

WILLIAM SOMERSET MAUGHAM:
AN ADLERIAN INTERPRETATION¹

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The life of Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) was in many ways intriguing. Maugham of the Maugham literature, the "I" of his first person narratives, the external narrator, the Maughamian character of his stories—never central, but always balancing the actions, comments, attitudes of the other characters, and always influencing the reader's participation; Maugham, the often elusive author behind the writing; and Maugham, the person, *has* always been observed with considerable interest, occasionally with contempt, often with bewilderment and puzzlement.

Reactions which have led many to describe Maugham as an *enigma*, as in the title of an anthology of critical essays in honor of Maugham's 80th birthday (14), do actually, however, indicate a lack of understanding. That is, for many Maugham had contradictory characteristics which blocked understanding. While seeming to be kind, compassionate, and courteous, he also seemed cynical, aloof, forbidding, and malicious.

Although observing both tendencies, most Maugham scholars have placed emphasis upon one in order to refute the other. For example, Richard Cordell, the leading American Maugham scholar and a friend of Maugham, expresses the positive position: "He is kindly and courteous, but never effusive. Having no illusions about man's altruisms, he expects little from people" (11, p. x). On the other hand, Noel Coward, the prominent English dramatist and acquaintance of Maugham, expresses the negative viewpoint: "His view of his fellow creatures was jaundiced . . . He believed—rather proudly, I think—that he had no illusions about people, but in fact he had one major one and that was that they were no good" (12, p. vi).

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However, to date, no in depth study has offered genuine understanding of this complex author, although there have been two brief psychological studies (8, 15). At this time, five years after Maugham's death, such an explanation is fitting and useful in order adequately to understand this man and his work.

The present paper is an attempt to shed light on the "enigma" of Maugham by examining his life and especially his work from the viewpoint of Adler's Individual Psychology. The student of literature should find this in many ways both refreshing and appropriate. Adler's subscription to the maxim, "Everything can be something else as well" (4, p. 11), illustrates much of the temper of his mind, a quality Phyllis Bottome termed, "his active skepticism and hatred of all rigidity" (9, p. 23). With this attitude, Adler further states, "The uniqueness of the individual cannot be expressed in a short formula, and general rules—even those laid down by Individual Psychology . . . should be nothing more than an aid to a preliminary illumination of a field of vision on which the single individual can be found—or missed" (4, pp. 11-12). Certainly, no short formula could explain the "uniqueness" of the artist, but general rules of human behavior could provide "an aid" to the illumination of the "uniqueness." Refreshing also is Adler's view that neither "trained (conditioned) reflexes" nor "innate psychical capacities" are sufficient for the individual confronting "ever-varying problems" (4, p. 12). No strict causality, only the "unresting, creative spirit," offers the individual this sufficiency (4, p. 12). Leaving thus the "ground of absolute certitude," Adler forms the "estimate of a human being—*his movement when confronted with the unavoidable problems of humanity*" (4, p. 13).

William Somerset Maugham was not only a writer—dramatist, novelist, short story writer, literary critic. He was also a man of the world—a medical student at London's St. Thomas's Medical School, earning the MD degree, but never practicing after receiving it, and an obstetric clerk in the out-patients department (which treated yearly some 25,000 patients, mostly from the nearby Lambeth slums) who brought sixty-three children into the world (11, pp.31, 34), a World War I British intelligence agent, a world traveler, a companion of Gerald Haxton and Alan Searle, brother of the Lord Chancellor of England, uncle of the novelist Robin Maugham, husband of Syrie Wellcombe, and father who attempted to disinherit his daughter Liza. In all these areas of participation, however,

Maugham was guided and limited by a "hesitating attitude" (5, p. 275). That is to say, the impressive list of relationships and roles in Maugham's life implies a much more active participation than is in fact the case, as we shall see.

In a study of Maugham's life much material is available, from literary scholars (e.g., 11, 14), fellow writers and friends (e.g., 12, 16, 27), and from his nephew, Robin Maugham (18, 19). But beyond this, his own major writings are autobiographical. "In one way or another I have used in my writings whatever has happened to me in the course of my life" (23, p. 5).

At the age of forty-one, he published *Of Human Bondage* (20)—which he wove "out of his misery" (19, p. 89). One of his major intentions in writing this novel was personal, therapeutic, cathartic: "The loss of my mother and then the break-up of my home, the wretchedness of my first years at school . . . which my French childhood . . . and . . . my stammering made so difficult, the delight of those . . . days in Heidelberg, . . . the irksomeness of my years at the hospital and the thrill of London; it all . . . became such a burden to me that I made up my mind that I could only regain my peace by writing it all down in the form of a novel" (23, p. 119). It offers the most complete view of Maugham's early life. Although one can never take the experiences of a fictional character to be exactly the same as the author's, Maugham informs us of the strongly autobiographical nature of the early Philip Carey, including his emotions, although many of the facts are altered (23, p. 120). When in 1945 Maugham attempted to read the first chapter of this novel as a recording for the blind, he stopped in the midst of the reading and without warning burst into tears. "I was moved, not because the chapter was particularly moving but because it recalled a pain that the passage of more than sixty years has not dispelled" (11, p. 89). "I suppose . . . the damned thing was more . . . autobiographical than I'd ever been willing to admit" (16, p. 15). But the last sections are highly fictionalized, and therefore one must turn to *The Summing Up*, *The Writer's Notebook*, and other sources for a view of the later Maugham.

At the age of sixty-four, Maugham published *The Summing Up* (23)—"a self-portrait" (28, p. viii). Feeling that "it would exasperate" him to die before writing this book and that he could afford to put it off no longer (23, p. 9), Maugham wrote "perhaps the most honest self-evaluation by any author" (13, p. 373). In this book he

reviews his life in hopes of bringing "some sort of order" and "some kind of coherence" to it (23, p. 8). "But such conclusions as I have come to have drifted about my mind like the wreckage of a foundering ship on a restless sea" (23, p. 8).

At the age of seventy-five, he published *A Writer's Notebook* (24), a record of his observations from 1892, when he was eighteen years of age, to 1944, age seventy. Maugham had also for this work a definite purpose: "By making a note of something that strikes you, you separate it from the incessant stream of impressions that crowd across the mental eye, and perhaps fix it in your memory" (24, p. 5).

EARLIEST MEMORY

The earliest memory was one of Adler's chief diagnostic aids since "the fundamental estimate of the individual and his situation is contained in it; . . . it is his subjective starting point, the beginning of the autobiography he has made up for himself" (3, p. 19). Whether this recollection is or is not the earliest in the individual's memory does not alter its usefulness in understanding the style of life: the individual's "choice . . . shows us that some interest or other must have attracted him to it . . . [and thus] gives a strong indication of his individual tendency" (4, pp. 212-213). It is this individual tendency we wish to understand in Maugham.

The earliest recollection of Philip, the protagonist in *Of Human Bondage*, is that of the security he felt with his mother. Waking Philip, the woman servant carried him to his mother's bed.

She stretched out her arms, and the child nestled by her side. He did not ask why he had been awakened. The woman kissed his eyes, and with thin small hands felt the warm body through his white flannel nightgown. She pressed him closer to herself. . . . The child . . . was very happy in the large, warm bed, with those soft arms about him. He tried to make himself smaller still as he cuddled against his mother, and he kissed her sleepily. In a moment he closed his eyes and was fast asleep (20, p. 1).

That memory frequently came again to Philip. While at King's School, he often felt that life was a dream and that he would awaken to find himself in his mother's arms.

. . . he felt the misery of his life. It seemed to his childish mind that this unhappiness must go on for ever. For no particular reason he remembered that cold morning when Emma had taken him out of bed and put him beside his mother. He had not thought of it once since it happened, but now he seemed to feel the warmth of his mother's body against his and her arms around him. Suddenly it seemed to him that his life was a dream, his mother's death, and the life at the vicarage, and those two days at school, and he would awaken in the morning and be back home . . . He fell asleep (20, p. 36).

And throughout his experiences at King's School, Philip was happy only when studying, which he found much easier than other activities, and when resting in his bed evenings. "And often there recurred to him then that queer feeling that his life was nothing but a dream, and that he would awake in the morning in his own little bed in London" (20, p. 38).

Assuming this memory to be attributable to Maugham the person, we may say that he describes here a condition of complete happiness and contentment in which he is small, quite passive, and receiving and enjoying comfort. He is *carried* by Emma, *kissed* by his mother, and *pressed closer* to her. He is very happy in the *large, warm* bed, with *soft arms about him*. His own activity is limited to making himself still more helpless, trying to make *himself still smaller, cuddling* against his mother. His only outward directed response is minimal in that *he sleepily kissed* his mother. This scene offers great solace to him and is remembered often especially when he is miserable. It is at these times also that life seems a dream and his role again is that of being passive.

It is important to realize here that we are speaking of Maugham's subjective account of a situation. We not only do not know, but are not really concerned with the exact objective life situation as it was (if that could be determined). Thus we are not disturbed when Robin Maugham states: "Accuracy . . . did not distinguish the writings of either Willie or my father when they came to describe their family" (19, p. 76). For our purposes the *felt* situation—that is, the individual's felt relation to his unique life situation—is of importance.

In Adlerian terms, the Philip-Maugham recollection would be an outstanding manifestation of "the pampered life style" (5, pp. 241-242), that is the life style of a person who wants to be pampered. From similar early recollections, Adler makes the observation:

The pampered child is revealed by the fact that the memory recalls a situation that includes the solicitous mother. . . . [And] *He looks on while other people work*. His preparation for life is that of an onlooker. He is scarcely anything more than that. If he ventures beyond that he feels that he is on the brink of a precipice and beats a retreat under the effect of the shock—fear of discovery of his worthlessness. If he is left at home with his mother, if he is allowed to look on while others work, then there does not seem to be anything wrong with him (4, p. 213).

FAMILY CONSTELLATION

With Maugham's position as the youngest in the family, his older brothers were a possible threat to his feeling of worth. According to Adler,

The youngest child has no followers but many pacemakers. He is always the baby of the family, probably the most pampered, and faces the difficulties of a pampered child. . . . Sometimes a youngest child will not admit to any single ambition, but this is because he wishes to excel in everything, be unlimited and unique. Sometimes a youngest child may suffer from extreme inferiority feelings; everyone in the environment is older, stronger, and more experienced (5, pp. 380-381).

From this viewpoint then, it is logical that Maugham would write: "I had always supposed that I should enter the law, but my three brothers, much older than I, were practising it and there did not seem room for me too" (20, p. 40).

In *Of Human Bondage*, Philip is presented as an only child, for which Maugham had artistic reasons. One obvious reason was simplicity: to focus directly on the one child, and therefore more easily and effectively show the security with his mother and the utter aloneness without her. Realizing that she had only a short time to live and not wanting her children to forget her "utterly," Maugham's mother had a photograph made of herself which "always stood on the little table" by his bed (18, p. 80). In the novel, "She could not bear to think that he [Philip] would grow up and *forget, forget her utterly*; and she had loved him so passionately, *because he was weakly and deformed*, and because he was her child" (20, p. 13, italics added).

Beyond this artistic purpose of simplicity, the only child may represent a wish of Maugham, in the same way as does Sally, the woman Philip is to marry at the end of the novel. Admitting that Sally represents a wish, Maugham writes later: "Turning my wishes into fiction . . . I drew a picture of the marriage I should have liked to make" (23, p. 121).

Of the only child Adler states: "His rival is not a brother or sister; his feelings of competition are directed against his father. An only child is pampered by his mother. She is afraid of losing him and wants to keep him under her attention. He develops a 'mother complex' . . . and wishes to push his father out of the family picture" (5, p. 381). In the novel both Maugham's elder brothers and his father (who actually died after rather than before his mother) are literally "pushed out of the family picture," that is, Philip is portrayed as an only child and his mother as his only living parent.

INFERIORITY FEELINGS

The sense of inferiority which Adler maintains all humans share initially can often be intensified by and focused on organ inferiority.

It would be a serious mistake, however, to consider that Adler sees this as a causative agent—for Adler holds organ inferiority to be only one of many factors which serve to “allure” the child “to mould his life in a certain direction”—in other words, it is seen as an “alluring, stimulating phenomenon” (6, p. 87). A child thus afflicted with an inferior organ, according to Adler, is likely to feel inadequately equipped for life’s tasks and to feel the *minus* situation “more intensely than [does] . . . the average child.” But significantly the ultimate outcome of this “depends on the creative power of the individual which expands outwardly according to no rule except that the determining goal always is success” which depends in turn upon “the individual’s own interpretation of his position” (5, p. 368). However, for children with imperfect organs or diseases the tendency is to be

overburdened, and it will be difficult [but never impossible] for them to feel that the meaning of life is contribution. Unless there is some one near them who can draw their attention away from themselves and interest them in others, they are likely to occupy themselves mainly with their own sensations. Later on, they may become discouraged by comparing themselves with those around them and it may even happen, in our present civilization, that their feelings of inferiority are stressed by pity, ridicule or avoidance of their fellows. These are all circumstances in which they may turn in upon themselves, lose hope of playing a useful part in our common life, and consider themselves personally humiliated by the world (3, pp. 14-15).

Many of these attitudes were those of Maugham during his early life, suffering, as he did, from stammering. In *Of Human Bondage*, he has Philip suffer from a clubfoot, instead, and he has him make use of this weakness as an aid in his movement from minus to plus, his movement toward the goal of perfection.

After the loss of his mother and the consequent loss of the pampering to which he was accustomed from her, as portrayed in his earliest memory, Philip suddenly found his sick condition and imperfect organ, his clubfoot, useful in his relations with others. Many examples of this inferiority and use of his weakness appear in the novel. For instance, when Philip is preparing to leave for Blackstable after the death of his mother, he hears Miss Watkin and her sister talking to friends in the dining room. Knowing that he will be pitied, the nine-year-old boy (Maugham was ten at this point) went in. “There was a sudden hush . . . and Philip limped in. ‘My poor child,’ said Miss Watkin opening her arms. She began to cry. . . . She could not speak.” After leaving the room, he waited on the landing to hear their conversation. “Poor little boy, it’s dreadful to think of

him quite alone in the world. I see he limps.' 'Yes, he's got a club-foot. It was such a grief to his mother' " (20, p. 4).

When he is taken by his uncle, Rev. Carey, to King's School to begin his formal education, Philip asks about the headmaster: " 'What's Mr. Watson like?' ' . . . You'll see for yourself.' There was a . . . pause. Mr. Carey wondered why the headmaster did not come. Presently Philip made an effort and spoke again. 'Tell him I've got a club-foot' " (20, p. 41). Philip again reasoned that if he knew of the clubfoot the headmaster would show some special sympathy for him.

At first his deformity only allowed him to feel painfully conspicuous, inadequate, to feel his unique minus situation intensely. But such feelings were increased by the ridicule of his schoolfellows. For instance, while playing a running game, Philip found "his limp gave him no chance."

Then one of the boys had the brilliant idea of imitating Philip's clumsy run. Other boys saw it and began to laugh; then they all copied the first; and they ran round Philip, limping grotesquely, screaming in their treble voices with shrill laughter. . . . One of them tripped Philip up and he fell, heavily as he always fell, and cut his knee. . . . His heart beat so that he could hardly breathe, and he was more frightened than he had ever been in his life. . . . the boys ran round him, mimicking and laughing . . . He was using all his strength to prevent himself from crying (20, pp. 46-47).

Maugham recalls an experience of his own of similar ridicule: "I was for long uncertain about the pronunciation of English words and I have never forgotten the roar of laughter that abashed me when in my preparatory school I read out the phrase 'unstable as water' as though unstable rhymed with Dunstable" (23, p. 16).

To return to Philip, at night when they went to bed, a boy named Singer with the help of his fellows, forced Philip to show his deformed foot to them (20, pp. 48-49). At another time when Singer and Philip were caught playing a forbidden game, Philip did receive special treatment because of his clubfoot. The headmaster swished Singer, but turning to Philip, said, "I can't hit a cripple" (20, pp. 51-52). The cruelty of his schoolfellow Singer continued throughout the two years in which they were associated.

Once or twice, driven beyond endurance, he [Philip] hit and kicked the bigger boy, but Singer was so much stronger that Philip was helpless, and he was always forced after more or less torture to beg his pardon. It was that which rankled Philip: he could not bear the humiliation of apologies, which were wrung from him by pain greater than he could bear (20, p. 53).

However, Philip found his sickly condition, his clubfoot, and his unfortunate family background also of some use in his relations

to others, giving him power over them. For example, once a boy called Luard was playing with Philip's ebony pen-holder. He was warned that he would break it, and almost at that moment he did.

"Oh, I say, I'm awfully sorry." The tears rolled down Philip's cheeks, but he did not answer. "I say, what's the matter?" said Luard, with surprise. "I'll get you another one exactly the same." "It's not about the pen-holder I care," said Philip, in a trembling voice, "only it was given me by my mother, just before she died." "I say, I'm awfully sorry, Carey." "It doesn't matter. It wasn't your fault." Philip took the two pieces of the pen-holder and looked at them. He tried to restrain his sobs. He felt utterly miserable. And yet he could not tell why, for he knew quite well that he had bought the pen-holder during his last holidays at Blackstable for one and twopence (20, p. 55).

STYLE OF LIFE

In this connection Philip recalls a previous experience in which his weakness (in that case both the loss of his mother and his deformity) was used for a similar purpose—to create misery, and thus to gain a sense of power over others. And that Philip was not aware of the "why" of his behavior is also evident in this experience:

He did not know in the least what had made him invent that pathetic story, but he was quite unhappy as though it had been true . . . He could not understand why he should have been so genuinely affected by the story he was making up. The tears that flowed down his grubby cheeks were real tears. Then by some accident of association there occurred to him that scene when Emma had told him of his mother's death, and, though he could not speak for crying, he had insisted on going in to say good-bye to the Misses Watkin so that they might see his grief and pity him (20, pp. 55-56).

It should be added that although Philip is portrayed as unaware of the logic of his behavior, Maugham was both alert to this and understood Philip's goal and therefore much of his own life goal as he wrote the novel. Thus Philip came more and more to see the personal usefulness of his weak condition, of his unfortunate family situation, and of his clubfoot. These weaknesses offered at once an excuse for his aloofness and passivity, and a means of manipulating others, of getting his way, of avoiding his sense of inferiority. It was no "accident of association" that guided his memory to select that scene with Emma and the Misses Watkin. Rather, it was the similarity of the experiences and the consistency of Philip's way of approaching life—his style of life.

His private logic (I, p. 80) at this point seems to have been: "Because I have no mother or father, am weak and sickly, and have a clubfoot, I have a right to expect special treatment." This, Adler would call a pampered style of life, as was already strongly indicated by the early recollection. "The pampered child is trained to expect

that his wishes will be treated as laws . . . He has been trained to expect and not to give" (3, p. 16).

It is inevitable, however, that the pampered individual with these unrealistic expectations will become a neglected individual. After his mother becomes unable to satisfy his every wish, he is not likely to find others who are willing to participate in such a one-sided relationship with him. Thus it is most interesting that Robin Maugham states about his uncle: "He was a classic example of what psychologists call 'the deprived child' [or neglected child], and this was born out by his constant and sometimes frantic search for happiness and reassurance throughout his life" (19, pp. 122-123).

It is rewarding to consider Maugham's alteration of his own stammer to a clubfoot for Philip. One obvious reason for this change is that the clubfoot helped Philip gain more quickly and genuinely the sympathy, pity, and even ridicule of his fellows (and certainly the reader has sympathy and even pity for him), without a humorous reaction which a stammer might produce. Furthermore, clubfoot is defined as a "deformity . . . present at birth or caused by muscle paralysis or injury" (26, p. 56). Stammering, on the other hand, is "almost never due to any organic weakness, either in the organs used in speaking or in the nerves and nerve centers which control them" (26, p. 903). The choice of the clubfoot (a truly crippled condition) thus established a more legitimate excuse for Philip's inferiority feelings and as yet undeveloped social feeling or interest, his interest in others. Correspondingly, the choice helped Maugham to see more objectively his own weakness in so far as the novel is an attempt to alleviate the burden of past memories.

"In the speech of the stammerer," Adler observes, "we can see his hesitating attitude. His residue of social feeling drives him to make connection with his fellows, but his low opinion of himself, his fear of coming to the test, conflict with his social feeling, and he hesitates in his speech" (5, p. 179). It is significant that although Maugham later overcame much of this stammer, as his social interest developed, in moments of uncertainty, when his inferiority feelings returned, he again stammered noticeably, and without the control he had learned. According to Adler, "There are really two tendencies in stammerers—one to associate with others, and another that makes them seek isolation for themselves" (2, p. 19).

It is then these two tendencies as they are manifested in Maugham's writings and in his life that form the basis for his seemingly

ambiguous and enigmatic nature. In his works he found a temporary relief from these conflicting tendencies. And yet, his writings portray the transfer of these conflicts to the created world, and especially to the Maugham voice and the Maughamian character.

Returning to the point made above, that the ultimate outcome of a defect depends upon the use the individual makes of it, and the interpretation he puts onto his entire life-situation, one can see that making excuses and securing special privileges are only one such use, and there are all sorts of positive compensations possible. In fact, as Adler puts it, "The only salvation from the continuous driving inferiority feeling is the knowledge and feeling of being valuable which originates from the contribution to the common welfare" (5, p. 155). Because the hesitating attitude and the consequent seeking of distance from the real tasks of life are the dangerous tendencies of the neurotic, the individual must develop this interest in the common welfare; that is, develop his innate capacity for *social feeling* or *interest* (7, p. 131). This salvation is social interest Maugham was only gradually able to accomplish, and never with great certainty did he recognize the value of his contribution to society.

SOCIAL INTEREST

At the age of sixty-four Maugham published the following statement:

It is pleasant to think, not that one may achieve immortality (immortality for literary productions lasts in any case but a few hundred years and then is seldom more than the immortality of the schoolroom) but that one may be read with interest by a few generations and find a place, however small, in the history of one's country's literature. But so far as I am concerned, I look upon this modest possibility with scepticism (23, p. 11).

Of course, Maugham has been "read with interest" by several generations (not only in his own country but in many countries and many languages) and is still being read with interest. But of more importance is the fact that in this statement Maugham expresses "interest in the interest of others" (7, p. 140). Clearly Maugham here sees the meaning of life as contribution to others.

Since interest involves value (i.e., one places value upon that in which he is interested), social interest serves as a "guiding cognitive structure by which decisions are made" (7, p. 145). In other words, "the function of social interest is to direct the striving toward the useful side" (5, p. 133); by useful, Adler means "in the interest of

mankind generally" (1, p. 78). And ultimately it is this criterion of usefulness vs. uselessness, i.e., the consequence of what the individual does, which, more than what the individual says, is the most dependable measure of his genuine social interest: "Since the value of any activity is to be judged by its usefulness to all mankind, whatever may have been included under social interest, self-actualization and growth, are also subject to this stipulation" (7, pl 139). With this criterion, then, Adler allows even the highly unique individual his place in a creative, ideal society. By extending this concept of social interest into the future, one is able to see that the independent spirit not only has a place, but is the "ideally normal man." "The criterion of social usefulness, however, is applicable to nonconformity as it is to any other behavior. The question is whether the nonconformity is ultimately socially useful, in the interest of mankind, or valuable to mankind, or whether it is merely a rebelling for personal reasons" (7, p. 147).

After viewing the self-interested young Maugham in the early Philip, one must wonder how, in what way, and at what point he gained this interest in others. The theme of the novel concerns Philip's quest for a philosophy of life, a meaning to life, a freedom from human bondage, or bondage to passion. The title was taken from Spinoza's *Ethics*. Maugham was attracted to Spinoza's statement that experience is only valuable when through our imagination and reason we are able to turn it into foresight, thereby shaping our future and freeing ourselves from the past; submitting to passion is human bondage, exercising reason is human liberty.

With this theme Maugham invents characters whom Philip observes to be in one way or another bound by passion. Philip's helpless bondage to Mildred is the epitome of human bondage for this protagonist. His friend Cronshaw gives him a Persian rug which he says contains the meaning of life, but each individual must perceive it himself. The climax of the novel comes in a very moving scene with Philip in the British Museum. Immediately before, he has been told of a friend's death. Seated before some Athenian tombstones in the museum, Philip felt the influence of the place descend upon him. All the figures on the tombstones seemed to be saying *farewell*, "that, and nothing more." Then it was that he began to question again the meaning of life, for which he had searched so long. Thinking of Cronshaw, Philip remembered the Persian rug which he had given him, telling that it offered an answer to his question upon the meaning of life;

and suddenly the answer occurred to him: he chuckled: now that he had it, it was like one of the puzzles which you worry over till you are shown the solution and then cannot imagine how it could ever have escaped you. The answer was obvious. Life had no meaning (20, p. 654).

Although Maugham the person reports no experience so specific as this, he did reach the same reconciliation early in his life. In this quite existential resolution he found a purpose and meaning for life, a meaning in no meaning. His relations with others thereafter took on a special meaning. No longer did he search aimlessly with the explicit purpose of expecting others to give him the meaning to life, but he now had an interest for the sake of giving meaning through his art, seeing now the meaning of life as contribution: "I have been attached, deeply attached, to few people; but I have been interested in men in general not for their own sakes, but for the sake of my work" (23, pp. 7-8).

Strikingly similar is this view to that of Hans Vaihinger, who significantly influenced Adler. "It is senseless to question the meaning of the universe, and this is the idea expressed in Schiller's words: 'Know this, a mind sublime puts greatness into life, yet seeks it not therein'" (5, p. 78).

This greatness which Maugham put into life is well described by Cordell: "Above all Maugham quickens our understanding of man, our tolerance for his weaknesses, our amused awareness of his pretenses, a sympathy for his ineptitude" (10, p. xi). Despite his useful contribution to others and his increased social interest, however, Maugham continued to approach life in a rather passive manner and to have still a rather hesitating attitude.

THE TASKS OF LIFE

According to Adler, every individual is confronted by three major problems, "tasks" or "questions of life," those of communal life, of love, and of work. The individual's "style of life is reflected more or less clearly in his attitude to all of them" (4, p. 43).

Relations to One's Fellowman

As we have already seen in Maugham's own vivid portrayal, he had difficulties from very early in the area of friendship or communal life. In late middle age, he writes,

I had disabilities. I was small; I had endurance but little physical strength; I stammered; I was shy; I had poor health. I had no facility for games, which play so great a part in the normal life of Englishmen; and I had, whether for

any of these reasons or from nature I do not know, an instinctive shrinking from my fellow men that has made it difficult for me to enter into any familiarity with them (23, pp. 32-33).

It is significant that Maugham here gives what Adler calls a "yes-but" account of his behavior which is indicative of "insufficient preparations for all the problems of life" (5, p. 156): the "yes" (relations with fellow men, "familiarity with them") "emphasizes the pressure of social interest" and the "but" ("the disabilities": smallness, stammering, shyness, etc.) tells what "prevents the necessary increase of social interest." Adler adds that "in all cases, whether typical or particular" the latter "will have an individual nuance" (5, pp. 156-157).

In *Of Human Bondage*, Maugham recognizes the importance of social interest: "It is such as he, as little conscious of himself as the bee in a hive, who are the lucky in life, for they have the best chance of happiness and of a life with meaning: their activities are shared by all, and their pleasures are only pleasures because they are enjoyed in common." Excluding himself, Maugham reflects: "It is because of them that man has been called a social animal" (20, p. 54).

In this area of life, again, one can observe Maugham's passive life style and his hesitating attitude, manifested in the two tendencies: one to associate with others, one to isolate himself from others.

Love

This life style and these tendencies are reflected clearly in the question of love:

Though I have been in love a good many times I have never experienced the bliss of requited love. I know that this is the best thing that life can offer and it is a thing that almost all men, though perhaps only for a short time, have enjoyed. I have most loved people who cared little or nothing for me and when people have loved me I have been embarrassed. . . . I have been jealous of my independence. I am incapable of complete surrender (23, pp. 51-52).

At age sixty-four Maugham published *The Summing Up* in which he stated that at forty he felt it was "high time" to marry if he intended to:

There was no one I particularly wanted to marry. It was a condition that attracted me. It seemed a necessary motif in the pattern of life that I had designed. . . . it offered peace from the disturbance of love affairs . . . ; peace that would enable me to write all I wanted to write without the loss of precious time or disturbance of mind; peace and a settled and dignified way of life. I sought freedom and I thought I could find it in marriage (23, p. 121).

With these one-sided expectations without any mutuality—peace for writing, no loss of time, no disturbances, freedom, and "no

one . . . particularly" he wanted to marry—he was doomed inevitably to disappointment and failure in marriage.

At age forty-one he published *Of Human Bondage* in which Philip's planned marriage to Sally is, according to Maugham's own admission, the type of marriage he would have liked to make (23, p. 121). Interesting therefore is the character of Sally and the similarity of Philip's relationship to her to that with his mother. Sally "did all that she had to do very competently, but seemed to feel no need of conversation; yet there was nothing unsociable in her" (20, p. 713). "Sally sat in silence, but she attended to Philip's wants in a thoughtful fashion that charmed him. It was pleasant to have her beside him" (20, p. 733). This novel he published in 1915, when he was forty-one, after two years of dedicated writing, probably between 1912 and 1914.

In 1913 Maugham met Mrs. Syrie Wellcome, who was separated from her husband, whom Maugham married in 1916, and divorced in 1927.

During the relationships, both Sally and Syrie feared that they were pregnant. At once, the serenity of Sally's expression altered noticeably. " 'What's the matter, Sally?' he asked. She did not look at him, but straight in front of her, and her colour darkened. 'I don't know.' He understood at once. She held out her hand and smiled. 'Don't worry about it yet. Let's hope for the best' " (20, p. 751). Syrie's reaction was significantly different. "Shortly before leaving England Syrie told me that she was . . . pregnant. I was dismayed. She burst into tears. She sobbed that it was only because she loved me so much that she wanted to have the baby. She made me feel an awful brute" (25, pp. 42-43).

Philip's and Maugham's reactions are importantly similar. Philip "despised himself. How could he have got into such a mess? . . . Everything was clear before him, all he had aimed at so long within reach at last, and now in inconceivable stupidity had erected this new obstacle" (20, p. 751). In a letter to Syrie (the date of the letter is unknown to him, he states), Maugham writes: "I felt I had been put in a position which I did not for a moment anticipate was a possibility. I knew that I had made a perfect fool of myself, but I thought I had also been made a perfect fool of" (25, p. 96). It is interesting also that the fictional Sally was not pregnant after all, and she and Philip planned to marry, while Syrie was really pregnant and she and Maugham were married sometime after the birth of their daughter, and after Syrie had obtained a divorce from her husband.

And in their relationship to a woman both Philip and Maugham reflect their passive style and hesitating attitude toward life, their inability to surrender to others. In his letter to Syrie, Maugham states, "you should be very well satisfied if you get from your husband courtesy and consideration, kindness and affection; but really you cannot expect passionate love" (25, p. 96). And Philip, even before he knew of the possibility of Sally's pregnancy, "knew that he did not love her. It was a great affection he felt for her, and he liked her company" (20, p. 751).

Maugham was altogether unsuccessful in this area of life, perhaps because he was never prepared properly to contribute to the relationship. Prior to meeting Syrie he had "a regular sexual relationship with a happy-natured, naturally amorous young woman," represented by Rosie in *Cakes and Ale* (22). After eight years of having such a relationship he proposed to her. But she rejected him. This was followed by his marriage to Syrie and "subsequent embittering divorce," and "lamentable conflicts of interest with his daughter" (28, pp. xvi & xiii).

Work

In his early attempts to find a suitable profession Maugham reflects the hesitating attitude in the matter of occupation, which is often characterized by "never finishing anything" (2, p. 34). He returned to England from a stay in Heidelberg determined to be a writer. But, "It was unheard of that a boy of eighteen, belonging to a respectable family, should adopt literature as a profession" (17). He rejected going into the church, which his uncle favored. He did not wish to go into law, the profession of his three elder brothers. He did begin preparation for a career in accounting, but this lasted for only two months. At last, he settled on a medical career, which the local doctor at Whitstable suggested (17). But after earning the MD degree, he never practiced.

Yet it was in this area of work that Maugham gained the courage to make his unique and useful contribution. From his earliest reflections it is noteworthy that Maugham's great sensitivity and suffering at the hands of others, though enabling him to pay much attention to himself, at the same time also made him very conscious of others, and he came increasingly to acknowledge the nature of those around him.

Something of this paradoxical quality is also present in the handi-

cap of stammering. As Adler points out, "the decisive factor lies in the stutterer's relationship to other people . . . in the tension aroused when he must establish a connection between himself and another person" (5, p. 389), "either through an unwillingness, perhaps, or a fear of failure to communicate" (5, p. 279). On the other hand, the stammerer is also forced to attend more to the very process of communicating, especially to a choice of words. It is most plausible that the paradox can resolve itself through a heightened interest in the written word.

In his preface to *The Old Wives Tale* by Arnold Bennett, who was also a stammerer, Maugham clearly reflects much of his own awareness of the function of this disorder in his life.

It was torture to him. Few realized the exhaustion it caused him to speak. What to most men was as easy as breathing, to him was a constant strain. It tore his nerves to pieces. Few knew the humiliation it exposed to him, the ridicule it excited in many, the impatience it aroused . . . the minor exasperation of thinking of a good amusing, or apt remark and not venturing to say it in case the stammer ruined it. Few knew the distressing sense it gave rise to of a bar to complete contact with other men. It may be that except for the stammer which forced him to introspection, Arnold would never have become a writer (21).

Being ambitious, Maugham, like Bennett, made use of this handicap to force himself to develop his powers of introspection and his interest in the written word.

"His craft was more important to him than his private life. Personal relationships were of less consequence" (19, p. 123). Maugham writes:

The artist can within certain limits make what he likes of his life. In other callings, in medicine for instance or the law, you are free to choose whether you will adopt them or not, but having chosen, you are free no longer. You are bound by the rules of your profession; a standard of conduct is imposed upon you. The pattern is predetermined. It is only the artist, and maybe the criminal, who can make his own (23, p. 34).

That Maugham here notes a similarity between the criminal's life style and the artist's is significant—for in fact there is a likeness: both are independent spirits, that is, they both claim a right to some degree of uniqueness, eccentricity, differentness from others and the present standards of behavior; both are to some extent aloof and withdrawn; the criminal always and the artist often initially have goals of personal superiority. There, however, the likeness stops. The criminal strives for an exclusively private goal of superiority. "The meaning they give to life is a private meaning. No one else is benefited by the achievement of their aims, and their interest stops short at their own persons . . . Meaning is only possible in

communication" (5, p. 156). The artist, on the other hand, may withdraw, remain aloof, and strive toward a goal of personal superiority. But as long as his works become meaningful, that is, succeed in communicating something that is of meaning to a larger public, he does make a contribution. The consequences of his efforts thus permit the inference that he was not guided by private sense alone, but that a sufficient amount of "common sense" was present. Where this is absent we have productions that belong to the category of insane art.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We have observed that Maugham's individual style of life can be partially understood from his earliest memory—he came to *expect*, and this training was not adequate to what he experienced as burdens in his early life: a stammer, ill health, and the early loss of his parents. These experiences only led to increased inferiority feelings, which in turn intensified his concern with himself and difficulties in establishing ties with others.

Maugham's *social interest* developed as he began to see his role as that of contributing to his fellow beings through his writings. Always he remained somewhat aloof, introverted, and more of an observer than a participant. The areas of friendship and marriage were clearly subordinated to that of work—his art. It was here that he *gave* most valuably. Although he used his handicaps as excuses for withdrawing, he did extend his own sensitivity to include an understanding of others. Combining this and skill in writing, probably compensatory for his stammering, with his zest for working—consciously or unconsciously a striving to concretize his own worth as an individual—he succeeded in making an outstanding contribution to his fellow men. Here one finds the final word concerning the individual person William Somerset Maugham. That contribution is effectively captured by Cordell. He writes:

Above all Maugham quickens our understanding of man, our tolerance for his weaknesses, our amused awareness of his pretenses, a sympathy for his ineptitude. He makes no attempt to explain human nature, but only to illuminate it; for he believes that man is unpredictable . . . He leads a reader to ask himself questions about good and evil, reward and punishment, justice and injustice, fact and superstition, the good life and the wasted life (10, p. xi).

Thus, with his death in 1965, Maugham did not "disappear completely from the community of men." And Adler's concept of social interest "through its extension into the future . . . provides a place

for the independent spirit . . . who contributes to the advancement of mankind" (7, p. 147).

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