

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer Bebel Proust  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke George  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy  
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates  
Strachwitz Bellamy Schilling Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka  
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**An Estimate of the Value and  
Influence of Works of Fiction in  
Modern Times**

Thomas Hill Green

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## PREFACE

*For a good many years I have used this essay of Green's with an advanced class in the theory of prose fiction. It has worked well. It always arouses discussion, and in doing so it has the great virtue that it imperiously leads the argument away from superficialities and centers it upon fundamentals. Its service as a stimulus to high thinking cannot easily be overestimated. For any student, and especially for one who has known only the unidea'd criticism of fiction so popular today, it is a fine thing to come in contact with a high-minded, sturdy, and uncompromising thinker such as Green is. As Green says of the hearer of tragedy, "He bears about him, for a time at least, among the rank vapors of the earth, something of the freshness and fragrance of the higher air." I trust that this reprint, by making the essay more easily accessible than it has been heretofore, will help to raise the grade of student thought and taste and criticism.*

F. N. S.

*University of Michigan  
December 1, 1910.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hill Green was born in Birkin, Yorkshire, April 7, 1836. His early education was acquired first at home under his father, the rector of Birkin, then at Rugby, where he was sent at the age of fourteen. In 1855 he entered Balliol College, Oxford, and came under the influence of Jowett, afterwards famous as Master of Balliol and translator of Plato. Though he matured early, Green was not a brilliant student. On the contrary, he appeared to be indolent and sluggish. "No man," wrote one of his fellow-students in 1862, "is driven with greater difficulty to work not to his taste.... He wrote some of the best college essays: he never sent them in on the right day, and might generally be seen on the Monday pondering over essays which every one else had sent in on the Friday night." These traits, however, as it proved later, were the index not of a vagrant mind, but of independence of thought and of preoccupation with weightier matters. To quote again from the tribute of a fellow-student: "On everything he said or wrote there was stamped the impress of [Pg 10] a forcible individuality, a mind that thought for itself, and whose thoughts had the rugged strength of an original character wherein grimness was mingled with humor, and practical shrewdness with a love for abstract speculation." In the end, his solid qualities of mind and character made so strong an impression upon the University authorities that in 1860 he was elected fellow of Balliol. At the same time he became lecturer on ancient and modern history. Though from the beginning of his student life he had been drawn to an academic career and especially to the study of philosophy, he was now for a period undecided what to make his life-work. At one time he thought of going into journalism in India. In 1864, having accepted a place with the Royal Commission on Middle Class Schools, he prepared a valuable report upon the organization of high schools and their relation to the university. Finally, however, in 1866, his indecision was brought to an end. Obtaining an appointment in that year to a position on the teaching staff of Balliol College, he settled down to the work of a tutor in philosophy. When Jowett was made Master of Balliol, Green became, under him, the responsible manager of the college, performing the manifold small duties of the position with patience, thoroughness, and tact.

In 1871 he was married to Miss Charlotte Symonds, sister of John Addington Symonds.

[Pg 11] Twice Green was candidate for a professorship; once in 1864 when he applied for the chair of moral philosophy at St. Andrews, and again in 1867 when the Waynflate professorship of moral and metaphysical philosophy fell vacant at Oxford. In both cases he was unsuccessful. It was not until 1878, by his election to the Whyte's professorship of moral philosophy, that he obtained the position and the independence he had long deserved. His enjoyment of the honor was brief. He died of blood-poisoning, after an illness of only ten days, March 26, 1882.

Green's character was compounded of a variety of elements. The shyness and reserve characteristic of many cultivated Englishmen, was accentuated in his case by a natural austerity and an absorption in serious thought. But though his temper was puritanic and inclined to moroseness, there was no sourness or cynicism in it. "If," he wrote to Miss Symonds, "I am rather a melancholy bird, given to physical fatigue and depression, yet I have never known for a moment what it was to be weary of life, as the youth of this age are fond of saying that they are. The world has always seemed very good to me." Grim though he might be outwardly, he had a keen sense of humor and a warmth of interest in his fellows that made him, for those who broke through his reserve, a charming companion. His most characteristic quality was elevation of mind. [Pg 12] In the essay that is here reprinted he speaks of "that aspiring pride which arises from the sense of walking in intellect on the necks of a subject crowd." Something of this elevation, this aloofness from the vulgar, characterized all of his utterances and gave to them at times a solemn fervency akin to that of the Hebrew prophets. This trait is finely portrayed in the following description of the tutor Grey (a thin disguise for Green) in Mrs. Ward's 'Robert Elsmere':

"In after years memory could always recall to him at will the face and figure of the speaker, the massive head, the deep eyes sunk under the brows, the midland accent, the make of limb and features which seemed to have some suggestion in them of the rude strength and simplicity of a peas-

ant ancestry; and then the nobility, the fire, the spiritual beauty flashing through it all! Here, indeed, was a man on whom his fellows might lean, a man in whom the generation of spiritual force was so strong and continuous that it overflowed of necessity into the poorer, barren lives around him, kindling and enriching."

Green's contributions to philosophy were partly constructive, partly (and perhaps mainly) critical and destructive. On the critical side, his greatest effort was his attack upon the philosophy of Hume in two masterly Introductions to an edition of Hume's 'Works,' published in 1874-5. English philosophical thinking, so Green held, [Pg 13] had stuck fast in the scepticism of Hume. Such forward movement in thought as there had been since the 18th Century, had come mainly through the writings of men like Wordsworth and Shelley—men who having seen deeply into life, had expressed themselves in imaginative, not in philosophical ways. To set the stagnant tide of speculative thinking in motion, involved a two-fold task: on one side the breaking down of the barriers erected by the sensationalist and materialist schools of the 17th and 18th centuries, and on the other side the letting in of a current of fresh ideas from some source outside of England. The first, or destructive, task Green performed with remarkable success in the two Introductions. For the new and truer ideas which were to displace the old, he naturally looked to Germany, whose methods of research were just coming into vogue at Oxford through the influence of Pattison and Jowett. And since to speculative thinkers of that time German philosophy meant the philosophy of Hegel, Green's fundamental conceptions were derived by Hegelian modes of thinking. In other words, he was a neo-Hegelian. But, as his biographer notes, he never committed himself unreservedly to the Hegelian credo. "While he regarded Hegel's system as the 'last word of philosophy,' he did not occupy himself with the exposition of it, but with the reconsideration of the elements in Kant of [Pg 14] which it was the development." That is, he was a neo-Kantian as well as a neo-Hegelian. Of his constructive thinking in these channels the most complete embodiment is his 'Prolegomena to Ethics.'

Though naturally his contributions to philosophy are first in bulk and importance, Green's writings cover a considerable range of subjects. Listed in the order of publication, they are as follows: 'The Force of Circumstances,' published in *Undergraduate Papers*, 1858; 'An Estimate of the Value and Influence of Prose Fiction,' published as a prize essay, 1862; 'The Philosophy of Aristotle' and 'Popular Philosophy in its relation to Life,' *North British Review*, Sept., 1866, and March, 1868; Introductions to 'Hume's Treatise of Human Nature' 1874-5; 'The Grading of Secondary Schools,' *Journal of Education*, May, 1877; Review of E. Caird's 'Philosophy of Kant,' *Academy*, Sept. 22, 1877; 'Mr. Spencer on the Relations of Subject and Object,' *Contemporary Review*, Dec., 1877; 'Mr. Spencer on the Independence of Matter,' *ibid.*, March, 1878; 'Mr. Lewes' Account of Experience,' *ibid.*, July, 1878; review of J. Caird's 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion,' *Academy*, July 10, 1880; 'Answer to Mr. Hodgson,' *Contemporary Review*, January, 1881; review of J. Watson's 'Kant and his English Critics,' *Academy*, September 17, 24, 1881; 'Liberal Legislation and [Pg 15] Freedom of Control,' 1881; 'The Work to be done by the New Oxford High School,' 1882; 'Prolegomena to Ethics,' 1883; 'The Witness of God' and 'Faith' (delivered in 1870 and 1877, and at the time printed for private circulation), 1884.

All of the foregoing, with the exception of the 'Prolegomena to Ethics,' are included in the 'Works' edited by R. L. Nettleship (3 Vols., 1885, 2d Ed. 1889, Longmans). The 'Works' contain, in addition, the following writings not previously published: An essay on 'The Influence of Civilization on Genius'; an essay on 'Christian Dogma'; an article on 'Mr. Lewes' Account of the Social Medium,' written for the *Contemporary Review*, but not used; four lectures or addresses on the New Testament; four lectures on 'The English Commonwealth'; a series of lectures on 'The Philosophy of Kant,' on 'Logic' and on 'The principles of Political Obligations'; a lecture on 'The Different Senses of Freedom as Applied to Will and to the Moral Progress of Man'; and a fragment on 'Immortality.'

Aside from occasional references to poetry and art in his philosophical writings, as, for example, in the opening paragraphs of the 'Prolegomena,' the essay on fiction here reprinted is Green's only venture in the field of aesthetic criticism. When we remember that it was one of his earliest pro [Pg 16] ductions, having been submitted

for the Chancellor's prize in 1862, when Green was but 26 years of age, the maturity of both style and contents seems remarkable. It is in fact a monumental piece of literary criticism, sufficient to establish the reputation of many a lesser writer. At the same time, however, there is about it an air of constraint which shows that the author was not at ease in this kind of speculation. He was fencing, so to speak, with his left hand. His mind was so absorbed in the metaphysical, ethical, and religious aspects of experience that upon the aesthetic as such he had little attention to bestow. When he approached aesthetic problems at all it was for the purpose of obtaining data which he could employ in other fields of thought. He was obviously not in sympathy with the aims of English novelists. He had no expert knowledge of the history of fiction in England, and no knowledge at all, so far as appears, of its history in other countries. Probably he misunderstood the relation, in certain particulars, of the novel to the epic. Nevertheless, his appreciation of concrete works of art was so genuine and profound, his insight so clear, his expressed judgments so candid, that any contact of his mind with art, literary or other, could not fail to be illuminating. Whatever its limitations, the essay has at least one distinguishing merit: in it a fundamental principle of criticism is applied with merciless [Pg 17] rigor to the solution of a literary problem. The products of such a method are certain to be interesting and valuable. Whether we agree with the author's conclusions or not, we can at least see whence he derives them and feel the stimulus which always comes from the spectacle of a powerful mind grappling in deadly earnest with momentous questions of art and life.



# AN ESTIMATE

## of the

### Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times

#### I. PRINCIPLES OF ART

#### A. EPIC, DRAMA, AND NOVEL

1. We commonly distinguish writings which appeal directly to the emotions from those of which the immediate object is the conveyance of knowledge, by applying to the former a term of conveniently loose meaning, "works of imagination." Of the kinds included in the wide denotation of this term there are three, between which it seems difficult at first sight to draw a definite line; which appeal to similar feelings, and excite a similar interest, in the different ages to which [Pg 20] each is appropriate. These are the epic poem, the drama, and the novel. Each purports to be, in some sort, a reflex of human life and action, as obeying certain laws and tending to a certain end. In each men are represented, not as at rest, or in contemplative isolation, but in co-operation or collision. In each there is a combination of two elements, an outer element of incident, an inner of passion and character. In view of these common features, we might be tempted at first sight to suppose the difference between the three kinds to be merely one of form, merely the difference between the vehicle of prose and the vehicle of metre. We shall find, however, on deeper inquiry, that to the true artist, who does not find his materials in the world, but creates them according to the inner laws by which the world and himself are governed, the vehicle is not more a part of his creation than the "impassioned truth" which it conveys. Here, as elsewhere, form and substance are inseparable; and the difference of form that distinguishes the novel from the other kinds of composition which it seems for the present

to have superseded, symbolises, or rather is identical with, a different potency in the art by which the substance is created. [1]

## FOOTNOTE:

[1] "Though in its most general sense the substance and matter of all fine art is the same, issuing from the common source of the human desire for expression, yet the region of fancy corresponding to each medium of utterance is molded by intercourse with that medium, and acquires an individuality which is not directly reducible to terms of any other region of aesthetic fancy. Feeling, in short, is modified in becoming communicable; and the feeling which has become communicable in music is not capable of re-translation into the feeling which has become communicable in painting. Thus the arts have no doubt in common a human and even rational content – rational in so far as the feelings which are embodied in expression, for expression's sake, arise in connection with ideas and purposes; but each of them has separately its own peculiar physical medium of expression and also a whole region of modified feeling or fancy which constitutes the material proper to be expressed in the medium and according to the laws of each particular art." – B. Bosanquet, 'The Relation of the Fine Arts to One Another' (*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*).

[Pg 21]



## B. IMITATION vs. ART

2. Mere copying is not art. The farther the artist rises above the stage of imitation, the higher is his art, the more elevating its influence on those who can enter into its spirit. If the landscape-painter does nothing more than represent nature as seen by the outward eye, the vulgar objection against looking at pictures—"I can see as fine a view as this any day"—is unquestionably valid. But if the painter is anything better than a photographer, he does far more than this. He brings nature before us, as we have seen it, perhaps, only once or twice in our lives, under the influence of some strong emotion. He does that for [Pg 22] us which we cannot do for ourselves; he reproduces those moments of spiritual exaltation in which "we feel that we are greater than we know"—moments which we can remember, and of which the mere memory may be the light of our lives, but which no act of our own will can bring back. It is not till the distinction has been appreciated between nature as it is and nature as we make it to be, between that which we see and that which "having not seen we love," that any branch of art can be reckoned in its proper value.

