
Introduction

Foundational values are addressed in various scientific disciplines, but especially in philosophy, literary criticism, theology, psychology, and history. An overview of the history of literary criticism from antiquity to the present shows that literary criticism is very closely connected with philosophy, and particularly with moral philosophy, when concerning itself with values. This unavoidable relationship is, however, not harmonious in every respect. The reason for this lies in the difference of the subject matter for both disciplines. Philosophy is concerned with basic human cognitive capacities and formal training of cognitive skills based on universal laws of reasoning and values. Important in philosophy, thus, is the ability to recognize the contrast between what is approved of and what is disapproved of in any society, even if how the contrast between good and evil is understood differs considerably from one society to another. On the whole, philosophy employs the language of abstract concepts and analytical reasoning. So it is that this question remains ever-open: how do we employ language to make points about human emotions, longing, personal values and persuasive discourses?

It seems important to be aware of the main task of both disciplines and of their specific methodological characteristics. In philosophy there are two main realms of reflection: the study of nature and of the world (as Aristotle preferred), and reflection on the human self and identity, as Plato and his immediate and later followers practiced. Plato held that the body and soul are two distinct types of being, while Aristotle insisted on the inner connection between man's corporeal and incorporeal aspects. Nevertheless, both parties agreed that philosophy was not a mere abstract intellectual discipline but pertained directly to life, to the search for truth and happiness. Classical texts became fundamental sources that have been greatly influential up to the present. They represent original value-laden views and beliefs that throughout the centuries have been exposed to ever new re-evaluation on the bases of sense-perception, practice and experience.

In all times we can observe the need to convey sense-experience and to evoke

ethical reflection by using a more suitable mode of expression, one that has an eye to the larger structures of literary presentation of reality and truth. Literature deals with presentation of life in all its contrasting manifestations in persuasive literary forms and is therefore intrinsically connected with aesthetics. Ethical sensibility, meanwhile, is most effective when dealing with particular individuals in specific contexts. Characters that embody goodness and love can be identified with beauty of soul. Evaluation of characters in specific contexts manifests an inner relationship between foundational values and aesthetics. Works of literature combine the particular and the general in concrete life situations and in individual characters. Acceptance of reality, especially of individual persons, opens the way to love, and yet acceptance and love are not possible without beauty.

It is agreed in both philosophy and literary criticism that values like truth, beauty and love are, in their extended semantic field, closely related. It is also agreed that the methodological possibilities in philosophy and literary criticism for grasping and explaining this relationship are not the same as in the realm of literature itself. Literature uses language as a system of metaphors while concerning itself with literary context and literary structures. The power of persuasion and synthetic perception of life has been especially ably evaluated by those great writers of all times who also wrote essays on the nature of literature and proved that their understanding of values and of literary forms seem fitted for one another. The interplay between foundational values and literary style functions in interpenetrating ways. This universally recognized fact calls for new methods and styles in dealing with literary in the totality of its complex and dramatic structure, while devoting full attention to both individual context and to the interaction between character and conduct.

Poetry and narratives such as short stories and novels are expressly designed, according to aesthetic criteria, for our delight and exploration. Literary works put not just values but also emotions and models of life on display. Technical analysis of literary texts may begin with simple reflection on common experience and values. Analysis of literary texts hinges on basic human cognitive capacities and a widespread potential for fostering innovation in openness to alternative views. As Colin McGinn states, "One of the reasons we are drawn to fictional works is precisely that they combine the particular and the general in ways we find natural and intelligible. The general is woven into the particular, which gives the particular significance and the general substance" (McGinn 2007: 3). The figurative nature of literary discourse allows us to consider thematic and aesthetic commonalities and interrelations from interdisciplinary and intercultural perspectives. Original and aesthetically pleasing literary styles encourage innovative methods, practices and especially doctrines and theories. In dealing with the question of the criteria invoked when judging what is beau-

tiful in the cross-cultural application of the notion of art, Geoffrey Ernest Richard Lloyd notes: “My argument has been that such ‘commonalities’ as we can discern are to be found at a deeper level. *Some* recognition of *some* distinction between the attractive and the ugly, the refined and the coarse, the admirable and the dull, is common, if not universal. That point remains however much we differ in what we admire and in how we might go about explaining our preferences if indeed we think they need some justification” (Lloyd 2009: 109).

Since antiquity literature has been considered a particular kind of imitation (*mimesis*). Friedrich Schiller distinguished between imitation of nature and imitation of human emotion (Schiller 1981). Imitation of nature is the subject of naïve art, whereas imitation of human emotion is the subject of sentimental art. Both types of literature combine an analytical and a synthetic way of presentation, and both tend also to consider tradition while nevertheless remaining open to innovation. This, however, is true of all sciences, cultures and religions. Grasping reality in its totality is therefore the first methodological principle of the study. A “total approach” on existential grounds conveys an awareness of the inner connection of all foundational values, of the inner connection between aesthetics and ethics and of the way to make an educational impact by means of persuasion. A “total approach” also favours an interdisciplinary orientation of research on the basis of analogy between material and spiritual reality.

Certain basic themes and forms are present in the literature of all times and cultures. A comparative treatment of literary texts is a path to discovering the contrasting relation of similarities and differences between authors, cultures and periods. Some foundational values were adopted in Europe from ancient Greece and Rome, and some from the ancient Middle East and Israel. One pair of common themes is longing and temptation (Avsenik Nabergoj 2009 and 2010), and in this regard Judaism, Christianity and Islam share a common heritage of biblical sources (Kvam et al. 1999; Volf et al. 2010). Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue challenges abstract doctrines and the commandment style of moral discourse, while stoking the imagination, common sense-perception and experience by raising fundamental questions about humans – about men and women – and society.

Comparative literary analysis has the potential to effect positive changes in relations between representatives of various cultures and faiths. Shared experience and knowledge can transform engaged individuals from ineffective observers into seekers of truth, beauty and love. Living examples – for instance those timeless icons of nonviolence, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela – emerged from the belief that shared experience and knowledge can create a common ground within the global world and thus make lasting contributions to a glorification of the innate goodness in humans. Only great souls can inspire people of all races, backgrounds and religions to turn anger

into compassion, hatred into love. Literature shows that throughout history all lasting relationships and all communities have been built on the path of life and on personal relationships embracing truth, beauty and love. Employing a “total approach” in comparative literary research is a means of putting love to work in resolving problems, healing relationships and creating lasting peace. In the final analysis it is clear that the sense of truth, beauty and love is not only inspiration but also a skill in perceiving values on the basis of experience.

An examination of contemporary writing on literary theory and especially literary genres reveals great plurality, or even confusion, in both the use of terminology for fundamental classification into literary types and genres and in determining the criteria for describing them. In his *Poetics* Aristotle provided, without prescribing any rules, the fundamental theory of literary types through his description of the conventions governing individual types or genres. In general, since antiquity literary theorists have offered normative descriptions of literary types and genres in the framework of a system that allows for a relatively reliable classification of types of literature into corresponding literary genres. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe spoke of the three main types or “natural forms of poetry” (the epic, the lyric, and the dramatic). This basic division and traditional classificatory system was later questioned as an open system of literary types and genres was put forth. Because the lines between the types and genres are no longer so firmly drawn, there is little certainty when it comes to ascribing texts to a particular category – that is, to knowing where to place texts that have characteristics of more than one type or genre. In both a theoretical and practical perspective it is of fundamental importance that the criteria for classifying literary types and their description be determined. Some critics have attempted to classify literary types and genres, though in so doing they have run into the dilemma of whether to do this according to formal characteristics or according to content. Attempts to answer this question led to the prevailing principle of pluralism in laying out the relevant criteria. Attempts to determine criteria, meanwhile, show that the greatest dynamic exists in reflecting on and searching for an answer to these unanswered questions about the relation between the theory of literary genres and the history of literary genres. The criteria can be worked out only by means of theory, but that necessarily includes critically evaluating the history of creating and defining literary types and genres.

Literary types and genres represent different *artistic* ways of writing about various views of reality in the material world, in society and in life in general, as well as about the truth of even the subtlest shades of the psychological and spiritual state of heroes. It is for this reason that the most important question for the reader of a literary work pertains to the multi-layered relation between form and content. An organic interweaving of form and content occurs already in the very coming-into-being of literary works. Literature is an answer to the chall-

enges of environment, interpersonal relations, social relations, and historical occurrences. Literature is a synthetic and artistic response to the challenges of time and space in the rhythm of life. Literary types and genres, thus, do not merely emerge of themselves. They are, rather, a consequence of expectations that arise in social constellations, in individual life stories, and in the vision and planning of the future.

Modern musings on the relation between form and content in literature have seen an increasing awareness of historical memory and of life experience. Both factors occupy such a fundamentally creative and cognitive role in the life of man as an individual and of society as a whole that some literary theorists value literary works as both a collective founding document and recognizable marker of the memory of individuals and entire societies of a culture. One need only consider the role of literary works that have entered the canon of a particular nation or even of the international community. The more important the role a literary work assumes in terms of cultural memory, the more it becomes a part of the context for the production of new texts. In other words, the more it becomes part of an organic process of intertextual communication both within a particular culture and in intercultural dialogue; it even establishes its position in the process of interculturality. This is why literature evidently has a more important role in the cognitive and the educational process at the level of individuals and of society than may seem to be the case given entirely divergent views on the role of literature.

Of course we could not speak of “cultural memory” if literature did not grow from impulses of primal human experience that span the polarity between longing and despair, love and hatred, war and peace. If the wisdom writer in the book of Ecclesiastes (3:1 – 8) sets down his experience by noting that “To every thing there is a season” and encompasses all the fundamental experiences, he is speaking while aware of the unfathomable strength of the laws of the universe, the environment of life, and the impulses of human innerness that affect man’s manner of feeling, thinking, his life and his creating. Literary works, with their generic and specific formal elements, are the central elements of our memory because they express the experience of past generations so truthfully that new generations can uncover in them the reality and truth of their life and can identify with their message. It is on the basis of this that literary types and genres represent models of interpretation of life experience and that they can also become a part of the canon of the human community that encodes values and norms on the basis of time-honoured experiences of human history.

The first part of this monograph is the fruit of a lengthy search for an answer to the question of where the explanations lie for the widespread and uninterrupted contemporising of literature in various literary genres as well as in folk and artistic representations the world over. In their studies, renowned writers

who have also contributed to literary theory express – sometimes more, sometimes less overtly – their recognition that ultimately literature is an artistic embodiment of what we have experienced in light of facts (which are also an area of empirical science), and under the impression of the convictions which generally reign in a community and which historical experience also confirms. In Chapter 9 of his *Poetics*, Aristotle summed up the criteria of poetic reality and truth: “it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen – what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity” (1451b). No literary theory could seriously question this statement. The art of writing within a system or “canon” of literary types is thus an echo of the internal necessity or lawfulness of natural phenomena and phenomena of life which is endowed with reason and is inclined to truth.

Examining the roots and development of literary types and genres allows for profound insight into the many possibilities that exist for creative literary communication in terms of content. Though the broadest realm is the structure of the universe, which we measure in light years, we also present, in ever contrasting shades, our immediate life surroundings. That is why nature, since the very beginning of human consciousness and imagination, has served as the source of innumerable models for imitation (*mimesis*) in all areas of artistic creativity. It was on the basis of this that primal literary forms – that is, literary types – arose, and that the first “collections” in the oral tradition tightly linked family members and the broader human community. Various literary types and forms came into being spontaneously – after the rise of literacy, the first literary theories were born and these theories more or less influenced the continued and lengthy development of the literary process. Observations of nature prompted both artistic creativity and scientific investigation, and analysis and synthesis were determining factors for the rise of various types of arts and sciences.

Since nature has always been the basic model for imitation, it has, simultaneously, also been the basis of the criteria for judging truth and, accordingly, objective reality. The human spirit shone also in the searching for a common core within the myriad phenomena in the material world. Already in ancient times people began to unveil the workings of natural law, and so it was that natural law later also entered consciousness as a concept. The poet and the scientist co-existed and co-created in harmony, as each was seeking the common core of the phenomenal world, each in his own way. The polymath Goethe is among the leading spokesmen for the harmony between external and internal order in man’s understanding of truth.

The creative imitating of the reality of the material world could not content itself solely with objective reality of the appearance of nature; rather, it necessarily included also subjective experiencing of the world, especially man’s own experiencing of objective reality. Man thus became the focal point for observing

and imitating. Artists tried the most suitable means of recording the appearance of humans' characteristics and their countless life situations at both the personal and social levels. All of this occurred of course in natural surroundings, that is, in the surroundings of the material world. For this reason, the concordance between the conceiving of external and internal reality became a crucial issue and the central problem in artistic creation. In Maxim 533, Goethe remarks, "Ordinary viewing, a right conception of earthly matters, is the heritage of general human reason; pure viewing of what is external and internal is very rare." This statement also corresponds to the organic coalescence between form and content in every artistic type and genre. Of this, Goethe states in Maxim 1351, "Perfect artists are more indebted to teaching than to nature." Maxim 1119 also points in the same direction: "Creating out of oneself", as it is called, usually results in false originals and mannerists" (Goethe 1999).

And yet all of this is scarcely the beginning of the great history of art in general as well as of the genesis of literary works of various types and genres. As social life increasingly became the focus of art, artists inevitably began to deal with the tremendous range of man's emotional world, his self-image, and his relation to his fellow man. And thus the realm of conceiving of and expressing reality expanded into the conceiving of and expressing of truth. The discovering of objective truth inevitably acquired a subjective character, and the ethical judgement of man's personal and social life became central. Thus, in evaluating the nature and role of literature, alongside the concept of reality the essential concept of truth became a central focus. Goethe expresses this in Maxim 382: "The first and last thing demanded of genius is love of truth." In Maxim 493, meanwhile, Goethe explains the essential quality of truth: "To find and to appreciate goodness everywhere is the sign of a love of truth." In Maxim 1220, he draws attention to the challenging nature of seeking truth: "Laying hold of the truth demands a much higher approach than what is called for in defence of [error]." Maxim 78 reads, "Wisdom is to be found only in truth."

With this searching the nature of the universal dimension did not lose validity but in fact became more valuable. The increasingly necessary viewpoint of man's creative world into the internal world of the soul entailed a broadening of possible viewpoints for judging objective reality, and at the same time this reality became an image of or symbol for portraying especially the inexpressible shades of man's psychology and spirituality. Art and science developed according to the principle of analogy, and in the area of philosophy the concept of the "analogy of being" (*analogia entis*) appeared. It became all the more obvious that literature is an organic link between objective and subjective truth which could only be expressed by means of a symbol, by analogy. Literary critics speak in theoretical terms of the ambiguity of symbols, words and word chains, and ultimately of hermeneutic theory that examines the literal meaning and the various aspects of

metaphorical meaning. In this lies also the reason for the tremendous significance of symbol and allegory. The essence of a symbol is that rather than offering an immediate way of representing truth it provides an analogous representation of truth. In Maxims 279 and 314, Goethe offered the following, now seminal, distinction between symbol and allegory:

There is a great difference whether a poet is looking for the particular that goes with the general, or sees the general in the particular. The first gives rise to allegory where the particular only counts as an example, an illustration of the particular; but the latter in fact constitutes the nature of poetry, expressing something particular without any thought of the general, and without indicating it. Now whoever has this living grasp of the particular is at the same time in possession of the general, without realizing it, or else only realizing it later on. (Maxim 279)

This is true symbolism, where the particular represents the general, not as dream and shadow, but as a live and immediate revelation of the unfathomable. (Maxim 314)

When the organic and creative linking of objective and subjective reality in art becomes the subject of analytical judgement and philosophical discourse, abstract systems inevitably follow. Systems like idealism, realism, materialism and so on have little to do with reality per se. Abstract constructs, which are fabricated, become constructs that the best creators in the area of the arts as well as the sciences transcend; those who are capable of doing so pour masses of objective reality and subjective impressions into a created whole. Because one cannot speak of truth without ethical awareness and judgement, the terms “reality” and “truth” are not synonymous: whereas the word “reality” implies ethical neutrality, this is not the case for the word “truth.” Thus, the two concepts come simultaneously to the fore and organically supplement each other when a creative and well-meaning intellect is at work; they clash, however, when immaterial judging of one and the other occurs. Literature is the primary realm of creativity, education and scientific clarification of truth at the individual and social levels.

Emmanuel Kant’s crucial distinction between “pure” and “practical” reason offered contemporary and later generations of philosophers a holistic model for linking objective reality and personal life experiences that include the moral imperative. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant explains the means of conceptual understanding in the area of actual or possible empirical experience. When it comes to empirical experience, pure reason is especially cognizant of uniting “the whole” and developing conceptual arguments for communication at both the abstract and systematic levels. This capability, however, in no way suffices or serves man’s experience in the objective world. Here man freely conceives of the moral imperative, sees dramatic ethical challenges as the basic guide for his dignity, and manifests his ethical sense of the beautiful and the

sublime, as well as, ultimately, his natural inclination for a goal (*télos*), while sensing absolute reality and truth. This area of human understanding and communication was dealt with by Kant in his *Critique of Practical Reason*. The world of nature and the world of man's freedom are two separate entities, although they are organically interwoven in material life. This distinction makes possible the discovery of the foundation of the traditional theological "negative path" (*via negativa*) and "negative capability," which the poet John Keats highlighted in connection with the experience of man's uncertainty, his doubts, and incapability of bringing his experiences about the mystical, the sublime and the profound into line with conceptual and systematised categories.

In his seminal book *Myth, Truth and Literature: Toward a True Post-Modernism* Colin Falck argues that the modern post-structuralist movement which emerged from the French literary and cultural theorizing of post-Saussureanism met with failure because "with its callow and philosophically incoherent anti-metaphysical posturings, [it] has tried to disengage literature from its troublesome spiritual dimension altogether – by simply denying the existence of that dimension. It has thereby threatened to deprive an entire generation of students and intelligent readers a part of their spiritual birthright" (Falck: xi–xii). His evaluation of the consequence of this is

students and readers are growing up with no real sense of the spiritual significance of literature and with no invitation to develop their own creative sensibilities in truly literary ways. This near-death of intuitive aesthetic sensibility in the academic world, together with the stifling of critical inquiry by journals with names like *Critical Inquiry*, the dismantling of the traditional literary canon for almost entirely non-literary reasons, and the virtually total supplanting of literary discussion and criticism by cultural-political discussion and criticism in books and articles now written about literature, has meant that there are no longer any places in the world of organized literary education where the value of literature as an open and unprejudiced imaginative enhancement of life can be either acknowledged or cultivated. (Falck 1994: xii)

Falck does not see the solution in searching for "new" methods but in a return to the great wealth of creative literary criticism written by writers and poets of genius. Their insights are convincing because these great minds were writing on the basis of their own creative and artistic literary experience. Though Falck points especially to the great Romantic artists and literary critics, this horizon can be extended to the entirety of literary theory from antiquity to the present. The purpose of this study is thus to present such critics in a broadly diachronic and synchronic perspective.