stream of current opinion and carried along with it.

Quite naturally one finds in Pater's books frequent references to his religious skepticism and its attendant pessimism. One of the best illustrations of his pessimistic outlook on life is found in Imaginary Portraits. He says:

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1 Thomas Wright, op. cit., I, 171.
2 Ibid., 207.
3 Ibid., I, 189.
I am just returned from early Mass. I lingered long after the office was ended, watching, pondering how in the world one could help a small bird which had flown into the church but could find no way out again. I suspect it will remain there, fluttering round and round distractedly, far up under the arched roof, till it dies exhausted. I seem to have heard of a writer who likened man's life to a bird passing just once only, on some winter night, from window to window, across a cheerfully-lighted hall. The bird, taken captive by the ill-luck of a moment, re-tracing its issueless circle till it expires within the close vaulting of that great stone church:—human life may be like that bird too!

Pater speaks of the religious skepticism current at that time in "Prosper Merimee", an essay in Miscellaneous Studies, and in the "Introduction" which he wrote for the Purgatory of Dante Alighieri by Charles Lancelot Shadwell. In "Prosper Merimee" he says that the fundamental belief is gone in almost all of us. Yet, he admits, some relics of it do remain—"queries, echoes, reactions, after-thoughts". This same idea is developed in his "Introduction", when he declares in no uncertain terms that his age is not an age of faith, but is, rather, an age of religious skepticism and an age of hope. For Pater came to feel that along with skepticism went a development of religious hope or hopefulness. Indeed, it is said that it was this element of hope in skepticism which won for the skeptics the final approval of Pater. He looked with favour upon this group of skeptical thinkers mainly because they could not be sure that "the sacred story" was false.

1 Walter Pater, Imaginary Portraits, p. 15.
2 Ibid., Miscellaneous Studies, p. 4.
The great possibility for which they made allowance, Pater felt, was of the utmost importance.

This recognition by Pater of hopefulness in skepticism is, I feel, at least partial proof of his innermost desire for religious faith. Perhaps he thought of himself when he pictured Marius as yearning "in that hard world of Rome, and below its unpeopled sky, for the trace of some celestial wing across it". Pater, also, would have welcomed such a sign. He yearned for something definite and tangible to hold by amid the perpetual flux of things around him.

Through hope, then, as well as through this desire for something definite to hold by, was Pater drawn, I believe, toward Christianity during his later years. After his youthful enthusiasm for skepticism in the extreme had become tempered and modified, he was led to feel that there was in religion a deep and tranquillising force. The motivating power behind this recognition of a deep and tranquillising force in religion was Pater's love of ritual. Yes, it was ritual with all its ceremony which gradually drew him again toward the church. Even as a child he loved it. Probably he had his own childhood in mind, when he wrote of the young Florian Deleal, saying:

He began to love, for their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belongs to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen, and holy vessels, and fonts of pure water; and its hieratic purity and simplicity became the type of something he desired always to have about him in actual life.

1 Helen H. Young, op. cit., p. 128.
2 Marius the Epicurean, p. 237.
3 Ibid., p. 109.
4 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 201.
5 Miscellaneous Studies, p. 166.
When he became a man, wracked by skepticism as he was, Pater spent some of his happiest hours in sacred places, drawn there by this love of ritual. One of his favourite retreats from the confusion of everyday life was St. Austin's Priory in Walworth, which was founded by the Reverend George Nugee, a wealthy high-churchman. The services held there were most ornate and it is said that Pater was attracted to them "solely by the gorgeousness of the scene". However this may be, we do know that at St. Austin's and similar places Pater was truly happy.

He was happy because through ritual his desire for escape seemed to be satisfied, if not for always, at least for the moment. Ritual expressed and interpreted for him a certain emotion, a certain need of the human spirit—that which strives to comprehend and to understand "the shadowy figure, the mysterious will, that moves behind the world of sight and sense". Of all the ceremonial Pater loved best that of the communion service. As he tells us in *Marius*, the natural soul of worship was most satisfied by the communion ritual. And, after having experienced it once, there remained a longing memory, a persistent desire, to know all this again.

An explanation of this great appeal of the communion service for Pater, as well as all other ritual, is not hard to find. In the light of his chosen aesthetic and Epicurean philosophy, it seems the most

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1 Thomas Wright, *op. cit.*., II, 37.
2 A. C. Benson, *op. cit.*., p. 216.
3 *Marius the Epicurean*, p. 272.
natural thing in the world that the ritualistic side of religion should have pleased him. For in his aestheticism he stressed in particular the senses and sensation. And it was to the senses, and especially to vision, that ritual addressed itself.

This devotion of Pater to the ritualistic side of Christianity has caused much comment among his critics. Many oppose him in this; a few take his part. One of the conscientious opposers is Algernon Cecil who goes so far as to call Pater a ritualist and nothing more. It was the form and colour in religion which Pater followed, he says, and not the reality of things. It was Catholic emotion which satisfied Pater—Catholic emotion divorced from real Catholic faith.

Paul Elmer More reiterates this same idea when he says that Pater put emotional satisfaction before religious duty. Pater emphasised, he declares, the beauty of the moment instead of the real challenge of Christian faith. Mr. More finds support for this last statement in *Marius the Epicurean*. In *Marius*, Mr. More says, there is no conversion from Epicureanism to religion, but merely another manifestation of aestheticism disguised in the phraseology of ancient faith. To write thus was, in the words of Mr. More, "to betray Christianity with a kiss".

Pater's ritualistic leanings are defended, however, by Thomas Stearns Eliot. Mr. Eliot calls ritual an integral and important part

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of religion, and maintains that because of Pater's devotion to this he cannot be accused of insincerity and aestheticism. Pater, in Mr. Eliot's eyes, was "naturally Christian but within very narrow limits".

Mr. Eliot's arguments in defense of Pater seem to me to be valid. I, too, feel that ritual is an integral and important part of religion. I, too, would admit that Pater was a Christian in the narrow sense of the term. But I would go a step farther than Mr. Eliot in asserting that ritual was for Pater a stepping-stone between skepticism and greater faith. For it seems to me that, ritual having drawn Pater again to the church, he found there in the end something more than he had at first expected. He found there the God whom he had loved as a child, the God whom he had repudiated as an Oxford youth, and the God in whom he desired so much to believe in his later years.

This latter statement, I realise, is a sweeping one. Many people will look upon it with scorn and will accuse me of misinterpretation. But, as I said in the first chapter of this thesis, the exact nature of Pater's religion is a matter of pure opinion. My opinion seems to me to be supported by the fact that Pater repeatedly speaks of the existence of a God. For instance, in Plato and Platonism, he mentions "the One which alone really is" and expresses the belief that the spirit of God moves in every form of real power, everywhere.

2 Walter Pater, Plato and Platonism, p. 38.
3 Ibid., p. 16.
This last idea is found also in Marius the Epicurean. Through the boy Marius, Pater declares that there is a living and companionable
Spirit at work in all things. As illustration of his meaning, he pictures this Spirit as an unfailing Companion walking always at one's
side. For Marius this Companion was capable of "doubling his pleasure in the roses by the way, patient of his peevishness or depression, sympathetic above all with his grateful recognition, onward from his earliest days, of the fact that he was there at all." Marius felt that such a Companion could remember the sharp pulsations which he forgot, and in both Marius and Pater this sense of companionship evoked a sense of conscience—of lively gratitude. This Divine Com-
panion behind phenomena was seen as a source of unfailing sympathy.

Mr. A. C. Benson thinks that Pater's use of the expression, "the glory of God", in the "Essay on Style" is proof enough of his belief in God. If this expression had not contained for Pater an essential truth, he says, he could never have used it. Furthermore, this single phrase is evidence of the fact that there was an "ethical base of temperament, a moral foundation of duty and obedience to the Creator and Father of men", below the aesthetic creed which Pater stressed so strongly.

In the "Essay on Pascal" Mr. Benson also finds proof of Pater's belief. He points out that Pater implies in this essay that we are not independent beings—a rather fatalistic view. Instead, the course

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1 Marius the Epicurean, p. 221.
2 Ibid., 221.
3 Ibid., 223.
of our lives is determined by something outside us and anterior to us. That Pater formulated no exact definition of his creed Mr. Benson is willing to admit. Yet, he declares that Pater was deeply penetrated and moved by the holiness and the perfection of the Christian ideal. He further declares that Pater "reposed in trembling faith on 'the bosom of his Father and his God'."

Other critics, besides Mr. Benson, have also supported the idea that Pater recognised the value of the Christian ideal and tended, as he grew older, to believe in the one God. For instance, Ferris Greenslet maintains that Pater moved from virtual paganism toward practical Christianity—from his youthful, ardent skepticism toward conservatism and trust in the Establishment. Especially in his last years, says Mr. Greenslet, was Pater's thought distinctly Christian.

This latter idea is reiterated by two other men—Edward Thomas and Thomas Wright, both admirers of Pater. In speaking of Marius, whom he feels is a version of Pater himself, Mr. Thomas expresses his belief that Pater's soul was naturally Christian and that Pater did advance toward Christianity. Mr. Wright is even more positive than Mr. Thomas, when he declares that the mature Pater must be regarded

1 A. C. Benson, op. cit., p. 172  
2 Ibid., p. 201  
3 Ferris Greenslet, op. cit., p. 125  
4 Ibid., p. 129  
5 Ibid., p. 130  
as a decided Christian.

Additional evidence of the fact that Pater was not a confirmed atheist at heart is, I think, his desire to know the truth about the future life and his tendency to believe in it. One finds in *Marius the Epicurean* this statement:

One's human nature, indeed, would fain reckon on an assured and endless future, pleasing itself with the dream of a final home, to be attained at some still remote date, yet with a conscious, delightful home-coming, at last, as depicted in many an old poetical Elysium.

If only, thought Pater, one could really know, and not be ever faced with uncertainty. Even the monk, however, who had renounced all worldliness in the hope of a greater future happiness was not sure of anything. Perhaps, after all, the thoughts of another world beyond were but a lovely but fantastic daydream.

Nevertheless, faced by uncertainty as he was, Pater persisted in his preoccupation with the future life of the soul. He realised that there was a great possibility, and he saw in that possibility at least a "faint hope". Such a hope fostered a sense of eagerness and a desire to be prepared for fuller revelation some day.

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3. Ibid., p. 186.
4. Ibid., p. 103.
Besides expressing a belief in God and a hope for future life, Pater admitted that certain benefits could be obtained from religion. First, there is the idea expressed in "Robert Elsmere", an essay in *Essays from the Guardian*, that religion of any type enlarges one's horizons. Then, in *Gaston de Latour*, he speaks of the power of religious faith, "itself so beautiful a thing", to alleviate sorrows and to enhance the beauty of the world.

Furthermore, Pater says in *Marius the Epicurean*, Christianity fosters hope and inspires chastity. The hopefulness of Christianity is typified in *Marius* by Cornelius Fronto. Ardently devoted to the ideals of the Christian faith, this upright Italian youth introduced a new element into Marius's life. His very presence radiated hope. Even the common, everyday objects held for Marius a new meaning, a new interest, when Cornelius was there to share them with him. It seemed to Marius as if his bodily eyes were somehow mysteriously renewed and strengthened. As for chastity, Pater dismisses it with these words:

Chastity, in turn, realised in the whole scope of its conditions, fortified that rehabilitation of peaceful labour, after the mind, the pattern, of the workman of Galilee, which was another of the natural instincts of the catholic church, as being indeed the long-desired initiator of a religion of cheerfulness, as a true lover of the industry—so to term it—the labour, the creation, of God.

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4 Ibid., p. 254.
Lastly, before ending this discussion of Pater's religious views, several other pertinent beliefs of the man should be mentioned. Foremost is the idea that the religion of each individual is modified by whatever modifies his life. Religions brighten under a bright sky, says Pater; they become liberal when the liberal spirit is abroad. And, when this liberal spirit changes to one of bigotry and narrowness, religions in turn reflect the nature of the change.

Pater also maintains that a universal pagan sentiment forms the broad foundation of all religions—a paganism even older than the Greek religion. As illustration of what he means by such a sentiment, Pater names the gods which men create in their own images, the general fear of death and the desire to live always here on earth, and the use of charms and talismans. True "religious progress", he says, "like all purely spiritual progress, is confined to a few".

In closing this chapter I think it would be safe to say that Walter Pater was one of those few who do make religious progress. As a lad, he was an ardent believer and lover of things churchly. As a young man, he went through various phases of disbelief. Finally, in his later years he turned again toward the church, finding it at the last a place of refuge from the continuous and rapid flux of things, a place where he could be truly happy. From belief, to disbelief, and back again toward belief! It is that last step which classes Pater among those who progress.

1 Walter Pater, The Renaissance, op. cit., p. 211.
2 Ibid., p. 212.
3 Ibid.
CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

From my study of these four phases of Pater's philosophy—his metaphysics, his aestheticism and Epicureanism, his ethics, and his religion—I feel that I have arrived at some very definite conclusions. First of all, in regard to metaphysics, I have shown that Pater did have a metaphysical philosophy in spite of himself. Although he repudiated his youthful interest in metaphysical speculation in favour of aestheticism and the artistic way of life, he nevertheless had a practical metaphysical Epicureanism. His metaphysics was essentially materialistic with its stress upon direct experience and sensation. Live in the 'here and now', said Pater, live in the present, with senses alert to every fleeting impression.

Secondly, in the chapter on aestheticism and Epicureanism, I have concluded that aesthetics formed the nucleus of Pater's philosophy. I have proved this by emphasising the fact that beauty was for Pater the most important force in life. It was the concern for beauty, the pursuit of beauty, which he placed before all else. In his search for the beautiful, however, it was not abstract beauty which interested him, but rather beauty through sensation and the concrete. Significant in his quest for beauty in the concrete were the senses, sensation, and experience, all of which had been stressed by the Epicureans.
In the third place, I have proved in the chapter on ethics that Pater did have an ethical philosophy. His ethical ideas are, in truth, an integral part of his aestheticism. That idea which ranks foremost in his ethics is his desire for perfection—an idea which establishes Pater as a perfectionist. Important in attaining perfection, Pater tells us, are moderation and restraint, chastity, self-respect, the desire not to add to the unhappiness of others, and sympathy. Pater himself, it is my conclusion at the end of the chapter, lived up to these ethical ideals, and, for this reason alone, he cannot be censured too severely.

Lastly, I maintain in the chapter on religion that Pater did have belief. In spite of his youthful skepticism, I feel that he found belief again in his later years. Having been drawn back to the church, after years of severance from it, by his love of ritual, he found there, I am certain, at least some of the faith which he had lost.
SUMMARY
The first chapter of my thesis, "The Life of Walter Pater", has comparatively little to do with his philosophy. It is in the main a chronological tabulation of the most important events of his life, followed by a list of his books. I speak, first of all, about his ancestry, his childhood, and his schooldays at King's School, Canterbury. Then come a few paragraphs dealing with Pater as a student at Oxford—his undergraduate study at Queen's College and his graduate work at Brasenose. The most important part of the chapter deals with Pater as a permanent Fellow at Brasenose, with his first trip to Italy, which he made the year following his permanent appointment, and with the years which he spent in London. I conclude the chapter with a brief account of Pater's sudden death and with a list of his books in order of publication. The purpose of the chapter is to give the readers of this thesis some idea of the man whose philosophy is being discussed.

In the first paragraph of my second chapter, "The Metaphysics of Pater", I set up the hypothesis that Pater does have a metaphysical philosophy in spite of his repudiation of metaphysics. Then, I proceed to prove that my hypothesis is a correct one.

First of all, I speak of Pater's early interest in metaphysics at Queen's College, Oxford—an interest intensified by his ardent concern for philosophy. Following this, there is a section describing
Pater's growing discontent with metaphysics and his final repudiation of it. Pater's condemnation of metaphysics is illustrated by the citation of various statements of repudiation included in his writings. For instance, there is the passage in *Marius the Epicurean* in which Pater declares that men's minds are wearied and oppressed by metaphysical speculation. I then go on to show that Pater was influenced in his repudiation of metaphysics by the ancient philosopher, Aristippus of Cyrene.

As further illustration of Pater's attitude toward the abstract, I discuss Pater's ideas concerning Beauty. It was not abstract Beauty which interested him, but, rather, Beauty in the concrete—the Beauty we can see and feel. To show what will happen to the person who disregards the concrete in favour of the abstract, I characterise one of Pater's characters, Sebastian van Storck.

Thereupon I show that Pater advocated interest in direct experience and sensation instead of interest in metaphysics. These ideas, I maintain, make Pater's essentially aesthetic and Epicurean philosophy also metaphysical; they formulate for him a practical metaphysical Epicureanism. They establish for Pater a materialistic metaphysics.

For further proof that Pater did have a metaphysics I point out that there are numerous statements favourable to metaphysics throughout Pater's books. These favourable statements, which are contradictory to those repudiative statements cited previously, are then discussed.

The third chapter of my thesis, "The Aestheticism and Epicureanism of Pater", is both the longest and the most important. For, as I point out in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, aestheticism
and Epicureanism form the centre of Pater's philosophy. My first step in discussing Pater's aesthetic and Epicurean ideas is to discover his childhood attitude toward beauty. I find that he was extremely sensitive to beauty as a child, but that this sensitivity became submerged during his years at King's School, Canterbury, and at Queen's College, Oxford.

Next, however, I point out that beauty became Pater's primary interest, after he was prohibited from taking church orders and after his first trip to Italy. As a result, Pater became an aesthetic critic and set up definite aesthetic principles—such as the one which states that the aesthetic critic must have a certain kind of temperament. Several paragraphs are then devoted to a discussion of these principles.

Then, after showing how Pater followed Winckelmann in his concern for the beautiful, I discuss other ideas of Pater concerning beauty. For instance, there are his beliefs in the real connection between beauty and sorrow, and of the perfect union of beauty and sorrow in music. This latter idea leads to a discussion of music and of art. According to Pater, music was the norm of art. Also, he said, art has no end but its own perfection.

After speaking of music and of art, several pages are devoted to Pater's ideas concerning the senses and sensation. To him the senses, and especially sight, were very important. Through living a life rich in sensation, Pater hoped to attain culture—a wide, complete education. He hoped to attain as perfect a life as possible.

This discussion of the senses and of culture leads naturally to
a discussion of Pater's emphasis upon experience. Particular mention is made here of Aristippus of Cyrene and of his influence upon Pater, in this connection. Noteworthy also is Pater's insistence upon the element of flux and instability in experience. The present alone, he says, really is. Because of the continuous and rapid flux of things and because of the shortness of life, we should crowd as many pulsations as possible into the given time. We should cultivate grand passions.

In ending this chapter on Pater's aesthetic and Epicurean ideas, I mention the misunderstanding which arose over Pater's insistence upon grand passions and the effect of this misinterpretation upon him. The chapter is concluded with a quotation from The Renaissance.

I begin the fourth chapter of my thesis, "The Ethics of Pater", with the statement that Pater's ethics was an integral part of his aestheticism. Thereupon I proceed to prove that my introductory statement is true. First, I speak of the most important tenet in Pater's ethics—his belief in perfection. This belief establishes Pater as a perfectionist, and also implies that it was fulness of life which he set up as the end to be attained. For Pater, the attainment of this end seemed to be comparatively easy. But for the great majority of us, such is not the case.

I point out, however, that Pater does admit that there is difficulty in the struggle for perfection. He says that the ends are distant and vague, that the means are unknown and not used by many people, and that most of us concern ourselves too exclusively and consciously with the means and ends.
Next I show that in discussing his desire for perfection, and, in connection with this desire, the means and ends of life, Pater does set forth some very explicit precepts. These are: his belief in moderation and temperance, his belief in chastity, his desire to maintain self-respect, and his determination not to add to the unhappiness of others. This last idea implies in turn an element of sympathy. And, indeed, Pater felt that sympathy was very much needed in the world.

After a discussion of these precepts, one of the few statements made by Pater concerning actual right and wrong is mentioned—the statement that right and wrong are determined by custom. The concluding paragraph then follows. In this paragraph I point out that, while Pater's ethics was too personal for others to follow successfully, nevertheless he himself lived up to his principles.

The last chapter of my thesis treats "The Religion of Pater". In my introductory paragraphs I call attention to the disagreement of the critics over Pater's attitude toward religion. Then I state that any classification of Pater's religion is a matter of opinion. My opinion is that Pater was never a confirmed atheist and that in the course of his life he turned from skepticism to Christianity.

I speak then of Pater's childhood attitude toward religion, his deep interest in religion at King's School, and his repudiation of religion during his undergraduate years at Oxford. As illustration of his religious skepticism and attendant pessimism, I cite several passages from his books. In what follows, I show that Pater came to feel that there was an element of hope in skepticism—a feeling that
partially proves that he surely desired religious faith. Through this hope, as well as through his desire for something definite to hold by amid the flux of things, was Pater drawn, I contend, toward Christianity during his later years.

Next, I show the importance of ritual in winning Pater back to faith. For it was ritual which Pater loved above all else. Ritual, and especially the ritual of the communion service, seemed to satisfy his desire for escape from the actual. It is clear, as I explain, that Pater's love of ritual is accounted for by the fact that ritual appeals to the senses—the senses so much emphasised in Pater's aestheticism.

Following this, I give both adverse and favourable criticism of this devotion of Pater to the ritualistic side of Christianity. I myself join with Thomas Stearns Eliot in defending Pater. Then, I try to prove that ritual acted for Pater as a stepping-stone between skepticism and faith. In doing this, I cite Pater's frequent references to the existence of a God, as well as give the testimony of several critics; and I call attention to the fact that Pater desired to know about the future life and tended to belief in it. Lastly, I speak of the benefits which Pater felt could be gleaned from religion, of his idea that religion is modified by whatever modifies a man's life, and of his belief that a universal pagan sentiment forms the broad foundation of all religions.
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