

## CHAPTER - II

### A QUESTION OF UPBRINGING

## CHAPTER - II

## A QUESTION OF UPBRINGING

The first trilogy Spring of the twelve volume novel A Dance To The Music Of Time opens with A Question Of Upbringing. Bernard Bergonzi in his book The Situation Of The Novel called it a social comedy.<sup>1</sup> A Question Of Upbringing describes degenerating and disintegrating middle class English society, its liberated middle class behaviour and especially its sexual behaviour during the twenties. It also describes the traumatic effects of the First World War. It traces the social and political changes in 1920s. It portrays the public school life and the university life where the degeneration had already started and high values had begun to degenerate. It also looks into the diminishing, disintegrating and degenerating aristocratic world after the First World War and describes the business activities in 1920s. It portrays the circle of four adolescents - Peter Templer, Charles Stringham, Nicholas Jenkins and Kenneth Widmerpoel, going through many incidents and living at places like the public school, at La Grenadiere in Touraine in France, at Oxford university and in London, burgeoning into youth by the end of A Question Of Upbringing.

Powell has used First person narrative method in this novel. He has chosen Jenkins as the narrator. Jenkins is the

narrator and at the same time the central figure of the great roman fleuve. In narrating the story, which covers the period from the First World War until the late 1960s, Powell mainly relies upon Jenkins's memories and reminiscences.

A Dance To The Music Of Time is a continuous single novel of twelve volumes. In the opening book Powell lays the foundation of great edifice. Every thing - characterization, the number of characters, the middle class world he describes in the subsequent books, the tendencies of characters, their attitudes to life and sex, their points of view, their philosophy of life are seedy and seminal in this book, to be developed in the later books.

A Question Of Upbringing opens with the description of a group of workmen warming themselves.

" The men at work at the corner of the street had made a kind of camp for themselves, where, marked out by tripods hung with red hurricane-lamps, an abyss in the road led down to a network of subterranean drain-piper. Gathered round the bucket of coke that burned in front of the shelter, several figures were swinging arms against bodies and rubbing hands together with large, pantomimic gestures; like comedians giving formal expression to the concept of extreme cold. One of them, a spare fellow in blue overalls, taller than the rest, with a jocular demeanour and long, pointed nose like

that of a shakespearean clown, suddenly stepped forward, and, as if performing a rite, cast ~~some~~ substance-apparently the remains of two kippers, loosely wrapped in newspaper-on the bright coals of the fire causing flames to leap fiercely upward, smoke curling about in eddies of the north-east wind. As the dark fumes floated above the houses, snow began to fall gently from a dull sky, each flake giving a small hiss as it reached the bucket. The flames died down again; and the men, as if required observances were for the moment at an end, all turned away from the fire, lowering themselves laboriously into the pit, or withdrawing to the shadows of their tarpaulin shelter. The grey, undecided flakes continued to come down, though not heavily, while a harsh odour, bitter and gaseous, penetrated the air. The day was drawing in."<sup>2</sup>

Powell's imagination, as Arthur Mizener notes, is essentially pictorial.<sup>3</sup> Jenkins describes this scene as if he were an art critic. He casts every imputation, every assignation of meaning upon them. These workmen are both men themselves and 'things'. While leaving a London art gallery just after learning of the death of Widmerpool in Hearing Secret Harmonies, the last volume of the novel, Jenkins sees a group of road menders 'gathering round their fire bucket' remind Jenkins of this scene. And between these two scenes

Jenkins completes the formal dance of his life.

The actions of these workmen bring to Jenkins's mind poussin's painting of <sup>S</sup> seasons and the image of Time brings to his mind,

"...thoughts of mortality : of human beings, facing <sup>out</sup> ~~towards~~ like the seasons, moving hand in hand in intricate measure; stepping slowly, methodically, sometimes a trifle awkwardly in evolutions that take recognisable shape : or breaking into seemingly meaningless gyrations, while partners disappear only to reappear again, once more giving pattern to the spectacle; unable to control melody, unable, perhaps to control the steps of dance."<sup>4</sup>

Powell shares Jenkins's point of view. James Tucker in his book The novels of Anthony Powell writes that from this <sup>~</sup> deflection and description we get an explicit account of what Powell means by his overall A Dance To The Music Of Time.<sup>5</sup>

Life has, like music and dance, shape, method and pattern. There is order. People are unable to control the melody, metaphorically the pattern of life. They lack power over the steps they perform. They have no choice but to take part in the dance of life, and their responses are like those of parts of a complicated machine. Their lives have some kind of meaning or 'seemingly meaningless' but they do

not know of what kind and do not consciously express it. Wyndham Lewis thinks that modern civilization has made men into things. And the characteristic art of that civilization must of necessity be comic, for one has no choice but to laugh at the sight of 'a thing behaving like a person'.<sup>6</sup> A novel produced in such kind of civilization requires that a writer should treat his characters not subjectively, like the modernists, through an examination of the interior life but objectively, through a report of character's outward appearance and machine like actions. Thus produced is a non-moral satire of the society, non-moral because it purports not to pass judgement merely to provide an objective description of the rhythmic scheme by which such bodies metaphorically society operate. Michael Gora thinks that Powell's A Dance To The Music Of Time embodies and exemplifies this Wyndham Lewis's conception of the comic.<sup>7</sup> We hear of life as a 'ritual dance' in A Buyer's Market. The ritual is a metaphor that suggests an underlying meaning. People behave as if they can play fresh, original part in life, whereas the lines have been laid down from far back. For example, Stringham and Templer dissipate their life but the lines of their dissipation have been laid down far back in the decaying and disintegrating aristocracy and degenerating middle class English society of the twentieth century. The contrast between how people might want to

behave or might have been expected to in view of their upbringing and background and the actual performance time imposes is the main theme of the novel. Everything is subjected to the music. The music moves irresistibly on and governs the dance regardless of the dancers.

In the opening chapter of this first volume four middle class adolescents - Peter Templer, Charles Stringham, Nicholas Jenkins and Kenneth Widmerpool are introduced. They are school boys at Eton public school in 1921. Charles Stringham came of dispirited, decaying and disintegrating aristocracy. His mother had once married Lord Wellington and inherited a large estate at Glimber. Peter Templer is a son of a businessman though not collosally rich he is not 'poor'. The father of Kenneth Widmerpool was manufacturer in liquid manure. Nicholas Jenkins, like Anthony Powell, is the only son of a regular army officer and has a long family history. Powell chose the middle class English society to deal with in his novels because he came of it and knew it better. While portraying the life of these four adolescents at public school and describing atmosphere at it, Powell hints at the deterioration of the public school institution. The book offers a satire on the outmoded and cloistered values of Eton in the 1920s. Yet at the same time persons in the authority assert the basic rightness of those values. For example, Stringham is the man of imagination, in an age

when a public school education, with its cult of athletics and amateurism turned into something 'blighting' of creative ambition. Such an education at public schools fosters what Martin Green describes as a set of 'aristo-military' Kiplingsque values that affront the humanist belief that individual fulfilment is the ultimate moral criterion<sup>8</sup>. Such schools made boys into roles, treated them and encouraged them to treat others as if they could be defined entirely by the objective world. Powell also went to public school and has had the first hand experience of the public school institution and education. So he is accurate in giving the characteristics of the public school education. Jenkins, Templer and Stringham do not fit comfortably within the games - playing hierarchy of the public school, hence despite their sense of individuality and their own gifts, they played insignificant roles in the school monolith.

Peter Templer and Charles Stringham dissipate their life and opportunity at the public school. They do not apply their minds to their study. They follow the middle class code which demands that no one should work hard or accomplish anything. They are the representatives of declining and dispirited English middle class society after the First World War, still suffering from physically and morally traumatic effects of it. The degeneration of Peter Temper has already ~~been~~ started at school. Akworth, the



contemporary of Templer at school is sacked from the school on the charge of sending homosexual note to Templer. The chief subjects of Templer's conversation were 'clothes, girls and the persecution of Le Bas, the housemaster, at whose house Templer, Jenkins, Stringham and Widmerpool were living during their school period. Templer could not be looked upon as a credit to the house. He was not much of a hand at the sort of games that were played at school, so that he was in a weak position, being fairly lazy at work. Templer boasted that he had never read a book for pleasure in his life. He was also an adept at breaking rules or diverting them to ends not intended by those who had framed them. Templer and Stringham are the inhabitants of bohemia. Jenkins feels that Templer is ahead of him in the sexual life. Templer is a constant womanizer. Even in his adolescence at the public school, he went to London and came late after having a girl and lied to the housemaster, Le Bas, that the train he took was late. Stringham once said of Templer that he did not fit in with home life and added that no one could have him in the house. Jenkins thought that Templer certainly did not appear to be designed for domestic life and the same could be said of Stringham. Le Bas, to get rid of Templer, persuaded the headmaster to the view that life would be easier for both them if Templer left the school. In consequence, Peter's father was persuaded to remove him a term earlier than previously

intended. This pleased Templer himself and did not unduly ruffle his father who was reported to take the view that schools and universities were waste of time and money. Before going to university he goes straight into business. Peter's adventures with women began while he was still at school making both Nicholas and Stringham feel backward. On a visit to Templer's family home Nicholas spots signs of an advanced relationship between Peter and Lady McReith, the widow and friend of his sister Babs who had come to his house. After leaving school Peter is engaged in business in London. Brent and Duport are his business friends working in the city. Templer had changed less and merely confirmed his earlier attitude towards life. Brent talked incessantly of women. Duport is aggressive and is after Peter's sister Jean. When Stringham and Jenkins were at university, they happened to meet Templer with Brent and Duport. After dinner the five go for a drive in an ageing Vauxhall car which Templer has recently bought. They pick up two girls Pauline and Ena. All the way Brent keeps kissing Pauline and Duport embracing Ena. On the return journey they crash the car and have to return by bus. It suggests their degeneration and moral decline. Brent and Duport are the typical representatives of Templer's London circles.

Another inhabitant of the bohemian world is Jean Templer with whom Jenkins thinks himself to be in love. After leaving school and before going to France Jenkins visits the Templers. The behaviour of Jean at the Horabins' dance crystallised Jenkins's feelings towards her. Jean kept to herself and remained in her somewhat separate world. When Jenkins enquired about Jean just before Vauxhall incident, Peter reported her sexual restlessness, "She is all right, in love with married man twice her age." She had an affair with Jenkins and Brent and married Duport.

Another representative of the degenerating and the dispirited upper middle class English society is Charles Stringham who has his origin in the decaying and disintegrating aristocracy. His mother had once married Lord Warrington. Stringham is the victim of uprooted and spoiled family relationship. His mother and father separated from each other and remarried. Stringham's mother, with whom he lives, is now the wife of Mr. Buster Foxe, who does not like Stringham much. He always tries to keep Stringham away from them. Powell presents the character of Stringham through his actions, and the comments passed about him by Jenkins and Widmerpool. Stringham is the man of intelligence and imagination, and has great personal charm and gifts but he dissipates his life and wastes his opportunities in sexual passion and drinking. Even at school he suffers from the

prolonged fits of melancholy. He is an excellent mimic and is quick at knowing the sources of quotations Le Bas makes. He is a favourite of Le Bas and perceives some good qualities in him. But by acting impulsively, he brings Le Bas in trouble by informing the local police on telephone that the man - Braddock alias Thorne, they wanted for fraud is lying in the field, by drawing likeness between Le Bas and the picture of Braddock alias Thorne stuck on the wall of police station, and gets Le Bas arrested. Later he regrets for this hoax. Jenkins observes Templer's and Stringham's behaviour and thinks that they exemplify two different sides of life in spite of some outward similarity in their tastes. Stringham is romantic. Widmerpool thought of him as a creature of impulse. Stringham and Templer provide in their respective methods of approaching life, patterns of two very distinguishable forms of existence. This contrasting temperament, Jenkins thinks, might be attributed to dissimilar background. Stringham is prone to fits of depression. He has an affair with Miss Widdon who was once his mother's governess. Jenkins thinks that Stringham, like Templer, is not designed for domestic life. After leaving school Jenkins visits Stringham's mother's house for the luncheon party. He experiences the luncheon party and finds the whole house in a depression. He had looked forward to coming there but was quite glad when it

was time to go. Stringham did not favour the idea of going to university. On knowing Stringham's involvement in Le Bas's arrest, Widmerpool remarks that Stringham is thoroughly undisciplined. It come from having too much money. Jenkins thinks that some inward metamorphosis is the cause of Stringham's melancholia because his attacks of gloom are qualified by frequent outbursts<sup>s</sup> of high spirits. Stringham did not reconcile with the life going on round him at the university. He began drinking heavily at the university. He said, "I am seriously thinking of running away and joining the foreign Legion or the North-West Mounted police whichever work the shorter hours." He thought, "one feels awful if one drinks and worse if one is sober." Jenkins began to understand Stringham's life at home subject to exterior forces like Buster's disapproval or Miss Weedon's regard which brought elements of uncertainty and discord into his family life. Stringham went down the university before completing the degree course, and got a job with Donners-Brebner firm on the recommendation of Sillery, the university don. At the end of this book we hear of Stringham, intended to marry Lady Peggy Stepney. He cuts short his appointment with Jenkins and goes off on the excuse of seeing Lady Peggy. This discourtesy Jenkins takes as a mark of 'final remnant of life at school.' It is Stringham's behaviour over a woman that makes Nicholas aware that time has turned a corner. Widmerpool is made up of

a different stuff. He violates the middle class code which demands that no one should work hard or achieve anything. He pushes his way rather than swims along with the tide. Even at school, as an adolescent, he is determinate, hard working and ambitious to achieve distinction. He is seen near the beginning of the book taking a solitary training run to improve his performance at the school games. Though he hards himself up he never reaches the semifinals at the games played in school. He sweats whereas his school-mates like Stringham and Jenkins take the steps with inborn ease. His school mates have superiority over him. It is a superiority which arises in part from class, (Stringham's mother was once married to Lord Warrington) in part from money (Stringham's family has the reputation of great wealth and Templer's is 'not poor') and in part appearance. Widmerpool is ugly. He is treated with con<sup>n</sup>tempt at school and appears to be dull. Against Stringham and Templer he seems blighted. In this book very few aspects of his character become manifest, though he is a fully developed character in the subsequent books of the novel. Gradualism in the development of characters is possible in the multi-volume novel. In this book his position is inferior to that of Templer and Stringham. But in subsequent books time brings about changes in their respective positions. Their positions change. He continues to rise in worldly matters-business,

politics, army whereas Templer's and Stringham's diminish, but his basic nature remains the same through<sup>out</sup> the novel. Time will play tricks with superficials - comparative power, wealth, rank but cannot touch the essentials. The dance will force participants to change their positions, but it cannot change their worth. Throughout the novel Widmerpool will be fool or villain; Stringham, Jenkins and Templer variously are flawed heroes. Near the start of this book, he is described by Jenkins as hopelessly awkward, as an automaton with defective machinery; a fish-like creature, someone doomed to struggle for distinctions which he would never achieve. The reader who takes the narrator's impressions of him in this book for truth would foresee Stringham and Templer moving easily towards success in later life, while Widmerpool flounders in hard-working mediocrity. But the music is to change, and the time reverses their respective positions, but the basic nature remains the same. Powell has a classical belief that the basic nature remains constant though the superficial aspects may undergo change. Even at school Widmerpool gets Akworth sacked by intercepting the homosexual note and showing it to Le Bas. James Tucker thinks that Widmerpool's basic evil is callousness, lacking humanity he cannot reach tolerance or decency, only to humbug. At first his faults reveal themselves in the smallscale almost permissible savageries of those disadvantaged and frantic for career advancement;

later from the same roots they blossom to a murderous disregard for others.<sup>9</sup> As an adult Widmerpool, in later books of the novel, uses his steamroller will to flatten everything in the way of his own material success. He was heavily built. His thick lips and metal-rimmed spectacles gave his face an aggrieved expression. There was something comfortless and inelegant in his appearance. His status was not high. He had no colours, and although far from being a <sup>u</sup>dance, there was nothing notable about his work at school. He sounded grotesque. Here is an example of Widmerpool's desire for recognition. Once while he was at school; Budd, the captain of cricket team, missed the target and hit over-ripe banana on Widmerpool's face. Budd said, "sorry, Widmerpool. That banana was not intended for you," At that time Stringham observed <sup>s</sup>lavish look coming into his face. Widmerpool became astonished to hear himself addressed by name so politely by a person no less than the captain of the Eleven. Widmerpool said, "I do not mind at all, Budd. It does not matter in the least." Templer suspects whether he is a human being at all. Thus he is treated contemptuously at school for being grotesque. Even after seeing his housemaster Le Bas being led off by the police, he kept himself behind the hedge. He did not want to get mixed up with anything awkward, as he said. He has no regard for others. After leaving school he came to France with



determination to learn French. Jenkins and Widmerpool happen to be the guests of Leroys in Touraine. Jenkins perceives change in Widmerpool. He had tidied himself up a little since leaving school though there was still a kind of exotic drabness about his appearance. Jenkins still judges him with the same contemptuous standards as he and his friends Stringham and Templer used to judge him at school. Widmerpool dictated Jenkins that they were supposed to talk French there. While at school, most of the time Widmerpool was alone and even when he walked with other boys he seemed in some way separate from them. At Le Grenadiere he had made himself an accepted, if not specially popular figure in the circle. No one was looking upon him as the oddity here as he had been regarded at school. He used to work hard at the language and could carry on a conversation adequately in French. Jenkins found that he had no interest in anything that could not be labelled as in some way important. His determination to learn French set an example from which Jenkins fell lamentably short. In his rigid application to the purpose for which he came to France, he was the most satisfactory of Madame Leroy's boarders. Though Widmerpool was articled to a firm of solicitors, he looked to wider horizons - business and politics, and reproached Jenkins for not adopting serious attitude to life and not having career plans. The tennis-court episode revealed to Jenkins a quite another side of Widmerpool's character : an unsuspected

strength of personality and power of negotiation. Widmerpool's negotiation brought about reconciliation between fighting Monsieur Lundquist and Monsieur Orn. Though Jenkins was there, he could not understand how to put them to right. Though Widmerpool was indelicate, inelegant, egoist and grotesque; he was ambitious and determined to achieve worldly success. In this book his villainy is not revealed. Ambition, political excess and adultery; these three principal frailties are covered in the novel. The beginnings of them appear in this first book.

Bernard Bergonzi thinks that against Widmerpool and the forces he represents is set initially, Charles Stringham, a young man of sensibility, wit and charm.<sup>10</sup> In the early stages of the novel the elegant Stringham seems immeasurably superior person to the gross and pompous Widmerpool. But by degrees their relative positions change, as Stringham is undermined by his own weaknesses, becoming an alcoholic and having to be looked after by a former governess, Miss Weedon; while Widmerpool continues to exert his iron will.

According to Arthur Mizener the novel's main theme is the opposition between men of will and men of imagination, an opposition that Jenkins first poses as that between Widmerpool and Stringham.<sup>11</sup> As a schoolboy, Widmerpool, is both fatty and clumsy. But he is nevertheless compulsive achiever, and as an adult uses his steamroller will to

flatten everything in the way of his own material success. Stringham is the offspring of an Edwardian plutocracy glutted on South African wealth, a man with a social position to which no social function adheres. He has both great personal charm and gifts. To the young Jenkins, Stringham has been born to win the glittering prizes his society offers. But when Widmerpool triumphs over Stringham by putting him to bed at the end of The Acceptance World, suggests to the young Jenkins a 'whole social upheaval'.<sup>12</sup> Thus Widmerpool, once derided, had become in some way a person of authority.

Arthur Mizener thinks that the novel's world is 'nearly transformed by Widmerpools though still haunted by Stringhams,<sup>13</sup> a world in which the plodding technocrat replaces the graceful aristocrat'. This description implies that the novel depends on a myth of decline in which Widmerpools replace Stringhams in positions of social power and authority.

But Michael Gora in his book The English Novel at the Mid-Century argues that Anthony Powell considered events in his novels from the point of <sup>view of</sup> development and could not subscribe to such a myth; for the present, for Powell, not only revises one's understanding of the past but is itself a 'corollary' of it.<sup>14</sup> According to him Arthur Mizener sees

Powell's elaborate reconstruction of the past in terms of the sort of historical novel in which two incompatible social types stand opposed to one another, the one giving way to the other as the past makes the present. Michael Gora further argues that Powell does not suggest that the one excludes the other, but rather suggests their continued coexistence.

Bernard Bergonzi holds that Powell's novel A Dance To The Music Of Time is essentially a comedy and Powell has always been sceptical about myths of catastrophe.<sup>15</sup>

Thus Powell does not rely on myths like modernist novelists. He, like a social comedian and naturalist, tries to comprehend objectively the incomprehensible objective world. He describes and chronicles the middle class English Society and its world between two great world Wars.

Widmerpool makes his way through sheer will. He is an egoist and has an urge for power and lacks interest in people. Arthur Mizener thinks that Widmerpool's nature is a peculiarly twentieth century phenomenon.<sup>16</sup> The present era, in Powell's view, provides Widmerpool with very favourable opportunities and becomes hero of our time. For Powell, Widmerpool represents in an unusually pure form the power of the will; he is insensitive, pompous, socially inept and monstrously selfish; yet he possesses an almost demonic

energy and an unstoppable urge to succeed.

Jenkins is the narrator and the protagonist of the novel. But earlier books and especially in this first one, he is more an observer and less a participant. He is not in any simple sense the hero of the novel. He does not put before us simply a series of adventures in which he figures, but describes incidents or relationships and reflects upon them. He is as well a participant in the events described. He observes, comments and reminisces. It is the degree of tilt towards comments and retrospective judgement which makes Jenkins exceptional.

In this book Uncle Giles, the brother of Nicholas's father; the structuring and shaping device, visits Nicholas twice, first at school and then in London. Between these two cheerless meetings with Uncle Giles, Jenkins has observed vivid changes in others and believes that a new epoch is starting for himself. Powell has posted his hero to a transit camp. It is a situation which is painful, confusing, absurd and anxious between late youth and full adulthood. While at school he neither dissipates his life like Stringham and Templer nor sweats like Widmerpool to achieve something. No excess touches him. He is not by nature an aggressive figure of a recognisable upper-class English type. He is endowed with considerable self-control and

calmness and has a notable taste for understatement. Frederick R. Karl points out that Nicholas is ' a cool cat, a hip operator.'<sup>17</sup> .

Though Nicholas comes to see and understands what goes on round him he remains personally insulated from much of it. Throughout the novel he avoids the worst features of ambition, arrogance and boring earnestness. In contrast to Widerpool, Nicholas almost never gets into a sweat, not in this book or later. His easy going coolness is a traditional public school mannerism, though some pupils and members of the staff miss it. Nicholas and his friends Templer and Stringham deride Widerpool's push and plod. This Nicholas's contempt for the sort of push and plod represented by Widerpool derives from admiration for an elegant casualness possible only to the well off insider.

Decency, dignity, restraint and humanity attend Jenkins. He felt it would be beneath his dignity to discuss, the family affairs of his friend Stringham, with someone like Widmerpool and cut short the conversation with Widmerpool who was telling about Ststringham's mother's divorce. After coming from France, at the university he discloses to Stringham his feelings for Suzette, the neice of Madam Leroy. But he does not tell him anything about his emotions for Jean Templer, a sister of his and Stringham's friend Peter Templer. Nicholas's sense of proportion is

achieved from intelligence, artistic sensibility and good-heartedness. This sense of proportion will keep him intact when other members of his group fall disastrously. Throughout the novel it seems to save him from excess and from emotional aridity.

Nicholas's relationship with Jean Templer never reaches beyond a warm thought or two in this book. This chimes his indeterminate sexual development. After school and before going to university, he goes to learn French with Leroys, friends of his father, at Le Arenadiere, a house in Touraine. It is here that Widmerpool, also a guest, reproaches Nicholas for having no properly serious career plans. Nicholas finds himself attracted to Suzette, a niece of the Leroys, but does little about this until near the end of his stay in France. He decides that he should adopt some sort of attitude to life. He plans to make a love declaration to Suzette on a day of his departure and in this admittedly imperfect fashion, achieves a advance from his 'state of chronic inaction'. It is in that comic scene he gets things wrong, and in his excitement kissed Miss Pecksniff's snuffers, in the passage, when she went upstairs to bed; meaning to have kissed her hand but missing it. He delivers the avowal prepared for Suzette to another woman. Madame Dubisson has borrowed Suzette's straw hat and, seeing her from behind, Nicholas uses it to make

the wrong identification. Having once begun his steamy declaration he feels compelled to go on, although immediately aware <sup>d</sup>tht he has blundered<sup>n</sup>, tells Madame Dubisson that she has brought romance to his stay. It is, of course, the ambiguous advance of Nicholas - an impression of lingering childhood seen against signs of emergence as an adult. Nicholas is in several senses, and above all the sexual, one of life's late developers. His two school friends Templer and Stringham - both slightly older, have left him behind. Although he does not get too far in this volume, Nicholas reveals a fair amount of his character in later books. Innocence sets him apart. Apartness or detachment, non involvement, distance-attend him throughout the series, of course, innocence fades or perhaps it changes nature. This process is already at work in this first volume of the novel. The theme of the book is the passing of youthful preoccupations and their replacement by the corrupt values of the adult world.

Nicholas's actions, thoughts, attitudes and emotions are given to us through the filter of retrospection and which are therefore short of vividness, actuality and suspense. There is self-effacement in Jenkins's character. Though he was present at the tennis court scene, he did nothing to bring about a reconciliation between quarrelling Lundquist and Orn. Nicholas emerges as a tentative often



baffled, sometimes defeated central figure. James Tucker thinks that this kind of character is current in the post-modernist novel<sup>18</sup> because the post modernist novelists believe that he mirrors many of his contemporaries. Nobody could deny that there is a pallor about the character of the younger Nicholas. Some people are by nature pale. Emotional disturbance is produced by Jean and Suzette in Jenkins. His position in the matter seemed to himself to be misty: half pleasant and half-melancholy. When Jenkins and Suzette were together in the summer-house and their hands together, he could not manage to turn the chance to some account. Like most of the post modernist novelists, their narrators and protagonists lack the confidence enjoyed by the modernist novelists and their protagonists.

In this book Powell gives degeneration at the university. It is suggested that Sillery, the university don, instead of concentrating on his tutorial duties and work, interferes in other people's business. His one or two pupils used to complain that they did not receive even adequate tuition. Short, a second year man at Sillery's college, who introduced Jenkins to Sillery and his tea parties, informed Jenkins that Sillery's parties had for years played an established role in the life of the university. Sillery caused inconvenience<sup>en</sup> to, fellow don, Brightman through Clay, the son of a consul in the Levant. To Short Sillery was a

politically-minded cardinal of the academic world 'never taking his tea without an intrigue; forever plotting behind arras'. Quiggin, the scholar, expressed<sup>S</sup><sub>A</sub> his moral indignation that every one at the university seemed interested in messing about with some game or other or joining some society or club, or sitting up all night drinking too much. He thought that people came to the university to study, not to booze and gas all the time. Sillery agreed with him that they all fell woefully short of his standards and expectations.

This book refers to English society's political shift to the Le<sup>ft</sup> in 1920s. Sillery was Right socially and politically veered increasingly to the Left. Short, like a number of young men of that period, was a Liberal. Sillery, Short informed to Jenkins, was a keen propagandist for the League of Nations, Czechoslovakia, and Mr. Gandhi, and was influenced by the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Quiggin was a Marxist. This book also referred to the economic world in 1920s and the General Strike in 1926. After school and before going to university, Jenkins visits Stringham's and Templer's homes. Powell has strategically placed these visits close to each other. These sections enable Powell to exercise one of his chief accomplishments, the portrayal of English social distinction, crucial differences between levels of the upper class. Stringham's

home near Berkeley square has about it the feel of 'old money'. Buster Foxe is the current husband of Stringham's mother. His behaviour is unsatisfactory. There is some tension at their home. At the Templers', on the other hand, business is the thing. Peter had spent a month or two in Amsterdam for the business enterprise. Peter's father Mr. Templer and Sunny Farebrother, his friend and business partner, always discuss business matters in Templers' house. Sunny Farebrother is supposed to have done well in the War. He is subjugated by Mr. Templer. His demeanour was ingratiating. With folded hands and head bent, he was listening attentively, humbly - almost as if his life depended on it - to the words that Mr. Templer was speaking. Jenkins imagined him cavalryman unable to support the expenses of his regiment, unwillingly became a stockbroker or an agent for some firm in the city to make two ends meet. He was treated with little considerations by the Templers.

Powell gives us the superficial marital relationships through the example of Babs and Jimmy Stripling, and the direct and indirect effects of the First World War on human relations. Jimmy Stripling, the racing motorist, who could not take part in the war because of his poor health; persuaded Babs to run away with him while her husband was at the front. Unfortunate from Stripling's point of view that his forerunner's conduct was gallant and this

fact had left him with hatred for all who had served in the armed forces. In consequence of this attitude, he gave an impression of hostility towards Sunny Farebrother. In spite of the circumstances of their marriage, outward relations between the Striplings were cool, almost formal and the link which seemed to bind them together was vested in the person of their friend Lady McReith, the widow of Mr. Templer's friend.

Thus in this book Powell metonymically describes English middle-class society and traces the social and political changes in the 1920s as social comedian and naturalist. In characterisation and plot construction, Powell turned to the nineteenth century tradition instead of following his modernist predecessors who employed the stream of consciousness technique, described 'the adventures of interiority' of their characters, concentrated on the 'life by values' and gave precedence to the soul over the world. The treatment of their characters was subjective. G.U. Ellis argues that Powell maintains a complete objectivity of approach to his characters<sup>19</sup>. Powell cares only for 'life in time', for the world and not for the soul. Templer and Stringham are almost types in a social comedy. They are representatives of modern middle-class English society and not individualized characters. Only Widmerpool is a fully developed character. Arthur Mizener thinks that the

portrayal of Widmerpool proves that even in the twentieth century characters can be drawn in traditional way.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the modernist novelists who cut off the souls of their characters from the world and describe the stream of consciousness of their characters, Powell portrays his men and women in the society.

In plot construction, Powell deviates from the modernist practice. He follows 'the logic of linearity' of realist novelist. Throughout his novelistic career he maintains the commitment to 'the point of view of development' - one moment leading into another, and another, a 'series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged' to which 'life by values' is irrelevant. Powell's interest lies in 'Truth Unveiled by Time'. Powell lacks modernist confidence in the soul's ability to reshape the world. He wants to comprehend an objective world whose operations seem incomprehensible, so requires not memory's attempt to bend the world to the soul, so much as the sheer passage of time, of which that memory is an indication. "Truth is unveiled by Time - by the world and not the soul. Powell uses memory because he needs it to suggest the pattern to Jenkins's experience. But that pattern lies not in Jenkins's subjective ordering of events, but in the objective world itself.

Powell, like the modernist, builds his work upon a metaphor. He uses the image of Poussin's painting of <sup>S</sup> seasons at the beginning of the novel. Michael Gora thinks that Powell's use of metaphor is not to circumvent what Malcolm Bradbury calls the 'linear logic taken from story or history', but to understand the operations of time's inescapable linearity.<sup>21</sup> For Powell that linearity makes everyone one of 'those to whom things are done'. The dancers cannot control the melody to which they dance; nor, having once begun to dance, they can control each individual step. The past crowds them along. Each step grows not out of conscious volition, but is only a 'corollary' of the step before, a part of the pattern behind one's developing experience. Thus in many ways A Dance To The Music Of Time and subsequently A Question Of Upbringing are different from the modernist novel.