Abstract

CULTURE AND 'DISSOCIATION OF SENSIBILITY' IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AND MATTHEW ARNOLD, WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO CARLYLE AND HIS SO-CALLED "CONDITION-OF-ENGLAND QUESTION."

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The study explores the hypothesis that the High Victorian ideal of Culture, and Carlyle's response to his own Condition-of-England question, represent efforts to combat, in roughly opposite ways, what T.S.Eliot termed 'dissociation of sensibility.' It offers an explanation of the persistent impulse towards holistic views of society in the face of technological and social forces moving ever more decisively in the opposite direction.

Chapter One defends the intelligibility and consistency of 'dissociation' in relation to influential criticisms by F.W.Bateson and Frank Kermode. The apparent anomalies these critics point to are explained by examining the source of the concept in Eliot's study of F.H.Bradley, and suggesting the relation of 'dissociation' to arguments of Jack Goody and Ian Watt concerning the interaction between oral and literate culture.

Chapter Two outlines some of the dimensions of 'dissociation' in the nineteenth century: its relation to romantic notions concerning the vision of the child, to various theoretical expositions of the relation between thought and feeling, and to accounts of the personal experience of 'dissociation' given by Darwin and J.S.Mill.

Chapter Three examines what some of his contemporaries felt to be Carlyle's impractical response to the Condition-of-England, showing it to be essentially an extrapolation of his own experience of the romantic revolution as described in Sartor Resartus and adumbrated in the early essays. Carlyle's tussle with anomy and heroic emergence into the 'Everlasting YEA' are discussed as a revulsion from literate consciousness.

Chapter Four suggests how Newman's idea of harmonious intellectual cultivation depends on the individual maintaining a proper balance between 'implicit' and 'explicit' thought. Newman's account of the relation between these modes in the Grammar of Assent is related to the educational system he expounds in his educational writings.

Chapter Five shows how Arnold's emphasis on intellectual consciousness constantly threatens to destabilise his theory of Culture and turn it into a merely subjective ideal. The chapter ends by suggesting how the philosophy of F.H. Bradley tends to heal the breach between consciousness and experience, providing a basis for Eliot's own understanding of the unified sensibility.

The Conclusion affirms the value of 'dissociation' as a means of illuminating the holistic impulse, which might otherwise be conceptually unassailable.

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Abbreviations for Primary Texts

'Arnold, Works' refers to The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold. Edited by R.H.Super. 11 vols Ann Arbor:University of Michigan Press, 1960-77.

'Carlyle, Works' refers to The Works of Thomas Carlyle. Centenary Edition. Edited by H.D.Traill. 30 vols. London:Chapman and Hall Limited, 1896-99.

Shorter Poems

In references to shorter poems, small Roman numerals refer to stanza numbers.

INTRODUCTION

The Approach

This study sets out to offer an explanation of the High Victorian ideal of 'Culture' in terms suggested by T.S. Eliot's notion of 'dissociation of sensibility.' Perhaps the best way to introduce the particular approach is to place it in relation to two main trends in the study of Victorian prose. In his book Culture and Society:1780-1950 (1958), Raymond Williams brought a fresh impulse to studies dealing with the artistic and intellectual response to social change. His method was to examine shifts in the meanings and relationships of certain nodal words: 'Industry,' 'Democracy,' 'Class,' 'Art' and 'Culture.' As Williams points out, "There is in fact a general pattern of change in these words, and this can be used as a special kind of map by which it is possible to look again at those wider changes in life and thought to which the changes in language evidently refer."[1] In this kind of approach, the selected literature is examined primarily as expressing changes in society.

A second trend, less broadly based, is exemplified in John Holloway's pioneering study The Victorian Sage (1953), the general stance of which is reflected in the book's subtitle, Studies in Argument. Holloway's book

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[1]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society:1780-1950 (London:Chatto & Windus, 1958), xiii.

accomplished two related things. By emphasising the 'art' of Victorian prose ('art' in the sense both of aesthetic intention and rhetorical strategy) it brought the field within the aegis of the New Criticism, summoning attention to argumentative devices, specific textures and figurative details in the writing; and by so stressing the appreciation of prose for its intrinsic qualities, leaving considerations of the validity or the general accessibility of the convictions expressed to one side, the approach effectively divorced the 'literary' study of Victorian prose writers from their social sources and context. The main question here concerns the very identification of writers such as Carlyle, Newman and Arnold as "sages": sage and poet being opposed, in Holloway's conception, to the philosopher and the scientist.[1]

No one would, I imagine, quarrel with these two approaches as legitimate (if partial) academic postures designed to bring out particular aspects of the writing. But we have to consider whether this very tension between literature viewed as a social document and literature viewed as an aesthetic or rhetorical construct does not in fact mean that an important dynamic actually helping to shape Victorian literature is thereby left out of the account.

On the one hand there is the open, generous stance

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[1]John Holloway, The Victorian Sage:Studies in Argument (London:Macmillan & Co.,Ltd.,1953) 1-20. The tendency of Holloway's approach matures in a book such as The Art of Victorian Prose,edited by George Levine and William Madden, where the introductory essay implies that, having lost its extrinsic validity, this large body of prose is best studied, from a literary point of view, in the framework of "an expressionist aesthetic in which all language is self-expression - that is, art." (George Levine and William Madden, eds., The Art of Victorian Prose [New York: Oxford University Press, 1968] , xiv.)

of much of this writing, embracing the assumption that the reader is potentially receptive to the world view it expresses. The sages accept that there is an underlying community of thought, feeling, belief and right judgment which has simply to be clarified and stimulated in the reader in order to elicit what Newman calls his "real assent": that ultimate affirmation of head and heart which is the life-blood of the Victorian sage.[1] It should not be forgotten that these prose writers produced their work when the prospect of a unified, holistic vision of man and his society had not yet disintegrated into a multiplicity of specialisms. In the words of G.M. Young, England had not yet passed "through the gateway of the Competitive Examination . . . out into the Waste Land of Experts, each knowing so much about so little that he can neither be contradicted nor is worth contradicting."[2] This trend took hold later, in the sixties and seventies; but the Victorian sage belongs essentially to an older intellectual milieu, to that state of affairs where:

> Science and poetry, business and adventure, religion and politics are not yet divided into separate, professional avocations; but they are thrown together in an irregular, massive synthesis, of which the keynotes still are competence and responsibility, a general competence not always distinguishable from a general amateurishness, a universal responsibility sometimes declining into universal self-importance.[3]

It is this fact of the intellectual milieu which makes the positivistic, aesthetic or rhetorical approach to

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[1] Ibid., 6-8.

[2] G.M. Young, Victorian England:Portrait of an Age (London:Oxford University Press,1936), 160.

[3] Ibid., 102.

the literary study of Victorian prose somewhat anomalous. Such an approach stands in a direct line of descent from the aestheticism of Pater, who, we remember, characterised Newman's Idea of a University as "the perfect handling of a theory."[1] But plainly the sages felt their cause to be rooted in common experience - not in theory.

On the other hand, the sages issue the individualistic, romantic claim to the authority of a privileged vision. This vision is 'open' only to readers of sound heart and good judgment. Conversely - so the claim goes - if the reader remains unimpressed and unconvinced the fault lies in his own moral and intellectual dullness.

While this claim to privileged insight is itself a social fact , it is also something which needs to be examined in its own terms. The Victorian sages point to a vision of the world which is not fully congruent with external society. In a degree, they each claim a unique isolation from "society" which the study of literature as a social document must generally underplay. Their views are not those of "society": this would be their response to Raymond Williams's conclusion that the social critiques of the sages represent the attempt to preserve traditional elitist minority standards in an increasingly democratic society.[2] Quite clearly this was not the overt intention of these writers. They wanted the standards, yes, and they were perfectly prepared to admit on purely practical grounds that, however desirable, it was not possible to offer these standards to the whole of

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[1]Walter Pater, "Style," in Appreciations with an Essay on Style (London:Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1910), 18.

[2]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 296.

society; but they wanted to. This is the important point. To a man they wished to commit the warm-hearted fallacy against which T.S. Eliot warned the twentieth century, when he wrote:

> A good deal of confusion could be avoided, if we refrained from setting before the group, what can be the aim only of the individual; and before society as a whole, what can be the aim only of a group.[1]

The sages were elitists, but purely in accordance with the quotidian limitations of humanity (however naive this may sound to post-Marxian ears). What the 'societal' approach to literature often fails to recognise is that these men had at the centre of their vision, informing their social views, an ideal of human nature: not "man in society," the nineteenth century sociological conception, but man still grounded in general ideas about human nature and ratified by personal experience.

Carlyle, Newman and Arnold are each disposed to treat society as if it were merely the human personality writ large. Of course there were vast discrepancies to be allowed for in terms of class, educational attainments, regionalisms and nationalisms, but however much the fact of dissension forced itself upon the attention, the idea that wholeness and integrity in the individual would be expressed in a whole and integrated society remained supremely compelling. These writers could still appeal to a congruence between the individual human sensibility and the collective sensibility of their readers. Eliot makes the point in connection with Matthew Arnold's Culture and Anarchy:

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[1]T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture (London:Faber and Faber Limited, 1948), 22.

> Arnold is concerned primarily with the individual and the 'perfection' at which he should aim. It is true that in his famous classification of 'Barbarians, Philistines, Populace' he concerns himself with a critique of classes; but his criticism is confined to an indictment of these classes for their shortcomings, and does not proceed to consider what should be the proper function or 'perfection' of each class. The effect, therefore, is to exhort the individual who would attain the peculiar kind of'perfection' which Arnold calls 'culture', to rise superior to the limitations of any class, rather than to realise its highest attainable ideals.[1]

Each of the writers, Carlyle, Newman and Arnold, is at pains to preserve the dominion of the individual sensibility in the face of the intellectual and material conditions prevailing in the circumambient society. This concern takes the form of the assertion that the individual has the capacity to know absolutely, or to 'believe,' and it offers the possibility of healing the individual sensibility (making it 'whole'), after which the way is open for the regeneration of society.

The threat to wholeness, however it has come to be entrenched in the body politic, is essentially one which must first be met in the individual sensibility. And so we come to the hypothesis upon which this study is based; namely, that the ideal of Culture may best be understood as an attempt to counter what T.S. Eliot called 'dissociation of sensibility.' Eliot is not only a very late romantic (as argued persuasively by C.K. Stead,[2] among others), but if one considers his social criticism it is apparent he is also very much a left-over eminent Victorian. Despite a high level of qualification, Notes towards the Definition of Culture still

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[1] Ibid.

[2] C.K. Stead, The New Poetic:Yeats to Eliot (London:Hutchinson of London,1964).

savours of Arnold, while "Tradition and the Individual Talent" is thoroughly reminiscent of Newman's paper on "A Nation's Classics and their Effects," included in the Idea of a University. Yet it is not on these grounds alone, nor yet in the case of Newman because of the Anglo-Catholic connection, that one places Eliot in a direct line of descent from the Victorian prose writers. It is on the basis of his tortured concern for unity and wholeness in men and in society, and his efforts to promote and clarify these ends through his writings - perhaps too in his awareness of failure - that the affinity finds its ultimate sanction. Properly understood, Eliot's controversial coinage 'dissociation of sensibility' offers a means of explicating the complicated shift from a sense of objective wholeness in man and his society, to the pursuit of an internal wholeness by the individual bent on reforming and elevating a hostile society.

The Limits of 'Explanation'

Since this study offers an explanation of the High Victorian ideal of Culture, it will be useful to indicate briefly the notion of explanation the study sets out to fulfil. The words 'description,' 'interpretation' and 'explanation' often refer to differing sorts of literary investigation. Most studies employ elements of all three. Yet the differences between them are notoriously indefinite - more like the gradations of colours in a spectrum, for instance, than those between tablets in a box of water-

colours.

Ideally, 'description' presumes objectivity. The investigation should adhere to the 'givenness' of the subject matter, without distortion or falsification. Description implies complete confidence in the adequacy of the approach. All substantive attention (as distinct from considerations of expository technique) is directed to the material scrutinised: the scrutiny itself is held to be transparent. With 'interpretation' a secondary focus of attention develops as the scrutiny itself begins to claim some substantive importance. Even though a particular interpretation may commend itself on grounds of superior insight, cogency or inclusiveness, there remains a peripheral awareness of other possible points of view - however inadequate or inconsequential these seem.

The modulation from 'interpretation' to 'explanation' is less simple. The problem is to define a sensible conceptual demarcation between the legitimate flexibility inherent in the idea of interpretation, and the more radical freedom suggested by 'explanation. Behind the notion of explanation lies the assumption that artists and thinkers do not always put their work forward with a full realisation either of its implications or of the impulses underlying their efforts. It supposes that supplementary insight or information puts the subject in a new light - one which transforms our view of it beyond the limits appropriate to interpretation. The present study takes the view that explanation differs from interpretation in that it goes beyond the limits suggested by the writer's conscious intention. Of course 'intentionalism' raises its (by now) hoary head, and the phrase "conscious intention" must be

duly qualified by adding "as revealed in his writings"; but whatever the practical and even philosophical difficulties involved in the idea of determining an author's intention, there remains a bedrock conviction that interpretation is about examining and weighing the evidence, in its historical context, in order to achieve a balanced view of what, in his own terms, an author is saying. With an explanation, however, this tacit bond of complicity in the assumptions of an author and his age may be suspended in favour of a more radical reappraisal deriving its validity equally from a capacity to elucidate the material under scrutiny, and its own intrinsic meaningfulness.

The stipulation that explanatory validity should derive equally - perhaps 'evenly' would be a better word - from an explanation's inner coherence and from its cogency in context, is not arbitrary. Although an explanation may go beyond the conscious intentions of an author, by examining his work from its own standpoint, there remains a clear demand to adhere to the 'givenness' of the work (hence the effort in what follows to supply substantial and representative quotations in support of the argument). Without such a stipulation an 'explanation' might simply supplant, rather than illumine, its subject. This possibility seems to inhere in the notion of explanation put forward by Basil Willey in his introduction to <u>The Seventeenth Century Background</u>:

> 'Explanation' may perhaps be roughly defined as a restatement of something - event, theory, doctrine, etc. - in terms of the current interests and assumptions. It satisfies, as explanation, because it appeals to that particular set of assumptions, as superseding those of a past age or of a former state of mind. Thus it is necessary, if an explanation is to seem satisfactory, that its terms should seem

ultimate, incapable of further analysis.[1]

Willey's formulation suggests that explanation supersedes the original statement and that its satisfactoriness rests largely on its independent validity. The present study prefers to adopt an intrinsic view of explanation, more in accord with explanation as characterised by A.N.Whitehead in the course of a defence of romantic poetry:

> . . . the sheer statement, of what things are, may contain elements of why things are. Such elements may be expected to refer to depths beyond anything which we can grasp with a clear apprehension. In a sense, all explanation must end in an ultimate arbitrariness. My demand is, that the ultimate arbitrariness of matter of fact from which our formulation starts should disclose the same principles of reality, which we dimly discern stretching away into regions beyond our explicit powers of discernment.[2]

It is "explanation" in this sense, that the present study sets out to provide.

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[1]Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion (London:Chatto and Windus,1967), 2-3.

[2]A.N.Whitehead, Science and the Modern World (Cambridge University Press,1933), 115.

CHAPTER I

DISSOCIATION OF SENSIBILITY

Introduction to the Concept

In an essay entitled "The Problem of Spiritual Authority in the Nineteenth Century," Northrop Frye has written:

> The aspect of Victorian literature represented by such names as Carlyle, Mill, Newman, and Arnold seems to me one of the seminal developments in English culture, ranking with Shakespeare and Milton, if not in literary merit, at least in many other kinds of importance.[1]

In one respect, this remark typifies the elevated status enjoyed by the "Victorian Sage" since John Holloway wrote his book in the nineteen-fifties. But it is rare to find a sentence which brings together with such little apparent discomfort, Shakespeare and Milton on the one hand, and those large figures of the nineteenth century on the other. We are not accustomed to making the juxtaposition even when the question of literary merit is pre-empted. Something urges that such disparate figures could only be "yoked by violence." They subsist within such radically different fields of reference.

This response has two sides to it. The Victorians were themselves so self-consciously separated from "the Past"

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[1]Northrop Frye, "The Problem of Spiritual Authority in the Nineteenth Century," in The Stubborn Structure:Essays on Criticism and Society (London:Methuen and Co Ltd,1970), 241.

that to stress a discernible continuity between past and present is to controvert the age's own judgment of itself.[1] Nevertheless it must be remembered that for the Victorians "the Past" is not the eighteenth century, despite a vigorous reaction against the Enlightenment in some quarters. Nor is it the Renaissance. Only the Middle Ages call forth the full resonance of the nineteenth-century notion of "the Past" - a feeling best exemplified, perhaps, in Carlyle's Past and Present.

The other side of this sense that to juxtapose Shakespeare and Mill must be improper concerns the present century. Carlyle, Mill and the others have about them a definite flavour of the modern: we can feel a slightly musty kinship with the full range of their thought. So far as is apparent, the twentieth century has added relatively little to the social and political assumptions of the nineteenth-century thinkers, and even the general tenor of present day existence harks back to the last century in many easily recognisable features. Such considerations point in the direction of Eustace Pilbrow's remark that "Nine English traditions out of ten, . . . , date from the latter half of the nineteenth century."[2] In short, our

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[1]John Stuart Mill exemplifies this attitude very clearly in his diagnostic piece, "The Spirit of the Age." Discussing the marked self-consciousness of the young century he observes: "Before men begin to think much and long on the peculiarities of their own times, they must have begun to think that those times are, or are destined to be, distinguished in a very remarkable manner from the times which preceded them. . . ." (John Stuart Mill, "The Spirit of the Age." No. 1. Examiner, January 9, 1831, 20.

[2]C.P.Snow, The Masters, in Vol.II of Strangers and Brothers, Omnibus Edition (3 vols.;London:Macmillan, 1972), 266.

kinship with the Victorians stems from a realisation that whatever differences separate us, the disjunction with preceding centuries is far more profound.

Such a recognition would seem to imply some kind of major transformation separating, say, Newman from Milton or Carlyle from Sir Thomas More - a supposition which, for the student of literature at least, may not be altogether satisfied by gestures towards dramatic changes in social, industrial and political organisation. Although the industrial developments of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or the French Revolution, to name the most obvious examples, leap to mind as quite momentous influences on the changing character and content of literary expression, a persuasion remains that literature has itself fostered a revolution: one which in a strange way reflects or parallels these external social and political developments, but is not wholly to be explained through them - nor indeed through a network of 'literary' influences.

One has to be careful employing the word 'revolution': the notion is as convenient on paper as it is problematic in actual manifestation. So often what is eagerly portrayed as a thoroughgoing revolution reveals itself on closer investigation as a rather temperate tracery of small adjustments in values and outlook, nourished, among other factors, by a sturdy umbilical cord stretching to the Renaissance and thence to Rome and to Greece. Nevertheless, one attempt at defining the existence of an important 'literary' rift between the Renaissance and the Victorians continues to stimulate thought and controversy, and it is here that our elucidation of the ideal of Culture may profitably begin.

Despite pervasive disquiet as to its provenance and precise meaning - a disquiet shared even by its originator - the phrase 'dissociation of sensibility' continues to enjoy considerable vogue in critical discussion. But it has lost the commanding incisiveness it once seemed to promise. Introduced by T.S.Eliot in his essay on "The Metaphysical Poets" in 1921, the idea seemed at first to strike a lost chord in the intellectual diapason. Eliot himself evinced modest surprise at the eagerness with which historians and literary critics seized upon his theory, and there can be little doubt that its success far surpassed his initial estimate of its importance. Whatever weight one assigns to the element of sheer provocativeness in its off-the-cuff presentation, "Old Possum" could not have foreseen that such an apparently slender speculation would burgeon rapidly into an intellectual catch-all, pressed into service far beyond its original context.

In "The Metaphysical Poets" the phrase serves as a kind of semantic cameo, summing up Eliot's views concerning the evolution of English poetry in the course of the seventeenth century. Poets prior to the Revolution were, he avers, "the direct and normal development of the precedent age," and the reader is asked to consider whether "their virtue was not something permanently valuable,which subsequently disappeared, but ought not to have disappeared."[1]

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[1]T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in Selected Essays (3rd ed.; London:Faber and Faber Limited,1951), 285.

After comparing passages from Chapman and Lord Herbert of Cherbury with excerpts from Tennyson and Browning, Eliot continues:

> The difference is not a simple difference of degree between poets. It is something which had happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.
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> We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, or Cino. In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and Dryden.[1]

It seems generally to have been accepted that when he adumbrated this theory of dissociation, Eliot was thinking in terms of a widespread upheaval in what, for want of a better phrase, we might term the collective intellect. This view needs qualification. Years earlier, in the Essays in Criticism, Matthew Arnold had maintained that the great flowering of English literature in the Elizabethan age occurred when "English society at large was accessible to ideas, was permeated by them, was vivified by them, to a degree which has never been reached in England since" and

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[1] Ibid., 287-88.

that Shakespeare and his contemporaries "were powerfully upheld by the intellectual life of their nation":

> A few years afterwards the great English middle class, the kernel of the nation, the class whose intelligent sympathy upheld a Shakespeare, entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned on its spirit there for two hundred years.[1]

Undoubtedly Eliot's conception carries with it much of this Arnoldian flavour. However, Eliot's cautious yet still virile romantic belief in the artist's superior capacities militates against considering 'dissociation' merely as a general literary and intellectual decline. Certainly dissociation is "something which had happened to the mind of England" rather than "a simple difference of degree between poets"; but it must be remembered that for Eliot the mind of England is that constantly modified and modifying legacy of transactions between "tradition" and "the individual talent." His most famous essay, written in 1919, suggested that the poet "must be aware that the mind of Europe - the mind of his own country - a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind - is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, ..."[2] It follows that while a deteriorating intellectual milieu may be a debilitating contributory factor, 'dissociation of sensibility' represents a failure on the part of individuals to capitalise on some of the finer, most essential, aspects of the historical legacy. The poets have let down the tradition. This is evident both in Eliot's castigation of particular

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[1]Arnold, "Heinrich Heine," Works, III,121.

[2]T.S.Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in Selected Essays, 16.

poets, Milton and Dryden, for allegedly aggravating the dissociation, and in the very texture of the notion.

As presented in "The Metaphysical Poets," the unified sensibility is a uniquely poetic achievement. "When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work," Eliot writes, "it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary." The tone of this remark is distinctly a-historical. (We shall see why in a moment.) Having never enjoyed a unified sensibility, the ordinary man will hardly be troubled by its dissociation. Experience remains for him "chaotic, irregular, fragmentary," perhaps as much so at the height of the Renaissance as in the aftermath of the first world war. The Augustans, and Tennyson or Browning, have simply failed to apprehend and exploit the quality of poetic sensibility already achieved in the dramatic verse of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Thus, whatever its particular excellence, their poetry represents a slump towards the quotidian level of the common man, a move in the direction of the "chaotic, irregular, fragmentary."

In the course of poetic development something "permanently valuable" has been abandoned <u>en route</u>: in this case special qualities associated with the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean achievement. But there is no effort to excuse poets for inevitably following the trend of a general historical disturbance.[1] Romantic 'genius' may have subsided

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[1]The discussion is so firmly based in a critical approach to poetry that questions about the 'causes' of dissociation receive little attention. Obviously Eliot's references to the Revolution, like Arnold's, do more than merely assign a date to the upheaval. They may hint at a resemblance between dissociation in the body politic and

into consciously subdued 'talent,' but the implications are much the same: the responsibility for the course of poetic development rests squarely with "the individual talent." Eliot's emphasis on criticism as complementary to the creative act, his recognition of a need to master the historical legacy, as well as his keen appreciation of the values of craftsmanship, separate the artist from the common man as effectively as the most extravagant conceptions of romantic genius. According to this view, the undissociated sensibility was never a collective attribute of society but a hard-won achievement of the gifted few.

Twenty-six years after "The Metaphysical Poets," Eliot felt bound to come to terms with the fact that his theory had evolved into an heuristic scalpel which historians were employing on almost every aspect of the seventeenth century. It had become a minor "Key to all Mythologies."[1] In his last published statement on 'dissociation,' presented in the conciliatory lecture on Milton before the British Academy in 1947, Eliot responded to the diverse enthusiasms the idea had sparked off outside purely literary circles by bequeathing his problem child to the intellectual world at large. But in doing so his attitude was truthfully

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dissociation within the poetic sensibility, but Eliot's keen awareness of the awkwardness of this kind of assertion is plainly evident in his final pronouncement on dissociation in "Milton II", quoted later in this chapter. Neither is there an effort to link dissociation to a falling off from the great period of Anglican theology. Such concerns (though possibly latent here) surface later in Eliot's career. In "The Metaphysical Poets" Eliot's attention is focussed on the poetry as poetry: the historical diagnosis is tentative.

[1]George Eliot, Middlemarch:A Study of Provincial Life, ed. with an introduction and notes by Gordon S. Haight (Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company,1956), 62.

ambivalent. On the one hand he conceded that "the general affirmation represented by the phrase 'dissociation of sensibility' . . . retains some validity":[1] but then, having absolved Milton and Dryden from undue complicity in bringing the dissociation to pass, he went on to place the conception outside the competence of literary criticism, leaving the entire question of its cause or causes trembling on the brink of the conceptually unassailable:

> All we can say is, that something like this did happen; that it had something to do with the Civil War; that it would even be unwise to say it was caused by the Civil War, but that it is a consequence of the same causes which brought about the Civil War; that we must seek the causes in Europe, not in England alone; and for what the causes were, we may dig and dig until we get to a depth at which words and concepts fail us."[2]

However heuristically portentous and illuminating dissociation of sensibility' might be held to be, a notion with such illusive roots must remain vulnerable to criticism, and the early euphoria was inevitably challenged. The most influential expression of dissent came from F.W. Bateson writing in the first volume of the journal Essays in Criticism (1951). In the ensuing exchange with Eric Thompson, Bateson mounted an apparently devastating attack on Eliot's whole conception, finally concluding that 'dissociation of sensibility' is "a lovely mouthful, full of sound and fury, but unfortunately it doesn't signify anything."[3] The general air of caution which today surrounds

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[1]T.S.Eliot, "Milton II," in On Poetry and Poets (London:Faber and Faber Limited,1957), 152.

[2]Ibid.,153

[3]F.W.Bateson, "The Critical Forum:Dissociation of Sensibility," Essays in Criticism:A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism,II (April,1952), 214.

the phrase stems in large part from Bateson's views, and his arguments must therefore be considered.

The Meaning of 'Dissociation'

In reviewing the substance of the exchange between Bateson and Thompson, it becomes apparent that Bateson's case is, in many respects, an extremely shaky one. Dissociation, he argues:

> . . . is a misleading term to apply either to Augustan poetry or to its social sources. The poetry of Dryden and Pope is characterized by the tension between its constituent elements. If from one aspect the image and the concept can be said to be dissociated, from another they appear almost to collide. The Dunciad, for example, is vivid and abstract. It is surely these opposite 'pulls' of centrifugal and centripetal forces that is the crucial fact about the Augustan poet.[1]

Now this may well constitute fair criticism of "dissociation" as a term (the word does carry the connotation of total unrelatedness); but paradoxically, Bateson's evocation of the characteristics of Augustan poetry could well stand as a justification for the substance of Eliot's contention. By contrasting "dissociation" with his own term "tension," Bateson attributes to the former an absoluteness quite foreign to Eliot's conception. It is exactly the compound tension between image and concept, between the vivid and the abstract, between the centrifugal impulse of intellect and the centripetal pull of sensuous apprehension,

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[1] F.W.Bateson, "Contributions to a Dictionary of Critical Terms:II;Dissociation of Sensibility," Essays in Criticism:A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism, I (July,1951), 304.

which constitutes Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility. If from one aspect the image and the concept seem dissociated, while from another they collide, the crucial point is that they seldom cooperate or unite in irrefragible wholeness. They are seldom 'unified.

However, Bateson's contribution to the controversy is based on more than a disagreement over the meaning and appropriateness of the term "dissociation." He maintains that the entire notion suffers from inherent conceptual confusion. Discussing Eliot's assertion that poets blessed with a unified sensibility "feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose," Bateson argues that 'sensibility' must therefore refer to sensation or 'feeling,' and consequently he finds it inexplicable that sensibility should partake of or be in any way related to 'thought.' Underlying his view is the assumption that 'thought' and 'feeling' are <u>in fact</u> utterly distinct. His argument unconsciously affirms the primacy of the dissociated sensibility. Thought cannot be felt because it is outside the sphere of sense-impressions:

> If sensibility is sensation, or the faculty of registering sense-impressions, how can one of the products of its dissociation be 'thought'? On the other hand, if the unified sensibility is an intellectual as well as a sensuous faculty, how can it be equated with 'feeling'?[1]

Eric Thompson went a long way towards clarifying this misunderstanding by pointing out the necessity of extricating oneself from the perspective of the British empiricist tradition in order to grasp Eliot's view of the

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., 305.

relation between thought and feeling:

> . . . Mr Bateson finds this paradox in Eliot only because his implicit assumptions lead him to equate Eliot's 'sensation' with Lockean mere or pure sensation. This equation won't do. In the frame of reference (Hegel-Bradley) wherein Eliot is known to have worked there is no such thing as mere sensation; every psychic event whether a sensation, a feeling, an emotion, or an idea has two sides: a side that is felt and another that is thought.[1]

Thompson then went on to relate dissociation of sensibility to this Bradleyan notion of the double-sidedness of the psychic event:

> This feeling invariably exceeds (escapes) all we can think; what we think at this moment exceeds (points beyond) this we feel. Our intellectual life is a struggle to establish a balance and the amount of coherence we succeed in establishing between the felt and the thought determines the degree of reality . . . that any existent has for us.[2]

The unified sensibility is one where a high degree of such coherence is achieved. Thus the unified sensibility not only feels its thought immediately, but it thinks its feelings with equal immediacy. For instance, in an expression which pushes the idea of a thorough fusion of thought and feeling to the syntactic limits, Eliot writes: "In

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[1]Eric Thompson, "The Critical Forum:Dissociation of Sensibility," Essays in Criticism:A Quarterly Journal of Literary Criticism,II (April,1952), 210.

[2]Ibid., 210-11. Bradley lumped together all "psychic events" as what he called "the material of existence ":
> "Feeling, thought, and volition (any groups under which we class psychical phenomena) are all the material of existence, and there is no other material, actual or even possible. This result in its general form seems evident at once;. . . ." (F.H.Bradley, Appearance and Reality:A Metaphysical Essay [2nd ed.;Oxford:Clarendon Press,1897], 127.)

Being convinced that immediate experience could not be isolated from other more complex or sophisticated elements in consciousness, Bradley could not concede the existence of any attribute of the subject side only (such as sensations or 'sense-data') which had somehow to be related to an external world.

Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling,. . . ."[1] An intimate coherence of thought and feeling ensures pure immediacy, and so gains a relatively reliable purchase on reality. The quality of immediacy or directness is the distinguishing virtue of the unified sensibility.

There can be little doubt that by placing 'dissociation of sensibility' in its proper context, Thompson impaired decisively the main force of Bateson's objection that the concept is incoherent.[2] The position is confirmed if one looks at Eliot's own work on Bradley. In his doctoral dissertation Eliot noted that "Bradley uses the term 'experience' and the term 'feeling' almost interchangeably. . .," and he went on to warn explicitly that "We must not confuse immediate experience with sensation, we must not think of it

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[1]T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," 286.

[2]Thompson's conclusion regarding Bateson's suggestion that 'dissociation of sensibility' may be traced to Rémy de Gourmont's Le Problème du Style is a sound one: "Investigations of Eliot's background must distinguish carefully between his frequent borrowings of words and ideas and his infrequent appropriations of intellectual structure." ("The Critical Forum:Dissociation of Sensibility," 208.) "What Eliot probably got (and it was not inconsequential) was matter for thought rather than a form for thought." (Ibid., 207.) In fact, as Bateson's articles have inadvertently demonstrated, "The Metaphysical Poets" simply cannot make sense when viewed from Gourmont's standpoint.

George Watson has proposed Goethe as an alternative source (George Watson, The Literary Critics:A Study of English Descriptive Criticism [Harmondsworth:Penguin Books, 1962], 189:footnote.), but though there is some affinity, there seems no special reason to emphasise Goethe over a number of other possible candidates. If dissociation of sensibility does represent a climax to the ubiquitous process outlined later in the present chapter, then naturally such speculative attribution becomes correspondingly less cogent or compelling. (Incidentally, with respect to the final sentence in Watson's footnote, it is of course Bateson, not Thompson, who insists that in Eliot's terminology 'feeling' means 'sensation.')

as a sort of panorama passing before a reviewer, and we must avoid thinking of it as the content or substance of a mind."[1] It becomes plain that in "The Metaphysical Poets" key words such as 'experience' and 'feeling' retain much of their Bradleyan significance. Indeed, it would be more surprising if, at this period, Eliot's vocabulary had been thoroughly purged of these accustomed thought-ways and their implied background of meaning.

When, for example, Eliot writes: "A thought to Donne was an experience; . . ." it is helpful to have in mind the Bradleyan aura which informs his use of the word 'experience.' In the dissertation Eliot quotes a passage where, he feels, Bradley's "whole theory is summed up." It reads as follows:

> Experience, we are told, 'is not a stage which shows itself at the beginning [of consciousness] and then disappears, but it remains at the bottom throughout as fundamental. And, further, remaining it contains in itself every development which in a sense transcends it. Nor does it merely contain all developments, but in its own way it acts to some extent as their judge.'[2]

Again, as defined by Bradley, 'feeling' means:

> . . . first, the general condition before distinctions and relations have been developed, and where as yet neither any subject nor object exists. And it means, in the second place, anything which is present at any stage of mental life, in so far as that is only present and simply is. In this latter sense we may say that everything actual, no matter what, must be felt; but we do not call it feeling except so far as we take it as failing to be more.[3]

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[1] T.S.Eliot, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H.Bradley, ed. by Anne C. Bolgan (London:Faber and Faber,1964), 15.

[2] Ibid., 16, quoting F.H.Bradley, Essays on Truth and Reality (Oxford:Clarendon Press,1914), 161. (Square brackets mine.)

[3] Ibid., 16, quoting F.H.Bradley, Appearance and Reality (Oxford:Clarendon Press,1946), 406-07. The editor

Within this Bradleyan conception of 'experience' and 'feeling' dissociation of sensibility becomes a meaningful expression. The unified sensibility can be envisioned as a kind of psychic palimpsest where a full range of 'experience,' from an inchoate basal confusion of 'feeling' to the most abstract determinations of consciousness and intellect, resonates coherently and simultaneously. Stringent attention to the nuances of 'feeling' guarantees a meaningful relation to reality. With the dissociated sensibility, on the other hand, 'thought' is held less rigorously to the exigencies of 'feeling.' This produces a greater degree of indeterminacy or emancipation, and the more abstract determinations of intellect and emotion tend to escape the bounds of 'experience,' for 'experience' always includes the irreducible actuality of 'feeling.' In so ignoring, evading or denying the jurisdiction of 'experience,' the dissociated sensibility at best traduces the possibilities and responsibilities of art. At worst, Eliot's suspicion of the dissociated sensibility represents his belief that in its very nature, the dissociated sensibility is unfaithful to reality.

To test this interpretation, we may turn to some of Eliot's examples. It is noticeable in discussions of 'dissociation' that relatively little attention is paid to the instances which Eliot provides to illustrate his theory. These are often illuminating both with respect to the poetry and to 'dissociation,' and in examining them it becomes abundantly apparent how much his speculation is confirmed by

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has used references to the 1946 edition because, she says, the 1893 edition is out of print.

the nature of the poetry. To take only one example, just before introducing the 'dissociation' theory Eliot suggests the reader compare this passage from Tennyson's "The Two Voices":

> One walked between his wife and child,
> With measured footfall firm and mild,
> And now and then he gravely smiled.
> The prudent partner of his blood
> Leaned on him, faithful, gentle, good,
> Wearing the rose of womanhood.
> And in their double love secure,
> The little maiden walked demure,
> Pacing with downward eyelids pure.
> These three made unity so sweet,
> My frozen heart began to beat,
> Remembering its ancient heat.[1]

with the concluding stanzas of Lord Herbert's "An Ode upon a Question moved, Whether Love should continue for ever?":

> So when from hence we shall be gone,
> And be no more, nor you, nor I,
> As one another's mystery,
> Each shall be both, yet both but one.
>
> This said, in her up-lifted face,
> Her eyes, which did that beauty crown,
> Were like two starrs, that having faln down,
> Look up again to find their place:
>
> While such a moveless silent peace
> Did seize on their becalmed sense,
> One would have thought some influence
> Their ravished spirits did possess.[2]

Beyond obvious contrasts of theme and expression, at a deeper level the subject of both pieces is a celebration of unity. Not merely the contrasting sorts of unity implicit in the subject matter, but also the unity which John Sparrow has included in his exacting demands upon

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[1]Tennyson, "The Two Voices," 1.412-23, quoted in T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," 287.

[2]Edward Herbert, "An Ode upon a Question moved, Whether Love should continue for ever?" 1.129-40, quoted in T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," 284-85.

great poets and "Great Poetry": "if a poet persuades me by his poetry that he has looked deep into things; that, so looking, he sees them as somehow parts of a universal whole; and that he has responded to this vision with an appropriate emotion; and if the poetry by which he persuades me of this moves me as poetry - then, and only then, I would call him great."[1] While neither Tennyson nor Lord Herbert necessarily qualifies as great in this sense, what is important here is that they both are striving after that sense of unity and wholeness which, in different ways, they regard as penetrating the depths of experience. Whether this unity is seen as numinous or deeply important on a purely human scale can remain, from a simple poetic point of view, a secondary concern. Yet the very different form in which this unity seeks expression in the two pieces illustrates rather well the cogency of 'dissociation of sensibility.'

In Lord Herbert's "Ode" no sharp distinction is apparent between the poetic situation (by which is meant the relations of the poetic voice to the poetic world and the implied audience) and the subject of the poem. The two cooperate in expressing a transient moment when human love is irradiated by a sense of divine possibility. Steeped in physical lassitude, the lovers experience a crystal clarity of feeling, and in this "moveless, silent peace," radical release from the dualism of sexuality and the conflict between soul and body seems a present possibility. Even the prospect of bodily disintegration in the earth appears tactfully as no more than a natural and perhaps comforting

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[1]John Sparrow, "Great Poetry," in Independent Essays (London:Faber and Faber,1963), 30.

counterpoint to spiritual transcendence.

An extra element of tension does surround the "starr" simile (about which Eliot expresses a slight reservation) and it is, of course, very often the introduction of such starkly visual or geometrical imagery which gives rise to the characteristic strenuousness of 'metaphysical' poetry. Extrapolating the "starr" simile might well produce a crop of physiognomic and astronomical paradoxes. But such refraction and analysis is hardly called for here, since the empirical detail, the feeling, the intellectual force behind the simile and its theological and metaphysical implications, support the unity of the poem, and are fully and simultaneously present in the language. There is no point where any of these elements stands forth in isolation.

The poetic situation is itself loosely indeterminate: no sharp bounds separate the poetic voice, the poetic world, and the implied audience. Bounds, if we are aware of them at all remain fluid and subordinate to the guiding assumptions of shared feeling and sympathetic responsiveness within the poetic situation. The evanescent unity celebrated in the world of the poem flows uninterruptedly out to the audience. Although the poetic voice modulates from tacit participation in a dialogue, to contemplation of the beloved, to more detached commentary, yet it does so without disturbing the poetic situation or rendering it self-conscious. The voice confides unselfconsciously in the audience: the poem is for no-one and everyone.

When we turn to the passage from Tennyson, an important transformation of the poetic situation is immediately apparent. The distinct provenances of the poetic voice, the poetic world and the implied audience are patently

delineated, and the speaker adopts the stance of a privileged mediator of private experience to a public world. A deliberately "flat-footed" description in the first three triplets is followed by a brief self-conscious rendering of the poet's response. It is clearly a case of 'observation' followed by 'reflection.' In the first three triplets, the poetic situation implies radical self-immolation on the part of the speaker: his subjectivity is presumed to disappear in presenting an 'objective' rendering of the scene (replete with moral evaluation!). Conversely in the fourth or 'reflective' triplet, the objective scene fades into oblivion while the audience is engaged in exploring an 'objective' insight into the speaker's subjectivity. The poet/observer does not participate in the interiority of the family group. Instead he interprets this interiority from the outside and then essays to educate the implied audience in appropriate feelings.

This state of affairs engenders a cluster of speculative doubts concerning the poetic situation. Chiefly it raises the question why, if the mere experience of seeing the little family was sufficient to inspire the speaker, is his poetic description of it inadequate to achieve the same result for the implied audience? There are three possibilities. Either the poetic voice doubts its own power to evoke the scene with sufficient poignancy to move the audience; or, complacent in its own adequacy, it doubts the emotional and moral perceptiveness of the audience; or thirdly, and this is a vital possibility, the poetic voice may be expressing something it does not really feel, but which it thinks it <u>ought</u> to feel. The poem may be an attempt to feel <u>despite</u> experience, moved by the frailty and mundaneness of the little

group and the overwhelming absence of any spontaneous feeling. Of course such doubts or queries are not resolved or indeed resolvable within the poem. The point is merely that they arise, whereas in Lord Herbert's "Ode" the poetic situation provokes no such questioning.

To establish the contrast between these two very different pieces of poetry in its relation to 'dissociation of sensibility,' we can return briefly to a crucial passage from Knowledge and Experience. Throughout the dissertation, Eliot's fascination with a primitive state of being prior to all intellectual or emotional articulation - Bradley's 'feeling' - is plainly evident. In particular, one illustration employed by Eliot throws light on what he means by the unified sensibility, and indeed, on his own critical and poetic practice. There is here a striking similarity to the goal which Eliot seeks to realise in his own poetry, and to the experience which he looks for in his criticism:

> We stand before a beautiful painting, and if we are sufficiently carried away, our feeling is a whole which is not, in a sense, our feeling, since the painting, which is an object independent of us, is quite as truly a constituent as our consciousness or our soul. The feeling is neither here nor anywhere: the painting is in the room, and my 'feelings' about the picture are in my 'mind.' If this whole of feeling were complete and satisfactory it would not expand into object, and subject with feelings about the object; there would, in fact, be no consciousness. But in order that it should be feeling at all, it must be conscious, but so far as it is conscious it ceases to be merely feeling.[1]

Lord Herbert's "Ode" is as assuredly consonant with this ideal situation as the Tennyson passage is at odds with it. In the "Ode," observation and feeling cooperate synchronically. The feeling is simultaneously the lovers' feeling,

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T.S.Eliot, Knowledge and Experience, 20.

the poet's feeling, the audience's feeling. And so with the observation: audience, lovers and poet share in it together. The process of poetic mediation is transparent and apparently unconscious. But in the Tennyson this process comes to the fore, being not only conscious, but verging on the self-conscious and problematic. The Bradleyan category of 'feeling' has been thoroughly disrupted into ". . . object, and subject with feelings about the object": detached observation of an external scene is followed by a reflection which we may suppose sets out to convey the depths of primitive 'feeling.' The line "Remembering its ancient heat" could be read as a gesture towards the general area covered by Bradley's notion of 'feeling,' and of course it is a memory, rather than an evocation.

The result, perhaps, is that when in the Tennyson we are told "These three made unity so sweet," we do our best to believe it (as, probably, did Tennyson): but in the "Ode" when we explore the possibility that "Each shall be both, yet both but one," such is our relation to the poem we are almost persuaded not only that it will be so, but that it <u>is</u> so.

<u>The Historicity of 'Dissociation'</u>

If then we can assume that Bateson's charge of incoherence and unintelligibility is not altogether justified (he himself adds with charming inconsequence that "Of course, something like this <u>did</u> happen. The relationship between the sensuous and intellectual elements did change in or about

1650."[1]) there remains a much more general point in his argument which has ever since cast quite legitimate doubt on the validity of the concept. It is a criticism for which Eliot himself supplied some ammunition in his shift of position on Donne. Bateson pointed out that in contrast to the adulatory stance of 1921, where Donne had appeared as a fully accredited exponent of the unified sensibility, ten years later Eliot could write: "In Donne, there is a manifest fissure between thought and sensibility."[2] Together with other instances of a revised estimate of Donne, this led Bateson to wonder, "Was Mr. Eliot's later comment intended as a specific repudiation of the unified sensibility? It reads rather like it."[3]

Bateson's line of argument here opens the way for the kind of critique offered by Frank Kermode: "A once-for-all event cannot happen every few years; . . . ."[4] Kermode sets 'dissociation' alongside similar attempts by critics and literary theorists of the modernist period, to discern a golden age of literature where their own particular literary canons could find historical warranty. He is able to show how Eliot's theory matches the efforts of Yeats and Hulme to locate an historical era where the numinous capacities ascribed to the poetic image in twentieth century symbolist

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[1]F.W.Bateson, "Contributions to a Dictionary of Critical Terms:II;Dissociation of Sensibility," 310.

[2]Ibid., 308, quoting T.S.Eliot's, "Donne in Our Time," in A Garland for John Donne:1631-1931, ed. by Theodore Spencer (Gloucester Mass.:Peter Smith,1958), 8.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Frank Kermode, Romantic Image (London:Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961),146.

theory were generally accepted modes of artistic experience. Hulme had his specialised interpretation of the Renaissance; for Yeats a crucial upheaval coincided with the collapse of the gyre in phase 15 of his system, around 1550; while for Eliot, of course, the equivalent disturbance occurred roughly a century later. In Kermode's view, Eliot's theory is simply one element in a partly unconscious attempt by twentieth century literary figures to uphold the value of the poetic image, and account for the intuitive, non-scientific modes of the poet in an age increasingly reliant upon the empirical, logical and mathematical methods of the natural sciences.[1] Side by side with these similar attempts, the historical dimension of 'dissociation' begins to look trivial, dogmatic and ultimately arbitrary: "It is not merely a matter of wrong dates; however far back one goes one seems to find the symptoms of dissociation. This suggests that there is little historical propriety in treating it as

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[1]There is strong support for this aspect of Kermode's argument in the fact that Eliot's criticism is, as he himself puts it, "a by-product of my private poetry-workshop; or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse." (T.S.Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism," in On Poetry and Poets,106.) However, it does not necessarily follow that 'dissociation' was just part of "the great experiment of projecting on to an historical scale a developed Romantic-Symbolist theory of the Image." (Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, 150.) Firstly, as will be argued later in the present chapter, it seems probable that 'dissociation' by its very nature has both a personal and an historical provenance. And secondly, Eliot apparently exempted 'dissociation' (along with, presumably, the 'objective correlative') from inclusion among the fruits of his artistically motivated intercourse with literary history and "the tradition": "The best of my literary criticism - apart from a few notorious phrases which have had a truly embarrassing success in the world - consists of essays on poets and poetic dramatists who had influenced me." (T.S.Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism," 106.) In my view these "notorious phrases" derive from Eliot's study of F.H.Bradley, though there is no need to assume that Eliot's interest in the problems they address originates there as well.

a seventeenth-century event, ..."[1] Kermode finds little justification for the idea of a decisive upheaval in the middle of the seventeenth century, and he argues that dissociation is a perennial condition in the western tradition, for "if we were to pursue the dissociation back into the past, we should find ourselves in Athens."[2]

With respect to this last point, one can only agree. Even though it constantly assumes new emphases and different guises, the competition between thought and feeling, intellect and emotion, head and heart, seems endemic in the western tradition. And if thought and feeling have always been to some extent at odds, what claims has the seventeenth century over any other, as the locus of a decisive upheaval in relations between the two? There appears considerable justification for wondering whether the notion of the unified sensibility is merely a fiction, an impossible ideal of the poets, or (in Eliot's case) simply a legacy of Bradleyan idealism.

However, an examination of the vexed question of Eliot's shift of position on Donne defuses this argument. For it confirms the meaning of 'dissociation' arrived at in the last section by showing that the key issue prompting Eliot's change of mind was the question of 'belief.' Bateson points out that when Eliot came to reassess Donne in "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927), he concluded that Donne really did no thinking at all:

I could not find either any 'mediaevalism' or any think-

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[1]Frank Kermode, Romantic Image , 141-42.

[2]Ibid., 142 .

> ing, but only a vast jumble of incoherent erudition on which he drew for purely poetic effects.[1]

This revised opinion of Donne clearly consigns him to the company of poets burdened by a dissociated sensibility, and the context in which the quotation appears indicates that the crucial factor which provoked this change of heart in Eliot was a keener sensitivity to questions of sincerity and belief.[2] These are the issues which distinguish genuine 'thinking' from 'a vast jumble of incoherent erudition' employed for 'purely poetic effects.'

Whereas in 1921, erudition and intellectual spriteliness had seemed to complement the powerful effusion of feeling in Donne's poetry, now the thought appeared somewhat nugatory, redeemed only by its contribution to the poetry. Eliot's new distrust of the intellectual element in Donne reflects a more mature estimate of Donne's commitment to the intellectual materials he employs. Perhaps closer acquaintance with the poetry leads him to realise that Donne did not necessarily believe the concepts and conceits he used in his poetry. Instead of genuine thought about the cosmos and man's relations within it, Eliot saw that Donne was already a poet of the dissociated sensibility using intellectual figures to illustrate a poetry which has its centre of gravity in feeling. The feeling might be genuine (though not necessarily in any autobiographical sense), but the thought has become merely subjective. The thought is really

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[1] T.S.Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," in Selected Essays, 139.

[2] The revised estimate of Donne emerges in the course of a discussion on the problem of belief in literature. See Ibid., 134-40.

pseudo-thought coupled to a genuine expression of feeling for the sake of poetry - not for what it says about the cosmos.

Dissociation of sensibility is thus not merely an exaggerated instance of the persistent conflict between thought and feeling in the western literate tradition. Rather it indicates a climax to this competition. Dissociation of sensibility occurs when the competition between thought and feeling becomes self-conscious and subjective. When individual poetic utterance can no longer assume a community of thought or feeling in the implied audience, it loses the character of unselfconscious communion (exemplified in the excerpt from Lord Herbert) and becomes an exercise in self-conscious communication (as represented in "The Two Voices"). With the unified sensibility, thought and feeling flow out to meet the audience as if part of a communal experience. Subtract 'belief' from either (or both) these elements, and they thereby lose any claim to tenure in communal experience, to become "merely poetic." In the case of Donne, it is the intellectual element which Eliot reclassifies as "merely poetic," an illustration of the feeling without its own integrity and habitude in the objective world. If so, we must conclude that really, instead of repudiating the unified sensibility, Eliot's altered opinion of Donne represents a more assured application of his theory of dissociation.

The Origins and Provenance of 'Dissociation'

If, as we have seen, 'dissociation' is a coherent

conception, and the thinking behind Eliot's historical application of it is sound (or at least explicable), there remains a fundamental problem - in fact, the strong point in the usual critiques of 'dissociation,' as well as the foundation of Eliot's own evident disquiet over his own conception: How can 'dissociation' possibly have both an historical and a personal provenance? On the one hand, the dominant strain in "The Metaphysical Poets" presents the unified sensibility as an essentially a-historical attribute of the "perfectly equipped" poetic mind. On this view, a unified sensibility is a cultivated capacity of the successful poet which enables him to sense wholeness in a concatenation of disparate, chaotic materials, regardless of the period of history he is writing in. One has only to ponder the array of materials Eliot invokes - falling in love, reading Spinoza, the noise of the typewriter, the smell of cooking - to realise that he considers the unified sensibility to be without historical rootedness. And how else could Eliot possibly detect its presence in such wildly dissimilar figures as Donne, Edward Herbert, Laforgue , Corbière, Valéry - and himself?

On the other hand, the essay clearly proclaims "In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, . . . ,"[1] a statement allowing commentators such as Kermode, and to a lesser degree Bateson, to consider 'dissociation' simply as an absolute historical event (albeit a bogus one). Roughly speaking, they take Eliot's contention as meaning that prior to the mid-seventeenth century poetry was

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[1] T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," 288.

the product of a unified sensibility; then 'it' happened, and thereafter poetry expressed a dissociated sensibility. Kermode goes so far as to remark, respecting the 'following' which Eliot's theory accrued: "There was, I think, an implicit parallel with the Fall. Man's soul, since about 1650, had been divided against itself, and it would never be the same again - . . . ."[1]

The way out of this apparent impasse is to go beyond Eliot's own understanding of his concept; beyond the intellectual framework he was familiar with. The present study takes the view that the so-called "unified sensibility" is associated with the immediacy of the spoken word - with what Eliot called the "auditory imagination"[2] while the dissociated sensibility appears at a certain stage in the evolution of literate 'consciousness.'

A clue to this position resides in Kermode's own remark that possibly "we shall never find a state of culture worth bothering about (from the literary point of view, that is) in which language is so primitive as to admit no thinking that is not numinous; in which there is no possibility of a naturalist assault on the society's beliefs."[3] Indeed not, for in order to be worth bothering about "from the literary point of view" a culture should of course be literate; while there is much to suggest that it is specifically literate culture which fosters a naturalist critique of society's beliefs and encourages erosion of the numinous.

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[1]Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, 141.

[2]T.S.Eliot, "Matthew Arnold" in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism:Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England (London:Faber and Faber Limited,1933), 118-19.

[3]Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, 142.

The significance of the oral/literate contrast is brought sharply into focus in the work of Jack Goody and Ian Watt. Their findings are summarised in an important essay on "The Consequences of Literacy," in which they examine essential differences between oral and written transmission of a cultural repertoire. In the case of non-literate societies the essential point is that " . . . the whole content of the social tradition, apart from the material inheritances, is held in memory,"[1] and as Goody and Watt point out, this simultaneity is a natural concomitant of exclusively oral communication:

> The transmission of the verbal elements of culture by oral means can be visualized as a long chain of interlocking conversations between members of the group. Thus all beliefs and values, all forms of knowledge, are communicated between individuals in face-to-face contact;. . . .
>
> The intrinsic nature of oral communication has a considerable effect upon both the content and the transmission of the cultural repertoire. In the first place, it makes for a directness of relationship between symbol and referent. There can be no reference to 'dictionary definitions', nor can words accumulate the successive layers of historically validated meanings which they acquire in a literate culture. Instead, the meaning of each word is ratified in a succession of concrete situations, accompanied by vocal inflections and physical gestures, all of which combine to particularize both its specific denotation and its accepted connotative usages. This process of direct semantic ratification, of course, operates cumulatively; and as a result the totality of symbol-referent relationships is more immediately experienced by the individual in an exclusively oral culture, ...[2]

Here we have a good description of the conditions which produce a 'unified sensibility'; emphasising the essential

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[1]Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in Literacy in Traditional Societies, ed. by Jack Goody (Cambridge University Press,1968), 30. Hereinafter referred to as Goody and Watt.

[2]Ibid., 29.

characteristics of immediacy of experience and a "directness of relationship between symbol and referent." In purely oral cultures, words like 'God' or 'Justice' could hardly be conceived of as separate entities, divorced both from the flow of oral discourse, and from the social context. The opening words of St. John's Gospel, for instance, present what is essentially an oral figure:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.[1]

The expression suggests an immediate - literally 'un-mediated' - intimacy between God and the Word. Instead of subject (God) and object (the Word), the metaphor, if such it can be called, rests on the simultaneity of sound in which the source of the utterance and the utterance itself co-exist inseparably. So too, in the oral environment, utterance, volition, and effect, tend to be understood as a unity, as in this verse from the Psalms:

> For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.[2]

Contrastingly, in Plato's Republic, Thrasymachus's

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[1]John 1:1. "'Logos' has two meanings in Greek: (1) reason or intelligence as it exists inwardly in the mind, and (2) reason or intelligence, as it is expressed outwardly in speech. Both these meanings are to be understood when Christ is called 'the Word of God.'" [A Commentary on the Holy Bible, ed. by the Rev. J.R.Dummelow, M.A. (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd,1965), 774.]

[2]Psalm 33:9. For an illuminating account of the primitive 'immediacy' of language, see chapter 2, 'Language in the Phase of Sensuous Expression,' in Ernst Cassirer, Language, Vol. I of The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, trans. by Ralph Mannheim with a preface and introduction by Charles W. Hendel (3 vols.; New Haven:Yale University Press, 1955), 177-97.

view that "justice is nothing else than what is advantageous to the stronger"[1] would seem to be an essentially literate notion. To bridge the gulf in conceptualisation separating the ubiquitous experience of power relations in society and the formulation of an assertion that 'might is right,' demands an effort of consciousness which can stand back from the immediate effects of power, and see instead relations. It is just this capacity for reflection that the process of inditing the literate record tends to induce. Such activity abstracts the writer from the immediate environment of experience, to a limbo of 'consciousness' where he can reflect on experience - including his own part in it - and see 'cause' and 'effect,' 'subject' and 'object.' In fact Roberto Unger regards this capacity to liberate 'consciousness' as the distinguishing achievement of classical philosophy:

> The ancient view of philosophy as the most exalted of human activities was an interpretation of the importance of consciousness among the attributes of humanity. The philosopher, according to this view, asserts clearly the power to change fate into a riddle by transforming all relations of force into relations of subject and object. In this way, he makes complete and explicit what is only haltingly present in the lives of his fellows. His exemplary worth consists in his ability to free the quality of consciousness, which he shares with all other men, from the cares and preconceptions that narrow its range in ordinary human lives.[2]

It was precisely this retreat from immediacy of experience into the reflective consciousness of experience, that Eliot sought to eradicate from poetic practice; since,

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[1]Plato, The Republic of Plato, trans. with an introduction by A.D.Lindsay (London:J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1926), 16.

[2]Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Knowledge and Politics (New York:Free Press,1975), 200-01.

as we have seen, it is the mutation of pure 'feeling' into relations of subject and object, which violates the unified sensibility. And it seems highly probable that it was just such a process of literate transcription which was at work behind the rise of characteristically western conceptual thought and which initiated that split between head and heart, intellect and emotion, or 'thought' and 'feeling' which is a hallmark of western literature.

However, literacy encourages more than a retreat from immediate experience to the reflexive consciousness of experience. There is also evidence to support the hypothesis that this abstract 'literate' consciousness attains its inner capacities, its "marching orders," through assimilating the visual properties of the written word. Kermode remarks that "the whole immense allegorical tradition [of the "Christian West"] is the result of applying intellectual instruments to the dissection of writings in which thought and feeling are, if they are anywhere, inseparable."[1] The investigations of Goody and Watt amplify Kermode's observation by indicating that these "intellectual instruments" are in all probability forged through prolonged imaginative familiarity with the properties of the written word; while the cultural material in which thought and feeling is 'unified' stems from traditional oral modes. The basic tools of logic - a system of rules for thinking itself - and taxonomy, may be intimately related to the material conditions of writing: the inscribed alphabetic 'marks' or 'signs.'

Goody and Watt point out that in the Phaedrus,

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[1]Frank Kermode, Romantic Image , 143. (Square brackets mine.)

Socrates is made to present the correct method for arriving at the truth in general. It is a critical method, where the body of popular notions and opinions is set on one side, so that discrete ideas may be analysed with respect to an initial definition of terms; following which a rational synthesis becomes possible. Goody and Watt comment that "This logical procedure seems essentially literate":[1] first, because it exploits the abstract ideality of literate 'consciousness'; and secondly, because the very notion of complex arguments such as those of the Republic originating, being conveyed, or being understood in an oral culture, seems untenable. Moreover Goody and Watt adumbrate a closer, "more directly causal connection"[2] between written transmission and the evolution of western logic:

> The Greek word for an 'element' was the same word as for a 'letter of the alphabet'; and in the Statesman Plato compares the basic principles of his philosophy with the child's first contact with the alphabet,* on the grounds that each principle or letter is the key to an infinitely greater number of words or ideas than the particular ones through which it is learned. Plato develops this idea in the Theaetetus when Socrates compares the process of reasoning to the combination of irreducible elements or letters of the alphabet into syllables which, unlike their constituent letters, have meaning: 'the elements or letters are only objects of perception, and cannot be defined or known; but the syllables or combinations of them are known and . . . apprehended'.** From this it is not far to the way the letters of the alphabet are used to symbolise the manipulation of general terms in Aristotelian logic; . . . .[3]
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> *Statesman, 278. See also Cratylus, 424b-428c.
>
> **Theaetetus, 201-202. The analogy is continued to the end of the dialogue.

If logic emerges through some such imaginative hypostatisation of the written signs, it seems sensible to view the

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[1]Goody and Watt, 53. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., 53-54.

complementary technique of taxonomy in a similar way:

> The same process of dissection into abstract categories, when applied not to a particular argument but to the ordering of all the elements of experience into separate areas of intellectual activity, leads to the Greek division of knowledge into autonomous cognitive disciplines which has since become universal in Western culture and which is of cardinal importance in differentiating literate and non-literate cultures.[1]

Here of course, the approach must be more inductive, more "Aristotelian," and start from the elements of experience rather than an ideal definition of terms. But again, the capacity to arrive at a satisfying classification relies on the ability of literate consciousness to survey the complexity of experience as a whole, and then represent areas of it by abstract concepts: much the same kind of process as the development of logic may have involved.

These connate developments combine to ensure the entrenchment of a vigorous and expanding critical tradition within literate cultures which exploits the free ideality of literate consciousness. Of course criticism <u>is</u> possible in a purely oral culture.[2] But Goody and Watt suggest that the unequivocal explicitness and relative permanence of the written record virtually ensure that scepticism becomes an

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., 54. Goody and Watt could, perhaps, have made more of the influence of geometry, as well as literacy, in the development of the Greek taxonomy. See F.M.Cornford, "Greek Natural Philosophy and Modern Science," 1938, in <u>The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays</u> (Cambridge University Press,1967), 85-89.

[2] Robert Redfield concludes that: "In primitive as in civilized societies some people live unreflective and matter-of-fact lives while a few others are disposed to speculation; and these latter accomplish some critical and even creative thought in problems of existence and conduct." (<u>The Primitive World and its Transformations</u> [Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press,1953], 117.) See also Jack Goody, "Intellectuals in pre-literate societies?" in <u>The Domestication of the Savage Mind</u> (Cambridge University Press,1977), 19-35

entrenched feature of society. Increasing reliance upon written rather than oral transmission undermines the homogeneity and intimacy of oral culture by disturbing semi-automatic processes of assimilation, suppression and adaptation. At the same time, the desire to produce an authoritative written record promotes a critical effort to reconcile differing versions in the oral repertoire, to choose between conflicting accounts, and generally tidy up the cultural heritage with the aim of producing a written culture having the same qualities of unity and homogeneity which characterise the homeostatic culture of non-literate societies:

> And so, not long after the widespread diffusion of writing throughout the Greek world, and the recording of the previously oral cultural tradition, there arose an attitude to the past very different from that common in non-literate societies. Instead of the unobtrusive adaptation of past tradition to present needs, a great many individuals found in the written records, where much of their traditional cultural repertoire had been given permanent form, so many inconsistencies in the beliefs and categories of understanding handed down to them that they were impelled to a much more conscious, comparative and critical attitude to the accepted world picture, and notably to the notions of God, the universe and the past. Many individual solutions to these problems were themselves written down, and these became the basis for further investigations.[1]

In this fashion the new and essentially critical enterprise establishes itself, setting out to sift the cultural inheritance by using analytical tools to distinguish "truth" from fiction, legend, error and superstition.

Obviously, simply to extrapolate this ancient ferment

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[1] Goody and Watt, 48.

some two thousand five hundred years forward in history would be to neglect the labyrinthine course of cultural development and make nonsense of the sheer vastness and detail of the historical record. Nevertheless one consideration should not be overlooked, and this is that even in highly literate cultures the major mode of communication (and hence of cultural transmission) remains the spoken rather than the written word. As far as the present study is concerned, the importance of Goody's and Watt's findings lies less in their pinpointing what may well be the historical roots of dissociation, as in their conviction that the interaction between oral and literate modes remains a permanent source of cultural modification and change. "For, even in a literate culture," they maintain, "the oral tradition - the transmission of values and attitudes in face-to-face contact - nevertheless remains the primary mode of cultural orientation, and, to varying degrees, it is out of step with the various literate traditions."[1]

The idea of the sturdy persistence of oral transmission, even in literate cultures and among intellectuals deeply versed in literate thought-ways, suggests the hypothesis that 'dissociation' must inevitably prove an enduring feature of cultural modification. For it is not simply a case of two cultural modes moving along in tandem; a small critical ferment developing in the company of the educated, and a much larger groundswell of material transmitted orally and through participation in what C.S.Lewis calls "the

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[1] Ibid., 58-59.

immemorial pattern of behaviour."[1] The two interact, as Kermode sees, virtually from the inception of critical thought; and this persisting interaction calls for examination in individual as well as societal terms. It becomes important to understand that 'dissociation' has - indeed must have - both an historical and a personal provenance.

It seems sensible to argue that in its historical provenance 'dissociation of sensibility' indicates the emergence of literature which renders the dissociated sensibility - in which the dissociated sensibility itself finds expression as subject matter. Eliot coined the phrase, as we have seen, in relation to important changes in the character of English poetic expression in the seventeenth century, though commentators have been eager to point out comparable changes in what amounts to the full sweep of intellectual life in that century. For, of course, the seventeenth century was the period in which faith in critical and analytical techniques rose, on a large scale, to complement and then to override partially the authority of inherited beliefs. The arena of theological debate illustrates the change quite clearly, and one could also cite such developments as the rise of scientific thought, the Cartesian revolution in philosophy, or the ascendency of economic individualism, as each having a bearing on 'dissociation.'[2] In literature

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[1] C.S.Lewis, The Discarded Image:An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press,1964), 5.

[2] In a variety of contexts, most modern commentators have seen the seventeenth century as a fulcrum, though without necessarily relating it to 'dissociation of sensibility.' Many writers have pointed to an important shift in the relations between faith and reason in theological literature at this period. Two contrasting examples are S.L.Bethell (The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century [London:

such occurrences as "The Rise of the Novel"[1] or "The Death of Tragedy,"[2] the increasing interest in biography (and particularly autobiography), even the presence of a literary maverick such as Blake - could be related to 'dissociation,' and they add substance to Eliot's view that the seventeenth century has a particular significance for his theory.

But if, as the present study suggests, the "cause" of 'dissociation' may be related to the interaction between literate and non-literate thought-ways, it follows that since each of us starts out in a predominantly oral/aural environment, under conditions which would seem to encourage a "unified sensibility," then every individual grappling with the literate heritage must come under considerable pressure

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Dennis Dobson,1951], 13-68.) who bases his discussion on Eliot's notion, but views the accentuated authority of reason with equanimity; and Harold L. Weatherby (Cardinal Newman in his Age:His Place in English Theology and Literature [Nashville:Vanderbilt University Press,1973], 63-113.), who also notes a connection with 'dissociation,' but sees the shift as a regrettable capitulation to 'modernism' and longs for a return to the Thomist world view. With respect to the broader movements of social relations, the key words which inform Raymond Williams's Culture and Society -'industry,' 'art,' 'democracy,' 'class' and 'culture' either come into being or assume a new 'modern' meaning at about this time.(Culture and Society,xiii-xx.) Lionel Trilling's Sincerity and Authenticity could be read as an historical sketch of dissociation of sensibility and its climax in authentic consciousness, covering the last four centuries; but again, the critical break occurs in the course of the seventeenth century. (Sincerity and Authenticity [London:Oxford University Press, 1974], 1-25.)

[1]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel:Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (London:Chatto & Windus,1957): in particular the opening chapters 9-37.

[2]George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy (London: Faber and Faber,1961), 353: "I would suppose that He [God] turned away during the seventeenth century, a time which has been the constant dividing line in our argument."(Square brackets mine.)

to conform his imaginative and thought processes to those he meets in the literate environment. If that literate environment expresses a 'dissociated sensibility' then each individual, depending on the intensity and character of his involvement with literate thought-ways, will encounter to some extent the very forces which ultimate in 'dissociation of sensibility.' It becomes obvious that Eliot's notion must have a personal provenance, and it is with this personal provenance of 'dissociation' that the present study is principally concerned.

Summarising the discussion so far, one could conceive of dissociation as a particular stage in the process of assimilating literate thought-ways to a fundamentally non-literate sensibility. Expressed abstractly, dissociation of sensibility occurs when the individual no longer feels a sense of participating in a community of belief: that is, when the authority for belief must be self-consciously assumed by the believer, and cannot be taken as universally self-evident. Belief becomes private, 'subjective'; an attribute of the individual, rather than a universal condition. The central contention of the present study is that the High Victorian ideal of Culture was a partly conscious strategy attempting to counter 'dissociation of sensibility'- an effort to reconstitute for an increasingly complex literate culture, some semblance of that unity and consistency which characterise a homeostatic oral culture, and which we all experience to a degree in the pre-literate world of the child.

CHAPTER II

THE VISION OF THE CHILD

Describing the complexity of the individual sensibility in his History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (1876), Leslie Stephen employs an analogy which is of central importance in the Victorian intellectual's efforts to understand 'dissociation' and its consequences. He writes of the individual's passage from infancy to cultivated intellectual maturity as patterning "on a small scale" the history of the race:

> In ordinary moods, we are still in the days of the old astronomy, and unable to believe in the antipodes; and in movements of poetical feeling, we easily return to the mental condition of the believers in the solar myths. Old conceptions are preserved to us in the very structure of language; the mass of mankind still preserves its childish imaginations; and every one of us has repeated on a small scale the history of the race. We start as infants with fetish worship; we consider our nursery to be the centre of the universe; and learn but slowly and with difficulty to conform our imaginative constructions to scientific truths. It is no wonder, then, if the belief, even of cultivated minds, is often a heterogeneous mixture of elements representing various stages of thought; whilst in different social strata we may find specimens of opinions derived from every age of mankind.[1]

Stephen's rationalistic, scientific persuasion shows in his underlying concern to wean mankind from myth and fable to scientific truths, but his description is valuable for recognising and tolerating the persistence of older

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[1]Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 1 (2 vols.; New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.,1962), 5.

thought-ways not only in the less-educated, but even in "cultivated minds." "In ordinary moods we are still in the days of the old astronomy. . .": childish imaginations and scientific truths coexist in the individual sensibility, while "movements of poetical feeling" may catalyse a return to ancient thought-ways. Such 'relapses' were indeed an important ingredient in Victorian intellectual experience, as we shall see. Nevertheless, on Stephen's view, the main thrust of development appears as a stable process of strenuous intellectual adaptation in which childish imaginations are eventually consigned to a peripheral detritus in the popular imagination, and the real life of society runs in harmony with scientific progress.

However, where Stephen envisages the change from childish imaginations to the cultivated adult intellect as a steady process of enlightenment which could tolerate outworn notions in a remote way, others were quick to assert a radical difference in quality between the vision of the child and that of the cultivated adult. These writers, the romantic "middlemen" and their forbears, were equally concerned to see a sharp dislocation between "Past" and "Present." For them, the adult is alienated from the child in much the same way that the present is divorced from the past.

This important contrast between the rationalist sense of continuous development from child to adult, from past to present, and the romantic view of a definite dislocation between them, is bound up with opposite attitudes to 'consciousness.' For it is 'consciousness,' we remember, that violates the unified sensibility by transforming the world of immediate experience into abstract relations of subject and object. The rationalist is generally insensitive

to the nature of consciousness - it is, after all, his stock-in-trade - but the romantic is rabidly averse to it, and the reason is not hard to find. "Consciousness, . . .," writes Roberto Unger:

> . . . is the sign of the self's distance from the world. If one could imagine this separateness from nature in its pure form, before it was counterbalanced by the effects of human activity, its sign would be the experience of terror before the strangeness of the world.[1]

The poised urbanity of Stephen's programme clouds the fact that for many writers and thinkers the process of conforming these childish imaginations to scientific truths was more than merely arduous and slow. It was emotionally and psychologically hazardous, even terrifying.

Wordsworth struck the keynote in his early poems "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" (both 1789), which attribute modern man's oppressive self-consciousness and his alienation from the natural world explicitly to book-learning and the analytical habit of mind:

> Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
> Come, hear the woodland linnet,
> How sweet his music! on my life,
> There's more of wisdom in it.
>
> .....
>
> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.
>
> Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
> Our meddling intellect
> Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:-
> We murder to dissect.[2]

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[1]Roberto Mangabeira Unger, Knowledge & Politics, 201.

[2]William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned," Wordsworth:Poetical Works, ed. with introduction and notes by

Dickens was similarly appalled at the deformation of childhood awareness incurred through enforced intercourse with abstract rationality. In Hard Times, of course, "meddling intellect" is represented by Mr. Gradgrind's efforts at murdering the innocents with his etiolated version of utilitarianism. Dickens dedicated Hard Times to Thomas Carlyle, and it is obviously the novel closest in spirit to Carlyle's "Condition-of-England question." In "Signs of the Times" (1829) Carlyle had maintained:

> 'He, who has been born, has been a First Man;' has had lying before his young eyes, and as yet unhardened into scientific shapes, a world as plastic, infinite, divine, as lay before the eyes of Adam himself.[1]

Like Carlyle, Dickens sees the transition from the plastic, numinous world of childhood to the hardened 'scientific' shapes of the adult world as traumatic and inhumane. At the centre of the novel is his fear that "the heart of infancy"[2] will wither up under the onslaughts of Gradgrindery. Mr. Gradgrind "seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow the pupils clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge."[3] But by stoutly maintaining that a horse is very much more than its abstract definition (as given by the appropriately named Bitzer), or that flower-patterned carpets though offensive to "fact" may yet please the fancy, children such as Sissy Jupe survive

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Thomas Hutchinson; rev. ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press,1969), 377.

[1]Carlyle, Works, XXXVII, 81.

[2]Charles Dickens, Hard Times:For These Times (London:Oxford University Press,1955), 299.

[3]Ibid., 3.

Gradgrindery to become happy adults capable of mitigating the worst evils of industrialism.[1]

This theme of the abrupt expulsion from childhood recurs notably in Great Expectations, where the convict Magwitch acts as the "cannon." Before Magwitch enters, Pip's world is essentially private. As his childhood fancy goes to work on the tombstones of his parents and little brothers, coaxing forth unreliable imaginings of what they were like, Pip's state of consciousness is reminiscent of a passage in

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[1]The contrast between characters who are pulled about by external forces; commercial, legal, industrial or political; and those whose moral integrity seems irrefragible, opens up a 'great divide' in Dickens' fictional worlds. The ethos of moral authority evident in his 'good' children - those who remain miraculously uncontaminated by society - carries over into a whole category of his adult characters, who become the moral touchstones of his fiction. Joe Gargery manifests the same innocence and natural benevolence with which Dickens endows his 'good' children; paragons like Sissy Jupe, Little Nell or Florence Dombey. A similar consistency and moral authority characterises the genuine philanthropists: Brownlow, Jarndyce and the brothers Cheeryble, for instance. Humphrey House writes of such characters:

> They are all good-natured, and seem to act as they do because they cannot act otherwise. Not one of them has a moral policy, or a considered opinion about why he does good. They seem to have no temptations, difficulties, or struggles: they are uniform, unruffled and unreflecting. (Humphrey House, The Dickens World (London: Oxford University Press,1941), 39.)

The'moral touchstones' can be evidently blind to tensions between themselves and their environment: Little Dorrit somehow thrives even in the Marshalsea. But often they have a place or environment in which they are naturally 'at home.' Significantly, those places most hospitable to moral innocence and healthy, vital living, are always radically separate from the commercial and industrial mainstream of society. One thinks of Coketown and Sleary's Circus in Hard Times, or the City and Sol Gill's little shop in Dombey and Son. Or most markedly, the contrast between the legalistic nightmare of 'Little Britain' and the warm domestic eccentricity of Wemmick's home in Walworth, replete with the 'aged P.': here the split in the moral standards and conventions of the two spheres generates or reflects (it is impossible to say which) a comparable division in Wemmick's personality and behaviour. The relation between the 'mechanical' and 'dynamical' selves in Carlyle, discussed in the following chapter, or that between the 'ordinary' and 'best' selves in Arnold, form striking analogues.

The Prelude:

> . . . I was left alone
> Seeking the visible world nor knowing why.
> The props of my affections were removed,
> And yet the building stood, as if sustained
> By its own spirit![1]

Pip has not yet entered the world of "facts" in which his parents are dead. Then Magwitch appears:

> 'Hold your noise!' cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. 'Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!'[2]

Under the impulse of sheer terror, the sensibility formerly "sustained by its own spirit" collapses, and Pip has to assimilate a new landscape of "facts":

> At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and thatAlexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond, was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.[3]

Surrounded by an endlessly retreating series of concentric horizons - the landscape of post-Cartesian space - Pip simultaneously experiences himself for the first time: the self as object. There is now a felt distinction between 'self' and 'world,' subject and object; and Pip feels alienated, "afraid of it all."[4] In this new structure of

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[1]William Wordsworth, The Prelude ii. 277-81.

[2]Charles Dickens, Great Expectations (London: Oxford University Press,1953), 1-2.

[3]Ibid., 1. [4]Ibid.

awareness the existence in others of a centre of self equivalent to one's own is open to doubt. So when Pip imagines the fleeing convict hooking himself up to the disused gibbet as if he were the hanged pirate come to life, he begins to query the adequacy of his own perceptions:

> It gave me a terrible turn when I thought so; and as I saw the cattle lifting their heads to gaze after him, I wondered whether they thought so too.[1]

Great Expectations shows very directly the unified childhood vision suddenly fractured into the alienated world of ". . . object, and subject with feelings about the object";[2] the world of dissociated sensibilities. In Hard Times the villain is a theory. But in Great Expectations only the experience of sheer terror remains to explain or qualify the disruption.

Shelley, writing in a"Defence of Poetry" (1821), elevated such 'Wordsworthian' preoccupations to a keenly conceptualised plane with his famous contrast between the principles of analysis and synthesis, and its expression in two classes of mental action, reason and imagination:

> According to one mode of regarding these two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations bourne by one thought to another, however produced; and the latter as mind acting upon those thoughts as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity.[3]

This is one of the clearest and most typical

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[1] Ibid., 5. (Italics mine.)

[2] T.S.Eliot, Knowledge and Experience, 20.

[3] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. by Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, VII (London:Ernest Benn Limited, 1965), 109.

expressions of the deep division which many intellectuals of the time felt in contemplating their own mental processes. The principle of synthesis "has for its objects those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself," while the principle of analysis "regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain results."[1] It was the presence in themselves, in their own mental activities, of these apparently irreconcilable processes and principles which fascinated and alarmed such thinkers. The alarm stemmed not merely from the existence of the division, nor simply from its codification in intuitionist or inductionist epistemologies, nor even from the social and political affiliations which accrued to such theoretical positions: it generated concern for the whole question of integrity in human development, thereby opening up the broad field covered by the words 'education' and 'cultivation.'

Naturally, such interest pointed back to the world of the infant as the touchstone of primitive integrity unspoiled by "meddling intellect." Shelley illustrates very well this almost reflex gesture of the romantic theorist when he follows his exposition of the contrast between reason and imagination with an evocation of the child at play:

A child at play by itself will express its delight by

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[1] Ibid. Such formulae can be traced to Schelling via Coleridge's distinction between the 'primary' and the 'secondary' imaginations in the Biographia Literaria. See, for example, Rene Wellek, The Romantic Age, Vol.II of A History of Modern Criticism:1750-1950, (3 vols.; London:Jonathan Cape,1955), 159.

> its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it; it will be the reflected image of that impression. . . .[1]

The question of the 'sincerity' of the child cannot arise because there is such an exact equivalence of stimulus and response. In the adult worldthis integrity of vision is preserved in poetry:

> In relation to the objects which delight a child, these expressions are, what poetry is to the higher objects. The savage (for the savage is to the ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner; and language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of these objects, and of his apprehension of them.[2]

The passage indicates those same qualities of immediacy, spontaneity and plasticity of expression and experience, which we saw in Chapter One as the distinguishing marks of the unified sensibility, and they serve to guarantee the integrity of the infant vision. Since they enjoy the same imaginative quality of vision, child, poet and 'savage' evidently belong to a still persisting order of primitive integrity and share in the synthetic principle. But this happy congruence no longer pertains in society as a whole. As a universal condition it belongs to the past: "In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry: and to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful."[3] In the present the unified or 'whole' sensibility of the poet and the child must do its best to exist alongside a self-conscious analytical habit of mind. The discrete value of analysis and

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[1] Ibid., 110. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

synthesis are to be acknowledged and tolerated.

From a more austere outlook, John Stuart Mill diagnosed the same kind of tension in the Victorian mind, and like Shelley, he recognised that its implications went well beyond the sphere of intellectual, religious or aesthetic debate, to bear upon discussion of practical social and political questions. He perceived that it governed and limited the conceptual parameters of social debate, and he was prepared to view the dichotomy as intrinsically absolute, thus drawing the issue more firmly into the realm of political, social and religious action. Mill sums up the supposed disjunction in his famous assertion that ". . . every Englishman of the present day is by implication either a Benthamite or a Coleridgian; . . . ."[1] As well as indicating a major intellectual lineage, Mill's formulation sets the tension in its starkest terms:

> By Bentham, beyond all others, men have been led to ask themselves, in regard to any ancient or received opinion, Is it true? and by Coleridge, What is the meaning of it? The one took his stand outside the received opinion, and surveyed it as an entire stranger to it: the other looked at it from within, and endeavoured to see it with the eyes of a believer in it;....[2]

Implicit in this abstract contrast between 'belief' and a merely critical faith standing outside received opinion, are complex questions of change versus stability in society; of action within a settled climate of belief as against action based on a desire to reform or even revolutionise society from a critical position 'outside'; and ultimately, questions

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[1]John Stuart Mill, "Coleridge" in Mill on Bentham and Coleridge, ed. with an introduction by F.R.Leavis (London:Chatto & Windus,1950), 102-03.

[2]Ibid., 99-100.

of individual identity and the very meaning of 'community.' The possibilities were thoroughly aired by a splendid range of commentators in their various departments, but the rift between the analytical and fiduciary[1] modes of awareness proved intractable - a bed-rock distinction which Mill quite rightly seized on as a defining characteristic of the Victorian intellect.

It was particularly in romantic theorisings about the vision of the child that some notional respite from the dichotomy could be envisaged. For while the child's affinities are more in harmony with the Coleridgian pole, really he is neither a Benthamite nor a Coleridgian. He stands neither outside the popular beliefs nor within them. He is neither a self-conscious critic nor a self-conscious believer. Moreover, he does not feel the tension between these positions as the romantics so clearly did. The child is natural, primitive, 'unconscious.'

Thomas De Quincey took this way out when, in describing the social and political effects of literature, he saw the full range of literary expression as falling into two kinds: literature of knowledge and literature of power:

> In that great social organ, which collectively we call literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices that may blend and often do so, but capable severally of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for reciprocal repulsion. There is first the literature of knowledge, and secondly, the literature of power. The function of the first is - to teach; the function of the second is - to move: the first is a rudder, the second an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the mere discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately it may happen to the higher understanding or reason, but always

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[1]The terms are borrowed from John Coulson, Newman and the Common Tradition:A Study in the Language of Church and Society (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1970), 4.

through affections of pleasure and sympathy.[1]

Literature of knowledge supplies information. It treats of that which is novel. But literature of power is concerned with "all truth which can occupy a very high place in human interests"[2] and which is "never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds: . . . ."[3] At this point, De Quincey resorts to the romantic vision of the child to illustrate the social importance of the literature of power, asserting that:

> . . . there is a rarer thing than truth, namely power or deep sympathy with truth. What is the effect, for instance, upon society - of children? By the pity, by the tenderness, and by the peculiar modes of admiration, which connect themselves with the helplessness, with the innocence, and with the simplicity of children, not only are the primal affections strengthened and continually renewed, but the qualities which are dearest in the sight of heaven - the frailty, for instance, which appeals to forbearance, the innocence which symbolizes the heavenly, and the simplicity which is most alien from the worldly, are kept in perpetual remembrance, and their ideals are continually refreshed. A purpose of the same nature is answered by the higher literature, viz. the literature of power. What do you learn from Paradise Lost? Nothing at all. . . . . What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which but a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe - is power, that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth.[4]

The literature of power, according to De Quincey, holds an important therapeutic function in society. It nurtures the moral capacities of man which might otherwise diminish through want of exercise, and strengthens man's apprehension of absolutes - justice, hope, truth, mercy and

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[1] [Thomas De Quincey], review of The Works of Alexander Pope, Esquire, ed. by W.Roscoe, Esq., North British Review, IX (August,1848), 301-02.

[2] Ibid., 302. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid.

retribution -; values which the "mere discursive intellect" generally neglects. In this task, the literature of power cooperates with the moral influence of the child:

> Were it not that human sensibilities are ventilated and continually called out into exercise by the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life as it moves through chance and change, or of literature as it recombines these elements in the mimicries of poetry, romance &c., it is certain that, like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually droop and dwindle. It is in relation to these great moral capacities of man that the literature of power, as contradistinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action. It is concerned with what is highest in man: for the Scriptures themselves never condescend to deal by suggestion or co-operation, with the mere discursive understanding: when speaking of man in his intellectual capacity, the Scriptures speak not of the understanding, but of "the understanding heart," - making the heart, i.e., the great intuitive (or non-discursive) organ, to be the interchangeable formula for man in his highest state of capacity for the infinite. Tragedy, romance, fairy-tale, or epopee, all alike restore to man's mind the ideals of justice, of hope, of truth, of mercy, of retribution, which else, (left to the support of daily life in its realities) would languish for want of sufficient illustration.[1]

De Quincey here articulates the workings of those opposing forces, both literary and psychological, whose interaction is central to this study. The literature of power points towards the world of communal experience, nourishes and reinforces the apprehension of absolutes, and expands the capacity to act: while the literature of knowledge moves by default in the other direction; towards increasing abstraction, scepticism as to absolutes, and a diminished capacity to act. The affective powers atrophy and the condition ultimates - though De Quincey does not say so - in anomic paralysis. We are back with Wordsworth's 'Wanderer' in The Excursion (1814), decrying the notion that the

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[1] Ibid.

State could ever thrive by conniving at ". . . the destruction of her innocent sons":

> In whom a premature necessity
> Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes
> The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up
> The infant Being in itself, and makes
> Its very spring a season of decay![1]

The examples from Shelley and De Quincey exhibit, at the level of considered doctrine, the idea of an important rift between childhood and adulthood, particularly between the mode of vision of the child and that of the cultivated adult. Even ignoring the stark terror of Dickens' rendering, with its sad autobiographical relevance, obviously the idea draws much of its force from adult feelings of forlornness, yearnings for lost innocence, and a sense of alienation from the world of childhood. As such, it tends to fuse easily with two other conventional romantic themes: pre-lapsarian and primeval innocence. Dickens' scanty historical imagination saved him from these deeper waters of romantic historicism, but in other writers the vision of the child is regularly called on to sustain three correlative topoi - childhood innocence, loss of Eden, and the "noble savage" myth - in one numinous fusion; a fusion from which, in the opinion of many romantic and late romantic thinkers, man is inevitably excluded by a process of education.

An intellectual rationale for such views is subtly articulated in a witty riposte of the 1830's which David Newsome has aired in his work on Platonism and romantic thought.[2] In the Table Talk for 2 July, 1830, Coleridge is

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[1]William Wordsworth, The Excursion,VIII. 287-91.

[2]David Newsome, Two Classes of Men:Platonism and English Romantic Thought (London:John Murray,1974).

recorded as making the following observation:

> Every man is born as Aristotelian, or a Platonist. I do not think it possible that any one born an Aristotelian can become a Platonist; and I am sure no born Platonist can change into an Aristotelian. They are the two classes of men, besides which it is next to impossible to conceive a third.[1]

Newsome considers this claim in relation to the response attributed to Frederick Denison Maurice, and recorded by Edward Strachey in a letter of 1836:

> . . . all little children are Platonists, amd it is their education which makes men Aristotelians.[2]

The tension between these points of view runs strongly both in the lives of individual Victorians, and in the cultural debates of the age. Coleridge conceived his distinction as absolute: men are either Platonists or Aristotelians. Maurice's more perceptive remark infuses the question with a nineteenth-century awareness of process. Children are born Platonists but become Aristotelians by a process of education.

The question this issue poses for the present study is one which goes beyond the matter of sources and influences—of the channels through which the romantics came to adopt aspects of Platonism and neo-Platonism as integral to their particular enterprise. Rather the question is <u>why</u> the Platonic tradition should prove so attractive. The immediate doctrinal reason would seem to be a reaction against the

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[1]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <u>The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge</u> (Oxford University Press,1917), 118.

[2]Letter, Edward Strachey to his Aunt, Lady Louis, October 27,1836, quoted in Frederick Maurice, <u>The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice</u>, I (London:Macmillan and Co., 1884), 207.

epistemology of eighteenth-century empiricism. The impulse which sent the romantics scurrying to ransack the Platonic tradition has usually been described as a revulsion from the assumptions of the Enlightenment, and in particular from their expression in the philosophy of John Locke.[1] Specifically, the romantics were unhappy with the notion of the mind as a tabula rasa, a passive amorphous vacuum awaiting the shaping impact of sensations. They wished at all costs to insist on the existence of an irrefragible creative force in man, taking epistemological precedence over the external influences of tradition, habit and experience. There must be a channel, a faculty, through which the infinite and divine might penetrate immediately to the heart of the poet beleaguered in a chaos of plurality and relativism. And Plato was the obvious authority to ratify such a notion.

But this revolt against the Enlightenment was more than a doctrinal strategy. It arose from a real feeling that all moral force and initiative, as well as the capacity for comprehensive vision, judgment and action, was being drawn away from the individual. There was a need to assert the validity and autonomy of individual capacities, and typically this need was expressed as a worry about the circumscription of man's 'inner' resources - particularly moral and spiritual energies - through undue emphasis on knowledge derived from external sources. Shelley wrote as follows:

> The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged

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[1] An influential example is Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century: A Study of the Political and Social Thinking of Burke, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, 1929 (2nd ed.; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1960).

> the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; . . . .[1]

The most extreme version of this anxiety over the rapid etiolation of man's inner faculties emerges in Carlyle, who felt that the early nineteenth century was in grave danger of neglecting the inward sphere altogether; and in "Signs of the Times" he sought to readjust the balance between the "inner" and "outer" faculties:

> Undue cultivation of the inward or Dynamical province leads to idle, visionary, impracticable courses, and, especially in rude eras, to Superstition and Fanaticism, with their long train of baleful and well-known evils. Undue cultivation of the outward, again, though less immediately prejudicial, and even for the time productive of many palpable benefits, must, in the long-run, by destroying Moral Force, which is the parent of all other Force, prove not less certainly, and perhaps still more hopelessly, pernicious. This, we take it, is the grand characteristic of our age. By our skill in Mechanism, it has come to pass, that in the management of external things we excel all other ages; while in whatever respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilised ages.[2]

It is this competition between 'inward' and 'outward' faculties which is so neatly captured in Coleridge's quip about Platonists and Aristotelians. Coleridge's position implies that those who are rooted in the intuitive or 'inward' mode must ever stand in opposition to those who trust to experience of the external world and value the test of practice. Maurice's rejoinder suggests a process mediating between the two positions: all children start out as Platonists and become Aristotelians through their education. We see Maurice's view exemplified in J.A.Froude's The Nemesis

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[1]Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," 134.

[2]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 73.

of Faith, where 'Markham Sutherland' observes that:

> Life complete, is lived in two worlds; the one inside, and the one outside. The first half of our days is spent wholly in the former; the second, if it is what it ought to be, wholly in the latter - Pretty well till we have done with our educating theories are only words to us, ... [1]

Here again, education is seen as a kind of watershed between the inward 'intuitive' life of contemplation, the self-contained world of Plato, poets and children, and the external Aristotelian world of practice. It is obviously as a disenchanted Aristotelian looking with nostalgia to his Platonic past, that Markham Sutherland sums up the themes we have been adumbrating:

> The world had its Golden Age - its Paradise - and religion, which is the world's heart, clings to its memory. Beautiful it lies there - on the far horizon of the past - the sunset which shall, by and by, be the sunrise of Heaven, Yes, and God has given us each our own Paradise, our own old childhood, over which the old glories linger - to which our own hearts cling, as all we have ever known of Heaven upon earth . . . . . [2]

The romantic preoccupation with a Golden Age of childhood represents more than the projection of arcane literary themes onto a native sentimentality. Some writers evidently felt the core of their inner life progressively riven as their intellectual energies were pressed more and more into the service of abstract analysis, exploring rational possibilities with at most an analogical foothold in felt experience. Their affective energies could either attach themselves to these cultivated productions of the intellect, or decline into a compensating sentimentality,

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[1] J.A.Froude, The Nemesis of Faith (London:John Chapman,1849), 145.

[2] Ibid., 106.

somewhat divorced from reality; but would never, it seemed, again be united naturally in the "understanding heart." In these circumstances, where literary precedents find confirmation in individual experience, the attractions of the Golden Age notion are obvious. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and De Quincey were interested in the vision of the child not simply because the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis promised a way out of the thickets of empiricist epistemology, nor simply because "of such is the kingdom of heaven." They felt an affinity because children are so thoroughly unself-conscious, uninhibited, immediate, spontaneous and single-minded: all the things which the literary intellectual conventionally is not. Although to anyone familiar with the mundane actualities of babyhood, the conception must seem a trifle strained, the romantics evidently regarded the child as somewhere between a model and an exemplification of the 'unified sensibility.'

The writings instanced so far have been variously distanced from personal experience, either as imaginative literature or theoretical clarifications. The argument would not be complete without a pair of episodes where writers have recorded modifications of sensibility which partially exemplify the process of dissociation and describe the experience and its implications in a straight-forward way. It will be remembered that Leslie Stephen wrote of movements of poetical feeling returning men momentarily to myth-bound primitivism. There is also evidence to shown that intricate and lasting upheavals between the poles of reason and imagination, art and nature, head and heart, could occur even in mid-life, and not only in the direction one would

expect from Maurice's comment that education turns men from Plato to Aristotle.

Two autobiographical accounts illustrate - in roughly opposite ways - the actual experience of such shifts by writers not even concerned with producing poetry or 'imaginative' literature. In his Autobiography, Charles Darwin writes:

> Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds, such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, gave me great pleasure, and even as a schoolboy I took an immense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. . . . But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I retain some taste for fine scenery, but it does not cause me the exquisite delight which it formerly did. On the other hand, novels which are works of the imagination, though not of a very high order, have been for years a wonderful relief and pleasure to me, and I often bless all novelists.[1]

John Angus Campbell has pointed out that Darwin's so-called "affective decline" was "confined almost solely to the world of art."[2] Darwin's responsiveness to nature, though changed by the exacting pressures of scientific enquiry, remained unimpaired; and there is, Campbell argues, evidence of sustained affective resiliency in the Darwin canon as a whole. He concludes that Darwin succeeded in maintaining a balance between admiration for nature and scientific detachment, throughout the scientific writings.[3]

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[1]Charles Darwin, The Autobiography of Charles Darwin 1809-1882, ed. with appendix and notes by Norah Barlow (London:Collins,1958), 138.

[2]John Angus Campbell, "Nature, Religion and Emotional Response:A Reconsideration of Darwin's Affective Decline," Victorian Studies, XVIII (December,1974), 173.

[3]Ibid., 168.

But Darwin was himself bewildered by the diminution in his capacity for aesthetic appreciation:

> This curious and lamentable loss of the higher aesthetic tastes is all the odder, as books on history, biographies and travels (independently of any scientific facts which they may contain), and essays in all sorts of subjects interest me as much as ever they did. My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive.[1]

Here Darwin resorts to the rhetoric of "Gradgrindery," as popularised by Carlyle and Dickens, in order to describe this etiolation of the aesthetic faculty.

John Stuart Mill's case is almost the obverse of Darwin's. Following the extraordinary rigours of his intellectual training at the hands of James Mill (a fortuitous typification of Gradgrindery in practice), John Stuart Mill was thoroughly entrenched in the Benthamite heritage. But the mental crisis of 1826 jolted him from this purely critical faith, with its teleological emphasis bearing on the transformation of the external world and the lives of others, to the discovery that the internal world of the individual needed attention:

> . . . I, for the first time, gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action.[2]

The other discovery to which this mental crisis brought Mill was the so-called "hedonistic paradox": the

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[1]Charles Darwin, Autobiography, 139.

[2]John Stuart Mill, Autobiography (London:Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer,1873), 143.

realisation that the direct pursuit of happiness as an end in itself could prove only abortive:

> Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is to treat, not happiness, but some end external to it, as the purpose of life. Let your self-consciousness, your scrutiny, your self-interrogation, exhaust themselves on that; and if otherwise fortunately circumstanced, you will inhale happiness with the air you breathe, without dwelling on it or thinking about it, without either forestalling it in imagination, or putting it to flight by fatal questioning.[1]

Mill now sees that although happiness _is_ the end of life (as the Benthamites proclaimed), happiness is not to be achieved through consciously pursuing it. The mere _consciousness_ that happiness is one's goal is not the slightest help towards attaining that goal, a point trenchantly confirmed by F.H.Bradley in his _Ethical Studies_ (1876):

> The man who says that happiness is his mark, aims at nothing apart from the ends of others. He seeks the illusory goal of all men; and he differs from the rest that are, and have been,not at all, or only in his assertion that happiness is to be found by seeking it.[2]

In the perspective of their lives as a whole, these experiences of Darwin and Mill are obviously very different in importance, in intensity, and in their consequences for the subsequent thought and influence of the two men. For Darwin the loss of aesthetic sensitivity was felt largely as a personal impoverishment, though he was willing to consider wider possible implications on the lines which we have seen the romantics pursue:

> The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the

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[1] _Ibid_., 142-43.

[2] F.H.Bradley, _Ethical Studies_ (London:Henry S. King & Co.,1876), 79.

emotional part of our nature.[1]

But, as Campbell has shown, it would be difficult to trace any such implications in his scientific work. However, Mill's crisis afforded him insights which modified the course of his intellectual development, and his awakening to the validity of the 'Platonic' or 'Coleridgian' pole changed his outlook fundamentally:

> For I now saw, or thought I saw, what I had always before received with incredulity - that the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings: as indeed it has, when no other mental habit is cultivated, and the analysing spirit remains without its natural complements and correctives. The very excellence of analysis (I argued) is that it tends to weaken and undermine whatever is the result of prejudice; . . . . [Analytical habits] are therefore (I thought) favourable to prudence and clearsightedness, but a perpetual worm at the root both of the passions and of the virtues; and, above all, fearfully undermine all desires, and all pleasures, ...[2]

As a consequence, Mill was led "to adopt a theory of life, very unlike that on which I had before acted, and having much in common with what at that time I certainly had never heard of, the anti-self-consciousness theory of Carlyle."[3]

The examples of Darwin and Mill would seem to imply that the competition between the analytical habit of mind and a more immediate or 'intuitive' response to experience goes well beyond the opposing intellectual allegiances indicated by the poles of Plato and Aristotle, Coleridge and Bentham. Behind any such notional intellectual commitment there was an actual interplay of forces capable of modifying

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[1]Charles Darwin, Autobiography, 139.

[2]John Stuart Mill, Autobiography, 137-38. (Square brackets mine.)

[3]Ibid., 141-42.

individual experience: a fluctuating tension between two modes of awareness. And, as other examples cited in this chapter confirm, the tension was not to be resolved by simple intellectual assent. The two modes continued to coexist in the individual sensibility, despite romantic longings for the 'immediate' unselfconscious vision of the child, or rationalist preferences for 'scientific' apprehension over common-sense modes of experience. Understandably, none of the writers mentioned recognised the source of this conflict as originating in the interaction between literate and non-literate thought-ways; this is something which has been emerging gradually in the course of the present century. But it seems certain that, among the late romantics, many of their efforts at realising intellectual syntheses set out to resolve the tension which this interaction produced.

The most radical - and articulate - example is Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle not only experienced 'dissociation of sensibility' at first hand and in an extreme form, but he described its effects with conspicuous accuracy. He starts from the premise of a unified sensibility, from the 'whole' world of childhood: a homeostatic world which is disrupted, principally, by his education - books and the literate patterns of thought they inculcate. The angry torrent of words which poured from the mouth and pen of the sage, reads today like a frantic effort to make sense of this disturbing upheaval from an holistic cosmos dominated by external authority and the spoken word, God and James Carlyle, to the internalised authority of the literate 'self' standing in fierce opposition to a circumambient chaos of individualistic, "mechanical," culture.

CHAPTER III

CARLYLE AND THE CONDITION-OF-ENGLAND

Introduction: The Problem of Action

In the wake of a fleeting encounter with Tractarianism and a somewhat deeper interest in "Bentham and the others,"[1] Tom Brown meets a volume that speaks to his needs:

> He had scarcely ever in his life been so moved by a book before. He laughed over it, and cried over it, and began half a dozen letters to the author to thank him, which he fortunately tore up. He almost forgot Mary for several hours during his first enthusiasm. He had no notion how he had been mastered and oppressed before . . . . The help which he had found was just what he wanted. There was no narrowing of the ground here - no appeal to men as members of any exclusive body whatever to separate themselves and come out of the devil's world; but to men as men, to every man as a man - to the weakest and meanest, as well as to the strongest and most noble - telling them that the world is God's world, that every one of them has a work in it, and bidding them find their work and set about it.[2]

Such was Tom Brown's reaction on a first reading of Carlyle's Past and Present. To include this kind of response in his account of a typical Oxford career - albeit that of "a good specimen of the genus"[3] - Thomas Hughes must have felt it to be in some way a representative experience. In any case it is clear that from about 1840 onward, a confrontation with Carlyle became almost a mandatory phase

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[1]Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown at Oxford, 1861 (3rd ed.; London:Macmillan and Co., Limited,1910), 346.

[2]Ibid., 347-48.

[3]Ibid., viii.

of intellectual development. Anyone who was not conscious of Carlyle and his opinions would have to be a complete stranger to the literary and intellectual world. The questions that bothered Tom: "Why a few men should be rich, and all the rest poor; above all, why he should be one of the few? Why the mere possession of property should give a man power over all his neighbours? Why poor men who were ready and willing to work should only be allowed to work as a sort of favour, and should after all get the merest tithe of what their labour produced, and be tossed aside as soon as their work was done, or no longer required?"[1] - these were the questions which troubled many social, political and religious thinkers in the middle years of the nineteenth century. And they were among the most important issues which Carlyle encapsulated in his phrase, the "Condition-of-England question."

Past and Present is Carlyle's fullest and richest endeavour to supply answers to this question, and evidence that some thinking people found the book as uniquely satisfying in real life as Tom Brown found it in fiction, is not hard to come by. On August 5, 1843, Lady Caroline Fox noted in her diary:

> - Finished that wondrous "Past and Present," and felt a hearty blessing on the gifted Author spring up in my soul. It is a book which teaches you that there are other months besides May, but that with Courage, Faith, Energy, and Constancy, no December can be "impossible."[2]

And accompanying John Ruskin's copy of Past and

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[1] Ibid., 344.

[2] Caroline Fox, Memories of Old Friends: Being Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox, ed. by Horace N. Pym, II (2 vols.; 3rd ed.; London:Smith, Elder, & Co., 1882), 14.

Present in the British Library is a letter to Alfred Magee in which Ruskin writes, referring to the book: ". . . it has become a part of myself - and my old marks in it are now useless because in my heart I mark it all."[1] Perhaps most enthusiastic of all was one of the book's original reviewers, Sir Peter Le Page Renouf, who wrote in the Dublin Review:

> Honour to him [Carlyle] and all others, who, in this faithless, mechanical God-denying, devil-fearing generation, lift up their voices, and use all their energies against the soul-destroying gospel of mammonism, in all its developments, forms, and modifications. Till this devil's gospel cease to be preached in every corner of our streets, and to be acted upon in every imaginable department of social life, all the proposed panaceas, reform bills, ballot-boxes, corn-law abrogations, etc. etc. are but so many Morrison's Pills, so many efforts of flunkeyism, terminating in puffery.[2]

The depth of Renouf's assent may be gauged from his wholehearted assimilation of Carlyle's terminology and ideas. In the entire review, his only reservation concerns Carlyle's underestimation of the Catholic church - scarcely surprising from a man heavily influenced by Newman.[3]

Such examples could easily be multiplied. They convey a sense that Past and Present met some deep-seated need in the climate of the time: that Carlyle was offering something orthodox utilitarianism or radicalism (the 'Reform' ethos) on the one hand, and Tractarianism on the other, failed to supply. Many of his readers evidently felt they had found a highly cogent and profound response to the Condition-of-England question.

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[1]Letter from John Ruskin to Alfred Magee, Brantwood Jan. 10 1887. British Library, C.61.a.14.

[2][Sir Peter Le Page Renouf], review of Past and Present, by Thomas Carlyle, in the Dublin Review, XV (August, 1843), 190.

[3]Renouf preceded Newman into the Catholic Church.

On the whole, this was not the opinion of the majority of Carlyle's reviewers. The formal critical reaction was at best lukewarm, Renouf being a notable exception. From the outset of his career as a Man-of-Letters, Carlyle's somewhat iconoclastic tone, his deliberate violation of the shibboleths of organised religion and orthodox political economy, and his increasingly idiosyncratic style, had earned him a good deal of unfavourable critical attention. This adverse comment became more forthright as Carlyle's unassailable autonomy, his rejection of standard solutions, and his penchant for oracular pronouncement, became uninhibitedly evident. One issue in particular claimed the attention of his critics: what if anything did Carlyle's work mean in terms of practical political and social action?

When Carlyle's ideas on the Condition-of-England question had achieved their mature articulation in Chartism and Past and Present, many of his reviewers were quick to point out a major paradox which they felt partially vitiated the force of his appeal. Why could not the chief prophet of the Victorian gospel of work tell his disciples in concrete terms what to do? Aside from determined gestures towards planned emigration and popular education - proposals which in any case had only a peripheral bearing on the main tendency of Carlyle's argument - Chartism and Past and Present put forward nothing in the way of solid practical steps to ameliorate the Condition-of-England.

The omission spurred Lady Sydney Morgan, the popular sentimental novelist, to complain: "It is to little purpose that Mr Carlyle revolves in an atmosphere of generalities if he will not strive, by individualising and analysing, to arrive at particular and practicable

results; . . . ."[1] Comparing Past and Present with Chartism she observes: "There is a like repudiation of statistics, political economy, of all investigations tending to appreciate and define; a like substitution of picture writing for analysis; . . . ."[2]

In similar vein the exiled leader of the Young Italy movement, Joseph Mazzini, enquires of his friend: "Wherefore does he speak to us at times in such beautiful passages of hope and faith, of the divine principle that is within us, of the duty which calls us to act, and the next minute smile with pity on all we attempt, - . . . ."[3] He realises that Carlyle's contempt for practical political engagement springs from a deeper source than simple distaste for the hurly-burly of the political arena; that Carlyle is constrained by intellectual and moral considerations which constantly undermine his calls for heroic action: "A perpetual antagonism prevails throughout all he does; his instincts drive him to action, his theory to contemplation."[4]

In Mazzini's view the root of this difficulty is related to Carlyle's emphasis on the society as an aggregate of individuals and nothing more:

> The forms of government appear to him almost without meaning: such objects as the extension of suffrage, the guarantee of any kind of political right, are evidently

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[1][Lady Sydney Morgan], review of Past and Present, by Thomas Carlyle, in the Athenaeum, May 13, 1843, 453.

[2]Ibid. In fact, both Chartism and Past and Present evince a markedly sane attitude to statistics.

[3][Joseph Mazzini], review of Six Lectures on Heroes and Hero Worship, Sartor Resartus, and Past and Present, by Thomas Carlyle, in the British and Foreign Review, XVI (January, 1844), 285.

[4]Ibid., 284.

> in his eyes pitiful things, materialism more or less disguised. What he requires is, that men should grow better, that the number of just men should increase: one wise man more in the world would be to him a fact of more importance than ten political revolutions.[1]

While he shares this longing for a society of just men, Mazzini holds that Carlyle is rejecting every possible means of implementing the ideal.[2] In social and political questions, two "criteria of certainty" are evident to Mazzini, "individual conscience" and "universal tradition." Truth is to be discerned in a reconciliation of the two.[3] Carlyle's mistake has been to disregard tradition and substitute an undue preoccupation with the individual conscience. This failure to admit and grapple with existing social and political forces external to the individual strikes Mazzini as incomprehensible and defeatist: ". . . God and the individual conscience - Mr. Carlyle sees no other object in the world. . . ."[4]

William Henry Smith finds even less of practical and cogent political import in Past and Present. When he attempts to estimate the chief value of Carlyle's works, he finds himself reduced to praising "the tone of mind which the reader acquires from their perusal; - manly, energetic, enduring, with high resolves and self-forgetting effort; . . . ."[5] The benefit seems nebulous and utterly inadequate as a

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[1] Ibid., 285.

[2] Ibid., 286: "When a creed is the professed object, we must not capriciously destroy the instruments which may enable us fully to attain it."

[3] Ibid., 257. [4] Ibid.

[5] William Henry Smith, review of Past and Present, by Thomas Carlyle, in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, LIV (July, 1843),137-38.

response to the distressing situation so roundly castigated by Carlyle in the opening section of Past and Present, and he is brought to the realisation that:

> In fine, turn which way you will, to philosophy, to politics, to religion, you find Mr Carlyle objecting, denouncing, scoffing, rending all to pieces in his bold, reckless, ironical manner - but teaching nothing. The most docile pupil, when he opens his tablets to put down the precious sum of wisdom he has learned, pauses - finds his pencil motionless, and leaves his tablet a blank.[1]

It would seem that Carlyle is saying nothing of practical relevance to the social and political issues of the day. All Smith manages to salvage is a worthy "tone of mind."

One point about these adverse critical reactions is immediately apparent: they do not grasp the nature of Carlyle's response to the Condition-of-England question. What has happened in fact is that Carlyle has burst the bounds of the conceptual framework shared, with different emphases, by his reviewers. All they can see with any certainty, is Carlyle's irrelevance to their own outlook on social and political questions. Where Tom Brown, and his counterparts in real life, found a compelling and adventurous tussle with the tumult of the young century, Mazzini, Lady Morgan and Smith see merely an all-embracing obsession with "God and the individual conscience," an inexplicable disdain for social and political institutions, "picture writing," a "tone of mind."

This section of the study sets out to elucidate Carlyle's response to the Condition-of-England question, paying particular attention to his concept of "action."

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[1] Ibid., 122.

What was Past and Present supplying that more orthodox treatments of social and political issues failed to provide, and why could not the chief prophet of work tell his disciples what to do?

The Intellectual Matrix

Though he had been pondering its themes for some time, Carlyle wrote Past and Present (1843) after first-hand observation of the appalling conditions prevailing in the workhouse at St. Ives under the New Poor Law of 1834. In the opening words of the book, he offered this formulation of the Condition-of-England question:

> The condition of England, on which many pamphlets are now in the course of publication, and many thoughts are going on in every reflective head, is justly regarded as one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest, ever seen in this world. England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition. With unabated bounty the land of England blooms and grows; waving with yellow harvests; thick-studded with workshops, industrial implements, with fifteen millions of workers, understood to be the strongest, the cunningest and the willingest our Earth ever had; these men are here; the work they have done, the fruit they have realised is here, abundant, exuberant on every hand of us: and behold, some baleful fiat as of Enchantment has gone forth, saying, 'Touch it not, ye workers, ye master-workers, ye master-idlers; none of you can touch it, no man of you shall be the better for it; this is enchanted fruit!'[1]

The present consideration of Carlyle's Condition-of-England question starts by exploring the possibility that in presenting the problem in the form of an extended paradox

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[1]Carlyle, Works, X, 1.

presided over by "some baleful fiat as of Enchantment," Carlyle was employing more than a convenient piece of rhetoric or an appropriate myth: that perhaps he was recording a perception deeply rooted in his own experience and which he correctly understood to have infused much of the intellectual and spiritual life of his age. This perception, which constitutes the matrix of his response to the Condition-of-England question, is that man's inner being is being invaded by what he terms 'mechanical thinking' or 'mechanism.' As he wrote in "Signs of the Times":

> Men are grown mechanical in head and heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions, - for Mechanism of one sort or another do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character.[1]

This insight sheds much light on the inner workings of what Walter Houghton has named "The Age of Anxiety,"[2] and particularly on the problem of anomy in industrial society. It offers in embryo the key to Carlyle's concept of action, and hence an explanation of his ambivalent solution to the social and political upheavals of the day. While other critics of early industrial society made very similar observations, in no other English writer is this perception dwelt upon with such insistence. In other romantic theorists one has to approach the area covered by 'dissociation' through their expository writings, or sometimes their poetry. The

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[1]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 63.

[2]See Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind:1830-1870, (New Haven:Yale University Press,1957), 54-89.

element of raw experience is lost. This is true to some extent even with Mill and Darwin. Mill could regard his own disturbance simply as an awakening to a more inclusive view of cultural topography, while Darwin's affective reorientation was too far removed from his habitual sphere of enquiry to provoke more than puzzlement.

With Carlyle, however, the intrusion of mechanical thought-ways upon the natural sensibility is rendered as an element of personal experience. In Sartor Resartus he effectively descibes the workings of 'dissociation' - though of course he does not call it that - and presents the experience as central to the intellectual dilemmas of his age.

To understand what Carlyle means by the phrase "some baleful fiat as of Enchantment," and to grasp the relation between mechanical thinking and his view of the Condition-of-England question, we must turn to the period of Carlyle's literary apprenticeship. His early essays, mostly wide-ranging forays in the criticism and translation of German literature, are peppered by sporadic grapplings with the solipsistic implications of a subjectivist epistemology. The impulsion which precipitates these grapplings is Carlyle's earnest desire to save his readers from the dangers of critical Podsnappery in their approach to the great German writers. For instance, in characterising "the vulgar reader" at one point he comments: ". . ., to a reader of this sort few things can be more alarming than to find that his own little Parish, where he lived so snug and absolute, is, after

all, not the whole Universe; . . . ."[1] He is afraid that a complacent faith in the universality of their own perceptions and outlook may rob his English readers of the riches enshrined in the German literary tradition. Thus in the essay on "Goethe's 'Helena'" of 1828, we find him urging:

> We have not read an author till we have seen his object, whatever it may be, as he saw it. . . . We should understand the circumstances which, to his mind, made it seem true, or persuaded him to write it, ...[2]

This tendency to agonise over the dialectical relationship between author and reader, perhaps exacerbated by his role as champion and votary in the service of a relatively unknown literature - unknown, that is, in England - receives different emphases in different contexts. Here for example, discussing 'taste' in the "State of German Literature" (1827), the stress is on the need for a prior state of spiritual and intellectual fitness in the reader in order to commune fruitfully with the vision of a great writer:

> Taste, if it mean anything but a paltry connoisseurship must mean a general susceptibility to truth and nobleness; a sense to discern and a heart to love and reverence, all beauty, order, goodness, wheresoever or in whatsoever forms and accompaniments they are to be seen.[3]

In"Goethe's 'Helena,'" written a year later,the emphasis has shifted to include the enlarging and ennobling influence on the reader of his sustained efforts to grasp a vision which is, initially at least, beyond and above him:

> Everywhere in life, the true question is, not what we gain, but what we do: so also in intellectual matters, in conversation, in reading, which is more precise and careful conversation, it is not what we receive, but what we are made to give, that chiefly contents and

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[1]Carlyle, "Novalis," Works, XXVII, 6.

[2]Ibid., XXVI, 150. [3]Ibid., 40.

profits us.[1]

The arduous discipline requisite to comprehend an author on his own terms is seen as valuable, since it encourages the reader to conform himself to his author's intellectual and spiritual stature. Carlyle's canon is not one of acquiescent submission to the vision of an inspired authority: "Continuance of passive pleasure, . . ., is here, as under all conditions of mortal existence, an impossibility."[2] Rather he urges his readers to test on their own pulses the authority of what he believes to be an inspired vision. Ultimately it is the reader's own experience of the vision which must affirm its authority. To reap the full potential enlightenment demands faithful and rigorous submission to the modes and nuances of the particular writer's vision, and the reward for such submission is not merely a passive acquaintance with that vision, but the actual possession of it.

From such passages, and there are many others, it is plain that Carlyle is to some extent bothered by the notion that, in Thackeray's words, ". . . a distinct universe walks about under your hat and mine - . . . ."[3] But while these tentative probings that suggest the makings of a thoroughgoing solipsistic anxiety are scattered fitfully through the early essays, the evidence is really too fragment-

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[1] Ibid., 150. The obvious echoes of, for instance, Acts 20:35, ". . . It is more blessed to give than to receive," anticipate Carlyle's later reliance on the strong ethical pressures of his Calvinist upbringing as a means to effect his readers' salvation from solipsistic ignorance.

[2] Ibid.

[3] William Makepeace Thackeray, The History of Pendennis, The Biographical Edition (London:Smith, Elder, & Co., 1899), 148.

ary to represent a major preoccupation.[1] However, the embryonic probing eventually emerges as a coherent concern in Carlyle's first sustained piece of social criticism, the influential essay "Signs of the Times," which appeared in 1829. Although evidence of this essay's direct influence has yet to be produced, it seems safe to regard the symbolic mills of Coketown, Arnold's definition of Philistinism as "Faith in machinery," and Ruskin's notion of mechanised labour as a type of slavery in "The Nature of Gothic," as sharing a common origin in this phase of Carlyle's thought.

In "Signs of the Times" Carlyle argues that the nation is succumbing to a creeping paralysis of soul, caught in a period of radical dislocation between past and future. "There is a deep-lying struggle in the whole fabric of society; a boundless grinding collision of the New with the Old."[2] This "collision" in the macrocosm of society reflects a disruption of what is usually an unproblematic condition of human life: man has his daily being along a locus of intersection between past and future. "The poorest Day that passes over us is the conflux of two Eternities; it is made up of currents that issue from the remotest Past, and flow onwards into the remotest Future."[3] In Carlyle's view, the normally unproblematic "conflux" has been distorted into a "collision" because man has failed to maintain a balance between his increasing reliance on mechanism and mechanical

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[1]Aside from which, Carlyle's role as the advocate of a relatively unknown literature in a foreign language helps to smother the solipsistic problem by placing it in a cross-cultural rather than an intra-cultural or inter-personal setting.

[2]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 82. [3]Ibid., 59.

thinking, and the needs of what Carlyle terms his inner "dynamical" being.[1] It is not the mere existence of machinery that worries Carlyle. In company with most of the major critics of industrialism, he is no simple Luddite.[2] While readily conceding the benefits which improved technology confers, Carlyle's alarm is aroused by the degree to which mechanism is invading man's inner being, his intellectual and spiritual life: "Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also."[3] Should this process continue unchecked, it may finally issue in the utter demise of the dynamical faculty. With this possibility, we approach the heart of Carlyle's deepest anxiety:

> . . . , we might fancy either that man's Dynamical nature was, to all spiritual intents, extinct, or else so perfected that nothing more was to be made of it by the old means; and henceforth only in his Mechanical contrivances did any hope exist for him.[4]

That "man's Dynamical nature" may indeed be extinguished, or if not completely snuffed out then atrophied in its present condition so that it becomes yet another predictable influence in a world which is rapidly assuming the aspect of a "dead, immeasurable Steam-engine,"[5] is a prospect which calls forth Carlyle's acutest spiritual vertigo. He fears that man may one day look out on this universe of

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[1]The nature of the mechanical/dynamical contrast is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

[2]Ruskin and Morris occasionally resort to machine-smashing rhetoric, but some recognition of the advantages of machine production is usually not far behind.

[3]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 60.

[4]Ibid., 73.

[5]Ibid., Sartor Resartus, Works, I, 133.

mechanism and see there nothing but a reflex image of himself - a mechanical solipsism.

It may be as well to indicate, at this point, that this worry was no mere chimera. It is precisely the vision of man which T.H.Huxley set forth with great equanimity later in the century, in his essay on "A Liberal Education" of 1868:

> That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in his youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, ... [1]

Such a conception of man was anathema to Carlyle, principally because it ignores what he calls the "dynamical province." The dynamical province is the avenue through which absolute values - " . . . , the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion,

. . . which have a truly vital and <u>infinite</u> character; . . ." [2] - can manifest themselves in the finite world of plurality and relativism. The encroachments of mechanical thinking leave society increasingly bereft of access to the realm of the infinite, and correspondingly incapable of infusing the

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[1]Thomas H. Huxley, "A Liberal Education; and Where to Find It," in <u>Collected Essays</u>, III, (London:Macmillan and Co.,1893), 86. Admittedly Huxley concludes the paragraph on a note which Carlyle might have found more congenial, holding that a liberally educated man ". . . has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself." But there can be no doubt as to where the major emphasis is placed. That same "clear, cold, logic engine" is to "spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; . . . ." Nothing approaching Carlyle's "dynamical province" has a place in Huxley's epistemology.

[2]Carlyle, <u>Works</u>, XXVII, 68.

finite world with absolute values. What might be termed a partial ontological vacuum is created, in which man finds himself subject principally to the empty forms of mechanism. Man's soul, denizen of the "inward or dynamical province," must struggle for survival in an atmosphere denuded of proper dynamical sustenance - cut off from the realm of absolutes. But there is hope:

> If Mechanism, like some glass bell, encircles and imprisons us; if the soul looks forth on a fair heavenly country which it cannot reach, and pines, and in its scanty atmosphere is ready to perish, - yet the bell is but of glass; 'one bold stroke to break the bell in pieces, and thou art delivered!' Not the invisible world is wanting, for it dwells in man's soul, and this last is still here.[1]

In this "one bold stroke," the action which shatters the enshrouding scrim of mechanism, lies the genesis of the Carlylean gospel of "work," and a major aspect of his response to the Condition-of-England question. Action informed by the dynamical province, prosecuted in the present moment where time and infinity coalesce - the "conflux of two Eternities" - brings into being or bodies forth absolute values which transcend the limitations of the mechanical sphere. Such action will ameliorate the "boundless grinding collision of the New with the Old" by reasserting a balance between dynamical and mechanical thinking in the individual, and between the dynamical and mechanical province expressed in society; or as Carlyle puts it, between "Body-Politic" and "Soul-Politic."[2]

A brief account of "Characteristics" (1831) will serve to conclude the main outlines of Carlyle's battle with

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[1] Ibid., 81. [2] Ibid., 67.

the spectre of mechanism, for with this essay he had established the ground of his future intellectual development. "Characteristics" develops the solipsistic implications of "Signs of the Times" by indicating a possible avenue of retreat from the malaise. The important innovation which the essay supplies is the doctrine of unconsciousness:

> We stand here too conscious of many things: with Knowledge, the symptom of Derangement, we must even do our best to restore a little Order. Life is, in few instances, and at rare intervals, the diapason of a heavenly melody; oftenest the fierce jar of disruptions and convulsions, which, do what we will, there is no disregarding. Nevertheless, such is still the wish of Nature on our behalf; in all vital action her manifest purpose and effort is, that we should be unconscious of it, and, like the peptic Countryman, never know that we 'have a system'.[1]

The argument turns on the notion of health, "wholeness," whether in the microcosm of the individual or the macrocosm of society, as a state of unconsciousness in which man's spiritual, intellectual and physical energies find natural, unhindered expression in action. Consciousness, or even self-consciousness, does not of itself thwart this normal 'outering' of man's capacities. Indeed as a symptom of intellectual struggle it may betoken an effort to restore in man the untroubled harmony of "the peptic Countryman." But if so, the effort is misguided, inasmuch as mechanistic intellectual endeavour, or "speculation," cannot transcend its own dead level: "Metaphysical speculation, as it begins in No or Nothingness, so it must end in Nothingness; circulates and must circulate in endless vortices, creating, swallowing-itself."[2] Since consciousness is a symptom and necessary corollary of speculation, and speculation is at the root of

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[1] Ibid., XXVIII, 3. [2] Ibid., 27.

the manifold dislocations in society, there is small hope of restoring harmony through its agency. Consciousness cooperates with mechanical thinking to thwart the natural expression of man's energies:

> Examine man's internal world, in any of its social relations and performances, here too all seems diseased self-consciousness, and mutually-destructive struggle. Nothing acts from within outwards in undivided healthy force; everything lies impotent, lamed, its force turned inwards, and painfully 'listens to itself'.[1]

The remedy, implicit in "Characteristics" (and explicit in Past and Present) is a return to a state of organic unconsciousness, a state where:

> Society was what we call whole, in both senses of the word. The individual man was in himself a whole, or complete union; and could combine with his fellows as the living member of a greater whole . . . . Opinion and Action had not yet become disunited; but the former could still produce the latter, or attempt to produce it; as the stamp does its impression while the wax is not hardened. Thought and the voice of thought were also a unison; thus, instead of Speculation, we had Poetry; Literature, in its rude utterance, was as yet a heroic Song, perhaps too a devotional anthem.[2]

Such then, is the central thrust of the early essays. The three related phases of Carlyle's early intellectual development that have been described - a tentative flirtation with the solipsistic implications of subjectivism, the overt formulation and explication of this activity in "Signs of the Times," and a possible remedy in the doctrine of unconsciousness - are the rudimentary embodiment of ideas which inform all Carlyle's thinking on the Condition-of-England question. Although he first coined the phrase "Condition-of-England" in the essay on Chartism (1839), and the themes he adumbrated there attained their fullest and

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[1] Ibid., 22. [2] Ibid., 15.

most satisfying expression in Past and Present, the germ of these teachings, many of his later attitudes, and the general tenor of his response are clearly discernible in the early essays.[1]

'Dynamical' Thinking and the Hero

"Signs of the Times" is organised around the contrast between mechanical and dynamical thinking, and we have seen that Carlyle attributes the widespread sense of transition and dislocation in the opening years of the century to man's recent excessive preoccupation with mechanical thinking. According to Carlyle, mechanical thinking involves an etiolated conception of intellect. Where formerly intellect was "the power man has of knowing and believing," under the mechanical view of things it becomes "nearly synonymous with Logic or the mere power of arranging and communicating."[2] When man's social, political, and religious thought is thoroughly permeated by this conception of intellect, then social, political, and religious activity reflect a facile faith in the manipulations of mechanism. The pursuit of "internal

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[1]The one important element in Carlyle's tussle with the Condition-of-England question which is not explicitly prefigured in the early essays is his criticism of "Cash Payment" as the principal economic manifestation of mechanism in society: "Cash Payment the sole nexus: and there are so many things which cash will not pay!' (Works, XXIX, 169.) This theme makes its first appearance in Chartism and is later developed in Past and Present as the "Gospel of Mammonism."

[2]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 74.

perfection" is rejected for "external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions, - for Mechanism, of one sort or another, ..."[1] The question arises as to what exactly Carlyle means by mechanical thinking, and perhaps more importantly, by dynamical thinking.

The terms evidently derive from Novalis, for they appear in an important passage translated by Carlyle from the Novalis Schriften, and published in his review of that work in 1829 - the same year as "Signs of the Times."[2] Apart from annexing the two major terms, and several nuances of phraseology,[3] the conceptual content of "Signs of the Times" is thoroughly congruent with the diagnosis of contemporary intellectual development outlined by Novalis in this passage. We are told that:

> 'Common Logic is the Grammar of the higher Speech, that is, of Thought; it examines merely the relations of ideas to one another, the Mechanics of Thought, the pure Physiology of ideas. Now logical ideas stand related to one another, like words without thoughts. Logic occupies itself with the mere dead Body of the Science of Thinking. - Metaphysics, again, is the Dynamics of Thought; treats of the primary Powers of Thought; occupies itself with the mere Soul of the Science of Thinking. Metaphysical ideas stand related to one another, like thoughts without words. . . . .' - [4]

Novalis holds that these two realms of "Common Logic" and "Metaphysics" - words without thoughts and thoughts

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[1] Ibid., 63. [2] Ibid., 36-38.

[3] Compare for instance, these two excerpts from the Novalis translation: " . . . the hostile masses towered themselves up against each other more fiercely than heretofore; . . . ; there followed powerful explosions." (Ibid.,37) and "Thus does the Philosophic Spirit arise at first, in altogether separate masses." (Ibid.), with the following from "Signs of the Times": "These two hostile influences, . . . had lain in separate masses, accumulating through generations, and France was the scene of their fiercest explosion; . . . ." (Ibid., 82.)

[4] Ibid., 36.

without words - remained stubbornly incompatible until the latter half of the eighteenth century, when an extreme intellectual fermentation was followed by "powerful explosions," leading some thinkers to assert "that a real Compenetration has somewhere or other taken place; that the germ of a union has arisen, ..."[1] However it is not the"Compenetration" that fascinates Carlyle, for he breaks the translation off before Novalis has enunciated his concept of a transcendental reconciliation between the two disparate modes. Rather, he is interested in Novalis's presentation of the stages of culture which lead up to their rapprochement.

In the first stage the divorce between "Logic" and "Metaphysics" is complete. The two distinct spheres give rise to widely different types of mental activity. The logician of this stage is the Scholastic; a "rude, discursive thinker" who builds his Universe "out of logical Atoms." He "annihilates all living Nature, to put an Artifice of Thoughts . . . in its room. His aim is an infinite Automaton."[2] Utterly distinct from the logician is the "rude, intuitive Poet" who "hates rules and fixed form; a wild, violent life reigns instead of it in Nature; all is animate, no law; wilfulness and wonder everywhere. He is merely dynamical."[3]

The second stage of culture arises when the disparate modes of Logic and Metaphysics, as Novalis puts it, "come in contact."[4] This is "the time of misunderstanding,"[5] a largely unfruitful episode dominated by the "Eclectic Philosophers."[6] Faced with a severe dichotomy between Logic

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[1] Ibid., 37. [2-6] Ibid.

and Metaphysics, these thinkers retreat into a concern with the "actual, present world, in the strictest sense."[1] The more closely their investigations limit them to this actuality, the higher their standing as Eclectic Philosophers; and conversely they evince "contempt"[2] for any less rigorous confinement to the actual than their own. Novalis comments that although the opposition between logician and metaphysician appears to be so complete, whereas the Eclectics seem solidly united in their rejection of these extremes belonging to the first stage of culture, in fact this appearance is deceptive. For the logician and metaphysician are "indirectly of one opinion; namely, as regards the non-dependence, and infinite character of Meditation, they both set out from the Absolute: whilst the Eclectic and limited sort are essentially at variance; and agree only in what is deduced."[3] It seems that while the "intuitive Poet" and the "discursive thinker" may differ in their methods and conclusions, at least they agree on their premises - one Absolute Reality is the agreed object of their different investigations. But the Eclectics are fundamentally at odds, because they start from limited pluralistic and relativistic assumptions and can find agreement only in what is deduced from compatible premises.

The difference between Novalis's first and second stages of culture is, broadly speaking, that between the philosophy of the early seventeenth century and that of the Enlightenment. Ernst Cassirer observes that in the seventeenth century:

[1-3] *Ibid.*

> Truly "philosophical" knowledge had seemed attainable only when thought, starting from a highest being and from a highest, intuitively grasped certainty, succeeded in spreading the light of this certainty over all derived being and all derived knowledge. This was done by the method of proof and rigorous inference, which added other propositions to the first original certainty and in this way pieced out and linked together the whole chain of possible knowledge. No link of this chain could be removed from the whole; none was explicable by itself.[1]

This aptly describes the endeavour of Novalis's "rude, discursive thinker." The eighteenth century takes a more modest, but for Carlyle more disturbing, view of reason:

> [Reason] is not the treasury of the mind in which truth like a minted coin lies stored; it is rather the original intellectual force which guides the discovery and determination of truth. . . . . And its most important function consists in its power to bind and to dissolve. It dissolves everything merely factual, all simple data of experience, and everything believed on the evidence of revelation, tradition and authority; . . . . Following this work of dissolution begins the work of construction. Reason cannot stop with the dispersed parts; it has to build from them a new structure, a true whole. . . . . Only in this twofold intellectual movement can the concept of reason be fully characterized, namely as a concept of agency, not of being.[2]

Here Cassirer has pinpointed the position of the "Eclectic" philosophers belonging to the second stage of culture. These are the forbears of the "mechanical" philosophers of the nineteenth century, and as we shall see, Carlyle circumvents their challenge by proposing a retreat to the first stage of culture.

But it is principally the third stage of culture which is pertinent to Carlyle's position in "Signs of the Times." The third stage, according to Novalis, is the prov-

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[1]Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, trans. by Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton:Princeton University Press,1951), 6-7.

[2]Ibid., 13-14. (Square brackets mine.)

ince of the Artist, who discovers that the two "absolute Philosophical Activities" of the logician and the poet constitute "a deeper-lying Separation in his own Nature; which Separation indicates, by its existence as such, the possibility of being adjusted, of being joined: he finds that, heterogeneous as these Activities are, there is yet a faculty in him of passing from the one to the other, of changing his polarity at will."[1] It is here that the affinities between the Novalis passage and "Signs of the Times" are most evident. The stance adopted in "Signs of the Times" is clearly that of the third stage, and it licenses Carlyle to dismiss the Eclectic stage of cultural development - with its implications of relativism, pluralism and scepticism - and instead direct his major effort towards encouraging a readjustment of the two "absolute Philosophical Activities" within the individual. This readjustment not only ensures harmony in the individual, but it enables him to discern more clearly the established harmony which actually prevails in the circumambient universe. He finds his place and right activity within an Absolute holistic cosmos, where social and political relations are not distorted by mechanism.[2]

It is important to realise that despite his susceptibility to dialectical thinking, Carlyle chooses not to present Novalis's notion of a transcendental reconciliation between the modes of "Logic" and "Metaphysics." And

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[1]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 38.

[2]Carlyle's position here supports the view that "dissociation" has both an historical and a personal provenance. While Novalis's essay is firmly historical in intention (and confirms Eliot's assertion that the seventeenth century is of distinctive importance for "dissociation"), Carlyle chooses to adapt its concepts to a personal, largely a-historical framework.

similarly in "Signs of the Times" there is no hint that such a reconciliation is possible. Instead the demand is to achieve an acceptable balance between the two:

> To define the limits of these two departments of man's activity, which work into one another, and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably, were by its nature an impossible attempt. Their relative importance, even to the wisest mind, will vary in different times, according to the special wants and dispositions of those times. Meanwhile, it seems clear enough that only in the right coördination of the two, and the vigorous forwarding of <u>both</u>, does our true line of action lie.[1]

But this conception of a "right coördination" or balance provides Carlyle with only a fleeting and frail resolution to the competition between mechanical and dynamical thinking. A particular strain of language in the essay indicates that the two modes are inherently hostile, so that the notion of balance - one which Raymond Williams sets considerable store by in his high estimate of "Signs of the Times"[2] - becomes more a gesture of assertion than of genuine conviction. This strain of language suggests that man's capitulation to mechanical thinking is scarcely a voluntary strategy. His surrender to mechanism is depicted in terms which suggest mass hypnosis:

> Today we may say, with the Philosopher, 'the deep meaning of the Laws of Mechanism lies heavy on us'; and in the closet, in the market-place, in the temple, by the social hearth, encumbers the whole movements of our mind, and over our noblest faculties is spreading a nightmare sleep.[3]

In similar vein, Carlyle notes that " . . . the inward eye seems heavy with sleep"[4] and that the unwise

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., 73.

[2] Raymond Williams, <u>Culture and Society</u>, 76.

[3] Carlyle, <u>Works</u>, XXVII, 79-80.

[4] <u>Ibid</u>., 73.

mechanical mode of viewing Nature causes a " . . . deep, paralysed subjection to physical objects."[1] This tendency for man's reliance upon mechanical thinking to bring about an involuntary loss of sensitivity towards the dynamical component of intellect immediately undermines the claim propounded both in the Novalis passage and "Signs of the Times"; namely, that man possesses a faculty of "changing his polarity at will."[2] It implies that not only does mechanical thinking tend to arrogate the legitimate concerns of the dynamical province, but it induces an unwitting curtailment of man's dynamical proclivities. Devotion to mechanical modes somehow entails man's involuntary exile from dynamical modes:

> An intellectual dapperling of these times boasts chiefly of his irresistible perspicacity, his 'dwelling in the daylight of truth,' and so forth; which, on examination, turns out to be a dwelling in the rush-light of 'closet-logic,' and a deep unconsciousness that there is any other light to dwell in or any other objects to survey with it.[3]

Man's attention is so completely absorbed by mechanical thinking that he has lost his awareness of the existence of dynamical potentialities: he is no longer even conscious of them. Instead of maintaining a suitable balance between the two contrasting modes, mechanical thinking has usurped the field of attention to such an extent that what presently satisfies man as the "daylight of truth" is actually only the "rush-light of 'closet-logic.'"

This theme is amplified and reinforced in "Characteristics" where mechanical thinking is explicitly identified with "consciousness." It is here too that Carlyle

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[1] Ibid., 80-81. [2] Ibid., 38. [3] Ibid., 75.

follows up the notion that mechanical thinking is in some way hypnotic, for he maintains that the suppressed dynamical modes are relegated to a domain outside man's conscious (i.e. mechanical) field of attention - to the realm of the unconscious. He writes:

> In our inward, as in our outward world, what is mechanical lies open to us: not what is dynamical and has vitality. Of our Thinking, we might say, it is but the mere upper surface that we shape into articulate Thoughts; - underneath the region of argument and conscious discourse, lies the region of meditation; here, in its quiet mysterious depths, dwells what vital force is in us; here, if aught is to be created, and not merely manufactured and communicated, must the work go on.[1]

In both "Signs of the Times" and "Characteristics" it becomes insistently clear that the mechanical and dynamical modes of thought are distinct both within each individual, and in the social, political and economic conditions they produce when manifested in society. "Characteristics" goes one step further. As far as the individual is concerned, Carlyle maintains that the practitioner of "closet-logic" and the dynamical thinker are usually different persons, according as one or other mode of thinking comes to predominate:

> . . . the man of logic and the man of insight; the Reasoner and the Discoverer, or even Knower, are quite separable, - indeed, for most part, quite separate characters.[2]

It should be plain here how readily the distinction between mechanical and dynamical thinking melds into the Carlylean theory of the "Hero." Where in "Signs of the Times" competition between the two modes was viewed as a

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[1] Ibid., XXVIII, 4-5. [2] Ibid., 5-6.

potential conflict within the individual, one which the essay set out to energise, here the conflict is largely externalised: the dynamical thinker and the mechanical thinker precipitate out as separate types. In a sense Carlyle has retreated from Novalis's third stage of culture to the first stage, envisioning the conflict as a straight fight between "rude, intuitive Poet" and "rude, discursive thinker,"[1] but without Novalis's high valuation of the latter. Such a retreat is already latent in "Signs of the Times," where the following passage clearly anticipates the mature Carlylean theory of the "Hero":

> We figure Society as a 'Machine', and that mind is opposed to mind, as body is to body; . . . . Notable absurdity! For the plain truth, very plain, we think is, that minds are opposed to minds in quite a different way: and <u>one</u> man that has a higher Wisdom, a hithertoe unknown spiritual Truth in him, is stronger, not than ten men that have it not, or than ten thousand, but than <u>all</u> men who have it not; . . . .[2]

The germ of the Hero theory is quite patent, and while the conception gains in solidity and depth in later works as moral, intellectual and spiritual qualifications of the Hero are specified more completely, the conceptual basis of the distinction between the Hero and ordinary people is here expressed in its simplicity. It is first and foremost his well-developed dynamical susceptibility which distinguishes the Hero from lesser individuals, and makes possible his privileged communion with the infinite. This susceptibility presupposes a large measure of freedom from the

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[1]A not unusual separation; c.f. Mark Pattison: ". . . are not poet and thinker incompatibles?" Lionel A. Tollemache, <u>Recollections of Pattison</u> (London:C.F.Hodgson & Son,1885), 84.

[2]Carlyle, <u>Works</u>, XXVII, 75.

hypnotic influence of "closet-logic": a dominion which allows his superior talent, his wide knowledge of facts, his veracity, and so forth, to participate in the "higher Wisdom" of the dynamical province. For once society is thoroughly captivated by mechanical thinking, dwelling wholly in "the rush-light of 'closet-logic,'" man's only hope of salvation from the toils of mechanical solipsism lies in some external dynamical intervention - in "the man who has a higher Wisdom, a hithertoe unknown spiritual Truth in him." This man is the "Hero." He becomes the channel through which absolute values are introduced into the mundane experience of less gifted individuals, who would otherwise be totally caught up in the machinations of mechanism.

What then is the nature of dynamical thinking? How does it differ from mechanical thinking? Or to rephrase these questions, why are some people "Heroes" and "rude intuitive poets" while others are not? Ernst Cassirer has formulated a distinction very similar to the mechanical/ dynamical contrast in Carlyle's writings. He employs a different terminology, but the distinction is essentially the same. Mechanical thinking he calls "theoretical" or "discursive" thinking, while dynamical thinking becomes "mythic" thinking. The passage is taken from Language and Myth:

> In discursive thought, the particular phenomenon is related to the whole pattern of being and of process; with ever-tightening, ever more elaborate bonds it is held to that totality. In mythic conception, however, things are not taken for what they mean indirectly, but for their immediate appearance; they are taken as pure presentations, and embodied in the imagination. It is easy to see that this sort of hypostatization must lead to an entirely different attitude toward the spoken

word, toward its power and content, than the standpoint of discursive thinking would produce.[1]

He continues by observing that in theoretical thinking:

> The word stands,so to speak, between actual particular impressions, as a phenomenon of a different order, a new intellectual dimension; and to this mediating position, this remoteness from the sphere of immediate data, it owes the freedom and ease with which it moves among specific objects and connects one with another.
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> This free ideality, which is the core of its logical nature, is necessarily lacking in the realm of mythic conception. For in this realm nothing has any significance or being save what is given in tangible reality. Here is no "reference" and "meaning"; every content of consciousness is immediately translated into terms of actual presence and effectiveness. Here thought does not confront its data in an attitude of free contemplation, seeking to understand their structure and their systematic connections, and analyzing them according to their parts and functions, but is simply captivated by a total impression. Such thinking does not develop the given content of experience; it does not reach backward or forward from that vantage point to find "causes" and "effects", but rests content with taking in the sheer existent.[2]

Cassirer's description of the differences between discursive and mythic thought could be substantiated from the full range of Carlyle's work, but in the early period which this study has termed "the intellectual matrix," the correlation is particularly clear. Cassirer's description of "discursive" or "theoretical" thinking pinpoints some of the main aspects of mechanical thinking which induce Carlyle to reject it so vehemently. The primary characteristic of mechanical thinking is a marked tendency to formal abstraction, or what Cassirer terms "free ideality"; "the core of its

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[1]Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. by Susanne K. Langer (New York:Dover Publications Inc., 1946),56.

[2]Ibid., 56-57.

logical nature." He notes that because of its "remoteness from the sphere of immediate data" discursive thinking moves easily and freely among specific objects "and connects one with another." We have seen that this is one of Carlyle's chief complaints against mechanical thinking. He charges that "the power man has of knowing and believing, is now nearly synonymous with Logic, or the mere power of arranging and communicating."[1] In a similar vein Carlyle holds that in the mechanical philosophy of the nineteenth century, "'Cause and effect' is almost the only category under which we look at, and work with, all Nature. Our first question with regard to any object is not, What is it? but, How is it?"[2] Carlyle would clearly be much more at home with the capacities of mythic thought as Cassirer describes them, for mythic thought "does not develop the given content of experience; it does not reach backward and forward from that vantage point to find 'causes' and 'effects', but rests content with taking in the sheer existent." Carlyle is overwhelmingly concerned with "the sheer existent": it is always the "what" and never the "how" of things that interests him. He is content to remain "captivated by a total impression." This principle manifests itself in his prose style, in his notions of historiography and, particularly, in his social and political prescriptions to meet the "Condition-of-England" question.

But first a possible explanation for the difference between mechanical and dynamical thinking must be put forward. The crucial point that emerges from Cassirer's formulation

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[1]Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 74. [2]Ibid.

of the mechanical/dynamical contrast, is that dynamical thinking (which he terms mythic thinking) is associated with "an entirely different attitude toward the spoken word, toward its power and content, than the standpoint of discursive thinking would produce." As Cassirer remarks elsewhere in the same essay, with mythic thinking "Thought and its verbal utterance are usually taken directly as one; for the mind that thinks and the tongue that speaks belong essentially together."[1] Notice how closely this parallels Carlyle's plea in "Characteristics" for a state of unconscious "wholeness" in society, for conditions where "Thought and the voice of thought were also a unison; thus, instead of Speculation, we had Poetry; Literature, in its rude utterance, was as yet an heroic Song, perhaps too a devotional anthem."[2] This "heroic Song" is the primal utterance of the "rude intuitive poet": but it is far from an aesthetic or decorative social embellishment. Earlier in the same passage from "Characteristics," we find Carlyle claiming that before man succumbed to mechanical consciousness, there existed a state of affairs where "Opinion and Action had not yet become disunited, but the former could still produce it, as the stamp does its impression while the wax is not hardened."[3] Cassirer points out that in mythic thought "every content of consciousness is immediately translated into terms of actual presence and effectiveness." Carlyle's entire oeuvre is deeply imbued with this feeling for language as power, as a force capable of moving men to action. This insight suggests

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[1]Cassirer, Language and Myth, 46.

[2]Carlyle, Works, XXVIII, 15. [3]Ibid.

the possibility that the entire trend of Carlyle's thinking may be closely related to oral rather than literate modes of thought and expression.[1] The Carlylean Hero's necessary emancipation from the hypnotic influence of "closet-logic" may simply indicate a fortuitous immunity from some of the side-effects of a literate culture. And indeed, there is much to suggest that such is the case.

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[1]As can be seen from the passages quoted above, Cassirer's observations (richly documented in his major work The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, trans. by Ralph Mannheim with a preface and introduction by Charles W. Hendel [3 vols.;New Haven:Yale University Press,1955].) lend considerable support to the argument of Goody and Watt, suggesting that the divorce between mythic and theoretical or discursive thought results from the entrenchment of literacy in "civilised" societies. But Cassirer's perceptions must be distinguished from his philosophical interpretation. Instead of a primitive or "mythic" consciousness producing a "different" attitude to the spoken word (as Cassirer avers), Goody and Watt would argue that the gradual etiolation of habits of mythic conception comes about through prolonged contact with the written (or printed) word, so that it is the hypostatisation of the written word which eventuates in theoretical or discursive thought. This hypothesis mitigates several dubious features of Cassirer's neo-Kantian philosophical outlook. First, it undermines a latent teleological determinism which views the development of theoretical thinking as a manifestation of the inward drive of "Geist" to realise itself: a notion redolent with nineteenth-century romantic 'developmentalism,' and which today can carry little more than rhetorical force. Secondly, as Goody and Watt point out, it invalidates any simplistic attribution of the crucial innovations in western conceptual thought in the sixth century B.C. solely to a superior mental endowment of the ancient Greek peoples. And thirdly, it helps to account for the persistence of "mythic" thought even in societies where conceptual thought is long established.

The Heroic 'Word'

In Past and Present Carlyle dwells on the Hero's calling in the following terms:

> Genius, Poet: do we know what these words mean? An inspired Soul once more vouchsafed us, direct from Nature's own great fire-heart, to see the Truth, and speak it, and do it; Nature's own sacred voice heard once more athwart the dreary boundless element of hear-saying and canting, of twaddle and poltroonery, in which the bewildered Earth, nigh perishing, has lost its way![1]

The Hero is first of all a voice. He has no personal authority, no special power originating in himself, but simply the capacity to enunciate "Nature's own sacred voice." The "bewildered Earth" must hear and obey, because this is natural. When he offers a pronunciamento on the role of the Hero in contemporary society, Carlyle almost invariably stresses the need for Truth to be spoken:

> Beyond all ages, our Age admonishes whatsoever thinking or writing man it has: Oh speak to me, some wise intelligible speech; your wise meaning, in the shortest and clearest way; behold I am dying for want of wise meaning, and insight into the devouring fact: speak, if you have any wisdom![2]

Such instances could be multiplied at length, and they generally carry a tone of formidable seriousness. The age is dying for want of wise meaning, while for Carlyle, until near the end of his career, the 'word' of the Hero could become the locus of redeeming authority and transform-

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[1]Carlyle, Works, X, 86.

[2]Ibid., The Life of John Sterling, Works, XI, 196.

ing power. There is much to suggest that Carlyle's conflation of 'thinking' and 'writing' with 'speaking' is more than metaphorical.

The literary style which embodies Carlyle's message was - and is - outrageous.[1] That he was thoroughly conscious of its idiosyncracies, its strengths and its shortcomings, is quite clear. For example, this penetrating description of Jean Paul Richter's style might well be taken for an analysis of his own:

> Not that [Richter] is ignorant of grammar, or disdains the sciences of spelling and parsing; but he exercises both in a certain latitudinarian spirit; deals with astonishing liberality in parenthesis, dashes, and subsidiary clauses; invents hundreds of new words, alters old ones, or by hyphen chains and pairs and packs them together into most jarring combination; in short, produces sentences of the most heterogeneous, lumbering, interminable kind. Figures without limit; indeed the whole is one tissue of metaphors, and similes, and allusions to all the provinces of Earth, Sea and Air; interlaced with epigrammatic breaks, vehement bursts, or sardonic turns, interjections, quips, puns, and even oaths! A perfect Indian jungle it seems; a boundless, unparalleled imbroglio; . . . .[2]

Carlyle's own "unparalleled imbroglio" stands in flat opposition not only to Johnsonian English, but to any style appropriate to orderly sequential exposition. It constitutes a "dynamical" challenge to a "mechanical" age.[3]

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[1]For a general discussion of Carlyle's style see G.B.Tennyson, 'The Style of "Sartor Resartus,"' in Sartor Called Resartus:The Genius, Structure, and Style of Thomas Carlyle's First Major Work (Princeton:Princeton University Press,1965), 238-83.

[2]Carlyle, "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter," Works,XXVI,12. (Square brackets mine.)

[3]Carlyle never divorces language from the world view it symbolises. For instance, he contrasts the expression of Thomas Hope and Friedrich Schlegel as follows:

> To Schlegel his Philosophic Speech is obedient, dextrous, exact, like a promptly ministering genius; his names are so clear, so precise and vivid, that they almost (sometimes altogether) become things for him: with Hope there is no Philosophical speech; but a painful, confused stammering, and struggling after such;

In a memoir of her husband, Elizabeth Lecky cites a passage from one of his Commonplace books in which he describes Carlyle's conversational style:

> It was never for an instant commonplace. The whole diction was always original and intensely vivid, and it was more saturated and interlaced with metaphor than any other conversation I have ever heard. It was a conversation which was peculiarly difficult to report, for it was not epigrammatic but continuous, and very much of the charm lay in the extraordinary felicities of his expressions, in the vividness of his epithets, in his unrivalled power of etching out a subject by a few words so as to make it stand out in prominent relief. He was the very greatest of word-painters.[1]

Of Carlyle's conversational gifts there can be little doubt: a visit to the Carlyle household roused the Boswell in so many of his contemporaries. Several of these observers indicate the probability that Carlyle's books merely hypostatise a more considered version of this exuberant conversational style. Recalling a visit to the sage, Frederick Harrison noted that Carlyle " . . . rolled forth Latter-Day Pamphlets by the hour together in the very words, with all the nicknames, expletives, and ebullient tropes that were so familiar to us in print, with the full voice, the Dumfries burr, and the kindling eye which all his friends

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> or the tongue, as in doatish forgetfulness, maunders, low, long-winded, and speaks not the word intended, but another; . . . . (Carlyle, Works, XXVIII, 34.)

Rather than distinguishing different uses of language, as the early twentieth century analyst might have attempted, Carlyle relates the difference, together with others that he finds, to one over-riding shift in outlook:

> For ourselves, the loud discord which jars in these two Works, in innumerable works of the like import, and generally in all the Thought and Action of this period, does not any longer utterly confuse us. Unhappy who, in such a time, felt not, at all conjuctures, ineradicably in his heart the knowledge that a God made this Universe, and a Demon not! (Ibid., 36)

[1][Elizabeth Lecky], A Memoir of the Right Hon. William Edward Hartpole Lecky: By His Wife (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), 93.

recall."[1] He was led to wonder, "Could printed essay and spoken words be so absolutely the same? Was he reciting one of his old pamphlets committed to memory, or was he really speaking impromptu as thoughts passed through his brain?"[2]

John Ruskin was struck by the same similarity, though in the Praeterita he puts it the other way round: " . . . he talked just as vigorously as he wrote, and the book he makes bitterest moan over, Friedrich, bears the aspect of richly enjoyed gossip, and loving involuntary eloquence of description or praise."[3] Lastly, Caroline Fox, who evidently experienced none of the difficulty Lecky anticipated, succeeded in reporting whole conversations with Carlyle, and again, she sets down perfect Carlylese.[4]

The idea that Carlyle's literary style was closely allied to his speech gains further support from the Reminiscences.[5] It must be obvious to every reader familiar with the

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[1]Frederick Harrison, Memories and Thoughts:Men-Books-Cities-Art (London:Macmillan and Co., Limited,1906), 99-100.

[2]Ibid., 100.

[3]John Ruskin, Praeterita, in The Works of John Ruskin, ed. by E.T.Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, XXXV (London:George Allen, 1903), 367.

[4]Caroline Fox, Memories of Old Friends:Being Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox, 80-85.

[5]The view first entered the critical arena in a much anthologised article by Logan Pearsall Smith, where he elaborated an insight of Emerson's:

> This distinction which Emerson makes between the written and the spoken dialect is of capital importance in our appreciation of Carlyle's prose. Almost all our authors make use of the written dialect of their time, and rich and beautiful it is as they often use it; but this written dialect has a tendency to dessication, is always on the way to becoming a dead language; and marvellous is the effect, like that of a fresh breeze

broad variety of Carlyle's pantheon of "Heroes," that in the degree they achieve this accolade, in that degree they tend to resemble the portrait of his father, James Carlyle, as presented in the Reminiscences. Bearing in mind that this urge towards identification underpins the entire piece, it is perhaps significant that Carlyle opens his tribute with a memorable description - using terms quite close to those employed by Lecky and Harrison - of his father's brilliant facility with the spoken word:

> . . . none of us will ever forget that bold glowing style of his, flowing free from the untutored Soul; full of metaphors (though he knew not what a metaphor was), with all manner of potent words (which he appropriated and applied with a surprising accuracy, you often could not guess whence); brief, energetic; and which I should say conveyed the most perfect picture, definite, clear not in ambitious colours but in full white sunlight of all the dialects I have ever listened to. Nothing did I ever hear him undertake to render visible, which did not become almost ocularly so. Never shall we again hear such speech as that was: the whole district knew of it; . . . [1]

Certainly Carlyle never forgot it! Dotted through the work are complementary observations indicating Carlyle's keen awareness of the spoken word in his youthful environment. He dwells on his father's conversational expertise, his love of trenchant argument (both as a participant and as a listener), his reliance on the Bible and on what might be called in a loose sense, oral tradition:

> from a window suddenly opened into a musty room, of the accents and syncopations and free syntax of the spoken voice. (Logan Pearsall Smith, "Thomas Carlyle:The Rembrandt of English Prose" in Victorian Literature:Modern Essays in Criticism ed. by Austin Wright [New York: Oxford University Press,1961], 123.)

[1]Carlyle, Reminiscences, ed. by Charles Eliot Norton, with an introduction by Ian Campbell (London:J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd,1972), 3.

> . . . all his knowledge of the Boundless Time was derived from his Bible, and what the oral memories of old men could give him, and his own could gather; . . . .[1]

And of course, the chief venue for experiencing the full power of verbal utterance was the sabbath sermon. James Carlyle's capacity for whole-hearted religious assent, we are told, was a product both of his freedom from rationalistic "speculation" (or 'closet-logic') on the one hand, and the powerful tones of the preacher on the other:

> He was Religious with the consent of his whole faculties: without Reason he would have been nothing; indeed his habit of intellect was thoroughly free and even incredulous, and strongly did the daily example of this work afterwards on me. "Putting out the natural eye of his mind to see better with a telescope:" this was no scheme for him. But he was in Annandale, and it was above fifty years ago; and a Gospel was still preached there to the heart of a man, in the tones of a man.[2]

In the context of the reminiscence as a whole, these (and other) references to the oral/aural environment strike one as only peripherally important. Other aspects of the Carlylean "Hero" - his willing subservience to hierarchy and 'natural' authority, for example[3] - capture the attention more readily. However, to appreciate Carlyle's nascent awareness of an intimate relation between the social and political assumptions surrounding his doctrine of "heroism," and the properties of the spoken word, we do not have to rely upon the reminiscence alone. Carlyle's urgent identification with his father in this work merely acknowledges in covert autobiographical terms, the culmination of a process which is described with considerable precision, insight, and vigour, in Sartor Resartus.

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[1] Ibid., 10. [2] Ibid., 9. [3] Ibid., 7-8.

Sartor Resartus: From Anomy to 'Belief'

In Sartor Resartus it becomes clear how the early essays were just preliminary attempts to articulate intellectually an experience Carlyle had gone through himself — well before he fell under the German influence - and which he believed to be of representative importance. The book records Carlyle's reflections on his induction into the world of letters and intellect, and with surprising explicitness, it shows a developed awareness of a deep-lying contrast between the 'whole' world of sound and the fragmented, alienated area of literate 'consciousness.' In effect, Sartor expands upon and explains Carlyle's cry in the reminiscence of his father:

> - Alas! such is the mis-education of these days, it is only among what are called the uneducated classes (those educated by experience) that you can look for a man.[1]

Carlyle contrasts his father with Burns, who perhaps serves to epitomise the effete poetic songster James Carlyle had been taught to disregard, if not despise.[2] In Carlyle's view, the two men enjoyed comparable natural advantages. Burns experienced "an infinitely wider Education," but James Carlyle "a far wholesomer." Had his father been subjected to the same character of education as Burns, Carlyle surmises the result would have been disastrous:

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[1] Ibid., 7.

[2] "Poetry, Fiction in general, he had universally seen treated as not only idle, but false and criminal." (Thomas Carlyle, Ibid., 9.)

> As a man of Speculation (had Culture ever unfolded him) he must have gone wild and desperate as Burns: but he was a man of Conduct, and Work keeps all right.[1]

Burns, here, is something of a surrogate. The real implication of the comment is that James Carlyle would have "gone wild and desperate" not so much as Burns had gone, but as Carlyle himself had. The whole passage may be read as a covert obeisance to James Carlyle, explaining his son's long dalliance in the suspect world of letters and speculative debate, prior to finding his "heroic" task of tackling the Condition-of-England question.

In Sartor Resartus, Carlyle presents an oblique autobiographical account of his own hard-won attainment of "Heroism." The chief value of this account to the present study is that it shows the contrast between "mechanical" and "dynamical" thinking as an appreciable force in individual experience: not two theoretical postures but a radical shift in man's consciousness of himself and his relation to the world which can be, so to speak, felt on the pulses. In Sartor, Carlyle returns to examine that area of his experience which is encapsulated so concentratedly in the culminating image of "Signs of the Times":

> 'He, who has been born, has been a First Man;' has had lying before his young eyes, and as yet unhardened into scientific shapes, a world as plastic, infinite, divine, as lay before the eyes of Adam himself. If Mechanism, like some glass bell, encircles and imprisons us; if the soul looks forth on a fair heavenly country which it cannot reach, and pines, and in its scanty atmosphere is ready to perish, - yet the bell is but of glass; 'one bold stroke to break the bell in pieces, and thou art delivered!'[2]

As can be seen from the first seven chapters of

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[1] Ibid. [2] Carlyle, Works, XXVII, 81.

Froude's history of the early years the seeds of the struggle described in Sartor were present from the start, but their decisive germination is probably best dated as December of 1818 when, having thrown over their teaching positions, Carlyle and Irving " . . . removed to Edinburgh, and were adrift on the world."[1] This step launched Carlyle more deeply into indeterminacy than he had previously ventured. He must tackle Edinburgh once more, this time without the prospect of a career in divinity to anchor him, and in the face of his parents' deep if restrained dismay.[2] The compulsion to make good was correspondingly inflated. He must succeed not simply on his own account, but to justify his lapsed vocation in the eyes of his family. The complex struggle reached a formal climax in the Leith Walk episode, which took place at some time in 1821 or 1822, but perhaps only genuinely resolved itself when the friendship with Jane Welsh began to blossom and Carlyle spent a tranquil year away from Edinburgh on the farm at Hoddam Hill (1825-26).[3]

Because Sartor is written from the standpoint of the early thirties (when Carlyle's immersion in German

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[1]James Anthony Froude, Thomas Carlyle:A History of the First Forty Years of His Life,1795-1835, I (2 vols.; London:Longmans, Green, and Co.,1882), 57.

[2]Carlyle, Reminiscences, 30.

[3]In his influential article "Sartor Resartus and the problem of Carlyle's Conversion" (PMLA,LXX [1955], 662-81), Carlisle Moore cast doubt on the Hoddam Hill episode as marking the conclusive ascendency of the 'Everlasting YEA,' maintaining that the complex process of 'conversion' was not complete until 1830 and the writing of Sartor. Yet Wotton Reinfred, the novel fragment included in the posthumous Last Words of Thomas Carlyle ([London:Longmans, Green, and Co,1892], 1-148.), contains a rudimentary account of an upheaval very similar to that experienced by Teufelsdröckh in Sartor, suggesting that by 1827 at the very latest, Carlyle had transcended the experience sufficiently to formulate it.

literature and philosophy had indelibly moulded his terminology and expression), and deploys the materials of experience up to that point according to the internal logic of the fiction, it is not really possible to employ this actual chronology to anchor the floating sense of time which characterises Sartor. Carlyle has warned against taking the book literally as autobiography,[1] and although the substance of experience is at many points recognisable beneath the fictional guise, its relation to historical chronology is often problematical. For the present study it is necessary only to indicate a general sense of autobiographical relation.

In Sartor Carlyle is seeking to illuminate the stages of Teufelsdröckh's transition from the depths of misery and despair in the 'Everlasting NO' to his triumphant emergence into the 'Everlasting YEA,' where he can resolve to " . . . 'work in well-doing,' with the spirit and clear aims of a Man."[2] This same shift underlies the pattern of the "intellectual matrix" described earlier in this chapter, only here Carlyle wishes not merely to expand the contrast between the abstract world of mechanism and the 'whole' world of organic unconsciousness - this he had already accomplished in the early essays - but to explain it.[3] Such an aim calls for a self-conscious rendering of experience, so that the

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[1]Carlyle's comments are available in John Clubbe's edition of the Althaus biography of Carlyle (See Two Reminiscences of Thomas Carlyle:Now First Published [Durham,N.C.:Duke University Press,1974].), and are discussed by Clubbe in an earlier article entitled "Carlyle on Sartor Resartus" (See Carlyle Past and Present:A Collection of New Essays, ed. by K.J.Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr [Plymouth:Vision,1976],51-60.).

[2]Carlyle, Works, I, 158.

[3]Writing of 'Book Second,' Gerry H. Brookes has noted that "We are more aware of a voice speaking out of experience and interpreting it than we are of the experience

shift is presented as a matter for direct apprehension, rather than from a standpoint of expository detachment. On the other hand, the danger of a narrowly autobiographical approach in which the universal significance of the upheaval might be undercut by the contingency and uniqueness of individual experience, must be avoided. So Carlyle sets in motion the strange figure of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. His strategy in effect parodies the biographer's art by trivialising the individual texture of Teufelsdröckh's life, placing maximum emphasis on the ridiculous and inconsequential, so that the form of the experience stands out all the more clearly by way of contrast.

At the height of his misery in the 'Everlasting NO, Teufelsdröckh describes his predicament in the following terms:

> A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude, I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes, whereby to discern my own wretchedness. Invisible yet impenetrable walls, as of Enchantment, divided me from all living: was there, in the wide world, any true bosom I could press trustfully to mine?[1]

Here, in microcosm, is the "baleful fiat as of Enchantment"[2] which Carlyle saw lying at the heart of the Condition-of-England question. Teufelsdröckh is conscious of himself only as an abstraction, a "feeble unit" set apart from his fellows in a world which has taken on the appearance of a vast hypothesis. It is a world consumed by abstract visuality: "I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes."

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itself, of its representation." (Gerry H. Brookes, The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus [Berkeley and Los Angeles:University of California Press,1972], 85.)

[1]Carlyle, Works, I, 132. [2]Ibid., X, 1.

In contrast, having accepted the 'Everlasting Yea,' Teufelsdröckh experiences a thoroughgoing revolution which enriches and restores his sense of himself, his capacities and his relations with society and the cosmos. He finds his vocation as sage and writer at the same time that he emerges into a mode of awareness where sound and the tones of the speaking voice are primary. Celebrating his discovery, Teufelsdröckh delivers this little encomium on the pen:

> Never since Aaron's Rod went out of practice, . . . , was there such a wonder-working Tool: greater than all recorded miracles have been performed by Pens. For strangely in this so solid-seeming World, . . . , it is appointed that Sound, to appearance the most fleeting, should be the most continuing of all things. The WORD is well said to be omnipotent in this world; man, thereby divine, can create as by a Fiat. Awake, arise! Speak forth what is in thee; . . . .[1]

Pen? Sound? Speak forth?: This unfamiliar collocation lends support to the hypothesis that Carlyle's literary output is intimately related to the conditions of oral communication. It also suggests that to some degree Carlyle was conscious of the connection. The unqualified conflation of the power of the spoken word with the power of the WORD, is an important key to understanding Carlyle's writing and his response to the Condition-of-England question. A man who can give voice to the WORD by means of the word is "thereby divine, can create as by a Fiat." His authority brooks no dissent, for it stems from his oneness with the absolutes of Nature and Truth.

Carlyle's notions of literature, art and religion are deeply imbued with this conception of the Hero as an inspired orator, a "rude, intuitive poet." But he has no

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[1] Ibid., I, 158

time for playful utterance: for poetry whose end is simply aesthetic pleasure, for art which is just a celebration, or merely decorative. "Homer shall be thrice welcome; but only when Troy is taken: . . . . I want Achilles and Odysseus, and am enraged to see them trying to be Homers!"[1] The first priority must be to meet the Condition-of-England question, to speak out and countermand the "baleful fiat as of Enchantment."

Teufelsdröckh's state of acute solipsistic anxiety in the 'Everlasting NO' is in many ways reminiscent of the epistemological tradition which starts with Descartes and is developed by the British Empiricists. In fact Teufelsdröckh attributes his state of "sick opthalmia and hallucination" to his involvement with their descendants, the "Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies,"[2] and at a number of points in Sartor, Carlyle resorts to what one might call the rhetoric of Cartesianism.[3] Just as in Locke, where perceptions simply represent objects, or Hume, who deals in "impressions" whose ultimate source is radically unknowable, so Teufelsdröckh finds himself shut out from sensuous reality by "Invisible, but impenetrable walls as of Enchantment, . . ."

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[1] Ibid., The Life of John Sterling, XI, 196.

[2] Ibid., 131.

[3] For example: "Who am I; what is this ME? A Voice, a Motion, an Appearance; - some embodied, visualised Idea in the Eternal Mind? Cogito, ergo sum. Alas, poor Cogitator, this takes us but a little way." (Ibid., 41.) Ernst Cassirer notes: "There is little relation between the ideas of Carlyle and Descartes. . . . ; they belong to different hemispheres of the globus intellectualis." (The Myth of the State [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946], 199.) The one point of agreement he finds is a personal approach to philosophy, grounded in doubt.

The mundane world of everyday perceptions has been usurped by one of abstract, mechanical visuality.

There is, however, a significant distinction between Teufelsdröckh's situation and the conventional posture of empiricism. For Locke, Berkeley or Hume, the notion of the world as nothing ascertainably more than a vast assemblage of hypotheticals offers no impediment to practical activity. Their paradoxical epistemology makes not the slightest impact on action in the 'natural' everyday world. For instance, Hume concludes his section 'Of scepticism with regard to the senses' by observing:

> This sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses is a malady, which can never be radically cured, but must return upon us every moment, however we may chase it away, and sometimes may seem entirely free from it. . . . . Carelessness and inattention alone can afford us any remedy. For this reason, I rely entirely upon them; and take it for granted, whatever may be the reader's opinion at this present moment, that an hour hence he will be persuaded there is both an external and an internal world; . . . .[1]

Hume understands the empiricist predicament as an anxiety state from which the philosopher is rescued only through liberal doses of "carelessness and inattention." This raises a query as to why the promulgators of the empiricist epistemology could effectively dismiss the practical import of their theories, while Teufelsdröckh remains locked in solipsistic abstraction, unable to resist as the mechanical universe bears down upon him like a "dead, immeasurable Steam-engine." 'Nature' delivered the empiricists; why not Teufelsdröckh?

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[1]David Hume, A Treatise on Human Nature, ed. by T. H.Greene and T.H.Grose, I (2 vols.; London:Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), 505.

The problem is illuminated to some extent by Emile Durkheim in his famous study on suicide.[1] In this work he distinguished three main classes of suicide. The first is the so-called "egoistic" suicide, which is a propensity to commit suicide as a reaction to inadequate integration into society or the family.[2] Egoistic suicide thrives on circumstances promoting radical divorce from communal life. "Altruistic" suicide is the reverse case of the egoistic type, a propensity to commit suicide induced by over-accommodation to the pressures of society or the family.[3] The willing sacrificial victim, the martyr, the politician's 'hack' would be examples of this type. These two suicide types concern the way the individual adjusts or fails to adjust to the demands of society. But the most interesting type, and the one most directly relevant to Carlyle's experience, is Durkheim's third type, the anomic suicide.

Anomic suicide is engendered by the disruption of the regulative function which society, according to Durkheim, exercises in any conflict between an individual's desires and their satisfaction.[4] A normal individual respects and is regulated by the norms of his society (what Durkheim terms the "collective conscience") to a normal extent. "But when society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this influence; thence come the sudden rises in the

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[1]Emile Durkheim, Suicide:A Study in Sociology, trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson; ed. with an introduction by George Simpson (London:Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1952).

[2]Ibid., 152-216. [3]Ibid., 217-40.

[4]Ibid., 241-76.

curve of [anomic] suicides."[1] So unlike egoistic or altruistic suicide, which result from inadequate or over-adequate accommodation to the demands of society, anomic suicide is engendered by the withdrawal of societal regulation from the individual. He can no longer measure himself against the "collective conscience," because for some reason this is no longer a discernable force.

This is precisely Teufelsdröckh's predicament in the 'Everlasting NO.' For Locke, Berkeley or Hume, 'Nature' or 'society' present a concrete aspect with full power to override the solipsistic malaise. But for Teufelsdröckh these are no longer appreciable forces, having to all intents been swallowed up in mechanical abstraction. Whereas the empirical philosophers can shake off the implications of their own 'closet-logic,' at whatever cost to consistency, for Teufelsdröckh the tangible presence of the everyday world has retreated to such an extent that its regulative effect is felt only dimly. The "English Editor" notes: " . . . Teufelsdröckh is one of those who consider Society, properly

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[1] Ibid., 252. As examples of such transitions or crises, Durkheim discusses the effects of sudden financial aggrandisement or decline, or in the case of the family, the 'conjugal anomy' produced by divorce. In the first instance, the regulating effect of a known income and its correlated purchasing power is drastically upset, and the individual is confronted with a vast and unfamiliar spectrum of material and social possibilities. In the second, the moderating influence of acknowledged family obligations disappears, and the individual is left with a new measure of autonomy in decision-making through the whole range of his experience. In both cases, the bounds of experience are drastically revised, while simultaneously the individual is subject to a corresponding contraction or dilation of customary social regulation. Such upheavals become major themes in the Victorian novel, especially in Dickens and Thackeray, but perhaps even more explicitly in the novels of Mrs. Henry Wood (see for example the opening of East Lynne [1895]).

so called, to be as good as extinct."[1]

As Sartor makes plain, Teufelsdröckh's exaggerated submission to the speculative universe of abstract mechanism was encouraged by his very literal separation from normal societal regulation at a vulnerable stage in his development. The book shows that Carlyle well understood how the attenuation of normal social contact had fostered and promoted his tussle with unbelief:

> . . . if we add a liberal measure of Earthly distresses, want of practical guidance, want of sympathy, want of money, want of hope; and all this in the fervid season of youth, so exaggerated in imagining, so boundless in desires, yet here so poor in means, - do we not see a strong incipient spirit oppressed and overloaded from without and from within; . . . .[2]

A more penetrating description of anomic pressures would be difficult to imagine. Just when the bounds of his intellectual experience are undergoing a challenging expansion, Teufelsdröckh's material and emotional resources are in full retreat. The book dwells at some length upon the stresses produced in a precocious young man, forced to cope with a relatively unregulated life of study, facing intellectual challenges which run counter to the trend of his religious upbringing, and compounded by multitudinous discomforts arising from poverty, solitude and separation from normal family life.

This literal withdrawal of customary societal regulation was matched and surpassed by a more devastating complex of influences, of which Carlyle was much less intellectually conscious. In their article on "The Consequences of Literacy," Goody and Watt indicate that the encounter

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[1]Carlyle, Works, I, 184. [2]Ibid., 92.

between literate and oral modes of cultural transmission may also encourage anomic disorder.[1] Literature introduces the reader to a virtually endless spectrum of alternative and competing "literary" environments, involving variant interpretations of most aspects of human experience, and it inevitably stands in contrast to the more stable basis of experience which usually characterises day-to-day living. It follows that thoroughgoing immersion in the complexities of literature, under conditions which render the impact of everyday life and family influence extremely tenuous, may produce surprising results.

It must be remembered that from earliest years, Carlyle's was a mind deeply imbued with the conviction that an external authority sustained order and harmony in a unitary cosmos. As he wrote in the Reminiscences: "An inflexible element of Authority encircled us all;. . . ."[2] This Childhood sense of an holistic cosmos had been fostered and reinforced by James Carlyle and the 'New Light' Burgher Church in Ecclefechan. The influence of this Calvinist teaching, with its sturdy insistence on the duties of the individual in a universe dominated by a transcendent God, and above all, on the primacy of the Bible in determining personal moral conduct, must have been very strong. Froude comments:

> Brought up in a pious family where religion was not talked about or emotionalised, but was accepted as the rule of thought and conduct, . . . , Carlyle, like his parents, had accepted the Bible as a direct communication from Heaven. It made known the will of God, and the

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[1] Goody and Watt, 58.

[2] Carlyle, Reminiscences, 28.

> relation in which man stood to his Maker, as present facts like a law of nature, the truth of it, like the truth of gravitation, which man must act upon or immediately suffer the consequences.[1]

Obviously this concept of the Bible as a direct communication from heaven gives it traditionally a special status, a derivative authority as the locus of God's Word. The external authority governing the universe speaks through the Book in order to reveal His will. And "like a law of nature," this has direct application in daily life. Carlyle's encounter with anomy was greatly exacerbated by his unconsciously carrying such an orientation or attitude into his everyday dealings with literature. His ingrained sense of authority as external, as out there in the cosmos, encouraged him to regard literature as potentially an inspired transcription of the holistic universe.[2]

Carlyle was not alone in this attitude. Walter Houghton points out that in Victorian England "Every writer had his congregation of devoted or would-be devoted disciples who read his work in much the spirit they had once read the

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[1]James Anthony Froude, Thomas Carlyle:A History of the First Forty Years of His Life, I, 66.

[2]Only late in his career did Carlyle waver in his conviction that all literature treats of the one reality. As early as "Characteristics" (1831) he was taking for granted a proposition Matthew Arnold approached rather cautiously some fifty years later, namely that literature is essentially a branch of religion, and " . . . in our time, it is the only branch that shows any greenness; and as some think, must one day become the main stem." (Carlyle, Works, XXVIII, 23.) By the time Arnold had enunciated the same theme, Carlyle was utterly disillusioned with literature as an agency of reform, or even as possessing a mildly didactic potential. Among the bitter fulminations of the Latter-Day Pamphlets (1850) he wrote of literature as a futile evasion of reality, as the ". . . haven of expatriated spiritualisms, and, alas, also of expatriated vanities and prurient imbecilities; here do the windy aspirations, foiled activities, foolish ambitions, and frustrate human energies reduced to the vocable condition, fly as to the one refuge left; . . . ." (Ibid., XX, 191.)

Bible."[1] Partly in recoil from disillusionment with conventional religion, partly as an ingrained habit of mind, and partly as a reaction to accelerated debate and controversy resulting from the "explosion" in the publishing trade,[2] many questing Victorians sought refuge in a 'literary' authority. This was, of course, a fate to which Carlyle himself happily submitted in later years.

A large measure of responsibility for Carlyle's struggles with anomy can be traced to his deferential attitude to the world of letters. When Teufelsdröckh finds the general temper of Weissnichtwo learning uncongenial, his characteristic response is to seek his own salvation. As he remarks to that young person of quality from the interior parts of England, Herr Towgood: ". . . But as for our Miseducation, make not bad worse; . . . . Frisch zu, Bruder! Here are Books, and we have brains to read them; here is a whole Earth and a whole Heaven, and we have eyes to look on them: Frisch zu!"[3] His innately deferential posture before the "whole Earth" and "whole Heaven" of letters increases the likelihood that when Carlyle/Teufelsdröckh confronts the mechanistic model of the universe, perhaps typified by Newton's Principia,[4] or the equally mechanical notion of

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[1]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 101.

[2]See S.H.Steinberg, "Book Production and Distribution," in Realities, Vol. II of The Modern World, ed. by David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London:Aldus Books,1972),509.

[3]Carlyle, Works, I, 94.

[4]See Carlisle Moore, 'Carlyle, Mathematics and "Mathesis,"' in Carlyle Past and Present:A Collection of New Essays, 61-95.

human behaviour presented in the hedonistic calculus of the utilitarians, he is temperamentally inclined to consider these views as mimetic formuli which, if painstakingly apprehended, might nevertheless yield access to the holistic cosmos and the natural world. Thus we find Teufelsdröckh endeavouring to " . . . read character in speculation, . . .," and this despite the fact that his"whole Universe, physical and spiritual, was as yet a Machine!"[1] He is making valiant efforts to retain a concrete world, which the abstract discourse of science and the mechanical "feelosophers"[2] cannot supply. Mechanical thinking bears down upon Teufelsdröckh like a "dead, immeasurable Steam-engine," not simply because it is mechanical, but because with the full force of infinite external authority, it usurps the place of the natural world.

These two aspects of Carlyle's intellectual posture, the conviction of an holistic cosmos presided over by infinite external authority, and the notion of literature as a derivative locus of authority reflecting this cosmos to a greater or lesser degree, were complemented by a third and perhaps decisive factor: the Calvinist emphasis on radical self-immolation. Convinced of an unbridgeable gap between God's perfection and fallen man, Calvinism is thoroughly sceptical about the value of the productions of the human mind, whether intellectual, imaginative or even ethical. A. Abbot Ikeler observes that as a consequence " . . . Calvin would counsel his brethren to deny the self in all its manifestations, whether internal or

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[1]Carlyle, Works, I, 92.

[2]Cobbett's word.

external."[1] It is this disposition which finally ensures that Carlyle/Teufelsdröckh's paralysed submission to the 'Everlasting NO' will be radical and complete. Having supplanted the external world, the spectre of mechanism finds no opposing centre of resistance within Teufelsdröckh, no 'self' to pit against the encroachments of abstract theory. Instead he waits passively for some external authority to give him purpose and a vocation:

> Had a divine Messenger from the clouds, or miraculous Handwriting on the wall, convincingly proclaimed to me This thou shalt do, with what passionate readiness, . . ., would I have done it, ... Thus, in spite of all Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies, with the sick opthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the Infinite nature of Duty still present to me: . . . .[2]

No such messenger appears, and unopposed, the universe of mechanism holds sway over Teufelsdröckh with the authority of objective reality. When the universe seems "all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility. . . ,"[3] the unspoken correlative is that Teufelsdröckh experiences himself as a reflex image of this state of affairs: as lifeless, purposeless, devoid of will or even aggression. Failing to perceive in himself an original creative force, a centre of authority capable of withstanding this "threatening Infinitude,"[4] he faces the prospect of ultimate dissolution.

As Durkheim's analysis of anomic disorders suggests, the problem is essentially one of regulation. In the "natural" situation the God of Ecclefechan had commanded "Do

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[1] A. Abbot Ikeler, Puritan Temper and Transcendental Faith:Carlyle's Literary Vision (Ohio State University Press,1972), 123.

[2] Carlyle, Works, I, 131. [3] Ibid., 133.

[4] Ibid., 132.

this!"; and Carlyle had perforce to obey. These new mechanical views of society included no such direct commands. Calvinism addresses itself to the problem of conduct within the framework of an all-pervasive cosmological disaster called the Fall. Fallen human nature must be regulated according to strict ethical precepts. But the open parameters of the utilitarian calculus offer no such built-in cosmic regulation. Utilitarian theory simply extends the faith of the Enlightenment in assuming that society works. The aim is to understand how it works, so that man can accommodate himself and his institutions to achieve more efficiency. But not to make it work. Self-interest, seeking to maximise 'pleasure' will cooperate with the invisible hand of laissez-faire economics, and automatically lead to the greatest good for the greatest number. Hence, in place of "Do this!" (and all will be well) these sophisticated intellectual views of society maintain "Understand this!" (and all will be well).

For a temperament so bound to the dictates of an external authority - whether expressed as specific, religiously based patterns of conduct, or as the traditional way of life of a community - the want of any overt claims on his practical conduct could only be devastating. Carlyle was quite incapable of sustaining belief in the natural mode of being and acting, while yet lending full credence to these mechanical views of society. One might say that he had not developed the "psychology" to accomplish this split: his was not a 'dissociated sensibility.' For he could have adopted such an intellectually sophisticated position only on his own authority and, thanks to the conditions of his upbringing, Carlyle was without any sense of himself as a locus of authority. Lacking an internalised centre of judgment which

would allow him to balance a private subjectivity against the 'objective' authority of mechanical theories, his temporary intellectual devotion to these theories leaves him mentally and spiritually paralysed.

The spell is broken by the emergence of the 'natural' self, the "whole ME":

> Thus had the EVERLASTING NO . . . pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then it was that my whole ME stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest.[1]

Teufelsdröckh discovers an original and creative force within himself which he can pit <u>against</u> external authority - a new "ghost" in the machine. The natural self is not the simple unselfconscious mode of being characteristic of childhood. True, it embodies largely similar beliefs and values, but so imperative and all-pervasive is the authority of external mechanical culture that the restitution of the natural mode of being seems wholly self-contained; a unique flowering of a quite new and different mode of being in a hostile environment. In his book <u>The Opposing Self</u>, Lionel Trilling indicates the primary feature of this new idea of the self, which gained currency towards the end of the eighteenth century: "It is different in several notable respects, but there is one distinguishing characteristic which seems to me pre-eminently important: its intense and adverse imagination of the culture in which it has its being."[2] The external authority of childhood has been internalised - forced into self-consciousness -; and because the circumamb-

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[1]Carlyle, <u>Works</u>, I, 135.

[2]Lionel Trilling, <u>The Opposing Self:Nine Essays in Criticism</u> (London:Secker and Warburg,1955), ix-x.

ient universe seems engulfed by mechanism, these 'new' values and beliefs are deemed to be private and privileged insights.

However, Teufelsdröckh does not retain the self as the locus of ontological absolutes. Had he done so he might have achieved 'authentic' consciousness and entered the arena of so-called existential man: that is, man having to exist according to the demands of his intrinsic being, wholly divorced from custom, ethical or religious theory, social conscience, family feeling - in fact without reference to any external authority.[1] For existential man, all demands for regulation must be met from within the self; and regulation there must be, for the alternative is random submission to the pull of appetite.

Teufelsdröckh's strategy - drawn ostensibly from Goethe and Novalis, but actually a reversion to one of the basic tenets of Carlyle's Calvinist upbringing - is to deny the self; to deny that there is any will or appetite to be regulated. He writes of it as the "first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (Selbst-tödtung),"[2] a locution

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[1]Commenting on what the present study has termed the 'rhetoric of Cartesianism' in Sartor, as exemplified in the following passage:

> Who am I; what is this ME? A Voice, a Motion, an Appearance; - some embodied, visualised Idea in the Eternal Mind? . . . . (Carlyle, Works, I, 41);

G.B.Tennyson writes: "From such questioning one could make a case for Jean Paul and Carlyle as being what is fashionable to call existential writers." (Sartor Called Resartus, 311.) Perhaps it would be more accurate, in the case of Carlyle, to describe his experience in Sartor as a retreat before the awful prospect of the existential view of man.

[2]Carlyle, Works, I, 149. The phrase appears in a fragment translated from the Novalis Schriften in the essay on "Novalis": "The true philosophical Act is annihilation of self (Selbsttödtung); this is the real beginning of all Philosophy; all requisites for being a Disciple of Philosophy point hither." (Ibid., XXVII, 39.)

which has prompted critics to regard the 'Centre of Indifference' as an extrapolation of the suicidal impulse in the 'Everlasting NO.'[1] This is not the case. The 'Centre of Indifference' is actually a period of healing and resuscitation in which the sense of a radical divorce between self and world partially recedes. Teufelsdröckh realises an ability to make empirical judgments on his own authority, and through his diverse "Pilgrimings" he regains confidence in his dealings with the not-self:

> In a word, he is now, if not ceasing, yet intermitting to "eat his own heart"; and clutches round him outwardly on the NOT-ME for wholesomer food.[2]

Unselfconscious empirical observation gradually restores the natural world by ameliorating the intensity of the subject-object contrast. Teufelsdröckh feels himself almost at home in the world. Having replaced all external regulation with absolute self-regulation, authority is no longer bound to the self, and resides simply in the natural order of things.[3] He is not averse to calling this cosmic authority Deity: " . . . what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God?"[4] He is ready for the 'Everlasting Yea,' in which the authority of the dynamical self ranges out over the

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[1]See, for example, Philip Rosenburg, The Seventh Hero:Thomas Carlyle and the Theory of Radical Activism (Cambridge, Massachusetts:Harvard University Press,1974),45-62.

[2]Carlyle, Works, I, 136.

[3]" . . . the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, Unity itself divided by Zero will give Infinity. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet." (Ibid, 152-53.)

[4]Ibid., 150.

universe to reclaim the natural world for Deity:

> The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's![1]

Once this coincidence between the dynamical self and the absolutes of nature and Deity has been established in the 'Everlasting YEA,' Teufelsdröckh has become a Hero.

'Sincerity' or 'Authenticity'?

Carlyle's experience of the romantic revolution is unique both in its severity and in the skill with which he expands the personal dimensions of the experience into an ideological fable of representative significance. The gradual incursion of rational speculation upon the hitherto unified and self-consistent sensibility cushioned by a background of whole-hearted religious belief, the ensuing slump into anomy, and the eventual release into a reconstituted and modified structure of belief, are handled with insight and precision. Moreover, if Eliot's notion of 'dissociation' has appeared as a temperate and urbanely analytical concept, Sartor demonstrates the potential ferocity of the forces at work behind the notion, at least where these are concentrated in the experience of an individual. By comparison, the milder observations of Darwin and Mill assume the status of modest choric affirmation. The book exposes the fervent tenacity with which Carlyle clings to a unified sensibility

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[1] Ibid., 150.

and an holistic world view, even at the cost of repudiating the most characteristic modes of thought and organisation of his day. More important still, as we shall see, it illustrates how Carlyle's entire response to social and political change, including the 'Condition-of-England' question, was subservient to, and influenced by, this struggle for inner wholeness. First, it will prove useful to attempt a closer precision in regard to Teufelsdröckh's recovery from the 'Everlasting NO,' since this helps to define the characteristic posture of the Victorian Sage, and indeed, much social and political commentary even today.[1]

As we saw in the opening chapter, what Eliot termed 'dissociation of sensibility' sets in when the individual no longer feels himself part of, and can therefore no longer rely upon, a community of 'belief.' If he is a writer or thinker, this means he can no longer take for granted a coherence of emotional, aesthetic, ethical and political perceptions and attitudes in society. Henceforth he is ever unsure of his reception, of his audience, and at heart he must be querying his relation to his subject matter, his grasp of it. The burden of determining both an affective apprehension and an intellectual understanding of himself, his society, and the relation between these, comes to rest solely with the individual: all purposive action must flow from the individual discerning or constructing his own convictions and acting upon them, amid a welter of uncertainties. The full depth of disquiet such a realisation could

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[1]As the title of this section implies, the analysis which follows draws upon Lionel Trilling's thought-provoking book, Sincerity and Authenticity.

engender remained unexpressed until Eliot made poetry of it in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
> When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
> Then how should I begin
> To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
> And how should I presume?[1]

For Carlyle, the insular estrangement of Prufrock could never be tolerable. In the 'Everlasting Yea' Teufelsdröckh manfully shuffles off his self-absorption and abandons the stance of authentic consciousness, with its postulate of total autonomy and neglect of all bases for comparison and all sense of continuity, to assume the less stringent attitude of the 'sincere' man.

The sincere man must presume. He wants to feel himself a member of a fairly cohesive society (despite appearances to the contrary). Above all, he must either feel free to assume an equivalent centre of self in other people, or else find a way to account for his not doing so. The epithet 'sincere' refers to a presumed congruence between an individual's inner convictions and his outward conduct or mien. The difficulties in the word arise because the word itself implies no necessary measure of concurrence with (or dissent from) those convictions on the part of outsiders. Its very use indicates a situation where individual belief is private, inaccessible to general scrutiny, and by no means to be inferred accurately from outward appearances. Such usage implies a society where a number of views are in competition for man's inward assent, while the outward organisation of

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[1] T.S.Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot (London:Faber and Faber,1969), 14-15.

society does not depend on these inner convictions and may even be at odds with them.

The 'sincere' man and the 'authentic' man have one thing in common: they both live by the authority of their inner convictions. But with the sincere man these inner convictions are not held to be self-subsisting and autonomous, as is the case with the existential man. The sincere man is a 'believer.' He holds as universally true, views which others may wish to dispute. The 'authentic' man may also act in such a way as to imply convictions which others may wish to dispute, but he feels no impulsion to argue or proselytise because (in theory) he is so convinced of his unassailable uniqueness and complete alienation that communication seems impossible as well as pointless. He must evince total disregard - and in practice, total contempt - for the views of others. His only obligation is to be true to his private vision.

For the 'sincere' man it is not quite as simple. He also has the solace of his private vision, but because he conceives of it as universally valid, the vision presents itself as universalisable. Thus the 'sincere' man has a built-in need to proselytise, a need which often comes in the guise of duty.[1] He can realise his vision only by bringing the opposition round to his point of view, wooing them from 'deluded' opinions which are hiding the 'natural' consensus. Consequently the 'sincere' man has a somewhat ambiguous relation to authority. In respect of 'unbelievers' he is the

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[1]For instance, Arnold discovers the "social and beneficent character of culture" not merely in discerning what true culture is, but in the effort to "make it prevail." Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, Works, V, 93.

authority, because they can't or won't see the light. But in respect of believers, the 'sincere' man has no intrinsic authority whatever: the collective vision carries its own authority.

From this follows Carlyle's perilous faith that all loyal Hero-worshippers will ultimately recognise their true leaders, and these true leaders will know where to lead them. The appearance of division, plurality and relativism in the world is essentially illusory, the result of faith in "mechanism" and "closet-logic"; and therefore it can be dissipated by direct appeal to man's oppressed and faltering dynamical "soul." The 'whole' world, and the 'natural' man need only to be uncovered.

Carlyle's answer to the Condition-of-England question thus involved, among other things, a spectacular denial of the implications of literacy. His holistic vision depends on his denying any ultimate validity to controversy and dissentient opinion. As he asserts in On Heroes and Hero-Worship, "Liberty of private judgment, if we will consider it, must at all times have existed in the world," and he denies that this liberty could ever end in anarchy and solipsism, for:

> . . . the exercise of private judgment, faithfully gone about, does by no means necessarily end in selfish independence, isolation; but rather ends necessarily in the opposite of that. It is not honest inquiry that makes anarchy; but it is error, insincerity, half-belief and untruth that make it. A man protesting against error is on the way towards uniting himself with all men that believe in truth. There is no communion possible among men who believe only in hearsays.[1]

Here we reach the crux of the matter: man is

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[1]Carlyle, Works, V, 125.

yielding assent to that which he apprehends only indirectly and abstractly, as it reaches him through the chaos of opinion and controversy in the cultural debates of the age. Because he pays no heed to the inner impulse of his "dynamical soul" man has become 'insincere.' His actions and organisation are a reflex of mechanism and mechanical thinking, whereas they should reflect the natural harmonies of the dynamical province, his inner being. The solution is to repudiate mechanism and mechanical thinking so that man is once more 'sincere':

> Only in a world of sincere men is unity possible; - and there, in the longrun, it is as good as <u>certain</u>.[2]

Carlyle takes his stand upon the assumption of an eternal coincidence between the dynamical self and the absolutes of Nature and Truth. This involves repudiating the mechanical self and mechanical society as a state of deluded consciousness. It implies that no changes in social institutions or political constitutions, in the natural sciences or in their application in manufacturing technology, in theories about society or theories about man, can shake this privileged inner vision of the sincere man. For these transitory phenomena are but <u>phases</u> of belief, not belief itself. They are mere 'beliefs' or 'symbols,' perishable as old clothes, and unworthy of fundamental allegiance.

Carlyle's concern is with belief <u>proper</u>: with that assumption of wholeness and integrity in society and the cosmos which allows man to feel at home in the world. For Carlyle, the great impediment to man achieving belief proper

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., 125.

(as distinct from an unprofitable and divisive entanglement in current social theories and ephemeral political activity), is the complexity of literate culture and the consequent proliferation of second-hand opinion. As we saw in the early review essays, Carlyle was anxious to ensure that his English public worked hard enough to achieve direct or immediate experience of the German thinkers. Not an accretion of opinion, but the immediate apprehension of Truth was the goal. Years later, in the first of the two fragments on 'Spiritual Optics' printed by Froude, which encapsulate the essence of Carlyle's message, he makes it clear that ignorance is to be preferred to second-hand authority:

> Except thine own eye have got to see it, except thy own soul have victoriously struggled to clear vision and belief of it, what is the thing seen and the thing believed by another or by never so many others? Alas, it is not thine, though thou look on it, brag about it, and bully and fight about it till thou die, striving to persuade thyself and all men how much it is thine. Not it is thine, but only a windy echo and tradition of it bedded in hypocrisy, ending sure enough in tragical futility, is thine. What a result for a human soul! In all ages, but in this age, named of the printing press, with its multiform pulpits and platforms, beyond all others, the accumulated sum of such results over the general posterity of Adam in countries called civilised is tragic to contemplate; is in fact the raw material of every insincerity, of every scandal, platitude, and ignavia to be seen under the sun. If men were only ignorant and knew that they were so, only void of belief and sorry for it, instead of filled with sham belief and proud of it - ah me!![1]

Man can extricate himself from blind submission to sham belief if only he will understand that his achievements are not miraculous gifts from external divinities, and accept the new and revolutionary "intrinsic fact" that divineness is

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[1]James Anthony Froude, Thomas Carlyle:A History of the First Forty Years of His Life, II, 10.

in man himself. Throughout history, he has been deluded into considering disturbance and change as being imposed upon him by an impassive external authority. Similarly he has believed that inner harmony was dependent on external circumstances. But just as Galileo revolutionised man's conception of the relations between sun and earth, so now at "the grand centre of the modern revolution of ideas"[1] man discovers that he is the central stillness round which circle the transitory and oft-times discordant phenomena of intellectual theories, religious dogmas and social institutions. The implications are profound:

> No man that reflects need be admonished what a pregnant discovery this is; how it is the discovery of discoveries, and as men become more and more sensible of it will remodel the whole world for us in a most blessed and surprising manner. Such continents of sordid delirium (for it is really growing now very sordid) will vanish like a foul Walpurgis night at the first streaks of dawn. Do but consider it. The delirious dancing of the universe is stilled, but the universe itself (what scepticism did not suspect) is still all there. God, heaven, hell, are none of them annihilated for us, any more than the material woods and houses. Nothing that was divine, sublime, demonic, beautiful, or terrible is in the least abolished for us as the poor pre-Galileo fancied it might be; only their mad dancing has ceased, and they are all reduced to dignified composure; any madness that was in it being recognised as our own hence-forth.[2]

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[1] Ibid., 12. [2] Ibid., 13.

"The Condition-of-England Question"

In the opening section of this chapter it was noted that many of Carlyle's reviewers found his response to the Condition-of-England question paradoxical to say the least. Why could not the sage put forward practical proposals to remedy the social, political and economic evils he diagnosed and castigated with such relish? England's wealth abounds, her labour is skilled, willing and productive, yet the working classes are stricken by grinding poverty. The country is producing and the working man is starving: surely something practical must be done? In essence Carlyle's reply is that of course something must be done, but that "something" is far more radical than commentators like Smith, Mazzini or Lady Morgan can conceive of as practical.

The paradox which Carlyle's reviewers unearthed as a major flaw in his response to the Condition-of-England question is actually inherent in his formulation of that question. When Carlyle first formally propounded the Condition-of England question in the opening chapter of Chartism, he set it down in two parts. The first was this:

> Is the condition of the English working people wrong; so wrong that rational working men cannot, will not, and even should not rest quiet under it?[1]

Raymond Williams comments, quite rightly, that "It is Cobbett's question, and in Cobbett's manner; . . . ."[2] However this sturdy formulation is followed almost immediately

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[1]Carlyle, Works, XXIX, 120.

[2]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 78.

by a paralysing alternative, a qualification very far from Cobbett's mind, which throws Carlyle's Condition-of-England question into a radically different framework:

> Or is the discontent itself mad, like the shape it took? Not the condition of the working people that is wrong; but their disposition, their own thoughts, beliefs and feelings that are wrong? This too were a most grave case, little less alarming, little less complex than the former one.[1]

No wonder some of his reviewers were puzzled! At base, this is the same ambivalence that dogs the early review essays: can the English reader conform to the moral and intellectual requirements necessary to verify the vision of an inspired writer? The subjective apprehension must coalesce with the external actuality if "Podsnappery" is to be circumvented. In a similar way, efforts at meeting the Condition-of-England question must be directed not only at the external realities, but at the inner moral, intellectual and spiritual attitudes which both reflect and support these conditions. For Carlyle, the individual and society are reflex images. To attempt to change 'society' without addressing the "thoughts, beliefs and feelings" of men is not only impractical, but nonsense. 'Society' expresses these very thoughts, beliefs and feelings, and it is first necessary to revitalise the internal world before action in the external world can be effective. A sick mechanistic society cannot be remedied by men "grown mechanical in head and heart,"[2] any more than mechanical education can produce whole

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[1]Carlyle, Works, XXIX, 120.

[2]Ibid., "Signs of the Times," Works, XXVII, 63.

men.[1] There is always this paralysing juxtaposition of the inner condition and its outward manifestation: "Why are the Working Classes discontented; what is their condition, economical, moral, in their houses and their hearts, as it is in reality and as they figure it to be; . . ."[2] Reality, houses and economy, versus consciousness, hearts and morality: one side of the equation cannot be elevated without due attention to the other.

This is where Carlyle and his reviewers part company. Take Mazzini's analysis for example. His notion of mankind as perpetually oscillating between "universal tradition" and "individual conscience," with truth emerging in some kind of reconciliation between these competing "centres of certainty," is a typical Enlightenment view of things.[3] On one hand stands the conservative Burkean strain, where society and its institutions rest, however dimly, on divine authority, and the task of education and religion is to see that the individual adapts successfully to the status quo. On the other hand the radical strain in Enlightenment thought, leading from Rousseau to Cobbett and Tom Paine, suggests that society is the creation of the wealthy, and the political demand is to force a reshaping of the tradition to accommodate the needs of the dispossessed. Broadly speaking, one either adapts the individual to society or society to the individual.

Mazzini, of course, inclines to the radical strand.

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[1] Ibid., 61. [2] Ibid., XXIX,

[3] [Joseph Mazzini], British and Foreign Review, XVI, 257.

He finds Carlyle urging individual moral and spiritual endeavour as the road to social salvation - nominally a conservative trait - but then discovers to his evident bewilderment that the usual conservative emphasis on institutions, constitutions and other political impedimenta is missing _in toto_:

> The forms of government appear to him almost without meaning: such objects as the extension of suffrage, the guarantee of any kind of political right, are evidently in his eyes pitiful things, materialism more or less disguised. What he requires is, that men should grow better, that the number of just men should increase: one wise man more in the world would be to him a fact of more importance than ten political revolutions.[1]

This is fair comment. However, Mazzini fails to see that this posture, which he regards as both inexplicable and politically debilitating, is based on an intellectual framework which shatters the assumptions on which his own analysis rests. Carlyle can no longer conceive of adapting the individual to society, or society to the individual, because society in Carlyle's sense is no longer extant, having been supplanted by a mechanical chimera; and the individual is no longer a "natural man," but an objective reflex of this mechanical society. The true answer to the Condition-of-England question lies in the repudiation of mechanism as a means of social organisation even while retaining it as a technological necessity.[2] Once this is accomplished then action in the external world will express the inner dynamical impulse, and only then will it be

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[1] _Ibid._, 285.

[2] A point which opens up the essential ambivalence inherent in many Victorian reactions to technology: c.f. Jonathan Benthall, _The Body Electric:Patterns of Western Industrial Culture_ (London:Thames and Hudson,1976), 35-38.

effective in ameliorating the lot of the working classes. The "Hero" with the cooperation of willing "Hero-Worshippers" must reclaim both society and the individual for the dynamical province.

> "But what are we to do? exclaims the practical man, impatiently on every side: "Descend from speculation and the safe pulpit, down into the rough market-place, and say what can be done!" - O practical man, there seem very many things which practice and true manlike effort, in Parliament and out of it, might actually avail to do. But the first of all things, . . . , is to gird thyself up for actual doing; to know that thou actually either must do, or, as the Irish say, 'come out of that!'[1]

Both Chartism and Past and Present are pre-eminently concerned with 'girding up for actual doing,' rather than "the rough market-place." "Universal Education" and "general Emigration," the two specific proposals he offers, merely illustrate how open to solution the Condition-of-England question really is. But "Paralytic Radicalism" - as favoured by Mazzini and Smith - cannot recognise this. Paralytic Radicalism:

> . . . gauges with Statistic measuring-reed, sounds with Philosophic Politico-Economic plummet the deep dark sea of troubles; and having taught us rightly what an infinite sea of troubles it is, sums-up with the practical inference, and use of consolation, That nothing whatever can be done in it by man, who has simply to sit still, and look wistfully to 'time and general laws': and thereupon, without so much as recommending suicide, coldly takes its leave of us. . . . . Paralytic; - and also, thank Heaven, entirely false! Listen to a thinker of another sort: 'All evil, and this evil too, is as a nightmare; the instant you begin to stir under it, the evil is, properly speaking, gone.' Consider, O reader, whether it be not actually so? Evil, once manfully fronted, ceases to be evil; there is generous battle-hope in place of dead passive misery; the evil itself has become a kind of good.[2]

Carlyle's response to his own Condition-of-England question was thus essentially an extrapolation of the lessons

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[1]Carlyle, "Chartism," Works, XXIX, 190. [2]Ibid.,191-92.

Teufelsdröckh learned during his three-stage entry into the world of Heroes. The first and most important of these was the discovery of the "dynamical" self, utterly distinct from all objective notions about the self. In Teufelsdröckh's case the dynamical self stands in sharp contradistinction to the "mechanical" self proposed by post-Lockean psychology and the utilitarian calculus. "Heroism" demands the repudiation of this theoretical, analysable personality which performs according to the unregulated parameters of self-interest and the greatest happiness principle. The individual is not the reflex image of a society increasingly organised according to "mechanical" thinking and principles. In this way, the dynamical self is extricated from the solipsistic interaction of the "individual" and "society" which had so exercised the eighteenth century. Carlyle's answer to the Condition-of-England question was governed by the overwhelming need to assert and preserve an autonomous, creative "self," quite inviolable and separate from the phenomenal world and all beliefs and theories about the phenomenal world. This dynamical self is the locus of belief, which, as the informing power behind particular beliefs and theories, is yet utterly irrefragible. In the metaphor of the "clothes-philosophy" of Sartor, particular beliefs may wear out like "old clothes," but belief itself is a perennial condition of the healthy man, and remains to shape and body forth new beliefs and theories to conform to the exigencies of a new historical epoch.

CHAPTER IV

NEWMAN AND INTELLECTUAL CULTIVATION

Introduction

At first sight few men could be more radically dissimilar than Carlyle and John Henry Newman. In upbringing, background and temperament, not more than in intellectual style, the two are a complete contrast. Yet their work overlaps on important common ground: they are both concerned to defend the capacity of the individual to 'know absolutely' or to 'believe.' When seeking to rouse men from what Carlyle called "do-nothingism," it was on the rightness of this internal faculty that they relied. Intellect cannot unaided produce an harmonious society. Intelligence must receive sanction of the understanding heart, before it can safely be put to service in society.

Carlyle saw the dominion of this natural intuitive faculty being withered away through hypnotic reliance on abstract rationality, so that the Authority which formerly reigned in the cosmos and imbued the affairs of men with intimations of fundamental justice and purposiveness, became submerged by a chaos of competing claims to authority, fighting for supremacy in the individual intellect. In order to be 'whole,' men must repudiate this enthralled preoccupation with intellectual 'consciousness' and thus regain the power to believe and act on the principles which are natural to their constitution, when undisturbed by mechanism.

Newman takes precisely an opposite view. Confronted by the tendency of rationalistic thought to draw men away from the heart's convictions, Newman's impulse is to seek the harmony which he finds to be implicit in the apparently confused and contradictory productions of the human intellect. The harm is not in 'consciousness,' but in imperfectly developed consciousness. So his central concern is to discern and define the path which allows head and heart to unfold harmoniously; the discoveries of the intellect never shaking, but perhaps even confirming, the beliefs of the intuitive understanding.

This fundamental contrast between Newman and Carlyle is obviously the tail end of the richly embroidered contest between art and nature which so exercised Renaissance thinkers. Newman sides with art as the 'natural' outgrowth and completion of potentialities inherent in the natural condition. For him, the 'natural' state of affairs is not the primitive order of Carlyle's imagining. Newman concurs with Leslie Stephen and the rationalists in viewing the development of intellectual consciousness as the growth of meaning and harmony out of atomistic, paralysing chaos; a move towards order, increased control over circumstance and a more creative role for humankind. Carlyle rejects this 'art' as the corruption and defacement of what is natural. Of course, by the mid-nineteenth century such debate is a vastly impoverished version of the Renaissance controversy. The multifarious capacities of the 'wit' have become etiolated into the sterile uniformity of abstract reason, while 'nature' here is a nebulous shadow of the Shakespearian conception; a mere hypothesis which tends to draw its strength more from being unlike the condition of intellectual consciousness,

than from its own qualities. We are at an advanced stage in what C.S.Lewis has called "that great movement of internalisation, and that consequent aggrandisement of man and dessication of the outer universe, in which the psychological history of the West has so largely consisted."[1]

Carlyle has contributed substantially towards our understanding this development. With his description of Teufelsdröckh's conversion, he displays the process whereby authority for belief gradually becomes vested in the individual intellect, fatally undermining the 'natural' belief which has hitherto been shared unselfconsciously with all believers. The progress of rational criticism slowly and ineluctably weans the individual from the security of conventional opinion and collective authority, by drawing the impalpable assumptions embraced in these 'beliefs' into distinct - and therefore controvertible - definition; laying them one by one, area by area, before the intellect. The effect is to inflate the self as a locus of authority so that all natural impulse becomes subject to conscious scrutiny, thereby encouraging the split between 'head' and 'heart' within the individual sensibility. Carlyle's response to this dissociation was to repudiate the area of conscious (particularly self-conscious) intellection and fight for a return to unconsciousness.

Newman addresses himself to precisely the same problem in education: namely, how to keep the intellectual forces of rationalism aligned with the right belief of the

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[1]C.S.Lewis, The Discarded Image:An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press,1964), 42.

heart. He holds that both head and heart may be educated without relegating belief to the sphere of mere 'private judgment,' provided the danger is understood and the correct methods of cultivation are employed. If the true idea of Culture is gained, the 'whole' man and hence the 'whole' society remain present potentialities.

The 'Noetic' Challenge to 'Childish Imaginations'

One passage in the Apologia is undeniably crucial to an understanding of Newman. Despite its familiarity it needs to be quoted at length, because it underlies not only Newman's religious apologetic, but his ideas on the meaning and importance of Culture:

> Starting then with the being of a God, (which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence, though when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape I find a difficulty in doing so in mood and figure to my satisfaction,) I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. If I looked into a mirror, and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me, when I look into this living busy world, and see no reflexion of its Creator. This is, to me, one of those great difficulties of this absolute primary truth, to which I referred just now. Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only; and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history, but these do not warm me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold or the leaves grow within me, and my moral being rejoice. The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of 'lamentations, and mourning, and woe'.[1]

The existence of this stark antinomy between an inward "kindly light" and an external "encircling gloom" in which the light finds no portion, is the paradox which Newman found he had to explicate. From his earliest years, in his

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[1]Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua:Being a History of His Religious Opinions, ed. with an introduction and notes by Martin J. Svaglic (Oxford:Clarendon Press,1967), 216-17.

childish imaginings Newman felt himself to be somehow separate from his surroundings, as though the physical world were merely some contingent veil perversely concealing a spiritual cosmos peopled with spiritual beings. "I thought life might be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow-angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world."[1] A more striking instance of Maurice's assertion that "all little children are Platonists . . ."[2] would be difficult to discover. Joseph Mazzini, we remember, threw at Carlyle the charge of imperviousness to the practical realities of political activity, in these words: "God and the individual man - Mr Carlyle sees no other object in the world . . ."[3] But, as has been suggested, Carlyle's sense of solipsistic enclosure was not indigenous. It was something which grew upon him, fostered by his lonely predicament in Edinburgh, and the character of his intellectual pursuits acting upon the habitual posture of his individualistic Calvinist cast of mind. With Newman it would seem that he possessed from the outset a sense of deep estrangement from the visible world.

There seems no point in probing the validity of Newman's account of this state of being too deeply. It is the predicate upon which the history of his religious and intellectual development rests. Interest must centre, as from his own perspective it did for Newman, on the survival of this inner vision. A certain egocentric self-containment

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[1] Ibid., 16.

[2] Frederick Maurice, The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, I, 207.

[3] [Joseph Mazzini], British and Foreign Review, XVI, 257.

is, after all, characteristic of many children. Their inexperience, linked to a limited facility in communicating and a necessary dependence on others, enforces a primal cultural isolation. This was part of their fascination for the romantics. There is also a reasonable consensus of testimony suggesting that many children are especially susceptible to 'religious' impressions.[1] All the same one marvels at the strength and durability of Newman's inward citadel which, through a long course of years, called the full resources of his intellect and artistry to its defence.

Newman's spiritual and intellectual odyssey starts from the contradiction so movingly evoked in the climactic passage from the Apologia, quoted above: the contradiction between the imperative promptings of his inner vision, and the equally undeniable evidence of appalling chaos, absurdity and evil in the world. Allegiance to the vision called for separateness from the world; in psychological terms, perhaps the prospect of perpetual solipsistic isolation. Capitulation to the ways of the world was intolerable, scarcely a possibility. At the age of fifteen Newman first found the basis from which he could provide for a defence of the inner citadel, and yet achieve a supportable rapprochement with the otherwise inexplicable chaos outside it:

> I fell under the influence of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God's mercy, have never been effaced or obscured.[2]

Whatever influence Dr. Mayers' sermons and conver-

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[1]A recent example being Edward Robinson, The Original Vision:A Study of the Religious Experience of Childhood, (Oxford:The Religious Experience Research Unit , Manchester College, Oxford, 1977).

[2]Newman, Apologia, 17.

sations may have had, the books Newman mentions reading (including works by Romaine and Thomas Scott which were strongly Calvinistic in bearing, as well as Law's Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life) evidently spoke to the depths of his religious awe, stimulating profound intimations both of fear and exaltation before the prospect of personal salvation: "I only thought of the mercy to myself."[1] The strength of this inward preoccupation nurtured Newman's involuntary suspension of belief in the external world's claims to substantiality, and supported his early "childish imaginations," making him "rest in the thought of two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings, myself and my Creator; - . . . ."[2] In the same year the opposite conclusions arrived at from reading Joseph Milner's Church History- a work which aroused his devotion to the early Fathers - while at the same time Newton's treatise On the Prophecies inculcated the view that the Pope was the Antichrist forseen by Daniel, St. Paul and St. John, set in motion the religious conflict which Newman resolved only at his conversion in 1845.

The crucial point about this first 'conversion' of Newman's, as far as his views on intellectual cultivation are concerned, is that it brought about a fusing of the intellectual component of his nature and his spiritual apprehensions. In this sense, the experience was not a conversion at all, but the reception of an intellectual formulation which, to his evident delight, exactly matched - perhaps even expressed - the 'quiddity' of his religious intuition. What Newman had found was an external authority which could medi-

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[1] Ibid., 18. [2] Ibid.

ate between his inner convictions and those of his fellows. He no longer had to bear the burden of separateness and, most importantly, this result was achieved at no cost to the purity of the "kindly light." Geoffrey Faber observes of this experience:

> It was the sudden concurrence and conjunction of the two halves of his conscious self - intellect and feeling. The impressions of dogma squared exactly with his instinctive attitude. Once interlocked the two could never be separated again.[1]

Perhaps a more judicious conclusion might be that they had never been separated: that until his'conversion' Newman's intellectual explorations (such as they were)[2] had simply failed to touch the inner core of his religious experience. In the terminology of the Grammar of Assent, they impinged only as notions. Nevertheless Faber seems close to the truth when he writes of the function of dogma in Newman's apologetic, that:

> It was the solidest buttress he could find to the aethereal constructions of his childhood. It was at once the impenetrable shield of those shrinking yet confident fantasies, and the means whereby they were brought into relation with the real world.[3]

One might speculate as to the fate of Newman's "kindly light" had he not encountered an intellectual formulation which melded satisfyingly with his private spiritual intuitions. Could he have expressed these intuitions in an intellectual formulation of his own devising? Or would he have joined the poignant chorus of romantic lament for the

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[1]Geoffrey Faber, Oxford Apostles:A Character Study of the Oxford Movement (2nd ed.;London:Faber and Faber,1936), 21.

[2]See Henry Tristram, "The School-Days of Cardinal Newman," Cornhill Magazine, LVIII (1925), 666-77.

[3]Geoffrey Faber, Oxford Apostles, 21.

waning powers of the imagination? His actual experience seems to imply that neither of these possibilities was very likely. For while the religious significance of the 'conversion' was that it wedded Newman inextricably to doctrine and dogma, it also appears to have had a decisive psychological importance. Through it, Newman's inner vision gained a foothold in the objective world, the first glimpse of an avenue which could broaden out to achieve sustained tenure in communal experience. In this aspect, then, his 'conversion' may be seen as an intellectual exodus from solipsism.

Having conceded an intellectual outpost to his inner citadel, Newman was bound to its defence. His education, drawing on an inherent vein of intellectual intrepidity, proved a constant challenge to the security of his religious intuitions. Newman went up to Oxford at a time of gathering momentum in academic renovation and reform. According to those in favour of reform, from the Reformation and most notably in the eighteenth century, the University had floundered ignominiously under the combined influences of negligent or incompetent college tutors, a neglectful professoriate, and inadequate formal incentives to high academic achievement. Of course, this unremittedly bleak picture was polemically advantageous in precipitating needed changes, and it is by no means certain that standards were as uniformly lax as men such as Mark Pattison would have us believe.[1] Be that as it may, at the beginning of the century a new spirit of academic rigour stirred in the University, emanating

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[1]See, for instance, Dame Lucy Sutherland, The University of Oxford in the Eighteenth Century:A Reconsideration (Oxford University Press,1973) , 12.

largely from the Oriel Common Room under John Eveleigh, Provost from 1781 to 1814. One result was the Examination Statute passed by Convocation in 1800, and implemented two years later, which provided for the appointment of six Public Examiners to preside over serious examinations for the award of first degrees, and also instituted the rudiments of the present Honours Schools system.[1] Ironically it was the examination hurdle, extended and modified, which proved to be Newman's temporary academic undoing. He over-read himself, suffering a minor breakdown which impaired his performance drastically, and emerged with a Second Class 'below the line' in Classics, while in Mathematics his name did not even appear.

Despite such a formidable setback to his hopes of a College Fellowship, Newman returned to Oxford and in April 1822 stood for election at Oriel. Fortunately for him, the college which had been so influential in raising academic standards also prided itself on independence of judgment, and had a reputation for electing its fellows with slight regard to the verdict of the Schools. So it proved in Newman's case. He was elected and subsequently introduced to what was widely held to be the most intellectually vibrant society in Oxford at the time.

The most important experience of his Oriel years, respecting his concern with intellectual culture, was his contact with the outlook, the ethos, of the so-called "Noetics. The Noetics earned the name for their high regard for reason,

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[1]For the controversy over the establishment of the more stringent examinations, see W.R.Ward, Victorian Oxford (London:Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.,1965), 12-16.

and their reliance upon logic and dialectical method in the pursuit of knowledge. A distinguishing feature of these men was their delight in the free play of the trained intellect over a wide range of religious, ecclesiastical and political problems. As William Palmer of Worcester College noted with distaste:

> A school arose whose conceit led them to imagine that their wisdom was sufficient to correct and amend the whole world. . . . [W]ith boundless freedom [they] began to investigate all institutions, to search into the basis of religious doctrines, and to put forth each his wild theory or irreverential remark. All was pretended to be for the benefit of free discussion, which was substituted for the claims of truth.[1]

Though hampered by an ignorance of developments in European thought, these men nevertheless introduced to Oxford a new critical spirit, antipathetic to doctrines of mere authority and concerned to think through problems afresh - a distinctly Aristotelian spirit.[2] A passage from Edward Coplestone's lively defence of Oxford's allegiance to the Classics - and Aristotle in particular - epitomises the intellectual impulse of this society, and its rationalistic tone.

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[1]William Palmer, Narrative of Events Connected with the Publication of the Tracts for the Times:With an Introduction and Supplement extending to the Present Time (London:Rivingtons,1883),19-20. (Square brackets mine.) The coterie included Edward Coplestone (successor to Eveleigh and Provost when Newman was elected), Richard Whately (later Archbishop of Durham, who schooled Newman in logic, and from whom he caught the anti-erastian views so important to the Oxford movement), Thomas Arnold (soon to make his mark at Rugby), John Davison (hero of the contretemps with the Edinburgh Review over the usefulness of a liberal education) and Renn Dickson Hampden (whose Bampton lectures, maintaining that the formularies of the Church were of human origin, not divine, remain the one concrete intellectual monument to the Noetics). Arnold, Davison and Hampden had resigned by the time Newman gained his Fellowship, but the influence lingered.

[2]A. Dwight Culler, The Imperial Intellect:A Study of Newman's Educational Ideal (New Haven:Yale University Press,1955), 36.

He writes of Aristotle:

> Now if ever a writer laboured more than another, in an age of sophistry and dogmatism, to establish the empire of Common Sense and Reason, it was Aristotle. He was thoroughly versed in all the doctrines of the Schools of Greece. He subscribed implicitly to none. He even incurred the obloquy of deserting and undermining his master Plato, because he rejected the visionary speculations of that philosopher, however fascinating to the fancy, as delusive and irreconcileable with reason. He is most generally known as the author of the Syllogistic form of Reasoning, in which his aim has been commonly misunderstood, ... This is one of the least of his works: . . . . His chief characteristic is a resolute endeavour to get to the bottom of his subject, whatever it may be. In this resolution his firmness and intrepidity are beyond example. It resembles that unextinguishable ardour, that insatiable desire of finishing their enterprise, attributed to the heroes of romance.[1]

Such intellectual adventurousness has to be measured against the massive stability of the underlying orthodox clerical tradition. "For many generations," writes Lytton Strachey in his Eminent Victorians, "the Church of England had slept the sleep of the . . . comfortable":

> The sullen murmurings of dissent, the loud battle-cry of Revolution, had hardly disturbed her slumbers. Portly divines subscribed with a sigh or a smile to the Thirty-nine Articles, sank quietly into easy livings, rode gaily to hounds of a morning as gentlemen should, and, as gentlemen should, carried their two bottles of an evening. To be in the church was in fact simply to pursue one of the professions which Nature and Society had decided were proper to gentlemen. . .[2]

Such was hardly the full picture, but undoubtedly it was the very sluggishness of this tradition, its sturdy rootedness, which allowed the Noetics their critical detachment, and shut their eyes to the probable consequences of their intellectual bravura. While never consciously setting

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[1][Edward Coplestone], A Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review against Oxford (Oxford:By the Author, 1810), 20-21.

[2]Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians (London:Chatto & Windus,1918), 10.

out to undermine their own traditional foundations, the Noetics were the immediate progenitors of the very liberalism Newman was to expend his intellectual and polemical energies in combating.

A decade or so before Newman joined their common room, this group of men had been called to the lists to defend the character and purpose of Oxford education against concerted attack from the pages of the Edinburgh Review. While the intricacies of this controversy proved ephemeral, it nevertheless brought the Oxford men to formulate, for their times, one of the main strands which went into Newman's ideal of Culture: the distinction between useful and liberal knowledge. Edward Coplestone led the way with his pamphlet, A Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review (1810), followed by two further pamphlets, one in the same year, and one in 1811;[1] and he was ably supported by John Davison, who had recently resumed residence in Oriel. The Oxford men argued that the material aggrandisement of society might well prove an impoverishment to the individual by subordinating his own higher interests to those of a specialist calling in society.

The argument emerged most forcefully in Davison's rejoinder to Richard Lovell Edgeworth's Essays on Professional Education.[2] Edgeworth (now remembered mainly as the

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[1] [Edward Coplestone], A Reply to the Calumnies of the Edinburgh Review against Oxford (Oxford:By the Author, 1810).
[Edward Coplestone], A Second Reply to the Edinburgh Review (Oxford:By the Author,1810).
[Edward Coplestone], A Third Reply to the Edinburgh Review (Oxford:By the Author,1811).

[2] R.L.Edgeworth, Essays on Professional Education (London:J.Johnson, 1809).

father of Maria) had contributed an undistinguished book propounding the view that all education should be directed consciously towards fitting a man for his future station and occupation. Underlying Edgeworth's view was the orthodoxy of classical political economy, Adam Smith's principle of the division of labour. Edgeworth was merely propounding its educational corollary. In his review of the work, Davison complained:

> Instead of making well-educated men, the object of his system is to make pleading, and prescribing, and other machines. So far does he carry the subdivision of his relative aims, that the knowledge of the first and plainest truths of religion, is made to belong to a particular profession.[1]

In firm contrast, Davison put forward the two counter-assertions which Newman later assimilated into the Idea of a University; maintaining first, that ". . . a Liberal Education is something far higher, even in the scale of Utility, than what is commonly called a Useful Education"[2] and secondly, that " . . . it actually subserves the discharge of those particular advantages, which are connected with professional exertion, and to which Professional Education is directed."[3] Defending the former assertion, Davison

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[1][John Davison], review of Essays on Professional Education, by R.L.Edgeworth, in the Quarterly Review, October, 1811, 189. This essay, together with the earlier review of Coplestone's first two Replies (Quarterly Review, August, 1810.) was included in Davison's Remains and Occasional Publications (Oxford:J.H.Parker,1840.) which Newman reviewed for the British Critic in April, 1842. See Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, II, 375-420.

[2]Newman, The Idea of a University:Defined and Illustrated, ed. with an introduction and notes by I.T.Ker (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1976), 148.

[3]Ibid., 150.

held quite simply that a man is much more than his profession or avocation, and that no education was worthy of the term 'liberal' that did not fit him for these extra-professional demands:

> As a companion, as a friend, as a citizen at large; in the connexions of domestic life; in the improvement and embellishment of his leisure; he has a sphere of action, revolving, if you please, within the sphere of his profession, but not clashing with it, in which, if he can show none of the advantages of an improved understanding, whatever may be his skill or proficiency in the other, he is no more than an ill-educated man.[1]

As to the second, Davison stressed a point which was to become prominent in Newman's ideal of Culture; namely, that even for 'useful' or vocational education, the formation of a cultivated intellect was more important than the mere acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge or information was a necessary prerequisite - not the end of education:

> Of the intellectual powers, the judgment is that which takes the foremost lead in life. How to form it to the two habits it ought to possess, of exactness and vigour, is the problem.[2]

He will prescribe no "routine of method"[3] to achieve this end, though he can aver that it is not to be gained "by a 'gatherer of simples'":[4]

> . . . a man who has been trained to think upon one subject, or for one subject only, will never be a good judge even in that one: whereas the enlargement of his circle gives him both knowledge and power in a rapidly increasing ratio. So much do ideas act, not as solitary units, but by grouping and combination; and so closely do all the things that fall within the proper province of the same faculty of the mind, intermix with, and support each other! Judgment lives as it were by

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[1] John Davison , review of Essays on Professional Education, 174-75.

[2 -4] Ibid., 179.

comparison and discrimination.[1]

For Davison, judgment stands for " . . . that master principle of business, literature, and talent, which gives him strength in any subject he chooses to grapple with, and enables him to seize the strong point in it."[2] "It describes the power that every one desires to possess when he comes to act in a profession, or elsewhere; and corresponds with our best idea of a cultivated mind."[3]

Davison's 'master principle' is characteristic of the Noetic emphasis on developing the individual intellect in its own right; increasing its comprehensiveness, acuteness and versatility. Of course this intellectual ability was to be harnessed to the issues of the day, and to meet vocational needs; but its inculcation demanded a posture of Socratic detachment. The formation of sound individual 'views' was the educational goal, and the practical social, political or theological consequences were left at one remove. This attitude naturally promoted confidence in the powers of the cultivated intellect, over faith in the conformation of society and its institutions received from the past. As Newman came to fear, the attitude exemplified by the Noetics portended a shifting, ever turbulent flux of intellectual alignments and schisms, at the expense of communal consensus and authority, and leading to an atomistic chaos under the sway of private judgment.

In retrospect it becomes evident that Newman was faced with two disparate but compelling claims on his intellectual attention. On the one hand was the elegant Aristotel-

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., 180. [3] Ibid.

ian spirit of criticism and analysis, with its spritely challenge to orthodoxy and no necessary commitment to traditional belief; while alongside it ranged the immediate compulsion of his private religious experience - those two luminously self-evident beings, God and himself, before whom the multifariousness of the everyday world paled into obscurity - an inner experience which found objective intellectual sanction in dogma and tradition. In these two claims, the inner 'Platonic' sphere of concrete intuition, and the fluid, critical, 'Aristotelian' attitude epitomised by the Noetics, lies the essential tension which Newman sought to reconcile in his thinking about the ideal of Culture.

"Barbarism," "Civilization" and Intellectual Development

The tension engendered during Newman's early intellectual formation, between the inner 'Platonic' sphere of concrete intuition and the fluid rootlessness of the Noetics' intellectual method, finds expression at the deepest levels of his thought. In Chapter Two it was observed that several romantic thinkers, striving for directness and immediacy of experience in contrast to the abstract ideality of intellectual 'consciousness,' postulated a kinship with the mode of being supposedly exemplified by the child and the savage. A similar collocation emerges very strongly in Newman, where the contrast between barbarism and civilisation, or between the child and the intellectually cultivated man, represents a more fundamental regulative contrast between concrete personal apprehension and its working out in discursive concept-

ual explication. Cultivation of the individual intellect proves to be an analogue for the development of the western intellectual tradition and its realisation in 'civilisation'; and the path which leads away from barbarism is the one each individual must take in his growth towards intellectual maturity. More strikingly still, the process of dissolution which Newman detects as latent in the very genesis of civilisation, and which he sees at work in nineteenth-century social, political and religious life, patterns the effect of what Newman regards as the inharmonious cultivation of man's intellectual resources.

Newman expounds his view of the contrast between barbarism and civilisation in a series of lectures entitled On the History of the Turks, in their Relation to Europe, delivered to the Catholic Institute, Liverpool, in October and November of 1853. Following Classical and Renaissance tradition he holds that "barbarism" refers to a state of nature, while by "civilization" is meant "a state of mental cultivation and discipline."[1] In a state of nature man has all the natural endowments. The problem is that they are disordered, their mutual relations undefined. The barbarian is unable to discipline his natural gifts according to a fixed principle, and his abilities are left to the haphazard disposition of circumstances. "He grows up," we are told, "pretty much what he was when a child; capricious, wayward, unstable, idle, irritable, excitable; with not much more of habituation than that which experience of living unconsci-

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[1]Newman, Lectures on the History of the Turks, in their Relation to Europe, in Historical Sketches, I (London: Longmans, Green, and Co.,1897), 163.

ously forces even on the brutes."[1] Like the brute, the barbarian's natural capacities are exercised capriciously because he acts upon instinct, rather than reason. Man, including savage man, differs from the brute in that his endowment includes a potential commitment to rationality, order and system, and is not permanently fixed within the limits of instinct: "He is, in his very idea, a creature of progress."[2] Man's teleological goal, at least in his mortal state, is "civilization":

> Civilization is that state to which man's nature points and tends; it is the systematic use, improvement, and combination of those faculties which are his characteristic; and, viewed in its idea, it is the perfection, the happiness of our mortal state. It is the development of art out of nature, and of self-government out of passion, and of certainty out of opinion, and of faith out of reason. It is the due disposition of the various powers of the soul, each in its place, the subordination or subjection of the inferior, and the union of all into one whole.[3]

Man's progress towards civilisation at the behest of his developing intellect, stands in marked contrast to the static repetitiveness of barbarian society, for barbarian minds " . . . remain in the circle of ideas which sufficed their forefathers; the opinions, principles, and habits which they inherited, they transmit."[4] This repetitive, non-developmental quality of barbarian life stems from an absolute reliance upon instinct and imagination in the mental sphere. A barbarian community is "impressed and affected by what is direct and absolute":

> Religion, superstition, belief in persons and families, objects, not proveable, but vivid and imposing, will be the bond which keeps its members together.[5]

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., 164. [3] Ibid., 164-65.
[4] Ibid., 173. [5] Ibid., 171.

Although escape from monotonous barbarian disorder comes about through the exercise of natural mental ability, this entails weakening these direct and absolute bonds, since "civilized states ever tend to substitute objects of sense for objects of imagination, as the basis of their existence."[1] The process of development issues in a civilisation organised according to the rule of law, embodying abstract rights and freedoms, but this development is at the expense of concrete imaginative apprehension.

Before the natural processes of the mind go to work on immediate experience, the child is in much the same case as the barbarian. Child and barbarian are as one in their dependence on 'instinct' and 'imagination.' When, in the Idea of a University, Newman addresses himself to defining the primary object of education, the path he describes is a progress away from supine thraldom to the immediacy of the concrete imagination, accomplished through drawing out the discursive implications of these imaginative apprehensions. Newman invokes the vision of the child, this time in a very literal sense, employing a favourite optical analogy which is meant to illustrate the full sweep of human education, not merely its intellectual aspect:

> It has often been observed that, when the eyes of the infant first open upon the world, the reflected rays of light which strike them from the myriad of surrounding objects present to him no image, but a medley of colours and shadows. They do not form into a whole; they do not rise into foregrounds and melt into distances; they do not divide into groups; they do not coalesce into unities; they do not combine into persons; but each particular hue and tint stands by itself, wedged in amid a thousand others upon the vast and flat mosaic, having no intelligence, and conveying no story, any more than

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[1] Ibid., 170.

the wrong side of some rich tapestry.[1]

Usually for the romantics, the appeal to the vision of the child rests on notions of the wholeness, purity and integrity of this vision, as well as gestures towards its freshness, immediacy and imperative urgency. Not so with Newman. In his view the child, like the barbarian, is subject to an enthralling, chaotic and essentially meaningless imaginative 'blur.' Newman calls it a "calidoscope," and the trope is significant: it points to an atomistic chaos, which must be transformed by the natural activity of the mind so that it may produce order, wholeness and meaning:

> The little babe stretches out his arms and fingers, as if to grasp or to fathom the many-coloured vision; and thus he gradually learns the connexion of part with part, separates what moves from what is stationary, watches the coming and going of figures, masters the idea of shape and of perspective, calls in the information conveyed through the other senses to assist him in this mental process, and thus gradually converts a calidoscope into a picture.[2]

The calidoscope must be converted into a picture - a one-way irreversible procedure. Just as the barbarian has toforsake imagination for abstract objects of sense, so the picture supplants the calidoscope. Despite Newman's skill at rendering a sense of gradual unfoldment and process (one of his most consistently valuable specialities as a writer), it is obvious that this 'mental motion' is anchored conceptually between two very definite poles: primitive atomistic chaos and the coherent, abstract, rationally ordered 'idea.'

Carlyle's thought has at its base the comparable tension between mechanical and dynamical thinking. One difference is, of course, that for Carlyle wholeness and

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[1]Newman, Idea, 272 ~~331~~. [2]Ibid.

harmony are the expression of unconscious dynamical thinking, while it is undue reliance upon the abstract formal rationality of mechanical thinking which produces a chaos of atomistic individualism. Newman starts from the same tension in reverse: the primitive barbarian mentality is bound to a world of concrete apprehension, where things are apprehended one by one, with no possibility of moving beyond these units to conceive general ideas. It is the rational impulse which leads towards an apprehension of wholeness in the development of general ideas. So from the outset Newman is attracted to a departure in the opposite direction, moving away from the confines of the concrete imagination towards the abstract logical capacities of the intellect. He writes of this transformation of "calidoscope" into "picture":

> The first view was the more splendid, the second the more real; the former more poetical, the latter more philosophical. Alas! what are we doing all through life, both as a necessity and as a duty, but unlearning the world's poetry, and attaining to its prose! This is our education, ...[1]

The significant point here is that Newman concedes no natural antagonism between the ideal statesof infancy and intellectual cultivation (or, to take the broader perspective, between barbarism and civilisation). With Carlyle the dynamical and mechanical provinces are inherently hostile, and he puts marked emphasis on the propensity of mechanical thinking to usurp the legitimate sphere of dynamical thinking. These antagonistic modes are determinative to the extent that they are ultimately associated with antithetical human types: "England will . . . learn to reverence its

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[1] Ibid.

Heroes and distinguish them from its Sham-heroes and Valets and gas-lighted Histrios...."[1] Carlyle would prefer to side with Coleridge: "Every man is born an Aristotelian, or a Platonist."[2] But, in his own conceptual terminology,Newman predicates the possibility of a naturally regulated transition, wherein intellectual cultivation supersedes more primitive mental conditions. As Maurice reportedly put it, " . . . all little children are Platonists, and it is their education which makes men Aristotelians."[3] The transition does not necessarily violate the 'content' of primitive awareness. Instead it elucidates and explicates it in the course of "development."

In the history of nineteenth-century thought in Europe as a whole, the idea of development has two main sources. It emerges towards the end of the eighteenth century, principally in Germany, as part of the Romantic reaction against the Enlightenment. Here the defining tendency is to describe historical development using organic metaphors derived from the growth of living things. A more formal strand, exemplified by Saint-Simon, Comte and then Marx, and essentially an extrapolation of the ideals of the Enlightenment, is expressed as a determinist belief in objective laws of social development on which a science of society could be founded. In England at least, these strands only culminated

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[1]Carlyle, Past and Present, Works, X, 221.

[2]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Table Talk and Omniana, 118.

[3]Frederick Maurice, The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, I, 207.

in the general assumption of evolutionism once the issues aroused by Darwin's theory of the origin of species captured the intellectual imagination.[1] However, since Newman's Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine precedes the furor occasioned by Darwin and Spencer there seems to be no alternative but to concur with Mark Pattison's assumption that Newman's conception was deeply original. As an old man he wrote to the Cardinal:

> Is it not a remarkable thing that you should have first started the idea - and the word - Development, as the key to the history of church doctrine, and since then it has gradually become the dominant idea of all history, biology, physics, and in short has metamorphosed our view of every science, and of all knowledge?[2]

The very character of Newman's writings suggests that he forged his theory of development primarily through reflexive examination of his own intellectual history. The major treatises,[3] read consecutively, illustrate in fascinating detail the very concept of development he proposes as the natural basis of human progress. They evidence an unrivalled capacity for sustained intellectual introspection, not in the romantic personalised vein of a Rousseau or a Proust, but in one which seeks temporarily to 'bracket' or 'suspend' indiv-

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[1]The notion of development and related concepts in European thought is usefully surveyed by Maurice Mandelbaum in his section on "Historicism." (Maurice Mandelbaum, History, Man and Reason:A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought [Baltimore:Johns Hopkins Press,1971], 41-138.

[2]Letter, Mark Pattison to John Henry Newman, 5 April, 1878, quoted in Owen Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman:The Idea of Doctrinal Development (Cambridge University Press,1957), x.

[3]These are, in the perspective adopted by the present study, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, The Idea of a University, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent. Obviously a different perspective would bring other works into prominence.

idual idiosyncrasies in order to propose general observations about intellectual activity, put forward as directly true to the reader's own experience. Newman constantly invites the reader to take the constitution and workings of his own mind and heart as the test of his arguments. This seems to have been the basis of Newman's own intellectual method.[1]

Newman's conception of development is rooted in his view of the nature of man. Development is intrinsic to human nature; not as a blind urge to completion, but as a sacred duty, an intelligent unfolding of man's implicit capacities in accordance with the will of the Creator. He makes the point in each of his major works, but perhaps most winningly in this passage from the Grammar of Assent:

> What is the peculiarity of our nature, in contrast with the inferior animals around us? It is that, though man cannot change what he is born with, he is a being of progress with relation to his perfection and characteristic good. Other beings are complete from their first existence, in that line of excellence which is allotted to them; but man begins with nothing realised (to use the word), and he has to make capital for himself by the exercise of those faculties which are his natural inheritance. Thus he gradually advances to the fulness of his original destiny. Nor is this progress mechanical, nor is it of necessity; it is committed to the personal efforts of each individual of the species; each of us has the prerogative of completing his inchoate and rudimental nature, and of developing his own perfection out of the living elements with which his mind began to be. It is his gift to be the creator of his own sufficiency;

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[1]Arguments for the originality of Newman's idea of development, and the personal mode of his investigations, are usefully summarised in J.-H.Walgrave, O.P., Newman the Theologian:The Nature of Belief and Doctrine as Exemplified in His Life and Works, trans. by A.V.Littledale (London:Geoffrey Chapman,1960), 13-16. In his study of "development" in its theological context, Owen Chadwick assigns Newman's conception a comparable originality. He finds that at most Newman was caught up in the atmosphere of controversy surrounding W.G.Ward's espousal of the developmental aspect of Johann Adam Mohler's much broader theological contribution; a controversy promulgated by such figures as William Palmer and Connop Thirlwell. (Owen Chadwick, From Bossuet to Newman, 96-119.)

> and to be emphatically self-made. This is the law of his being, which he cannot escape; and whatever is involved in that law he is bound, or rather he is carried on, to fulfil.[1]

The modus of this development is, as Newman sees it, thoroughly intellectual, being cognate with the gradual unfolding of the natural powers of the mind through intellectual discipline and the pursuit of knowledge. The Grammar of Assent gives Newman's mature analysis of this mental activity, and the account which follows is drawn mainly from this work, supplemented where this is helpful by material from Newman's earlier writings.

The Grammar of Assent is informed by the fundamental distinction between real and notional apprehension. Real apprehension is "an experience or information about the concrete."[2] It may be direct, or embodied in memory as an image, or even produced by an "inventive faculty."[3] This last is, of course, a step beyond immediate experience, but Newman avers that even here, an invented picture "derives its vividness and effect from its virtual appeal to the various images of our memory."[4] The distinguishing feature of this concrete apprehension is its immediacy. Though it starts from sense experience (either sense organs or 'mental sensations'), real apprehension goes beyond the sheer datum to apprehend its object without any conscious or isolable intermediary process. In this sense it is broadly correlative with what is generally understood by 'intuition.'

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[1]Newman, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (London:Longmans, Green, and Co.,1901), 348-49.

[2]Ibid., 23. [3]Ibid., 27. [4]Ibid., 28.

Notional apprehension, on the other hand, is distinguished principally by its mediate character. It is the apprehension of intentional objects abstracted from the raw data by a process of reasoning. So its accuracy and value depend to a large extent upon the quality of the real apprehension from which it derives. Newman maintains that in contrast to real apprehension, human knowledge is abstract, being arrived at through natural processes of abstraction and inference: " . . . we are ever grouping and discriminating, measuring and sounding, framing cross classes and cross divisions, and thereby rising from particulars to generals, that is from images to notions."[1] In this mediate process of reasoning, the mind does not perceive its objects, whatever they may be, at once in their totality. Instead, it forms judgments on the basis of discrete aspects of the object, and only as they multiply can these judgments converge towards an adequate representation of reality. This is the 'idea' of that reality.

Several points should be noted about the term 'idea' as Newman generally uses it. First, an 'idea' is itself an instance of development: it is always more than the mere representation of experience. The natural functioning of the mind, conscientiously employed upon the limited materials of experience, arrives at an 'idea' which conveys knowledge of a multi-faceted whole (whether or not each facet has itself been experienced): "The idea which represents an object or supposed object is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects, however they may vary in the separ-

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[1] Ibid., 30-31.

ate consciousness of individuals; . . . ."[1] Thus the possession of an 'idea' is no guarantee of the existence of a corresponding reality; nor does an idea extrapolated from a narrow base in experience necessarily correspond to the reality of those aspects of experience which have not been considered. It follows that there is often an ideal element in Newman's use of 'idea,' since it points to knowledge which is perfect and not in practice attainable by individual minds. An individual mind, or an individual institution, may be stirred and moved by a partial sense of an 'idea,' but the 'idea' itself has a completeness which transcends the apprehension of the individuals or institutions through which it is partially realised.

But secondly, the word 'idea' is also used by Newman in a special sense to signify knowledge of an immediately apprehended reality - an intuition - from which the abstract operations of the intellect may be said to start, and which acts as the experiential ground or guarantee for the concepts or views at which the intellect may subsequently arrive. This use is more noticeable in Newman's earlier years, particularly in the Oxford sermons, where the 'idea' has a Platonic immediacy which disappears in the later writings. Newman apparently became less confident in the powers of real apprehension in himself, and in the nineteenth century generally, and his later works tend to use 'idea' in the sense of a synthetic aggregate of rational concepts never fully assimilated to the inwardness of personal thought.[2]

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[1]Newman, An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrin (London:Longmans, Green, and Co.,1900), 34.

[2]For instance, he writes in the Grammar of Assent: "On few subjects only have any of us the opportunity of

Patently, these two uses of 'idea'[1] participate in the distinction between real and notional apprehension, the first belonging to the mode of notional apprehension, and the second to that of real. The question arises as to the relation between these two modes. Newman is definite that they start from the same basis in experience:

> Here then we have two modes of mental action, both using the same words, both having one origin, yet with nothing in common in their results. The informations of sense and sensation are the initial basis of both of them; . . . .[2]

Though their source and origin is the same, the two are ultimately irreducible. Real apprehension takes hold of its objects immediately, "from within"; notional apprehension by processes of abstraction and inference, viewing them "from outside." Real apprehension <u>perpetuates</u> its objects as images; notional apprehension <u>transforms</u> them into notions.[3] The relation between these modes emerges best in Newman's account of their unfoldment through time - of their development.

As is well known, Newman distinguished two kinds of reasoning, 'implicit' and 'explicit.'[4] The contrast is

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> realizing in our minds what we speak and hear about; and we fancy that we are doing justice to individual men and things by making them a mere <u>synthesis</u> of qualities, as if any number whatever of abstractions would, by being fused together, be equivalent to one concrete." (Newman, <u>Grammar of Assent</u>, 33.)

[1]For a helpful illustration of this distinction in operation, see Owen Chadwick, <u>From Bossuet to Newman</u>, 149-51.

[2]Newman, <u>Grammar of Assent</u>, 34.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>.

[4]This is the language of the Oxford sermons: in the <u>Grammar of Assent</u> the equivalent distinction is that between informal and formal inference.

comparable with Carlyle's separation of 'dynamical' and 'mechanical' thinking, or Coleridge's 'reason' and 'understanding.'[1]

Implicit reasoning might be described as real apprehension undergoing development. It is the slow growth, the inward maturing, of personal thought. Primarily unconscious,[2] implicit reasoning is informed by the moral and spiritual, rather than the intellectual propensities of the reasoning being. Nurtured by the full texture of personal experience, it takes form in the gradual precipitation of convictions, ideas and attitudes from the particularities of separate events and influences. Implicit reasoning is spontaneous, uncalculating and intrinsically valid. Moreover, it is not illogical. A process of reflection and analysis may be requisite to expose the logical sequence inherent in implicit reasoning, but the sequence is there. The logic is not imposed from without. Newman's best description of the process of implicit reasoning occurs in his Oxford sermon of 1840:

> The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication; another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on testimony;

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[1]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, I (2 vols.;Oxford: Clarendon Press,1907), 109-10.

[2]Such is not, of course, the meaning of 'unconscious' made familiar by Freudian 'depth-psychology,' because there, the unconscious is permanently inaccessible to conscious thought. The Freudian unconscious can be probed only indirectly through the process of psycho-analysis, and never itself becomes explicit. What Newman (and, incidentally, Carlyle) regards as 'unconscious' is an area of experience potentially available for scrutiny, though it generally eludes conscious attention. The agencies of implicit and explicit reason can draw this inchoate region into clear definition.

> then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus it makes progress not unlike a chamberer on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowments and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another.[1]

Proceeding in this fashion, by guess, instinct and intuition, rather than by rule, implicit reason cannot subsequently map its own progress. Implicit reason plays tantalisingly at the verge of consciousness, elusive, impalpable and swathed in affective mists until (should this happen), in a season of quiet reflection it surfaces to claim imperative conscious attention. Ideally, it is at this point that explicit reasoning comes into its own, to formulate the promptings of implicit reason so that they are subject to conscious scrutiny.

Explicit reasoning is deliberate conscious thought, governed by formal laws of logic. It seeks to clarify and define the position which has been won by the living spontaneous activity of implicit reason, by approaching the findings of implicit reason from the outside, transforming them into notions, and then by process of extrapolation, comparison and contrast, relating these findings to the body of notions with which the reasoning subject is already acquainted. The chief value of explicit reason is that it makes possible the exchange of ideas, allowing the inwardness of personal experience to be shared in a form accessible to those who have not the direct experience upon which those ideas are based. It offers a means whereby the inherently partial nature of

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[1]Newman, "Explicit and Implicit Reason," in Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford (London: Longmans, Green, and Co.,1900), 257.

individual experience may be enlarged and completed through participation in a community of such partial approximations to the full 'idea' - whatever the idea in question may be.

Such is the normal relation between implicit and explicit reasoning. But unfortunately - and here is the crux of Newman's critique of the intellectual situation in the nineteenth century - explicit reasoning is not necessarily in accord with the findings of unconscious personal thought; with that inward matrix from which "the whole man moves."[1] The same process of abstraction which gives to conscious intellection its scope and powers of generalisation, admits also its chief weakness. Abstraction allows the development of general ideas from singular concrete experiences; it also admits the possibility that explicit reasoning may transgress the findings of implicit personal thought, taking its cue increasingly from mere notions divorced from personal experience, and then generating further notional conclusions even more removed from experience. At best abstract concepts are imperfect approximations to reality. Seldom, if ever, do they achieve the ideal fullness of the true 'idea.' If attention is paid exclusively to these abstractions, explicit reasoning may lead to conclusions which, though internally consistent, transgress the facts of the case:

> . . . then it comes to pass that individual propositions about the concrete almost cease to be, and are diluted or starved into abstract notions. The events of history and the characters who figure in it lose their individuality. States and governments, society and its component parts, cities, nations, even the physical face of the country, things past, and things contemporary, all that fulness of meaning which I have described as accruing to language from experience, now that exper-

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[1]Newman, Apologia, 155.

> ience is absent, necessarily becomes to the multitude of men nothing but a heap of notions, little more intelligible than the beauties of a prospect to the short-sighted, or the music of a great master to a listener who has no ear.[1]

This passage might well serve as a description, in the delicate and precise framework of Newman's own terminology, of the phenomenon T.S.Eliot referred to as "dissociation of sensibility." We have seen that by its nature, notional apprehension tends to weaken the pull of immediate apprehension, directing the attention of the reasoning being away from concrete images to abstract notions. This development is not inherently dangerous, according to Newman. Indeed it is natural and thoroughly beneficial; but only on condition that ". . . real apprehension has the precedence, as being the scope and end and the test of notional; . . . ."[2] Where this precedence is lost, "dissociation" sets in. Having abandoned any accurate basis in real apprehension, the mind becomes thoroughly enmeshed in its own constructions, and thereby loses its ground in reality.

Conscious intellectual thought should represent the deliberate explication of man's inner life. For Newman, this holds true as much for the macrocosm of society as it does in the microcosm of the individual. Just as undue reliance upon notional apprehension may lead the individual to neglect or distort the living trend of his inner experience, so where the conscious thought of society is dominated by notional apprehension, such thought may betray human nature by not representing it fully. The effect is to weaken and then dissolve the bonds which unite society. Newman discerns this

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[1]Newman, Grammar of Assent, 31-32. [2]Ibid., 34.

process at work in the nineteenth century, and the following account from the Historical Sketches, though couched in general terms as applying to all civilised societies, clearly has a special relevance for Newman's own age:

> The cultivation of reason and the spread of knowledge for a time develop and at length dissipate the elements of political greatness; acting first as the invaluable ally of public spirit, and then as its insidious enemy. Barbarian minds remain in the circle of ideas which sufficed their forefathers; the opinions, principles, and habits which they inherited, they transmit. They have the prestige of antiquity and the strength of conservatism; but where thought is encouraged, too many will think, and think too much. The sentiment of sacredness in institutions fades away, and the measure of truth or expediency is the private judgment of the individual. An endless variety of opinion is the certain though slow result; no overpowering majority of judgments is found to decide what is good and what is bad; political measures become acts of compromise; and at length the common bond of unity in the state consists in nothing really common, but simply in the unanimous wish of each member of it to secure his own interests. . . . . Selfishness takes the place of loyalty, patriotism, and faith; parties grow and strengthen themselves; classes and ranks withdraw from each other more and more; the national energy becomes but a self-consuming fever, and but enables the constituent parts to be their own mutual destruction; and at length such union as is necessary for political life is found to be impossible. Meanwhile corruption of morals, which is common to all prosperous countries, completes the internal ruin, and, whether an external enemy appears or not, the nation can hardly be considered any more a state.[1]

The one factor regulating this analysis of social dissolution - with the possible exception of the reference to "corruption of morals," near the end - is the violation of real apprehension by notional; a process which could equally well be described using Eliot's term "dissociation of sensibility." Considerations of economic, political, military, or even religious factors, are neglected or subordinated to it. The hugely reductive nature of this effort at concept-

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[1]Newman, Historical Sketches, I, 173-74.

ualising social change, and yet its evident cogency given the framework of Newman's phenomenology of thought, emphasise the importance of understanding "dissociation of sensibility" in order better to appreciate the workings of the romantic intellect. Was Newman here writing objective social and political history? Or was he concerned with subjective intellectual development? We begin to understand the relation between these questions when we examine the ideal of intellectual cultivation he advocated to counter "dissociation of sensibility."

"Newman's Educational Ideal"

The heading to this section is the sub-title of The Imperial Intellect, A. Dwight Culler's important, if sometimes idiosyncratic, inquiry into Newman's educational ideas. At one point he calls attention to a significant discrepancy between two sets of images which run through the Idea of a University:

> According to one set, the mind is a storehouse or container, and as the virtue of a storehouse is to be "capacious" and its vice to be "narrow" or "confined," so the object of education is mental enlargement, and the phrase "enlargement of mind" becomes one of the key phrases in the Idea of a University. But according to the other set, the mind is a living organism, either a stomach which "digests" the crude and raw materials of knowledge or else a plant which has to be "cultivated" - in either case, something which is alive, not mechanical; active, not passive; something which does not merely accumulate foreign bodies but assimilates these bodies into its own organic form.[1]

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[1] A. Dwight Culler, Imperial Intellect, 206.

Culler goes on to place the conflict in its intellectual setting:

> The organic imagery and the emphasis upon unity of mind derive from the school of Coleridge, whereas the mechanical imagery (the "storehouse" is simply a tabula rasa with raised edges) derives from the liberal tradition of the Enlightenment.[1]

Culler regards the discrepancy as symptomatic of an unresolved tension which, in his view, undermines the integrity of Newman's argument in the Idea. The perceptions informing this conclusion are valid and stimulating; the conclusion is less so. It seems more correct to suggest that Newman was thoroughly conscious, not only of the disparate images, but of the contrasting attitudes and traditions which are behind them. Indeed, the capacity to reconcile harmoniously the centrifugal pressures incurred by "enlarging the mind" with the centripetal ones necessary for disciplining it, is close to the heart of Newman's ideal of intellectual cultivation.

Culler has some interesting observations to make on Newman's ambivalent attitude to the conventional liberal notion of "enlargement of mind." Newman included in the Idea an extract from one of his Oxford sermons of 1841, which discussed this notion, replete with illustrations suggested in part by Isaac Watts' The Improvement of the Mind: Or, a Supplement to the Art of Logick (1741).[2] In his original sermon Newman modified Watts' position by placing new emphasis on assimilating fresh knowledge, rather than merely

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[1] Ibid., 206-7.

[2] Isaac Watts, The Improvement of the Mind:Or, a Supplement to the Art of Logick (London:James Brackstone,1741).

accumulating it. Watts had considered enlargement of mind, while a little unsettling, as thoroughly rewarding and commendable. The interesting point about Newman's sermon as it reappears in the Idea, is that these laudatory overtones are distinctly muted, and enlargement of mind is now presented as something merely inevitable, a necessity to be coped with.

Newman instances an English traveller experiencing for the first time "parts where nature puts on her wilder and more awful forms"[1] (indulging a fashionable penchant for the "sublime," perhaps), who discovers that:

> He has a feeling not in addition or increase of former feelings, but of something different in its nature. He will perhaps be bourne forward, and find for a time that he has lost his bearings.[2]

Similarly the telescope opens a view which, "if allowed to fill and possess the mind, may almost whirl it round and make it dizzy."[3] So it is, he finds, with the approach to novel intellectual disciplines. Physical science initially "elevates and excites the student, and at first,. . ., almost takes away his breath."[4] There is a strong hint of the threat "enlargement of mind" poses to religious convictions in Newman's remark that the novel experience of exotic beasts could "throw us out of ourselves": into what? Into "another creation, and as if under another Creator, ..."[5]

The mildly disparaging overtones of these illustrations come to a climax in a passage where Newman makes small effort to conceal his nugatory estimate of "enlargement

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[1] Newman, Idea, 118.

[2] Ibid. (Italics mine.)

[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., 119. [5] Ibid.

of mind" as conventionally advocated in the liberal tradition:

> And in like manner, what is called seeing the world, entering into active life, going into society, travelling, gaining acquaintance with the various classes of the community, coming into contact with the principles and modes of thought of various parties, interests, and races, their views, aims, habits and manners, their religious creeds and forms of worship, - gaining experience how various yet how alike men are, how low-minded, how bad, how opposed, yet how confident in their opinions; all this exerts a perceptible influence upon the mind, which it is impossible to mistake, be it good or be it bad, and is popularly called its enlargement.[1]

Ironically, as Culler observes, Newman's is approximately the attitude Watts' book, in the first instance, was trying to correct. Alienation, anxiety - but also a certain justness - underlie the passage. Culler suggests, helpfully, that Newman's ambivalence towards "enlargement of mind" stems in part from his experience of the mental turbulence incurred in investigating unfamiliar intellectual territory:

> . . . as the mind takes in larger and larger bodies of material, the burden upon it becomes almost intolerable, and it was this burden which produced in Newman the five shattering illnesses which form the basic pattern of his undergraduate and liberal years. Gifted with a ranging and curious intellect, he was led again and again into novel sciences and extra curricular studies, until at last, breaking under the strain or thrown into a panic by some approaching examination, he found he had not mastered his materials at all, ...[2]

Attributing Newman's illnesses exclusively to intellectual stress seems exaggerated,[3] but there can be little doubt that Culler is correct when he makes Newman's own undergraduate experience the basis of his mistrust for a spurious "enlargement of mind." Later the mistrust was

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[1] Ibid., 119.

[2] A. Dwight Culler, Imperial Intellect, 205.

[3] The point is discussed by I.T.Ker in his introduction to the Idea, liv n.1.

reinforced by his experience as a tutor, and by his notable talent for monitoring the intellectual habits of his countrymen. Finally, there was the underlying threat to that inward citadel of religious intuition which Newman felt instinctively bound to keep at the centre of his conscious life.

Culler's analysis needs to be complemented by closer consideration of the second component of intellectual cultivation, "discipline of mind." This is the capacity which must be engendered in order to counter the alarming effects of an unregulated "enlargement of mind."

Discipline of mind has two related aspects, one of which is fairly straightforward. New information, novel ideas and notions, must be related to what is already known, not as a mere random aggregation, but in relation to accepted principles:

> The result is a formation of mind, - that is, a habit of order and system, a habit of referring every accession of knowledge to what we already know, and of adjusting the one with the other; and, moreover, as such a habit implies, the actual acceptance and use of certain principles as centres of thought, around which our knowledge grows and is located.[1]

No true enlargement of mind can be said to take place unless there is this orderly, systematic activity of mind upon the material received. Without such activity the mind rests at the level of mere acquisition:

> . . . [E]nlargement consists, not merely in the passive reception into the mind of a number of ideas hithertoe unknown to it, but in the mind's energetic and simultaneous action upon and towards and among those new ideas, which are rushing in upon it. It is the action of a formative power, reducing to order and meaning the matter of our acquirements; it is a making the objects of our knowledge subjectively our own, or, to use a familiar word, it is a digestion of what we receive,

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[1]Newman, Idea, 404. ~~(Italics mine)~~

> into the substance of our previous state of thought; and without this no enlargement is said to follow.[1]

Here then, is Newman's effort to reconcile the Lockean epistemological tradition with the demand (which he held in common with the romantics and other intuitionists) for an inward locus of experience, knowledge and insight. That Newman intends more than a merely rhetorical reconciliation between the two is obvious from the whole trend of his thought. The distinction between mere acquisition of information and its assimilation to the living inwardness of personal thought clearly relates to Newman's basic differentiation between real and notional apprehension. The difficulty is that fresh information, exciting new theories, novel encounters, "rushing in" from outside, may overwhelm that inward centre from which "the whole man moves,"[2] drawing it away from its intrinsic principles before these have developed the fixity and resilience of intellectual maturity. Indeed the immediate object of true cultivation is to achieve the gentle and orderly assimilation of new material into the inward faculty - the locus of implicit thought - without disturbing these implicit principles.

The crucial word Newman employs to describe the process is 'digestion.' This at once connotes the full sweep of romantic organicism and its appropriate analogical imagery; but Newman's effort to reconcile the mechanical notion of "enlargement of mind" with his own experience of true cultivation rests on more than a suggestive metaphor. As has been said, Newman is after more than a rhetorical solution.

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[1] Ibid., 120 [2] Newman, Apologia, 155.

When Newman's abstract description of the assimilation of new information is viewed in conjunction with his practical requirements for conditions under which true intellectual cultivation can be achieved, the importance of the analogy with living organisms is at once apparent. For instance, in one of the Historical Sketches, he tackles the possibility that increased availability of printed matter on every subject may eliminate the necessity for personal teaching:

> Considering the prodigious powers of the press, and how they are developed at this time in the never intermitting issue of periodicals, tracts, pamphlets, works in series, and light literature, we must allow there never was a time which promised fairer for dispensing with every other means of information and instruction.[1]

Allowing this, Newman nevertheless argues that for true intellectual cultivation, book learning is not enough:

> . . . whenever men are really serious about getting what, in the language of trade, is called "a good article," when they aim at something precise, something refined, something really luminous, something really large, something choice, they go to another market; they avail themselves, in some shape or other, of the rival method, the ancient method, of oral instruction, of present communication between man and man, of teachers instead of learning, of the personal influence of a master, and the humble initiation of a disciple, ...[2]

The litera scripta are of inestimable benefit as "a record of truth," "an authority of appeal," and "an instrument of teaching in the hands of a teacher," but:

> . . . if we wish to become exact and fully furnished in any branch of knowledge which is diversified and complicated, we must consult the living man and listen to his living voice.[3]

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[1] Newman, Historical Sketches, III, 7.

[2] Ibid., 7-8.

[3] Ibid., 8.

With this statement we reach the front line in Newman's defence of true intellectual cultivation. Abstract and generalised knowledge is readily obtained from books: its assimilation to the living trend of the student's personal thought can be achieved only through personal influence. In this practical condition which Newman deems necessary for true cultivation, the organic metaphor of "digestion" begins to take on real substance. He essays a short detour to investigate the reasons for the apparent superiority of personal communication, and comes up with two contributory factors. The first is that every reader is individual, and consequently no book can hope to meet each successive reader's unique queries or difficulties satisfactorily. The second is that when compared with the richness of face-to-face oral communication, the written or printed word must inevitably seem an impoverished medium:

> . . . no book can convey the special spirit and delicate peculiarities of its subject with that rapidity and certainty which attend on the sympathy of mind with mind, through the eyes, the look, the accent, and the manner, in casual expressions thrown off at the moment, and the unstudied turns of familiar conversation. . . . . The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home; but the detail, the colour, the tone, the air, the life which makes it live in us, you must catch all these from those in whom it lives already.[1]

Mere book-learning cannot transmute a general acquaintance with a discipline into the intimate grasp characteristic of true intellectual cultivation. In the terminology of the Grammar of Assent, book-learning alone remains at the level of notional apprehension. It cannot convey the inner meaning of such generalised knowledge: ". . . the life

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[1] Ibid., 8-9.

which makes it live in us, ..." To draw such notional apprehension systematically into the living centre of personal thought demands personal contact with "those in whom it lives already."

So we come to the idea of learning as belonging properly in a community. It is in the University community, as a living approximation to the true 'idea' of a University, that Newman finds the cohesive force necessary to counter the debilitating effects of a spurious enlargement of mind based on the printed word alone. He gives examples. Just as the society gentleman acquires his poise and polish in experiencing the beau monde, or a politician deepens his views of political life through experience in the Legislature, or even a scientist may find value in the convivial and ceremonial side of University life, so all who seek real cultivation cannot rest in the relative abstraction of book learning, or even one particular discipline, but must enter the living heart of the community, which may then be trusted to curb the extravagances and unrealities of a partial perspective by invoking the true 'idea' of a University.[1]

Newman's reliance on the substantiality of human intercourse as a means of curbing dissociative forces, calls for comparison with Carlyle's position. Carlyle, we remember, represents Teufelsdröckh as consolidating his recovery from solipsistic abstraction by cautiously testing his perceptions and judgment in the everyday world. Similarly, David Hume understood the paradoxes involved in his own epistemological position as inducing an anxiety state which could not be

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[1] Ibid., 10-14.

radically cured, but might be over-ridden by simply ignoring it, and accepting the commonsense view of the world. However Newman's appeal is not to the mundane actuality of human nature undistorted by intellectual development; but to a nature cultivated in accordance with the true 'idea' of the University. Far from proposing a retreat in the direction of Carlylean 'unconsciousness,' Newman seeks to instate perfectly developed consciousness as the guarantee of wholeness in man and society.

The 'form'or 'idea' of a University represents the assumption that when all phenomena of experience are transposed into the abstract modes of human knowledge, they constitute an harmonious whole. Since the various sciences, the branches of knowledge and the methods appropriate to them, are the explication of what is implicit in human nature, the guarantee of the wholeness of the 'idea' is the wholeness of cultivated human nature itself. So Newman's ideal of Culture postulates a coincidence between the implicit wholeness of the cultivated man (the 'gentleman') and the eventual explication of the wholeness anticipated in the 'idea' of a University.

Through constant social and intellectual intercourse in an environment replete with both the outward explication of knowledge in books and formal instruction, and its tacit embodiment in the lives of cultivated tutors, the raw material of young minds may be developed to achieve an harmonious congruence between implicit and explicit knowledge; inner and outer faculties. The student thus gains far more than a degree of specialised knowledge. Even if he imbibes a mere fraction of explicit learning, by pursuing his studies in a mental environment which to some extent exemplifies the

true 'idea' of a University, such a liberal education makes possible a true enlargement of mind, by unfolding in the individual intellect the implicit sense of the full potentiality of human nature:

> . . . true enlargement of mind . . . is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence. Thus is that form of Universal Knowledge, . . ., set up in the individual intellect, and constitutes its perfection. . . . . It makes every thing in some sort lead to every thing else; it would communicate the image of the whole to every separate portion, till the whole becomes in imagination like a spirit, every where pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them one definite meaning.[1]

In the Grammar of Assent this inner percipience, combining judgment and insight with unifying vision is called the "Illative Sense."[2] It is akin to Coleridge's 'esemplastic imagination'[3] and also, of course, to what Eliot regarded as a prime feature of the unified poetic sensibility: ". . . it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; . . . . [The ordinary man] falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes."[4] And as with Eliot, for Newman this unity of meaning is an inner thing, an attribute of the inward sphere of concrete apprehension. As such it is 'implicit' or, in Carlyle's terminology, 'unconscious.'

So despite the surface incongruity, there remains

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[1]Newman, Idea, 122-23. [2]Newman, Grammar of Assent, 336-53

[3]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, I, 107.

[4]T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in Selected Essays, 287. (Square brackets mine.)

an underlying affinity between Newman's 'gentleman' and the Carlylean Hero; they both enshrine an inward vision of wholeness which is, to some degree, betrayed by external circumstances. The chief difference is that Carlyle's Hero is a leader out to free men's minds from crippling subservience to "closet-logic," while Newman's gentleman remains content to rest in the implicit state of cultivated human nature, leaving the gradual unification of disparate intellectual theories to the natural course of intellectual development.

Newman understood that without the postulate of ultimate wholeness governing the educational process, dissociation (the violation of 'real' apprehension by 'notional') becomes an entrenched feature of society, rather than a passing phenomenon to be eliminated in the process of developing towards the complete 'idea.' If one of the sciences is removed from the circle, the area of human experience upon which it is based becomes merely subjective. To take the example which dominates the opening discourse of the Idea, dogmatic theology gives religious experience its place in the circle of sciences. Withdraw this tenure in objective discourse, religion retreats to the sphere of private judgment, and belief becomes subjective. Where before authority and responsibility rested impartially in the community as a whole, now communal consensus becomes distorted into relations of subject and object, and the burden of solipsism begins to press in on the individual.

The remedy, according to Newman, is to grasp the true scope and nature of the University (the Idea was originally titled, in part, 'Discourses on the Scope and Nature of University Education'). The one way to ensure that the congruence between self and world is not going to be threatened by each

new discovery is, first of all, to admit all knowledge to potential tenure in the circle of sciences. This is the true 'scope' of the University:

> Not Science only, not Literature only, not Theology only, neither abstract knowledge simply nor experimental, neither moral nor material, neither metaphysical nor historical, but all knowledge whatever, is taken into account in a University, as being the special seat of that large Philosophy, which embraces and locates truth of every kind, and every method of attaining it.[1]

But simply to admit all knowledge into the scope of the University does not in itself ensure that it will embody the ideal of Culture. Such a policy would commit the institution to a random aggregation of knowledge, and subsequently its students to the intellectually debilitating effects of a spurious enlargement of mind. Under this view (supposedly exemplified by the University of London), the University becomes "a sort of bazaar, or pantechnicon, in which wares of all kinds are heaped together for sale in stalls independent of each other; . . . ."[2] This runs counter to the natural tendencies of the human mind, which is "ever seeking to systematise its knowledge, to base it upon principle, and to find a science comprehensive of all sciences."[3]

The full 'scope' must be complemented by the true 'nature' of university education. Here Newman relies on the corporate character of university life, and the personal influence of mind on mind through the spoken as well as the written word, to ensure that expanding powers of notional

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[1]Newman, Idea, 428. The passage is taken from the suppressed Discourse V of 1852. For Ker's discussion of the probable reasons for the suppression, see Idea, xxxii-xxxviii.

[2]Ibid. 421.

[3]Ibid.

intellection are not permitted to distort or swamp that inward matrix of moral and spiritual insight from which "the whole man moves." Newman's eagerness to abide by the principle of the integrity of knowledge is thus far more than a strategy for defending the presence of theology in the circle of sciences, as the stark syllogistic outline of the opening discourses of the Idea might lead the casual reader to suppose. Nor, as we have seen, is it simply a polemic supporting the inclusion of all subjects in the purview of the University. The postulate of ultimate coherence and harmony among the sciences has therapeutic and liberating implications for a society struggling in a situation of increasing intellectual diversity and incoherence. Intellectual culture, embracing so far as is practical the true scope and nature of university education, liftsthe individual into the consciousness of wholeness, even though the deliberate explication of this wholeness in the various disciplines is as yet imperfect. Consequently if offers society the possibility of sustaining a coincidence between the unconscious ('implicit') life of the individual, and the conscious explication of human nature in the various sciences. The 'whole' individual as a microcosm of a 'whole' society remains a potentiality.

The Gentleman

The Victorian fascination with gentility was sponsored largely by the increasing dominance of the professional and industrial middle classes. Wielding ever more political and social influence, these energetic and malleable sections

of the community became the object of a two-pronged campaign to recast their social mores in the mould of the gentleman. The concerns went deeper than manners and morals. The aristocracy, supported by its middle class acolytes, claimed the traditional responsibility of setting the tone of the nation 'from the top.' There was also a needling pressure from the social commentators and sages, urging the adoption of more magnanimous and 'noble' ideals on intellectual grounds, as a means of ameliorating the narrow concentration on money and property so prevalent in the commercial and manufacturing classes. Here the authority for the gentlemanly ideal tended to be thrown back upon Greek and Roman sources, pressed into the service of a contemporary critique. Both influences drew support from the vitality of dissent and the evangelical revival, so that the traditional aristocratic timbre of the ideal merged with the more mundane virtues of puritanism, particularly the backlash provoked by Regency license.

The middle classes themselves found in the ideal an acceptable outlet for social and ethical aspiration, which carried the blessing of tradition and antiquity, and had the further advantage of accommodating a range of variant religious and ethical persuasions without discomfort. Thackeray made this phase of social upheaval peculiarly his own. But beyond the purely social dimensions of the pressure towards gentility, there lay an intellectual and spiritual imperative of more rarefied but general significance. In the higher reaches of intellectual theory, the gentleman becomes a symbol of human dominion and autonomy. Having risen above the riving pulls of different intellectual and moral confusions, the gentleman is fully human, whole. That human fulfilment was not utterly dependent on social rank and inherited

wealth, but could be achieved through moral and intellectual striving - this was the most elevated and optimistic interpretation of the gentlemanly ideal. Of this tendency, Newman's 'gentleman' is the type.

The uniqueness of Newman's 'gentleman' is readily apparent in relation to other contemporary definitions. Thackeray's, as given in "George the Fourth" (1860),is predominantly an ethical ideal:

> What is it to be a gentleman? Is it to have lofty aims, to lead a pure life, to keep your honour virgin; to have the esteem of your fellow citizens, and the love of your fireside; to bear good fortune meekly; to suffer evil with constancy; and through evil and good to maintain truth always? Show me the happy man whose life exhibits these qualities, and him we will salute as a gentleman, whatever his rank may be; . . . .[1]

Among his many virtues, Thackeray's gentleman evinces a robust fortitude in the face of influences, whether social or cosmic, which could blur his stalwart conformity to the gentlemanly ideal. Allegiance to this ideal entails a degree of autonomy from social forces. Indeed the ideal presumes, and may even confer, a consistent sense of 'self, and stable or predictable relations with society. Given these conditions, the gentleman, it seems, is one who can maintain his high standard of conduct and modest demeanour under every circumstance.

Ruskin concurs to a point, but supplements Thackeray's ethical prescription with a typically Ruskinian mixture of patrician eugenics and etymology. While agreeing that superior ethical conduct produces the gentleman ("a man of pure race"), he regards this specification of the means as

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[1]William Makepeace Thackeray, The Four Georges, in The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, The Biographical Edition (London:Smith, Elder, & Co.,1898), 710.

insufficient to describe the result:

> . . . though rightness of moral conduct is ultimately the great purifier of race, the sign of nobleness is not in this rightness of moral conduct, but in sensitiveness. When the make of the creature is fine, its temptations are strong, as well as its perceptions; it is liable to all kinds of impressions from without in their most violent form; liable therefore to be abused and hurt by all kinds of rough things which would do a coarser creature little harm, and thus to fall into frightful wrong if its fate will have it so.[1]

Ruskin's gentleman, possessing a fineness of temperament which renders him overly responsive to "impressions from without," is closely related to the eighteenth-century 'man of sensibility.' Where Thackeray's rather Burkean gentleman is firmly established in his society and preserves an equilibrium through good and evil, Ruskin's is characterised by a tendency to over-respond; to exceed the usual reaction of ordinary members of society. Now we turn to Newman's definition:

> . . . it is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. This description is both refined and, as far as it goes, accurate. He is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him; and he concurs with their movements rather than takes the initiative himself.[2]

Then follows a metaphor which deftly characterises the ends of liberal education as effete and superficial, at the same time that it evokes the utilitarian, civilising, 'domesticating' rationale for pursuing the gentlemanly ideal:

> His benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature: like an easy chair or a good fire,

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[1]John Ruskin, Modern Painters, in The Works of John Ruskin, ed. by E.T.Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, VII (London: George Allen,1903), 343.

[2]Newman, Idea, 179.

> which do their part in dispelling cold and fatigue, though nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them.[1]

He goes on to liken the role of the gentleman, and hence the purpose and value of Culture, to the impersonal functions served by these inanimate domestic accoutrements:

> The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; - all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at their ease and at home.[2]

Newman's gentleman is one who has assimilated the ideal of Culture: he is concerned to make others 'at home' because he himself is at home. His elastic adaptability and matchless social resilience stem from familiarity with the true 'idea' of cultivated human nature, and consequently, are not confined to intercourse with the cultivated strata in society. Acquaintance with the 'idea' unfolds a broad measure of tolerance for less 'developed' opinions, tastes and emotions. Such tolerance extends even to the devastating contradictions which the steady advance of faith in natural science was imposing upon traditional religious belief. In fact, by adhering to the principle of the integrity of knowledge, the gentleman is licensed to hold in abeyance <u>any</u> conflicting claims, until the growth of knowledge impelled by the natural activity of the intellect achieves the unity and harmony implicit in the ideal of Culture:

> [The gentleman] knows the weakness of human reason as well as its strength, its province and its limits. If he be an unbeliever, he will be too profound and large-minded to ridicule religion or to act against it; he is too wise to be a dogmatist or fanatic in his infidelity.

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., 180.

> He respects piety and devotion; he even supports institutions as venerable, beautiful, or useful, to which he does not assent; he honours the ministers of religion, and it contents him to decline its mysteries without assailing or denouncing them. He is a friend of religious toleration, and that, not only because his philosophy has taught him to look on all forms of faith with an impartial eye, but also from the gentleness and effeminacy of feeling, which is the attendant on civilization[1]

Superficially the "gentleness and effeminacy of feeling"in this portrait would seem to parallel the sensitivity of Ruskin's gentleman, but the resemblance is deceptive. For the obvious and unique attribute of Newman's gentleman is his utter passivity. He is entirely without the strong passions of Ruskin's mettlesome thoroughbred.

Newman's gentleman would never transgress the proprieties. Far less, one suspects, would he be moved to write a book such as Unto This Last - or even Culture and Anarchy. He is equally removed from the robust equilibrium achieved by Thackeray's gentleman. Newman's gentleman has neither the will nor the desire to assert himself in the social and intellectual conformation in which he finds himself. In truth, he has no 'self' to assert. For this reason the entire portrait is cast, so to speak, in the negative: . . . a gentleman . . . is one who never inflicts pain." The passivity is more than a temperamental quirk of Newman's. It reflects a deliberate intellectual position.

The gentleman dwells in the consciousness of wholeness and harmony, even though the actual relations between the various branches of knowledge are far from harmonious, and even though the actual state of social, political and

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[1] Ibid. (Square brackets mine.)

religious life in the community falls short of this ideal order. He understands that: "Error may flourish for a time, but Truth will prevail in the end."[1] Possession of the true 'idea' of cultivated human nature ensures that no development in society, however novel, can imperil the calm inner citadel of the gentleman. Culture makes 'implicit' in the gentleman what should be explicit in the circumambient society, thereby extinguishing the conflict between self and world, subject and object, because both are merged in the rational idea of Culture. So the gentleman, the true product of a liberal education, "has the repose of a mind which lives in itself, while it lives in the world, . . .":[2] a perfect definition of the 'unified sensibility.'

For the natural man, this serene self-containment and intellectual dominion become an end in themselves: mature intellectual cultivation signifies the completion and perfection of man's natural state. Even so, the Idea is not, ultimately, a eulogy of intellectual cultivation. Although it was undoubtedly Newman's intention that his Dublin audiences should be deeply impressed by its value, he is equally concerned to put humanistic culture in its place; to supply a rigorous demonstration of the 'scope' of university education, matching his evocation of its 'nature.' The latter might appropriately be assessed in intrinsic terms, but to ascertain the true 'scope' demands an extrinsic perspective, as provided by religion. For this reason, in Discourse VIII, Newman abruptly rounds on the ideal he has hitherto espoused, in order to expose its poverty in relation to the cosmic

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[1] Ibid., 385.

[2] Ibid., 155.

immensities which are the province of revealed religion. There is a significant parallel with Carlyle, who found that once he had achieved his own intellectual emancipation, the primitive cosmos was once more present to him:

> God, heaven, hell, are none of them annihilated for us, ... Nothing that was divine, sublime, demonic, beautiful, or terrible is in the least abolished for us . . . .[1]

For Newman, of course, the realisation of living constantly on the threshold of the numinous was scarcely the same source of miraculous relief that it became to Carlyle, who thrilled to the mingled harshness and tenderness of a freshly perceived cosmic justice. Rather, Newman felt perpetually the drastic contradiction between the beatific vision and ordinary experience: "The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of 'lamentations, and mourning, and woe'."[2] Culler gives a masterly evocation of Newman's reservations regarding a humanistic culture unregulated by the claims and discipline of religion:

> There were moments when man had no right to be calm, relations in which he had no business to be philosophic, seasons in which he could do no better than grovel in terror before a Maker of whom his solipsism had told him nothing. The view of the world which was presented by the humanistic tradition was all very well for a sunny day, and in the Stoic version it would even give support in periods of moderate gloom. But it told nothing of the awful dark and the blinding bright which lay below and above the tiny, pastoral world of man considered solely as man. It did not whisper to him of his ruined state or of his utter inability to gain heaven by any efforts of his own, it did not speak of the moral certainty of losing his soul if left to himself, of gloom and terror, of martyrdom and wrath. It said nothing of the inconceivable evil of sensuality and the imperative and obligatory force of the voice of conscience, of the

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[1]James Anthony Froude, Thomas Carlyle:A History of the First Forty Years of His Life, II, 13.

[2]Newman, Apologia, 217.

> simple absence of all rights and claims on the part of the creature in the presence of the Creator, and of the illimitable claims of the Creator on the service of all his creatures. It spoke much of Nature but nothing of Grace, much of the mean but nothing of extremes. It told man of no perfection beyond the type of his own species, and it gave him such hopes of achieving that perfection that it led insensibly into a kind of conscious pride which, although it was the highest conception of pagan ethics, was also the root of all the Christian sins.[1]

The cultivation of human nature and its redemption are, for Newman, separate things. "The world is content with setting right the surface of things; the Church aims at regenerating the very depths of the heart ."[2] There is not the slightest guarantee that intellectual cultivation will call forth a real assent to Catholic Truth.

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[1]A. Dwight Culler, The Imperial Intellect, 230.

[2]Newman, Idea, 174.

CHAPTER V

ARNOLD AND 'CULTURE'

Introduction

Surveying the tradition of thought which concerns us from the late eighteenth century to the time of Matthew Arnold makes one trend strikingly apparent. The further one moves into the nineteenth century, the more decisively the strength of allegiance to any existing state of society wanes. Burke, for instance, in challenging the political and social assumptions behind the pressure for democracy, wrote confidently:

> Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion.[1]

In Burke's view the task of education and religion is, broadly speaking, to win dissenting factions into the existing social structures, and to reinforce the sentiment of belonging in loyal members of society. He instinctively shrinks from introducing a regulative authority distinct from the organic inter-relatedness, embodied in the institutions and tradition of a people, which he regards as naturally

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[1]Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, in The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, II (London: George Bell & Sons,1886), 351.

sustaining a healthy society. Nevertheless, though Burke's 'gentleman' is more firmly rooted in historical reality than Newman's, the designation of a gentlemanly 'principle' already suggests the etiolation of social actuality in the service of more abstract, theoretical considerations - a direction pursued with some vigour by Burke's successors.

Like Burke, Coleridge stresses the importance of sound institutions and tradition to complement the strivings of the individual in achieving a healthy society. He draws inspiration from the idea of a Christian polity, and seeks to redefine it for his own age. But the values he cherishes, which formerly achieved authoritative social expression, are now only tenuously embodied in contemporary social and political practice. To reinstate them Coleridge finds he must introduce a new regulative influence:

> The permanency of the nation . . . and its progressiveness . . . depend on a continuing and progressive civilization. But civilization is itself but a mixed good, . . ., where this civilization is not grounded in cultivation, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterize our humanity.[1]

The ordinary progress of society is to be measured against the standard of "cultivation," and to this end a distinct class, the 'Clerisy,' comprising learned men of all denominations as well as experts in the liberal arts and sciences, is to be endowed with a separate allocation of the national wealth, and charged with the task of monitoring and directing the development of "civilization." So not only is Coleridge's ideal nowhere extant, but to bring it into being demands the creation of an alien class whose sole function is

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[1]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, On the Constitution of the Church and State According to the Idea of Each, ed. with an introduction by John Barrel (London:J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd,1972), 33-34.

to regulate the efforts of the existing orders; the landowners, and the merchants and manufacturers.

Carlyle, too, was hard pressed to find a foothold in actual society. Not only, like Coleridge, did he idealise and draw inspiration from values and organisations of the past, but he was sufficiently disenchanted with the conformation of contemporary society to seek its radical transformation. Carlyle's real longing was for "A whole world of Heroes";[1] an entire national community living unselfconsciously attuned to the wisdom of the dynamical province.

At first glance Newman would seem an exception to this progress of increasing disaffiliation from the existing social order,in that,once the crucial fusion between his private religious feelings and objective theological dogma had been achieved, he always knew that the locus of spiritual authority ultimately rested with the church catholic. Never anything like a protestant, his problem lay in deciding whether the Anglican or the Roman communion was its authentic embodiment. But here again, while Newman had at some points a quite Burkean faith in the stability of society and its institutions, his allegiance was not circumscribed by the existing conformation of the church. His 1839 essay on "The Prospects of the Anglican Church," for instance, proposed that even the liturgical and doctrinal forms advocated in the Tracts for the Times were not to be defended on their intrinsic truth and permanent validity, but because they serve as adequate vehicles for truth in the context of the age. The spirit which tractarianism awakes is, we are told, "in a

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[1]Carlyle, Works, Past and Present, X, 35.

manner quite independent of things visible and historical."[1] Carlyle, and even Arnold to an extent, would be at home with this kind of view. The basic notion is a commonplace of later romantic thought, and notably characteristic of English liberal theology at the mid-century. Many of the authors of the controversial Essays and Reviews (1860), as well as men like Francis Newman, Tennyson, or even Herbert Spencer, could subscribe to variants of the theme. The sturdiness of Newman's own position lay in his undeviating insistence on the permanent coincidence of dogma and belief embodied in the church catholic, however much the 'economical' aspects might change.

Coming now to Matthew Arnold, we find that in one important respect he is virtually at the opposite end of the scale to Burke. Where Burke examines the institutions and practices of society in order better to apprehend their nature, assess their limitations, and ascertain where they might be modified without harm to the whole, Arnold wishes to 'float' society's stock notions and habits in order to submit them to the critique of Culture: an authority with no proper embodiment in society as it actually is. He admires Burke not simply because he has made a magnificent defence of the status quo, but because "...almost alone in England, he brings thought to bear upon politics, he saturates politics with thought; . . . ."[2] Burke made political theory acceptable in an age engrossed and satisfied by

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[1]Newman, "The Prospects of the Anglican Church," in Essays Critical and Historical, I (London:Longmans, Green, and Co.,1901), 272.

[2]Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Works, III, 266.

practice. This is part of what Arnold means when he writes that Burke "could float even an epoch of concentration and English Tory politics with them."[1] Raymond Williams draws attention to the particular quality of Burke's intellectual engagement which Arnold has captured in his use of the verb 'saturates':

> It is not 'thought' in the common opposition to 'feeling'; it is, rather, a special immediacy of experience, which works itself out, in depth, to a particular embodiment of ideas that become, in themselves, the whole man.[2]

Because they exemplify the concentrated, intimate political experience of the whole man, heart and soul as well as intellect, Burke's political writings carry an authority which transcends the localised validity of his conclusions. Only in this way could he challenge effectively the prevailing mistrust of theoretical speculation, a mistrust which had much to do with the belief that the French Revolution was itself partly a consequence of intellectuals interfering in politics. Arnold recognised that this mistrust had become so ingrained as to be extended mistakenly to ideas as such:

> The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers "miscreants," because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. This would be all very well if the dislike and neglect confined themselves to ideas transported out of their own sphere, and meddling rashly with practice; but they are inevitably extended to ideas as such, and to the whole life of intelligence; practice is everything, a free play of the mind is nothing.[3]

In Burke, Arnold thought he recognised a supremely

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[1] Ibid., 267.

[2] Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 5.

[3] Arnold, Works, III, 268.

important achievement. By transferring politics from practice to the realm of intellectual consciousness, Burke opened up the possibility of 'a free play of the mind' on political questions, which would be more than abstract speculation. Burke successfully transferred the locus of authority from practice to the consciousness of practice. What had been unconscious and implicit as practice, was now conscious and explicit; and therefore malleable, controvertible, open to change and improvement. These broader possibilities open to consciousness might result in establishing a new regulative authority in the national life, a new basis for amending and reforming practice, and eventually producing a better society. The central problem was to find grounds on which to affirm the objective authority of properly cultivated consciousness. For Burke these grounds were still faintly evident in the existing order, properly understood. For Arnold, seventy years later, the accelerating rate of change, the entrenchment of manufacturing industry, the pressure for democracy, the spread of education and the intensification of intellectual concourse, the advance of science and the consequent challenges to religious faith: all these diverse forces threatened the possibility of a unified vision of society, and disturbed the fluid coincidence of consciousness and society which Arnold celebrated in Burke. Arnold found himself working to establish an authority which had as yet no proper embodiment in society; which would be equal to the task of understanding, unifying and directing the development of society; and which could criticise practice on the basis of both knowledge and tradition: the authority of 'Culture.'

Poetry and the 'Imperious Lonely Thinking-Power'

As we have seen, Burke described the good things of manners and civilisation as depending traditionally upon two principles: "the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion."[1] For Newman, half a century later, the cooperation of these 'principles,' though still highly desirable, was much less assured than it had been even for Burke. Certainly, a liberal education should move the student towards a 'gentlemanly' apprehension of the essential unity of existence; but intellectual cultivation of itself was no guarantee that this insight would culminate in religious assent. The 'gentleman' might turn out to be a mere philosopher. Newman was perennially interested in the relation between intellectual and spiritual culture, and in one of his early sermons, "Love the Safeguard of Faith against Superstition," he put his position very simply: "The safeguard of Faith is a right state of heart."[2] In the same sermon he argued that real faith

> . . . is itself an intellectual act, and it takes its character from the moral state of the agent. It is perfected, not by mental cultivation, but by obedience.[3]

Though his response to the problem of the relations between faith and reason grew in richness and complexity

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[1]Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution, 351.

[2]Newman, "Love the Safeguard of Faith against Superstition," in Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford, 234.

[3]Ibid., 249-50.

through the years,[1] Newman remained convinced that what rests in the heart is proof against the world's logic, while whatever is subject solely to the judgment of reason may be destroyed by disputation. Even the Illative sense, Newman's final formula describing the complex process whereby man is able to judge truth in the concrete, is ultimately subject to the moral and spiritual predispositions: it may still act on "mistaken elements of thought."[2] In the Grammar of Assent Newman wrote of the private and personal nature of 'real assent' as follows:

> . . . we cannot make sure, for ourselves or others, of real apprehension and assent, because we have to secure first the images which are their objects, and these are often peculiar and special. They depend on personal experience; and the experience of one man is not the experience of another. Real assent, then, as the experience which it presupposes, is proper to the individual, and, as such, thwarts rather than promotes the intercourse of man with man. It shuts itself up, as it were, in its own home, or at least it is its own witness and its own standard; and . . ., it cannot be reckoned on anticipated, accounted for, inasmuch as it is the accident of this man or that.[3]

If faith, then, is dependent on a right state of heart, and 'real assent' becomes an accident of the individual, solid cooperation between "the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion" is less than secure. For Newman, the inward evidences of conscience and heart testified to Catholic orthodoxy. For the great multitude of his fellows, they did not; and Matthew Arnold was one of these.

Without the support of dogmatic theology and its

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[1]The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty, ed. by Hugo M. de Achaval, S.J. and J. Derek Holmes with an introduction by Charles Stephen Dessain (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1976), contains Newman's preliminary attempts on the themes of the Grammar of Assent, between the years 1853 and 1869.

[2]Newman, Grammar of Assent, 381. [3]Ibid., 83-84.

authoritative expression in the Catholic church, Arnold found himself struggling to achieve objective tenure for his inner world of subjective feeling; searching for some means of bringing poetry and religion into meaningful relation with the changing assumptions of the nineteenth-century intellectual milieu. The turbulent birthpangs of democracy, the growing authority of natural science, the precocious achievements of technology, the cumulative impact of 'historical' criticism, particularly of the Bible: all these factors combined to thwart in Arnold the delicate balance between faith and reason which Newman had so carefully adumbrated. It was not merely that the traditional assumptions were under fire. New facts and theories were rushed forward to reinstate in changed guise some semblance of the old certainties; a procedure which in general tended to aggravate rather than abate the atmosphere of confusion. Walter Houghton observes of this phase of development:

> As one prophet after another stepped forward with his program of reconstruction, the hubbub of contending theories, gaining in number as the century advanced, and echoing through lectures, sermons, and periodicals as well as books, created a climate of opinion in which, quite apart from any specific doubts, the habit of doubt was unconsciously bred.[1]

Newman and Arnold shared this landscape for much of the century, yet while Newman, protected by the supposed objective validity of dogma, viewed the tumult from the relative serenity of his inner citadel, Arnold was left to devise some kind of rapprochement between his inner experience and the changing 'facts' of the nineteenth-century situation, on his own account.

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[1]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 12.

In comparison with the sense of first-hand intellectual encounter which, in different ways, permeates and vivifies the work of Carlyle and Newman, Arnold's 'Culture' is somehow lacking in freshness and vigour. The intellectual temper, the style and tone, are often very attractive - indeed they are close to the substance of what Arnold wished to recommend - but the underlying intellectual structure betrays the stresses and insecurities which the age could no longer ignore. In part, this contrast between a surface amenity and the intellectual difficulties it passes over, or neglects, reflects Arnold's status as a Victorian of the mid-century, raised on the issues which had become entrenched after the intellectual efflorescence of the opening decades. Many of the positions which thinkers like Carlyle and Newman had won at first hand, Arnold knew primarily as received ideas, features of the existing landscape. It is not surprising, therefore, that Arnold's work should take on a mediatorial aspect.

David DeLaura sees Arnold as setting out to reconcile the earnestness of Rugby and 'muscular Christianity,' typified (if not entirely created) by Dr. Arnold, with that blend of intellectual cultivation and spirituality exemplified by Newman; the 'instinct for conduct' of Hebraism complementing the 'sweetness and light' of Hellenism.[1] Obviously these elements of Arnold's 'Culture' do not resolve neatly

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[1] David J. DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England:Newman, Arnold and Pater (Austin:University of Texas Press, 1969), 575.

into the actual views of either Newman or Dr. Arnold, as DeLaura himself recognises, but the general direction is apparent. Geoffrey Tillotson would clearly wish to include Carlyle on the Hebraising wing of DeLaura's equation when he observes that "Arnold spoke of himself as his 'papa's continuation', but could have bracketed Carlyle with Dr.Arnold."[1] Similarly, but directing his attention to broader concerns, Eliot can sum up Arnold's writing "in the kind of Literature and Dogma" as ". . . a valiant attempt to dodge the issue, to mediate between Newman and Huxley; . . . ."[2] In this respect, then, Arnold's mediatorial position reflects the success with which intellectual explorers had established their opinions and shared out the available territory between them. Arnold was left to effect a synthesis, if this were at all possible, between entrenched, influential and disparate positions.

However, there is an important sense in which Arnold's mediatorial role was part of his intellectual make-up at a much deeper level than the urge to reconcile discordant intellectual and religious tendencies in his background. This sense is lucidly conveyed in an important letter which Arnold wrote to his mother in 1869:

> My poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it.[3]

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[1]Geoffrey Tillotson, A View of Victorian Literature (Oxford:Clarendon Press,1978), 97.

[2]T.S.Eliot, "Matthew Arnold" in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 105-06.

[3]Letter, Matthew Arnold to his mother, June 5 1869, in The Letters of Matthew Arnold:1848-1888, ed. by George W.E. Russell II (2 vols.;London:Macmillan and Co.,1895), 9.

He goes on to give a concise and perceptive assessment of his poetic virtues and the character of his enterprise in writing poetry:

> It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs.[1]

Lionel Trilling observes in his early book, Matthew Arnold, that the "obsessive theme" of Arnold's youthful letters to Clough is integration: "the integration of the individual, the integration of the work of art, the integration, finally, of the social order."[2] Yet the poetic situation Arnold describes in 1869 virtually belies the possibility of achieving this integration. On the one hand, valuing a fusion of intellect and emotion as an important poetic asset suggests an acceptance of the unifying, integrating power of the poetic sensibility; an acceptance of that capacity for amalgamating disparate experience and forming new wholes which Eliot attributed to the unified sensibility. But two other features of his poetic enterprise - the mysterious ability to'apply'this fusion of intellect and emotion to "the main line of modern development," and a progressively self-conscious awareness of what that development is - indicate quite the opposite: they suggest the poet's increasing sense of alienation from the mainstream of life. Arnold is operating in a new poetic situation, and it is chiefly in this altered sense of relations between the poet,

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (2nd ed.; New York:Columbia University Press,1949), 33.

the poetic world and the implied audience, that the source of Arnold's independence and originality lies, as well as his claim to be the representative poet and critic of his day.

We have seen, in connection with Carlyle, how prevalent was the sense of change during the opening years of the century. Arnold feels this perpetually, but he belongs more closely to the mid-century, to the era W.L.Burn has dubbed "The Age of Equipoise."[1] Eliot writes that "Arnold represents a period of stasis; of relative and precarious stability, . . ., a brief halt in the endless march of humanity in some, or in any direction."[2] For Carlyle, the turmoil of the twenties and thirties had been felt as a radical divorce between 'past' and 'present.' For Arnold the present opens out into a sense of prolonged transition, divorced from the past, but not yet of the future. It is as though Arnold felt himself sealed into the 'Centre of Indifference,' that transitional episode in Sartor before Teufelsdröckh finally shuffles off his self-containment to reverence the 'Everlasting Yea.' In fact some of the major themes of Arnold's best-known poetry echo Carlyle's meditations on this phase of his experience, as in the following passage from Past and Present:

> Isolation is the sum-total of wretchedness to man. To be cut off, to be left solitary: to have a world alien, not your world; all a hostile camp for you; not a home at all, of hearts and faces who are yours, whose you are! It is the frightfullest enchantment; too truly a

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[1]W.L.Burn, The Age of Equipoise:A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation (London:George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1964).

[2]T.S.Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 103.

work of the Evil One.[1]

For Arnold the malaise is both more and less than the "frightfullest enchantment" of Carlyle's analysis: more because the estrangement now seems endemic, and less because the dramatic struggle into the absolute dynamical immensities is no longer a compelling possibility. Thus it is that Arnold's 'best self' is to be found:

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead
> The other powerless to be born[2]

Arnold's efforts towards achieving a measure of integration meet with a fundamental difficulty. The unity he seeks has always the appearance of being imposed rather than discovered. We are left with Arnold's particular 'fusion' of emotion and intellect 'applying' itself to a poetic world which remains singularly unresponsive. The apotheosis of this alienation is magnificently realised in Empedocles' meditation on the possible fate of his disembodied mind, following suicide of the body. The cosmos is no longer divine and Empedocles seeks unavailingly for release from the oppressive self-consciousness and restless speculation which proclaim his own guilt in stifling the very numinous vitality he seeks. Corporeality returns naturally to the elements of air, fire, earth and water:

> But mind, but thought -
> If these have been the master part of us -
> Where will <u>they</u> find their parent element?
> What will receive <u>them</u>, who will call <u>them</u> home?
> But we shall still be in them, and they in us,

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[1]Carlyle, <u>Past and Present</u>, <u>Works</u>, X, 274.

[2]Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," <u>The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold</u>, ed. by C.B.Tinker and H.F. Lowry (London:Oxford University Press,1953), iv.19-20.

> And we shall be the strangers of the world,
> And they will be our lords, as they are now;
> And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
> And never let us clasp and feel the All
> But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.
> And we shall be unsatisfied as now;
> And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
> The ineffable longing for the life of life
> Baffled for ever; and still thought and mind
> Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,
> Over the unallied unopening earth,
> Over the unrecognising sea; while air
> Will blow us fiercely back to sea and earth,
> And fire repel us from its living waves.[1]

Both Wordsworth and Carlyle would recognise this moving evocation of the estrangement incurred by the dissociated sensibility, separated from any felt response to "the All," and severely insulated from the natural world by the lineaments of intellectual consciousness. The poem stands squarely in the line of development explored in Chapter Two. What they would not recognise is the element of stoical acceptance; the sense of being in the grasp of implacable forces beyond the reach of human influence, which can neither be repudiated nor ignored. 'Dissociation' has indeed, in Eliot's phrase, "set in."[2]

Several commentators have viewed Arnold's poetry in this light, though they do not refer specifically to 'dissociation of sensibility.' A highly perceptive passage from A. Roper's book on Arnold's treatment of poetic landscape sees Arnold as struggling with a divided poetic inheritance. Roper is discussing certain continuities he finds between the landscapes of Thompson, Gray and Collins, and those of Arnold:

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[1]Arnold, Empedocles on Etna ii.345-63.

[2]T.S.Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in Selected Essays, 288.

> . . . very generally, the Augustans and Victorians share a strongly objective sense of nature and landscape as something to be reflected upon, examined for evidence of transcendent truth, or used as the correlative of a mood. What, in general, they do not share is a Romantic conviction that behind the objective phenomena known to the senses there are truths or realities apprehensible by an exercise of the imagination which eliminates the distinction between subjective observer and observed object.[1]

J. Hillis Miller reaches a similar conclusion in his stimulating book, The Disappearance of God:

> . . . Arnold has no sense of a harmonizing power in nature, ... Each object means itself, and is not a symbol of anything further. Landscapes in his poetry are often a neutral backdrop before which the action takes place. The closest Arnold can come to the multi-dimensional symbolism of romantic poetry is the simple equation of allegory, in which some human meaning or value is attached from the outside to a natural object. This produces locutions in which a concrete thing and an abstraction are yoked by violence together, as in the 'sea of life', the 'Sea of Faith', the 'vasty hall of death', the 'icebergs of the past', and so on. Try as he will Arnold cannot often get depth and resonance in his landscapes, and his descriptive passages tend to become unorganized lists of natural objects.[2]

Both passages suggest a poetic situation dominated by the dissociated sensibility. It is not merely that so much of the poetry is informed by themes of separation, separateness and the threat of solipsistic enclosure; but that simultaneously there is a longing for the seemingly impossible: for the spirit of community, for unselfconscious communion, for sincerity. In "To Marguerite - Continued" (1852) this longing becomes "a longing like despair."[3] The poem illustrates well Miller's point about the propensity towards

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[1]A. Roper, Arnold's Poetic Landscapes (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press,1969), 8.

[2]J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God :Five Nineteenth-Century Writers (Cambridge, Mass:Harvard University Press,1963), 235. (Page references omitted.)

[3]Arnold, Poetical Works, iii.

unrewarding allegory in Arnold's landscapes, but here the intransigent fixity of the island metaphor is relieved and counterpointed by the pervasiveness of moonlight, the impartial "balms of spring,"[1] and the unselfconscious song of the nightingales. These are the natural synthesising forces working to counter the radical divorce between subject and object embodied in the geographical metaphor of islands. The emotional poignancy of the poem rests on the very frailty and inadequacy of these beneficent influences when measured against the physical concreteness of geographical separation, guaranteed by "The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea."[2] Effectual unity exists only as an obscure feeling, perhaps a memory:

> For surely once, they feel, we were
> Parts of a single continent![3]

Arnold felt increasingly bound to come to terms with a poetic sensibility unable to escape the sense of its own subjectivity. The pull towards the centre, to wholeness and community, though insistent in its demands, was failing badly in realisation, and Arnold gave vent to his most despairing premonitions in the harrowing soliloquy which leads up to Empedocles' leap into the crater:

> . . . then we shall unwillingly return
> Back to this meadow of calamity,
> This uncongenial place, this human life;
> And in our individual human state
> Go through the sad probation all again,
> To see if we will poise our life at last,
> To see if we will now at last be true
> To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
> Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
> Or whether we will once more fall away
> Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
> Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze

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[1] Ibid., ii. [2] Ibid., iv. [3] Ibid., iii.

> Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power.
> And each succeeding age in which we are born
> Will have more peril for us than the last;
> Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,
> Will fret our minds to an intenser play,
> Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.
> And we shall fly for refuge to past times,
> Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness;
> And the reality will pluck us back,
> Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature
> And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,
> And rally them for one last fight - and fail;
> And we shall sink in the impossible strife,
> And be astray for ever.[1]

Walter Houghton has argued persuasively that despite protestations to the contrary,[2] Empedocles represents Arnold's attempt "to recreate the historical character in the image of a nineteenth-century intellectual."[3] Much more than a self-portrait, the poem aims to be representative. There is, however, an important autobiographical undercurrent which helps to explain Arnold's decision to withdraw it between 1852 and 1857, when it was once more printed complete. The condition of Empedocles' 'salvation' is that he learn to "poise" his life above the contrary pulls "of the flesh or mind." The poem grows out of Arnold's own failure to achieve such poise, his determined withdrawal from the passions implicit in the"Marguerite poems"being betrayed by an equally debilitating thraldom to the "imperious lonely thinking-power." Arnold had eagerly obeyed Teufelsdröckh's imperative command: "Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe";[4] but, as James Simpson has pointed out, it was Goethe's intellectual

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[1]Arnold, Empedocles on Etna ii.364-90.

[2]See Preface of 1853. Arnold, Poetical Works,xvii.

[3]Walter E. Houghton, "Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna'," Victorian Studies, 1 (June,1958), 314.

[4]Carlyle, Past and Present, Works,I, 153.

capacity rather than his poetic sensibility that compelled Arnold's emulation: "In the figure of Empedocles Arnold had expressed symbolically his fear that over-concentration on intellectual study had done great injury to his poetic gifts: Empedocles, who in his younger days had been like Callicles, is a lapsed poet."[1] The Goethian 'cure' proved more damaging than the disease, as far as Arnold's poetry was concerned:

> Slave of sense
> I have in no wise been; - but slave of thought? . . .[2]

It is clear that for a writer operating so very much under the demand for "integration," striving to produce a poetry which would restore some of the Augustan virtues to a debased Keatsian tradition, the realisation of endemic failure was disheartening. Arnold struggled to break out of the confines of the poetic situation exemplified in Empedocles, and like so many poets, found he could reach in prose conclusions which were beyond his powers in poetry. In October 1852 he wrote to Clough, suggesting a means of extricating himself from the tradition of Tennyson, Keats and Shelly:

> . . .modern poetry can only subsist by its contents: by becoming a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did: by including, as theirs did, religion with poetry, instead of existing as poetry only, and leaving religious wants to be supplied by the Christian religion. . . .[3]

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[1]James Simpson, "Arnold and Goethe," in Matthew Arnold, ed. by Kenneth Allott, Writers and Their Background Series (London:G.Bell & Sons,1975), 298.

[2]Arnold, Empedocles on Etna ii. 390-91.

[3]Letter, Matthew Arnold to A.H.Clough, Oct.28 [18]52, in The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. with an introduction by Howard Foster Lowry (London:Oxford University Press,1932), 124.

As a magister vitae poetry might transcend the limitations of a merely subjective sensibility by dealing with material of compelling universality. In the Preface to the Poems of 1853 he made public the position he had been elaborating privately to Clough, advocating a return to poetry that is "particular, precise, and firm,"[1] having its basis in action, and above all, which would " . . . most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, . . ."[2] However, these feelings are not to be transmuted by a mediating poetic sensibility. Arnold recoils from romantic subjectivism to the security of Aristotelian mimesis or representation. He wants, not a representation of consciousness surveying action, but a simple representation of action. He writes of the Greeks:

> The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, . . ., in this: that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; . . . .[3]

The rationale behind the Preface is clear. The emphasis upon action and Goethean Architectonicè offers a possible release from the predicament of the 'dissociated sensibility' where a 'subject' has feelings (or thoughts, or images) concerning an 'object'; the object being in this case the action. Again, by 'losing' the rendering in that which is rendered, the grand style turns attention from poet to

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[1] Arnold, Poetical Works, xviii.

[2] Ibid., xix.

[3] Ibid., xxi.

subject matter: ". . . it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys."[1]

There is a close affinity here with Carlyle's "unconsciousness" theory, and indeed, with the general attraction which the Greeks held for the Victorians. Much later, for instance, in De Profundis (1905), Oscar Wilde was to discern "great sanity in the Greek attitude":

> They never chattered about sunsets, or discussed whether the shadows on the grass were really mauve or not. But they saw that the sea was for the swimmer, and the sand for the feet of the runner. They loved the trees for the shadow that they cast, and the forest for its silence at noon. . . . .
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> We call ours a utilitarian age, and we do not know the uses of any single thing. . . . . As a consequence our art is of the moon and plays with shadows, while Greek art is of the sun and deals directly with things.[2]

Wilde's situation in prison gives these observations a rather poignant literal relevance, but in aesthetics, both he and Pater share the urge for release from oppressive self-consciousness which informs Arnold's prescriptions for poetry.

It is one thing to outline an abstract programme, and another to fulfil its conditions oneself. The Preface is scattered with references to obstacles which an age of "spiritual discomfort,"[3] deficient in "moral grandeur,"[4] presents for the poet. Although the authority for these adverse judgments is at the last minute thrown onto the shoulders of Goethe and Niebuhr, Arnold is clearly preparing to assume the responsibility himself, and offer his own

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[1] Ibid., xxi.

[2] Oscar Wilde, De Profundis (London:Methuen and Co.,1908), 159-60.

[3] Arnold, Poetical Works,xxix.

[4] Ibid.

attempt at ameliorating the conditions which hinder a more satisfying poetic practice.

The Function of Criticism

In his criticism, Arnold set himself two aims which have rarely been regarded as compatible. The first is to exercise the utmost flexibility and receptiveness in his response to literature. In the tradition of celebratory criticism, he affirms that ". . . it is the critic's first duty, - prior even to his duty of stigmatising what is bad - to welcome everything that is good";[1] while at the same time he deprecates ". . . that obduracy and over-vehemence in liking and disliking . . . to which English criticism is so prone."[2] The second aim, more problematical, is to restore the sense of authority and objectivity in aesthetic and intellectual judgments which romanticism had to a large degree blown away. Again, this end is to be attained without the combative dogmatism he deplores. Arnold's subtle account of the formation of literary judgments is reminiscent of Newman's evocation of the movements of 'implicit reason' in the Oxford sermons:

> . . . the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and

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[1] Arnold, "On Translating Homer," Works, I, 199.

[2] Ibid.

> letting his own judgment pass along with it, - but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract lawgiver, - that the critic will generally do most good to his readers. Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard . . . criticism may have to deal with a subject matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment . . . . Here the great safeguard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to retain an intimate and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong.[1]

The stir occasioned by his lectures On Translating Homer (1861) indicated to Arnold that his audience was not altogether convinced by the high tasks appointed for criticism. His response was the first of the Essays in Criticism (1865), "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." The central purpose of the essay is to rescue the concept of criticism from the largely negative light in which, according to Arnold, it rests for the British public. He sets out to show that the habit of viewing the creative and critical faculties as incompatible, if not mutually exclusive, is at best unperceptive, and at worst, thoroughly deleterious. Citing several instances where critical work quite outdistances an author's creative efforts ("Is it true that Johnson had better have gone on producing more Irenes instead of writing his Lives of the Poets; . . .?"[2]) Arnold is willing to accept that, intrinsically, the critical power ranks lower in importance than the creative. But he goes on to affirm that ". . . men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of

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[1]Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Works, III, 283.

[2]Ibid., 259.

literature or art; . . . . they may have it even in criticising."[1] Arnold succeeds in further expanding the claims of criticism by asserting that creative power, in literature at least, very largely depends on the quality of ideas "current at the time."[2] The emphasis is on currency rather than accessibility, for Arnold is convinced that:

> The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations, - making beautiful works with them, in short.[3]

The task of criticism is to sustain and nourish this atmosphere, to search out the fruitful ideas and give them the authority and currency which will in turn inspire the creative artist.

This programme for criticism opens up the dilemma at the heart of Arnold's theory of Culture and,indeed, a characteristic feature of the Victorian intellectual terrain near the mid-century: "There is so much inviting us! - what are we to take? what will nourish us in growth towards perfection?"[4] This is Arnold's central question. His answer is that the critical power

> . . . tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with what it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature.[5]

Not far beneath this argument is the unspoken but

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[1] Ibid., 260. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., 261.
[4] Ibid., 284. [5] Ibid., 261.

obvious implication, adverted to in the previous section, that Arnold felt his own poetry to be languishing for want of just such a fructifying intellectual atmosphere. The link may be assumed when he invokes his habitual critique of the romantics: ". . . the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough."[1] Criticism is to prepare a way out of the intellectual malaise which had enfeebled the work of the romantics and is thwarting his own poetice impulse. Not surprisingly, this phase of Arnold's thought addresses some of the very problems which Eliot reduced to conceptual intelligibility with his phrase "dissociation of sensibility."[2] The idea of the poetic sensibility being challenged by the intellectual and spiritual character of the age is implicit in Eliot's notion; but Eliot, of course, was pointing to a retreat from cosmological lore treated as real knowledge, to a situation where such material is used merely for poetic effect. As we have seen, the difference could be described

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[1] Ibid., 262.

[2] Lionel Trilling describes Arnold's criticism as:

> . . . the reconciliation of the two traditions whose warfare had so disturbed his youth - rationalism and faith. . . . He steers a course both by compass and by stars: reason, but not the cold and formal reason that makes the mind a machine; faith, but not the escape from earth-binding facts. "The main element of the modern spirit's life, "he says, " is neither the senses and the understanding, nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative reason."
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> The imaginative reason: with this phrase Arnold feels he has closed the gap between head and heart, between feelings and intellect, ... (Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold, 194.)

as one of 'belief.' Arnold, on the other hand, is urging the creation of a vital intellectual ambience through the practice of criticism. What is required is a thorough interpretation of the world; whether this interpretation is in fact true (and hence a proper object for belief), while a question of vital import to the philosopher or scientist, is of no vital interest to the poet as such. What is important is that criticism should produce a consensus, a compelling synthesis of opinion, which can be taken as authoritative.

We gain a sense of the grand scale of Arnold's task, as he conceived it, in this passage from "Heinrich Heine," where he depicts the modern spirit as an alienated sensibility drinking directly from the sources of life, while the systems of society, its institutions and habits of thought, remain petrified in outworn conformations:

> Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds exactly with the wants of their actual life, that, for them, it is customary, not rational. The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit. The modern spirit is now awake almost everywhere; the sense of want of correspondence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit, between the new wine of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the old bottles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, or even of the sixteenth and seventeenth, almost every one now perceives; . . . . To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense.[1]

A key issue for Arnold was the manner in which this renovation and conciliation was to be effected: "Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and

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[1]Arnold. Works, III, 109.

facts we must all be . . . what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it."[1] How is society to be modernised, while shunning the ways of 'Jacobinism,' the passion for external reform unrelated to the inner life of society? Who is to decide where the correct line of development lies?

The second of the Essays in Criticism, on "The Literary Influence of Academies," finds Arnold struggling over this problem of authority in cultural affairs with characteristic ambivalence. He is deeply disturbed by the current diversity of critical and intellectual standards, promoting a situation where each thinker must, almost single-handedly, justify his presuppositions and general outlook before he can even begin the business of criticism. To integrate the cultural life of the nation, Arnold argues that an assured centre of authority has become an obvious necessity. The French have such an authority in their Academy, which functions as "a supreme court of literature";[2] "a recognised authority, imposing . . . a high standard in matters of intellect and taste, ..."[3] The Academy not only raises the level of cultural attainment, but it helps to check the combative spirit, the want of 'centrality,' the narrowness which might otherwise prevail. The 'note' (a usage borrowed, with acknowledgments, from Newman) of 'provinciality' sounds less strongly than it does in England as a result. Provinciality is contrasted with 'urbanity,' a quality rare in English writers but notably exemplified in Newman:

> The provincial spirit . . . exaggerates the value of its

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[1] Ibid., 109-10. [2] Ibid., 234. [3] Ibid., 235.

> ideas for want of a high standard at hand by which to try them. Or rather, for want of such a standard, it gives one idea too much prominence at the expense of others; it orders its ideas amiss; it is hurried away by fancies; it likes and dislikes too passionately, too exclusively. Its admiration weeps hysterical tears, and its disapprobation foams at the mouth. So we get the eruptive and the aggressive manner in literature; the former prevails most in our criticism, the latter in our newspapers. For, not having the lucidity of a large and centrally placed intelligence, the provincial spirit has not its graciousness; it does not persuade, it makes war; it has not urbanity, the tone of the city, of the centre, ...[1]

Redolent with the ethos of Newman's 'gentleman,' the passage could be taken as a tacit celebration of Newman's prose though perhaps Arnold would have acknowledged J.S.Mill and George Eliot as scaling at least the foothills of 'urbanity.'

Despite a clear statement to the contrary near the end of the essay, Arnold was still misunderstood as recommending the establishment of a Literary Academy in England, and had to protest in the Preface to Culture and Anarchy that it was an intellectual cast of mind(which would inevitably militate against the success of such an institution, were it established) that he was really out to challenge. He recognises that the institutional machinery of a National Academy would be foreign to the cultural tradition, and is equally aware that such a body might well prove oppressive and constricting. However, by promoting disinterested reflection on the purpose of Academies, Arnold calls attention to a particular imbalance in the English sensibility which tends to promote cultural anarchy, and it is here rather than in institutional renovation or reform that the main energy of

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[1] Ibid., 249.

his thought finds its focus. In a passage which anticipates the opposition between Hebraism and Hellenism in Culture and Anarchy, Arnold attributes English 'provinciality' and neglect of recognised cultural standards to a dullness of intellectual conscience, a lack of sensitivity in intellectual matters:

> The word conscience has become almost confined, in popular use, to the moral sphere, because this lively susceptibility of feeling is, in the moral sphere, so far more common than in the intellectual sphere; the livelier, in the moral sphere, this susceptibility is, the greater becomes a man's readiness to admit a high standard of action, an ideal authoritatively correcting his everyday moral habits; . . . . And a like deference to a standard higher than one's own habitual standard, in intellectual matters, a like respectful recognition of a superior ideal, is caused, in the intellectual sphere, by sensitiveness of intelligence.[1]

It is clear that Arnold regards the restitution of some kind of authoritative intellectual consensus as a necessary condition for creative renewal, and that this depends upon the restoration of a better balance between the authority of moral feeling and action, and that accorded to intellectual percipience. The achievement of such a balance, ideally, would mean an upsurge of cultural vitality in the nation as a whole, so that an age rivalling the Greece of

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[1] Ibid., 236-37. Interestingly, Arnold is here elevating the intellectual component of "conscience." C.S. Lewis has suggested that "conscience," as an epistemological faculty, may best be understood as a concept which rose to take the place of reason once the eighteenth century was no longer so thoroughly convinced of the authority of simple reason in matters of moral judgment. (The Discarded Image, 159.) Lewis makes the remark in connection with Butler's Sermons, but its validity would obviously extend to Butler's disciple, Newman. In contrast, Arnold's move is consistent with his later emphasis on Hellenism over Hebraism, and with the general intellectualist bias which finally ensures that 'imaginative reason' (which perhaps could be regarded as Arnold's cognomen for the 'unified sensibility') remains a critical notion, rather than a feature of his poetic practice.

Pindar and Sophocles, or the England of "Shakspeare" might be anticipated; one where again the poet lives " . . . in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; . . ." where society is " . . . in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive; . . . ."[1] For a poet living in a transitional period Arnold offers an alternative strategy, less satisfactory in itself, but adapted to a milieu where a consensus must be 'constructed':

> Even when this does not actually exist, books and reading may enable a man to construct a kind of semblance of it in his own mind, a world of knowledge and intelligence in which he may live and work. This is by no means an equivalent to the artist, for the nationally diffused life and thought of the epochs of Sophocles or Shakspeare; but, besides that it may be a means of preparation for such epochs, it does really constitute, if many share in it, a quickening and sustaining atmosphere of great value.[2]

A genuine consensus, in the sense of a thorough interpretation of the world, may not be available for an "epoch of expansion," but a vigorous critical effort allows the thinker to simulate such a consensus. By reaching his own conclusions based on "the best that is known and thought in the world," these conclusions take on, for him, the authority which more generally accepted views might have in an "epoch of concentration." Arnold's hope, a looser version of Newman's, is that these private syntheses will gradually coalesce into a grand whole which, while needing perpetual critical surveillance to keep it in line with fresh knowledge, could eventually lift the burden of a merely private,

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[1]Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Works, III, 262-63.

[2]Ibid., 263.

simulated 'consensus' from the poetic muse, and allow an unselfconscious approach to poetry. Like Carlyle, Arnold finds himself adopting the posture of the 'sincere' man striving to universalise a private vision, in order that self-conscious communication may dissolve into unselfconscious communion.

The Social Obstacles to Perfection

'Culture and its Enemies,' Arnold's farewell lecture as Professor of Poetry, appeared in the Cornhill Magazine in 1867. He followed it in 1868 with five further articles under the revealing title 'Anarchy and Authority.' With some revision, the whole series was issued as a single volume in January of 1869 as Culture and Anarchy.

The dates are significant. Arnold was writing in a period of limited but persistent social unrest. The failure of Gladstone's 1866 Reform Bill refuelled determined agitation for the extension of the suffrage. In London, Reform League demonstrators tore down the railings and rioted in Hyde Park, despite the best efforts of police to keep them out. The radical John Bright was travelling the country, drawing large crowds in Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds and elsewhere. Pressure mounted until 1867 when Disraeli successfully introduced a bill more sweeping even than Gladstone's: working men in the provinces were now enfranchised, doubling the electorate practically overnight. Nor was 'the vote' the only source of unrest. 1867 saw turbulent trades union activity, scattered acts of violence by Fenians

and a series of riots sparked by a fiercely anti-Catholic rabble-rouser named Murphy.[1] But these localised incidents which find their way into the fabric of Culture and Anarchy were by no means symptomatic of widespread social disruption, let alone revolution. It was more a case of the orderly surface consensus of public life being challenged more frequently, more directly and in ways hard to ignore.

Arnold was, of course, aware of this distinction. For all that Culture and Anarchy emerges as his most 'authoritarian' book, Arnold is at one remove from the primal terror which spilled over from the French Revolution into Carlyle and Dickens. In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" he can even deplore the fashion in which the writings of Burke are "disfigured" with "the violence and passion of the moment...."[2] Arnold's sympathy with the democratic movement remains alive, sedate and tinged with the awareness of its inevitability. Nevertheless the outbreaks of rowdyism are becoming more serious, the nostrums peddled by "Our Liberal Practitioners"[3] continue ineffectual, while the educated and intelligent classes remain in their majestic repose - and fail to act. The situation is grave. As had been Newman's practice before him, Arnold takes his response to the current turbulences well beyond localised polemic and the surface contours of the contemporary situation, seeking to secure answers of more general and permanent validity. The anarchy to which Arnold's title refers is not simply a straight-

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[1] The different reactions of Arnold, Carlyle and J.S.Mill to the Hyde Park riots are discussed in Fred G.Walcott, The Origins of Culture and Anarchy: Matthew Arnold & Popular Education in England (London: Heinemann, 1970), 132-35.

[2] Arnold, Works, III, 266.

[3] Arnold, Works, V, 192.

forward designation of social and political tendencies at the time, but more fundamentally it points to the intellectual and spiritual disorder which, in Arnold's view, underlies these surface manifestations.

A.O.J.Cockshut conveys the central intention of Culture and Anarchy when he describes the work as "a satirical study of the social obstacles to the idea of harmonious perfection of the intellect through study that Newman had proposed [in The Idea of a University]."[1] Arnold is not in a position merely to celebrate'Culture.' By virtue of his years as a school inspector, in the course of which the dismal and illiberal pulse of Philistine England throbbed round him unremittingly, Arnold gained a very concrete sense of the intractability of the conditions which stood in the way of realising Newman's ideal. It follows that a large part of his purpose is the attempt to demolish these hindrances. Like Newman's 'gentleman,' he ". . . is mainly occupied in merely removing the obstacles which hinder the free and unembarrassed action of those about him."[2] But the posture is more robust and more overtly directed to changing the social conformation, for 'Culture' has one passion greater even than its passion for sweetness and light: "- the passion for making them prevail."[3] As with Carlyle, the time

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[1]A.O.J.Cockshut, "Victorian Thought," in The Victorians, ed. by Arthur Pollard, Vol.VI of History of Literature in the English Language (12 vols.; London: Sphere Books Ltd,1969), 22.

[2]Newman, Idea, 179.

[3]Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, Works, V, 112.

for Homer is not yet. There is still much for Achilles to accomplish.

The utility of Culture consists initially in its identification of the proper end of human striving: "our total perfection."[1] Part of the battle will have been won if Arnold can convince his public of the true goal to be desired. Arnold shares Newman's insistence on starting from, and sustaining, a clear sense of the proper teleological end to which intellectual and social activity is to be directed. As early as the winter of 1848-9 he had written to Clough blaming the romantics for not understanding ". . . that they must begin with an Idea of the world . . . ."[2] If Newman's key idea could be summed up in the word 'unity,' in Culture and Anarchy the word which really carries the energising force of Arnold's arguments is 'totality.' The difference is perhaps significant. While Newman struggled to preserve a basis for unity, both intellectual and spiritual, in a cultural milieu which was rapidly degenerating from this ideal, Arnold feels himself grappling with a bemused civilisation already hopelessly disintegrated: one where unity must be created. This impulsion is uniform with his praise for the Greeks in the Preface of 1853: "They regarded the whole; we regard the parts,"[3] and with his prescription of 1852 for a poetry which ". . . must not lose itself in parts and episodes

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[1]Arnold, Works, V, 233.

[2]Letter, Matthew Arnold to A.H.Clough, [1848-49], in The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, 97.

[3]Arnold, Poetical Works, xxi.

and ornamental work, but must press forwards to the whole."[1]

When one turns from the Essays in Criticism to the various 'definitions' of 'Culture' propounded in Culture and Anarchy, the continuity of endeavour is immediately apparent. 'Culture' is essentially an amplification of what Arnold means by 'criticism.' However there is a significant heightening of emphasis which edges 'Culture' towards the status of what Raymond Williams has called a known absolute.[2] This was always a possibility inherent in Arnold's concept of 'criticism,' and in Culture and Anarchy the potential is realised. The tendency is no doubt partly rhetorical, but it is also congruent with the deepest ambivalence in Arnold's thought, which concerns the need to believe and the impossibility of belief.

One indication is the increased prominence of the notion of perfection in Culture and Anarchy. In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" the business of criticism is simply "to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas."[3] When we meet the initial definition of Culture in Culture and Anarchy this has become:

> . . . a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits,

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[1]Letter, Matthew Arnold to A.H.Clough, Oct.28 [18] 52 in The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, 124.

[2]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 126.

[3]Arnold, Works, III, 270.

> which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically.[1]

Of course, the goal is to be a pursuit of perfection, as is appropriate in an "epoch of expansion," for light and perfection consist, we are told, ". . . not in resting and being, but in growing and becoming, in a perpetual advance in beauty and wisdom."[2] Nevertheless Arnold fails to disguise the presence of an absolute in the new formulation, however unattainable, removed or simply vague its status. By becoming acquainted with 'the best,' we are to pursue 'the perfect.' Aside from their importance for an understanding of Arnold's 'Culture,' considerations of this sort lead directly into the intellectual confusion that scars Arnold's later religious speculations, and which so exercised men such as Henry Sidgwick and F.H.Bradley. Perhaps the strongest defence to be offered is that the ambiguity is true to Arnold's personal situation, and embodied in the full spread of his thought. The conceptual 'blur' reflects Arnold's habitual pragmatism,(one of his most impressive qualities as a thinker) as well as a central dilemma of his age.

The revised formulation also clarifies the 'reflexive' posture of Culture. Culture turns a fresh stream of thought onto contemporary practice. Thought is first lifted above practical commitments; refreshed, expanded and enlightened by knowing "the best that is said and thought in the world"; and then returned to the sphere of practice to do a better job there. Culture requires only a temporary suspens-

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[1]Arnold, Works, V, 233-34. [2]Ibid., 130.

ion of practical involvement, and Arnold is quite prepared to justify the strategy on utilitarian grounds - as Newman had done before him. In contradistinction to Mr. Sidgwick, who says that ". . . social usefulness really means 'losing oneself in a mass of disagreeable, hard, mechanical detail,' . . .," Arnold is persuaded that ". . . if we have the ideas firm and clear, the mechanical details for their execution will come a great deal more simply and easily than we now suppose."[1] So although it involves a temporary turning from action to thought, Culture is not at odds with the felicific calculus. In fact Culture addresses, in its own way, the general aim which Arnold had proposed a few years before in the essay "My Countrymen" (1866):

> What is the modern problem? to make human life, the life of society, all through, more natural, and rational; to have the greatest possible number of one's nation happy.[2]

The utilitarian rhetoric underlines the broad scope of Arnold's enterprise. Culture is to address the full compass of society. Having established Culture as "the pursuit of our total perfection," Arnold makes plain that by total perfection he means a harmonious perfection, "developing all sides of our humanity"; and a general perfection, "developing all parts of our society."[3] Arnold's relative equanimity in the face of this colossal undertaking is partially undergirded by his belief that, however difficult of accomplishment, the goal is divinely ordained:

> . . . the only absolute and eternal object prescribed to us by God's law, or the divine order of things, is the progress towards perfection . . . .[4]

Of course this goal meets with resistance, even

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[1] Ibid., 227. [2] Ibid., 18. [3] Ibid., 235. [4] Ibid., 219.

strong opposition, inherent in the character of contemporary society. Culture as a general goal is at odds with ". . .our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of "every man for himself"; while as an ideal of harmonious expansion, Culture is incompatible with ". . . our want of flexibility, with our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing, with our intense energetic absorption in the particular pursuit we happen to be following."[1] Although Culture, we are told:

> . . . seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, . . .[2]

it was never Arnold's belief that this end could be pursued as if class distinctions did not exist. This is the very failing for which, using John Bright as his whipping boy, he takes the United States to task.[3] Arnold was quite sure that no class or social organisation in its present form was good enough, and equally sure that a difficult transformation was necessary if the goal were to be attained. Nevertheless, despite his hostility to Philistine culture, in the middle classes he could at times detect a potential which might achieve concrete steps in the right direction. A good example occurs in his essay "A French Eton"(1863-4):

> The truth is, the English spirit has to accomplish an immense evolution; nor, as that spirit at this moment presents itself in any class or description among us, can one be perfectly satisfied with it, can one wish it to prevail just as it is.
>
> But in a transformed middle class, in a middle class raised to a higher and more genial culture, we may find, not perhaps Jerusalem, but,

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[1] Ibid., 95. [2] Ibid., 113. [3] Ibid., 241.

> I am sure, a notable stage towards it. In that great class, strong by its numbers, its energy, its industry, strong by its freedom from frivolity, not by any law of nature prone to immobility of mind, actually at this moment agitated by a spreading ferment of mind, in that class, liberalized by an ampler culture, admitted to a wider sphere of thought, living by larger ideas, with its provincialism dissipated, its intolerance cured, its pettiness purged away, - what a power there will be, what an element of new life for England![1]

So for all its inadequacies, Arnold could be almost sanguine in contemplating the potentialities of the middle class. He is generally less optimistic when it comes to the working class, referring to it in the same essay as:

> This obscure embryo, only just beginning to move, travailing in labour and darkness, so much left out of account when we celebrate the glories of our Atlantis, now and then, by so mournful a glimpse, showing itself to us in Lambeth, or Spitalfields, or Dorsetshire; this immense working class, now so without a practicable passage to all the joy and beauty of life . . . .[2]

Yet even here, Arnold can summon a visionary attitude which looks beyond these dire straits to a future where the working class has surmounted its present limitations, and joins the general drive towards perfection:

> Children of the future, whose day has not yet dawned, you, when that day arrives, will hardly believe what obstructions were long suffered to prevent its coming! . . . You will wonder at the labour of its friends in proving the self-proving; you will know nothing of the doubts, the fears, the prejudices they had to dispel; . . . . But you, in your turn, with difficulties of your own, will then be mounting some new step in the arduous ladder whereby man climbs towards his perfection; . . . .[3]

The underlying generosity and hopefulness so evident here go a long way towards mitigating the autocratic dogma of "Force Till Right is Ready,"[4] and other less appealing

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[1]Arnold, Works, II, 322. [2]Ibid.,324. [3]Ibid.,324-25

[4]Arnold,"The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Works, III, 265-66.

aspects of Arnold's response to the democratic movement.

As far as the 'Barbarians' were concerned, Carlyle had long been trumpeting forth the claims of an aristocracy as the proper seat of authority, government and leadership in society: not, of course, the existing landed classes, but rather a revitalised 'Heroic' aristocracy, duly awakened to its responsibilities. Arnold obviously felt bound to make some gesture towards this position, though his enumeration of the Barbarian virtues proves, in context, quite as devastating as his critique of their major deficiency. Significantly, Arnold is dissatisfied with the aristocracy for some of the very reasons Carlyle finds it attractive. Where Carlyle could admire freedom from self-consciousness, natural acceptance of rank and hierarchy, acquiescence in a tradition (even in an era of rapid change), Arnold perceived danger. As "children of the established fact"[1] the Barbarians share with the Philistines an imperviousness to ideas which must prove debilitating in an age of transition largely governed by ideas. While the modern aristocracy cannot avoid coming in contact with ideas, they remain unmoved by them, and are consequently in a poor position even to understand how it is that the lower orders can respond so vigorously to their influence. But the chief danger of trusting to the aristocracy is the prospect that it will naturally behave as though presiding over an epoch of concentration:

> In epochs of expansion, epochs such as that in which we now live, . . ., aristocracies with their natural clinging to the established fact, their want of sense for the flux of things, for the inevitable transitoriness of all human institutions, are bewildered and

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[1]Arnold, Works, V, 140.

> helpless. Their serenity, their high spirit, their power of haughty resistance, - the great qualities of an aristocracy, and the secret of its distinguished manner and dignity, - these very qualities, in an epoch of expansion, turn against their possessors.[1]

In "England and the Italian Question" (1859), Arnold's first published venture into political analysis, it is just this rigidity and immobility of the aristocracy which had impressed him as a major impediment to England's successfully learning the lesson of democracy:

> Members of an aristocracy, forming more or less a caste, and living in a society of their own, have little personal experience of the effect of ideas upon the masses of the people. They run little chance of catching the influence of these ideas by contact. On the other hand, an aristocracy has naturally a great respect for the established order of things, for the fait accompli. It is itself a fait accompli, it is satisfied with things as they are, it is, above everything, prudent. Exactly the reverse of the masses, who regard themselves as in a state of transition, who are by no means satisfied with things as they are, who are, above everything, adventurous.[2]

Arnold's chief complaint against the Barbarians' most attractive qualities is that they are external and superficial. Historically, theirs was "an exterior culture mainly,"[3] a relatively limited matter of good looks, physical vigour, field sports, a distinguished bearing. He will allow them only the most "exterior, . . .,of the inward virtues":[4] courage, a high spirit, self-confidence. Even at the present day, there is no rich interiority, no cloistered subjectivity seeking to transform the world in its own image. The 'sweetness' is without 'light':

> Allowing, therefore, with Mr. Carlyle, the aristocratic

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[1] Ibid., 124-25.

[2] Arnold, Works, I, 83.

[3] Arnold, Works, V, 141.

[4] Ibid.

> class to possess sweetness, culture insists on the necessity of light also, ...[1]

While Arnold was far from underestimating the rigidity and intransigence of the class structure, he did call attention to two important mitigating features. The first is that ". . ., under all our class divisions, there is a common basis of human nature, . . .":

> . . ., therefore, in every one of us, whether we be properly Barbarians, Philistines, or Populace, there exists, sometimes only in germ and potentially, sometimes more or less developed, the same tendencies and passions which have made our fellow-citizens of other classes what they are.[2]

The second is that:

> . . . in each class there are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self, with a bent for seeing things as they are, for disentangling themselves from machinery, for simply concerning themselves with reason and the will of God, and doing their best to make these prevail; - for the pursuit, in a word, of perfection.[3]

In these two conditions Arnold finds the basis for his attempted unification - perhaps redemption would not be too strong a word - of society under the authority of 'Culture.' The aristocracy is impervious to ideas, the middle class narrow and self-satisfied, the working class raw and undisciplined. The only way forward is for these "aliens" who are ". . . mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection..."[4] resolutely to outgrow their class limitations, to accept the authority of their best selves, and then to ". . . set up a fire which enfilades, so to speak, the class with which they

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[1] Ibid., 124. [2] Ibid., 143. [3] Ibid., 145.
[4] Ibid., 146.

are ranked; . . . ."[1] The aim is to achieve ". . . some public recognition and establishment of our best self, or right reason"[2] whereby the members of each class ~~come~~ cease to operate in response to the limited parameters of class-based perceptions, and gradually adopt their "best selves" in accordance with that enlarged vision of human perfection made available through acquaintance with "the best that is known and thought in the world." The State will then become the collective expression of the 'best selves' of the nation, and the power vested in the State will be in a position to benefit the essential humanity of its citizens, rather than the distorted class-interests of particular sectors of society.[3]

Despite its thoroughgoing condemnation of the rigidities, both mental and physical, of industrial society, Arnold's social analysis is shot through with an optimistic sense of both class and the individual as potentially malleable and open to change and improvement. This is exactly the tone Arnold needs to establish if the reader is to accept as practical the abstract and intellectual nature of the remedies he proposes.

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., 162. [3] Ibid., 158.

Hebraism, Hellenism and "the Will of God "

Culture seeks ". . .the harmonious perfection of our whole being . . ."[1] and this end requires the development of all man's distinctly human powers, which Arnold later itemised in "The Future of Liberalism" (1880) as ". . .the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners."[2] In Culture and Anarchy these capacities are distributed between the two terms of one of Arnold's best-known and most problematic coinages, the contrast between 'Hebraism' and 'Hellenism.' The contrast is designed to generalise the lessons drawn from the topical illustrations discussed in the earlier chapters, particularly the inadequacy of "Faith in machinery"[3] as a regulative principle; but it also introduces the sweeping historical scale of Arnold's speculations. Despite his obvious delight in parading the unvarnished pettiness on the surface of important local and national issues, a strategy which conveniently counterpoints the serenity and nobility of 'Culture'; despite, too, the many meek disavowals of intellectual facility and rigour from this "notoriously unsystematic and unpretending writer,"[4] one should not be misled into underestimating Arnold's ambitions as a thinker. Richard Jenkyns has observed that in positing these categories, Arnold was:

...essentially schematizing the idea, which ran through so

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[1] Ibid., 244. [2] Arnold, Works, IX, 141.
[3] Arnold, Works, V, 96. [4] Ibid., 143.

> much nineteenth-century thought in England, that Greece and Jewry between them had a unique importance in human history, whether as allies in God's plan for the redemption of the world or as rivals contending for the soul of man.[1]

Scarcely a modest undertaking, and Arnold stands convicted of a 'soft' historicism. Yet the character of his endeavour should not be misunderstood. Jenkyns argues that Arnold was unwittingly caught up in a confusion between historical and symbolical meanings of his two key terms, and is disappointed that he shows no signs of recognising the difficulty. "Are they just handy tags, these names, or is there a historical theory attached to them?"[2] Quite patently, Arnold felt he had successfully defined the two essentially a-historical impulses of human nature, whose relation, interaction and development was mightily influential in the course of history. Hebraism and Hellenism are rivals ". . . not by the necessity of their own nature, but as exhibited in man and his history, - . . . ."[3] Arnold could never allow a distinction between 'historical' and 'symbolical' meanings in the first instance. To do so would be to admit the possibility that he was merely projecting onto history certain preoccupations of the nineteenth century. In his historical observations, Arnold believed he was monitoring the different phases of a universal dynamic of human nature, made concrete in the course of history. That he was wrong about the historical character of the ancient Greek and Jewish cultures is here not at issue.

Arnold's historical diagnosis runs as follows. In

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[1] Richard Jenkyns, The Victorians and Ancient Greece (Oxford:Basil Blackwell,1980), 270.

[2] Ibid., 271.

[3] Arnold, Works, V Ibid., 163.

the age of primitive Christianity, Hebraism was legitimately the dominant cultural mode, and the drive to perfection at that period demanded its fullest development. This ascendency remained valid until the Renaissance, when Hellenism came into its own. In England this new force produced the flowering of the Elizabethan age, but thereafter a sharp resurgence of Hebraism, in the form of seventeenth-century Puritanism, thwarted England's natural course of development and forced into second place the cultural impetus which should have taken the lead, as it had done in Europe as a whole:

> For more than two hundred years the main stream of man's advance has moved towards knowing himself and the world, seeing things as they are, spontaneity of consciousness; the main impulse of a great part, and that the strongest part, of our nation has been towards strictness of conscience. . . . . This contravention of the natural order has produced, . . ., a certain confusion and false movement, of which we are now beginning to feel, in almost every direction, the inconvenience. . . . . Everywhere we see the beginnings of confusion, and we want a clue to some sound order and authority.[1]

The ambiguity in the word "want" indicates both the felt absence and the informing pressure Arnold's 'Culture' was designed to satisfy. The missing "clue" emerges in the restoration of a lasting balance between the forces of Hebraism and Hellenism, first in the individual and subsequently in society:

> . . . thus man's two great natural forces, Hebraism and Hellenism, will no longer be dissociated and rival, but will be a joint force of right thinking and strong doing to carry him on towards perfection.[2]

Nevertheless, Hebraism and Hellenism are scarcely of equal importance to Arnold. His sympathies are overwhelm-

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[1] Ibid., 175. [2] Ibid., 226.

ingly on the side of Hellenism; more so even than the argument of a current imbalance in favour of Hebraism would seem to warrant. Yet there is also an important compensatory emphasis. Arnold offers more than a straightforward polemic for Hellenism, in that he makes sound Hebraism a necessary precondition for fruitful Hellenism:

> . . . the priority naturally belongs to that discipline which braces all man's moral powers, and founds for him an indispensable basis of character.[1]

Although Arnold could wish for a respite from the relentless concentration on sin - the "obstacle to perfection" which in Hebraism "fills the whole scene"[2] - he is conscientious in admitting that by neglecting this hindrance ". . .it was the Hellenic conception of human nature that was unsound...."[3] The argument emerges in a sort of chiasmus. Hellenism lapsed historically because it neglected to master sin. Hebraism, which combats sin so efficaciously and energetically, fails in the present age because it lacks the "sweetness and light" of Hellenism. Given the present ascendency of Hebraism, the outlook must be encouraging: 'Conquer sin that we may Hellenise' seems a fair summation.

Arnold's acceptance of sin as, in some sense, a known quantity with suitable remedies already prescribed, was controversial, perhaps deservedly so. Writing in his book Culture and Religion (1871), J.C.Shairp tactfully observed:

> As perfection is put forward in the theory I have been examining, one cannot but feel that there is a very inadequate notion of the evil in the human heart that is to be cured, and of the nature of the powers that are needed to cope with it.[4]

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[1] Ibid., 170. [2] Ibid., 168. [3] Ibid., 169.

[4] J.C.Shairp, Culture and Religion in Some of their Relations (Edinburgh:Edmonston and Douglas,1870), 69.

At root, this is the same spiritual opacity in Arnold to which T.S.Eliot drew attention in his Harvard lecture of 1933: ". . . though he speaks to us of discipline, it is the discipline of culture, not the discipline of suffering."[1] For Arnold, the discipline of suffering, pursued mechanically and in isolation, had reached its dead level. Nothing further could be expected of it:

> For we see whither it has brought us, the long exclusive predominance of Hebraism, - the insisting on perfection in one part of our nature and not in all; . . . . Instead of watching and following on its ways the desire which, as Plato says, 'for ever through all the universe tends towards that which is lovely,' we think that the world has settled its accounts with this desire, knows what this desire wants of it, and that all the impulses of our ordinary self which do not conflict with the terms of this settlement, . . ., we may follow unrestrainedly, ... And to any of these impulses we soon come to give the same character of a mechanical, absolute law, which we give to our religion; . . . . We treat it, in short, just as we treat our religion, - as machinery.[2]

In Arnold's view, the only force capable of freeing humanity from this crippling faith in machinery, is Hellenism. But again, Arnold's Hellenism is patently not the integrated idea he intends it to be. While the phrase "sweetness and light," taken from Swift's Battle of the Books,[3] is designed to suggest a natural equipollence between these two elements, all the evidence indicates that intellect is to take the lead in moving humanity 'towards that which is lovely.' Where intellectual prowess is demonstrated in concrete (if quizzically disputatious) examples, such as the controversy over the Real Estate Intestacy Bill, or marriage with a deceased wife's sister, aesthetic sensitivity appears either as a corollary

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[1] T.S.Eliot, "Matthew Arnold," in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 103.

[2] Arnold, Works, V, 185-86.

[3] Ibid., 99.

of this cultivated intellectual temper, or in pale gestures towards Greek art[1] and the spirit of Newman's Oxford.[2] Indeed, if "light" is roughly equivalent to 'intellectual grasp' or 'judgment,' and "sweetness" corresponds to beauty, then the latter appears primarily as the equableness and urbanity of Arnold's authorial tone, in contrast to the fierceness and obsessiveness attributed to Hebraism. Arnold's "sweetness" is a very intellectual kind of beauty. Sometimes it even appears that aesthetic response is subordinate to, and dependent upon, intellectual vision, as when Arnold writes that Hellenism sets out:

> . . . to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty. . . .[3]

There is no one formulation which adequately summarises the meaning which gradually accrues to 'Hebraism' and 'Hellenism' in the course of the book. As always, Arnold's prose proceeds by suggestive adumbration rather than definitive statement. Nevertheless this passage from the start of the chapter entitled "Hebraism and Hellenism" formally introduces the terms:

> We may regard this energy driving at practice, this paramount sense of the obligation of duty, self-control, and work, this earnestness in going manfully with the best light we have, as one force. And we may regard the intelligence driving at those ideas which are, after all, the basis of right practice, the ardent sense for all the new and changing combinations of them which man's development brings with it, the indomitable impulse to know and adjust them perfectly, as another force. And these two forces we may regard as in some sense rivals, . . ., . . . dividing the empire of the world between them. And to give these forces names from the two races of men who have supplied the most signal and splendid manifestations of them, we may call them respectively the forces of Hebraism and Hellenism.

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[1] Ibid., 100. [2] Ibid., 107. [3] Ibid., 167.

> . . . between these two points of influence moves our world.[1]

Isolating the leading elements in this formulation reveals the basic conceptual structure Arnold has in mind. Hebraism is identified with "energy," Hellenism with "intelligence." The object of Hebraism is practice (unqualified), while Hellenism is "the basis of right practice." Hebraism is apparently sensitive to nothing beyond its own internal dynamic. Hellenism participates in a changing environment of ideas and new combinations of ideas, seeking to "adjust them perfectly." The passage conveys the sense of a serious cleavage between a shifting, unfolding, malleable sphere of ideas, and a rigid, unresponsive, fully determinate and realised sphere of practice; while the insouciant affirmation that Hellenism is "after all" the basis of right practice nudges the reader towards the understanding that this dissociation ought to represent a separation between a regulating sphere and a regulated sphere.

Although Culture promises ultimately to return everything it scrutinises to the sphere of practice, one major effect of Arnold's theory is to transfer the locus of authority from practice to the consciousness of practice. That astute critic, Richard Holt Hutton, once remarked in connection with Arnold's style, that its "whole colour":

> . . . transmits, . . ., the impulse or effort to think apart from the disturbing influence of action. This thins the whole imaginative sphere of his mind, and even

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[1] Ibid.163-64. At some points it becomes uncertain whether Hebraism and Hellenism do in fact divide "the empire of the world between them." Near the end of the chapter Arnold describes them as "contributions" to the whole development of man, leaving room for the possibility that they may not be exclusive categories. (Ibid., 171.)

> his poetry is written in the intellectual plane, and strives to crystallize its thought wholly in that plane, without permitting the perturbations of practical life to influence it there.[1]

This tendency matures in Arnold's theory of Culture. The divergence between consciousness and society, contemplation and action, theory and practice, seems entrenched and irrevocable. Arnold deliberately takes his stand outside the flux of life, in order to criticise it. Hutton contrasts this procedure with that of Newman:

> [Newman] tries to enter into the whole nature of man first, and to deduce thence the highest intellectual dogma that is adequate to guide him. Mr. Arnold stands apart observing serenely on the intellectual plane all that goes on outside it, and exaggerating rather than attempting to bridge over the chasm between life and thought.[2]

Mill, we remember, divided the _globus intellectualis_ into Benthamites and Coleridgians. The Benthamite ". . . took his stand _outside_ the received opinion, and surveyed it as an entire stranger to it: . . ."; the Coleridgian ". . . looked at it from within, and endeavoured to see it with the eyes of a believer in it; . . . ."[3] Arnold's critical detachment and devotion to reason edge him towards the Benthamite camp; his respect for the traditions, institutions and meanings of the past puts him closer to Coleridge. But really Arnold is neither Benthamite nor Coleridgian, since the values he cherishes are now all assimilated to the sphere of consciousness. Where Carlyle sought harmony and

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[1][R.H.Hutton], review of _Essays in Criticism_, by Matthew Arnold, in the _Spectator_, xxxviii, February 25, 1865, 215.

[2]_Ibid_. (Square brackets mine.)

[3]John Stuart Mill, "Coleridge," in _Mill on Bentham and Coleridge_, 99-100.

wholeness in 'unconsciousness,' for Arnold these characteristics belong to the cultivated consciousness.

Instead of reason acting as a solvent on everything believed on the evidence of tradition and authority (as it had done for the eighteenth century), with Arnold, the spontaneous activity of reason is vested with powers of harmonious integration, gradually restoring a cultural consensus and the authority of tradition. And if individual reason, inspired by the standards of Culture, can unite with the will of God, as Arnold implies, then it is not an individualistic agency of discovery and analysis, but almost an attribute of being.

Moreover, a powerful stream of rhetoric in Culture and Anarchy is devoted to creating a sense of society responding to, or perversely struggling against, the immanent working of divinity in the cultural process. This appeal to divinity opens up a crucial question concerning the status of Arnold's ideal of human perfection. On the one hand, Arnold evidently regards the verdict of Culture on contemporary life as self-validating. The consensus arrived at by the 'best selves' of the best thinkers in all ages must be taken as providing an objective authority and a basis for reform. But there is this other stream of language in Culture and Anarchy, which identifies the march of Culture, not with the spontaneous acceptance by the intelligentsia of the dictates of their best selves, but with the immanent sense of divine power working in society. Culture is to make ". . . reason and the will of God prevail. . . ."[1]

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[1]Arnold, Works, V, 92.

T.S.Eliot adverts to the problem in his fine essay on F.H. Bradley:

> In Culture and Anarchy, . . ., we hear something said about 'the will of God', but the 'will of God' seems to have become superseded in importance by 'our best self, or right reason, to which we want to give authority'; and this best self looks very much like Matthew Arnold slightly disguised.[1]

Similar possibilities worried contemporary critics, notably Henry Sidgwick, Fitzjames Stephen and J.C.Shairp.[2] Faced with such considerations, it would be easy to dismiss Arnold's Deity as a spurious hypothesis instituted in order to universalise the authority of Culture. (For of course, it is only when society as a whole is working to promote the ends of Culture, that the cooperation of the Hellenising and Hebraising modes can be anything more than a subjective ideal ranged against the Philistine imperatives of a hostile and alien society.) To do so would be to neglect the overwhelming importance of the religious impulse in Arnold's work, even prior to the theological speculations of his last period. There is truth in Basil Willey's remark that:

> . . . religion, . . ., was to him the culmination, crown, and sanction of all his dearest aims - culture, criticism, sweetness and light, the 'promotion of goodness.'[3]

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[1]T.S.Eliot, "Francis Herbert Bradley," in Selected Essays, 452.

[2]For instance, this is Shairp discussing the literary theory of Culture:

> Its starting point is the idea of perfecting self; and though, as it gradually evolves, it tries to forget self, and to include quite other elements, yet it never succeeds in getting clear of the taint of self-reference with which it set out. (J.C.Shairp, Culture and Religion, 63-64.)

[3]Basil Willey, "Arnold and Religion," in Matthew Arnold, ed. by Kenneth Allott, Writers and their Background Series, 240.

This devoutness was widely recognised by Arnold's contemporaries, and it undoubtedly contributed much to his popular success. Even a solid Churchman such as Dean Liddon could write:

> His language on the most solemn of all subjects - the Being and Personality of God - makes it, . . ., impossible for a sincere Christian to think of him with other feelings than those of the deepest regret that he is not a believer.[1]

The irony here, of course, is that it was just Arnold's 'language on the most solemn of all subjects' which put him in trouble with F.H.Bradley, one of whose objections was that Arnold could not squarely admit the objective being of God, although his theory implied it. Humanism was parading falsely in the vestments of religion:

> In the religious consciousness we find the belief, however vague and indistinct, in an object, a not-myself; an object, further, which is real. An ideal which is not real, which is only in our heads, can not be the object of religion; and in particular the ideal self, as the 'is to be' which is real only so far as we put it forth by our wills, and which, as an ideal, we can not put forth, is not a real object, and so not the object for religion.[2]

T.S.Eliot has observed that "Such criticism is final."[3] Notionally, of course, it is: theologically and philosophically the objection must stand. However, the practical distinctions between a religiously orientated humanism and a theism bent on social and cultural regeneration are indefinite, to say the least; particularly in an age where a

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[1]H.P.Liddon, quoted in John Octavius Johnston, Life and Letters of Henry Parry Liddon (London:Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), 358.

[2]F.H.Bradley, Ethical Studies, 282.

[3]T.S.Eliot, "Francis Herbert Bradley," in Selected Essays, 451.

prominent minority values very highly the flexibility and fluidity of the open mind.[1] A less tough-minded critic, F.D. Maurice, gave his response to one of Arnold's essays on Spinoza in a letter to Richard Holt Hutton of 1863:

> The Parmenidean "One," the "Being" of Spinoza, the "Absolute" of Hegel, if they are only conceptions of the intellects of these two men, are horrible, ghastly self-contradictions. If they are recognitions by the intellect, of what the intellect cannot conceive, of a God who must make Himself known, they are blessed and glorious testimonies to truths which are not theirs but universal. If the religious feelings create their own object or objects they must be the sources of all idolatry, superstition, division, hatred; if they are awakened by the object, which is meant for them and can satisfy them, they are good and practical, and they can never be at war with any of the truths of Reason. If the literary critic assumes himself to be the judge of right and wrong, of the intellects and of the religious feelings, he will labour in his vocation as an Edinburgh, or Quarterly, or Saturday Reviewer, to put out all light but that which he has kindled. . . . . Arnold appeals to the clergy. If they have any function, it is to preserve men from substituting the intellectual discerner, the man of religious instincts and impulses, the exalted critic, for the Living God.[2]

Though it is finally clear where his allegiance rests, the 'provisional' character of Maurice's response illustrates the blurred margin between man-centred and God-centred humanism.

Arnold's work takes full advantage of this ambiguity. The sense of society being carried onwards at the impulsion of the divine will, which Arnold is so careful to evoke, naturally tends to universalise the authority of Culture. But this was hardly a calculated strategy on the part of Arnold. It seems impossible to escape the conclusion

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[1]Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 176-80.

[2]Letter, F.D.Maurice to Richard Holt Hutton, February 3, 1963, quoted in Frederick Maurice, The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, I, 441-42.

that in establishing cultivated intellectual consciousness, imbued with standards of wholeness, harmony and beauty, as the seat of Culture, Arnold genuinely felt that this consciousness was naturally allied with the hidden deific power at work in the universe. The relation might be obscure, very much a matter of faith rather than sight; but when Lionel Trilling writes that Arnold ". . . steers a course both by compass and by stars: . . ."[1] we can be sure Arnold felt that the open verdict of the compass would not grossly distort the hidden guidance of the stars.

The impetus behind an intellectual structure such as that of Culture and Anarchy is succinctly suggested by Launcelot Law Whyte in his chapter on 'The Rise of European Self-Awareness.' Significantly, Whyte is writing with regard to the seventeenth century:

> Confronted by a universe in which neither order nor disorder prevails to the exclusion of the other, those whose faculties lay in the realm of speculative reason unconsciously sought to compensate the pain of their awareness of disorder by the search for general ideas which might reveal an underlying order and bring comfort. Here Plato had already marked out the way. This search for intellectual harmony is not, at root, a deliberate attempt to impose a fictitious order on a mainly disordered universe but a valid organic response: a movement to adjust the otherwise unbalanced judgment of human self-consciousness.[2]

The relative level of spiritual, intellectual and social 'disorder' had risen markedly in the intervening centuries, but Arnold, caught in the mental turmoil of his own period, nevertheless took a comparable path in his search for intellectual deliverance. Was Arnold, then, a Platonist?

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[1]Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold, 194.

[2]Launcelot Law Whyte, The Unconscious Before Freud (London:Tavistock Publications,1960), 44.

Not perhaps in any overt sense, but the structure of his thought is characteristic of the 'Platonising' impulse so evident in this phase of nineteenth-century thought.[1] We are hardly surprised when he draws Culture and Anarchy towards its conclusion by adjusting the rival claims of Aristotle and Plato (here in the person of the Platonic Socrates), and, with some small assistance from Goethe's maxim " . . . to act is easy, to think is hard, . . ."[2] there can be no doubt that

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[1]David Newsome's answer to the question suggests that Arnold was Platonist and Aristotelian at different points, and that neither tendency was predominant. (Two Classes of Men, 126-31.) It seems probable, however, that the distribution of Platonic and Aristotelian elements in Arnold is neither as random nor as tangential to his main purpose as Newsome's brief commentary might lead one to suppose. The relation is clearly illustrated in Arnold's important lecture on "Literature and Science" (1883), a major salvo in his contretemps with Huxley over the merits and meaning of a literary education. Where an earlier generation, confronted by a need to explain the powerful integrative forces supposedly resident in humane letters, would have plunged into epistemology, Arnold takes refuge in a positivistic Aristotelian stance:

> The appeal is to experience. Experience shows that for the vast majority of men, . . ., they have the power. (Arnold, Works,X, 67.)

But the end and rationale of literary study is attributed to Plato:

> "An intelligent man," says Plato, "will prize those studies which result in his soul getting soberness, righteousness, and wisdom, and will less value the others." (Ibid., 55.)

It is through literary study that we learn to relate ". . . our knowledge to our sense for conduct and to our sense for beauty." (Ibid., 63.) Literary study becomes, in effect, a substitute for that elusive epistemological channel which (in Carlyle for example) allies man's efforts at self-improvement with the divine power at work in the universe. Of course, for Arnold, the nexus is no longer a matter of knowledge and intuition, but of instinct. (See Ibid.) Nevertheless, once the desired integration has been accomplished, the implication is that human society will more closely approximate the unfolding harmony intended for the universe.

Further implications of the 'Platonising' impulse in Arnold are discussed in the next section.

[2]Arnold, Works, V, 227.

the decision finally falls to Plato. Moreover, Arnold frames the discussion in terms of what may well be the original source of Coleridge's distinction between Platonists and Aristotelians, as well as a stimulus to Maurice's apt rejoinder:

> Aristotle says that those for whom alone ideas and the pursuit of the intelligible law of things can, in general, have much attraction, are principally the young, filled with generous spirit and with a passion for perfection; but the mass of mankind, he says, follow seeming goods for real, bestowing hardly a thought upon ~~the~~ true sweetness and light; - "and to their lives," he adds mournfully, "who can give another and a better rhythm?"[1]

Conceding this, Arnold nevertheless finds himself unable to ". . . admit and rest in the desponding sentence of Aristotle."[2] The verdict of Aristotle supports facile acquiescence in the status quo, whereas the believer in Culture sets himself ". . . to get the present believers in action, . . ., to make a return upon their own minds, scrutinise their stock notions and habits much more, ..."[3] Arnold invokes the Platonic Socrates as a confirmatory authority for this strategy of Culture:

> Pericles was perhaps the most perfect public speaker who ever lived, for he was the man who most perfectly combined thought and wisdom with feeling and eloquence. Yet Plato brings in Alcibiades declaring, that men went away from the oratory of Pericles, saying it was very fine, it was very good, and afterwards thinking no more about it; but they went away from hearing Socrates talk, he says, with the point of what he had said sticking fast in their minds, and they could not get rid of it. Socrates has drunk his hemlock and is dead; but in his own breast does not every man carry about with him a possible Socrates, in that power of a disinterested play of consciousness upon his stock notions and habits, of which this wise and admirable man gave all through his lifetime the great example, and which was the secret of his incomparable influence?[4]

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[1] Ibid., 225. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., 226.

[4] Ibid., 228-29.

Arnold's Plato is not the passionate mystic, the believer in anamnesis and metempsychosis, the Plato of Blake and Shelley. Even so it is impossible not to catch the authentic note of a cooler romantic Platonism in his praise for those who follow the bent of Socrates (and Arnold); who ". . .endeavour to reach, through culture, the firm intelligible law of things, ..."[1] These are the "sovereign educators" of the nineteenth century, and for the future:

> Docile echoes of the eternal voice, pliant organs of the infinite will, such workers are going along with the essential movement of the world; and this is their strength, and their happy and divine fortune.[2]

Consciousness versus Experience: the Solution of Bradley and Eliot

It remains only to suggest how those particular aspects of the philosophy of F.H.Bradley which attracted the attention of T.S.Eliot helped to ameliorate the contrast between consciousness and experience, subject and object; a contrast which was so dominant in nineteenth-century thought, and which constantly threatened to turn Arnold's theory of Culture into a merely subjective ideal.

The steadily intensified sense of removal from any satisfactory form of collective social existence on the part of writers in the tradition we have been examining is symptomatic of a rift which was opening up in comparable or

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[1] Ibid., 229. [2] Ibid.

analogous ways through the full sweep of nineteenth-century thought. Everywhere is found a growing sensitivity to a severe dislocation between the possibilities open to 'consciousness,' and the limits imposed by some powerful, intractable and strangely alien substratum. Such two-tier structures of thought, where consciousness is emphasised over the more inflexible substratum, become naturally hospitable to a 'Platonising' or idealist metaphysics and epistemology.

In particular, a relaxation of the demand for religious knowledge (a demand emphasised so strongly in Newman) destabilised those intellectual structures which sought to retain the 'feeling' or moral worth of religion while denying the possibility of a cognatively substantial transaction between man and Deity. As we have seen in the cases of Arnold and Carlyle, the posture melds easily with an acceptance of some form of divine immanence. In its pure form, such a doctrine denies that the object of religious feeling transcends the world, confining it instead within the totality of nature or society. It becomes possible to identify true religion with a worship of that immanent power working in nature and society, and continually evolving higher forms of organism, both biological and social - an assumption deeply appropriate to the age of Darwin.

But even Darwinism, with its innate iconoclasm, weighty scientific authority and broad comprehensiveness, failed to heal the breach between consciousness and experience. Towards the end of the century, T.H.Huxley was forced to point out in his important Romanes lecture on "Evolution and Ethics" (1893), that the attempt to determine the meaning of 'good' and 'evil' from the study of 'natural selection' - as Herbert Spencer, among others, was disposed

to - led in fact to profound contradictions. The difficulty arose because both moral and immoral impulses are then equally the result of 'natural selection.' The "Prolegomena" of 1894, appended to the lecture, revived all the urgency of the Renaissance debates on art versus nature, with Huxley arguing that a gardener characteristically works in opposition to the processes of nature, which would otherwise ultimate in the triumph of weeds over more delicate species. Moreover, when the horticultural argument is transferred to the arena of human society, the conflict between ethical behaviour and the processes of 'natural selection' becomes even more pronounced. A gardener not only eliminates those plants which fail to meet his criteria of beauty and utility, but he culls the weaker or less attractive specimens among the strains which he does elect to cultivate. A human society which chooses to 'weed out' the weaker brethren may conform more closely to natural processes, but is unlikely to win praise for ethical achievement on that account. Huxley concludes that the recognised standards of ethics not only do not support natural selection, but are in fundamental opposition to it:

> Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical process of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.[1]

Huxley is definite that, though they are the product of 'natural selection,' man's ethical proclivities have acquired a degree of autonomy from the primitive processes of evolution, and they even claim a certain authority in

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[1] T.H.Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics," Romanes Lectures: Decennial Issue 1892-1900 (Oxford:Clarendon Press,1900), 122.

regulating, shaping (and understanding!) their outcome.

It would seem that wherever the ethical determinations of consciousness no longer receive the sanction of an objective Deity, relations between subjective experience and the objective (or 'conscious') experience of 'nature' and 'society' are thrown more deeply into confusion; resulting in strenuous efforts either to close the gap between consciousness and experience (as with Carlyle) or to determine more precisely the possibilities of consciousness in relation to its less fluid substratum (as Arnold had attempted).

Some continental analogues will serve to suggest the range of possibilities. There was, at one extreme, the radical solution proposed by Ludwig Feuerbach:

> I deny God. But that means for me that I deny the negation of man. In place of the illusory, fantastic, heavenly position of man which in actual life leads to the degradation of man, I substitute the tangible, actual, and consequently the political and social position of mankind.[1]

Religious beliefs are simply delusory "projections" of legitimate and valuable human attributes; misinterpretations of man's generic identity. In his thoroughgoing denial that there is any object corresponding to the supposed object of religious feeling, while yet maintaining that such feeling is of the utmost importance to man, Feuerbach's position remains unparalleled in the nineteenth century.

Marx pursued Feuerbach's central effort into the secular domain, and established there the most rigorous of all the many dichotomies between 'consciousness' and exper-

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[1] Ludwig Feuerbach, Preface to Sämmtliche Werke, 1846, quoted in Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1936), 222-23. (Translator's interpolation omitted.)

ience. His design was to relate the qualities and values of 'consciousness' wholly to the exigencies of the economic system. The famous Preface to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) states that:

> In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society - the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness . . . .[1]

Expressed in this absolute and dogmatic formula, Marx's basic insight has been difficult, if not impossible, to defend. Plainly, historical change is not always initiated by some force inherent in the relations of production.[2]

At the opposite end of the scale from Marx and Feuerbach stands an idealist philosopher like Schopenhauer, who gives to comprehensive intellectual understanding its widest emancipation from a limiting substratum of any thinker of the age. In The World as Will and Idea (1818), Schopenhauer explained human behaviour in terms of an interplay between two fundamentally different forces in human nature: will and intellectual consciousness. He maintained that to a surprising extent, intellectual comprehension can master and direct human behaviour. Intellect can even free consc-

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[1]Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, trans. by N.L.Stone (London:Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner & Co., Ltd.,1904), 11-12.

[2]Raymond Williams gives an opposite view. See Culture and Society, 266-69.

iousness sufficiently to contemplate the 'Platonic' forms objectified in the order of nature and reproduced in art. But he also emphasised that it is not through intellectual consciousness that the 'World as Will' may be understood. That is to be achieved only through direct experience of the sufferings and strivings of the will. For Schopenhauer the 'World as Idea' rides precariously atop the 'World as Will', which threatens to engulf existence in its rapacious moral indifference.

These continental models serve to illustrate the heady extremes to which the contrast between consciousness and experience could be brought. F.H.Bradley lent a more urbane, commonsense spirit to the problem of the subject/object contrast. The topic was, for him, as crucial as it had been for Hegel. Though he drew upon Hegel, Bradley's philosophy is almost as much a reaction against the excesses of Hegelian abstraction, as it is an attack upon what T.S. Eliot called "the whole Utilitarian mind."[1] In Eliot's provocatively Arnoldian phrase, Bradley ". . . replaced a philosophy which was crude and raw and provincial by one which was, in comparison, catholic, civilized, and universal."[2]

Hegel had maintained that because the religious spirit seeks the certainty of ideas about absolute reality, it cannot be satisfied by inquiries which remain in the sphere of objective Understanding (the Kantian Verstand), or which resort to a supplementary channel of intuitive knowledge (as, for instance, in Fichte). Kant had considered Reason (Vernunft) as an extrapolation of the powers of the

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[1] T.S.Eliot, "Francis Herbert Bradley," in Selected Essays, 448.

[2] Ibid., 448-49.

Understanding beyond their legitimate sphere. Hegel followed him in part, maintaining that Reason is not a completely different mode of cognition - feeling as opposed to thinking, or faith acceded to in the face of contradictory empirical evidence - but he went on to view Reason as a necessary extension and realisation of the powers implicit in the Understanding. Reason brings to fulfilment the process which the Understanding started.[1]

Not surprisingly, this assimilation of the subject/object contrast into the dialectic of Reason is small comfort as far as the emancipation of individual intellectual consciousness is concerned. For Reason, in Hegel's system, comes fully to consciousness only in the realm of objective '_Geist_.' And it is in Reason, not in individual thought, that truth is attained. There is no means by which any one individual may achieve a true knowledge of Reality. The world historical process as a whole is subject to rational necessity, but people in general participate more deeply in that process when they are not consciously directing their wills to achieve their own subjective (and therefore inaccurate) notion of what _Geist_ might be determining.[2]

Bradley inveighed against this colossal abstraction. He insisted upon starting from a re-examination of immediate experience, and came to the conclusion that the subject/object contrast is _not_ primary; that it is never given

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[1]Raymond Plant, _Hegel_ (London:George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), 87-89.

[2]Charles Taylor, _Hegel and Modern Society_ (Cambridge University Press,1979), 47-52.

'immediately' as the totality of experience:

> Wherever this or any other relation is experienced, what is experienced is more than the mere relation. It involves a felt totality, and on this inclusive unity the relation depends. The subject, the object, and their relation, are experienced as elements or aspects in a One which is there from the first. And thus to seek to extrude the One from what at first is experienced, is in every case to mistake for fact what really is sheer abstraction.[1]

This attitude effectively discounts the Hegelian solution. Instead, Bradley affirms that any situation where a subject is defined as such, and related to an object, should be recognised as a posture of consciousness abstracted to some extent from felt experience. As Bradley puts it:

> ". . . consciousness is superinduced on, and is still supported by, feeling; and feeling is itself an experienced whole."[2]

That which is actually experienced is never the mere terms and their relation. The object, of course, qualifies the subject; but as soon as reflection turns back on itself to regard the subject <u>in relation</u> to the object (i.e. self-consciously), what effectively happens is that a new object is created, made up of the old (subject + object), while the felt subject which experiences this new object is simply <u>felt</u>: there is no relation between it and the new object.[3] In case the bare argument should fail to strike home, Bradley appends an example:

> Take such an experience as ordinary desire. Beside pleasure and pain we have in this state, I presume, a relation of something, that is, to an idea in me. These terms we may certainly agree to call objects, and, in some cases and in one sense, we may agree also to say this of the relation between them. But, beside the above, is there nothing experienced in desire? I should

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[1] F.H.Bradley, <u>Essays in Truth and Reality</u>, 200.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., 195. [3] <u>Ibid</u>., 196.

> say, yes, the whole experience is felt as one, and in that unity there is a background which is not an object. Desire, for me, is a felt whole containing terms and a relation, and pleasure and pain. But it contains beside an indefinite mass of the felt, to call which an object strikes my mind as even ludicrous.[1]

This is Bradley in full retreat from the "unearthly ballet of bloodless categories"[2] propounded by Hegelian idealism and, incidentally, his example unconsciously anticipates the rationale behind D.H.Lawrence's passionate advocacy of sensualism as the one way to heal the gulf between the supposed destructiveness of intellectual consciousness, and the primitive life of innocent, spontaneous animality.

T.S.Eliot's debt to the Bradleyan presuppositions is very evident in his assessment of Arnold's poetry and criticism. The core of Eliot's critique is expressed in his lecture "Matthew Arnold" of 1933, where he writes that:

> Arnold's notion of 'life', in his account of poetry, does not perhaps go deep enough."[3]

On similar grounds, Arnold is taken to task for asserting that the greatness of a poet ". . . lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life." Eliot comments: "Not a happy way of putting it, as if ideas were a lotion for the inflamed skin of suffering humanity."[4] The mysterious quality of "depth" which is lacking in Arnold's view of 'life' is, in Eliot's view, commensurate with his allegiance to a 'communication' theory of poetry, and to

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[1] Ibid., 197.

[2] F.H.Bradley, The Principles of Logic (London:Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co.,1883), 533.

[3] T.S.Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, 119.

[4] Ibid., 112.

discover what Eliot means by this we must return to the Introduction to The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, the collection in which "Matthew Arnold" appears:

> If poetry is a form of 'communication', yet that which is to be communicated is the poem itself, and only incidentally the experience and the thought which have gone into it. The poem's existence is somewhere between the writer and the reader; it has a reality which is not simply the reality of what the writer is trying to 'express', or of his experience of writing it, or of the experience of the reader or of the writer as reader. Consequently the problem of what a poem 'means' is a good deal more difficult than it at first appears.[1]

For Eliot, poetry can never be understood as a conceptual or even emotional 'package' to be transferred from poet to reader. 'Communication' of that sort is something which takes place between subject and object: it is relational, an appropriate theory for a "teacher, leader, or priest."[2] With Wordsworth or Shelley ". . . poetry was a vehicle for one kind of philosophy or another, ..."[3] Such a poetic is already partly 'closed' and limited by its own self-consciousness, though 'open' in another sense because of the presumed sincerity of the poetic voice: for Wordsworth and Shelley ". . . the philosophy was something believed in."[4] With Arnold ". . .the best poetry supersedes both religion and philosophy."[5] It is a vehicle without belief.

In contrast to this 'communication' theory, Eliot regards poetry as belonging properly to the "auditory imagination."[6] This notion, though obviously rooted in the Bradleyan conception of 'feeling,' owes much to Eliot's own sensitivity as a poet to the power of sound and rhythm in

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[1] Ibid., 30. [2] Ibid., 115. [3] Ibid., 113.
[4] Ibid. [5] Ibid. [6] Ibid., 118.

stimulating and guiding hidden depths of feeling, largely inaccessible to merely discursive thought. It is, in fact, the closest Eliot comes to recognising the importance of the oral mode in ensuring immediacy of experience in poetry, and in releasing its audience from the constrictions of literate consciousness. The passage reads as follows:

> What I call the 'auditory imagination' is the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilised mentality.[1]

Arnold's poetry and criticism suffer from an impoverished sensitivity to the "auditory imagination"; and for this reason Arnold's notion of life, in his account of poetry, ". . .does not perhaps go deep enough."[2]

The "auditory imagination" brings us close to Eliot's sense of his own purpose in writing the kind of poetry he did. The poetic conception of history which pervades Eliot's early essays, and which he used (perhaps not altogether successfully) in much of his poetry, resembles the mythic sense of history characteristic of oral tradition, and is closely related to his concern with the auditory imagination and, indeed, the unified sensibility. It was the potential simultaneity of history which captured Eliot's imagination and stayed with himthroughout his career. The idea emerges most clearly in his redefinition of the importance of tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

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[1] Ibid., 118-19. [2] Ibid., 119.

"Tradition," we are told, does not mean "a blind or timid adherence" to the achievements of the past:

> It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, . . .; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional.[1]

The sense of history which Eliot is here entertaining might be described as history apprehended by the unified sensibility. Empirical history, the history of fact, event and sequence, can be only relatively true. Once again, a conceptual formulation of such an outlook occurs in Eliot's work on Bradley. Consider this passage from Knowledge and Experience:

> Everything, from one point of view, is subjective; and everything, from another point of view, is objective; and there is no absolute point of view from which a decision may be pronounced. Hence any history of the process [the differentiation of feeling into subject and object] must be only relatively true: it must be a history of the object side, postulating the subject, or a history of the subject side postulating the object side. For feeling, in which the two are one, has no history; it is, as such, outside of time altogether, inasmuch as there is no further point of view from which it can be inspected. In time, there are two sides, subject and object, neither of which is really stable, independent, the measure of the other. In order to consider how the one came to be as it is, we are forced

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[1]T.S.Eliot, Selected Essays, 14. From the standpoint of literate consciousness, a notion of history which partially short-circuits chronology and regards the historical sense not only as "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal" but as one of "the timeless and of the temporal together" (italics mine) seems quaint, at the very least. One feels happier calling it an un-historical or anti-historical sense.

to attribute an artificial absoluteness to the other.[1]

Applied to history instead of poetry or poetics we again encounter 'consciousness' claiming a problematic emancipation from experience, this time in order to indict an 'objective' view of history. A contemporary subjectivity sets out to describe and explain a supposed historical objectivity and, of course, wherever a 'subject' is conscious of an 'object,' there arises the possibility of self-consciousness: the subject can become aware of its own activity. Now empirical history is always history <u>of</u> something and lays claim to objectivity (as Eliot expresses it, to an "artificial absoluteness"), so it cannot avoid immolating or ignoring the perceiving subjectivity. Hence it can be only relative and one-sided, and the usual notion of history must be regarded as inadequate. Eliot offers the following illustration:

> To say that the world really was as we describe it, a million years ago, is a statement which overlooks the development of mind. To say that mind, in its beginnings in child or aborigine or animal, really was as we describe it, is to commit oneself to a relative truth of the same sort. In the same way in our theory of knowledge, when we leave the moment of immediate experience, we are forced to present our account either as the history of mind in its environment, or as the history of the world as it appears to mind.[2]

As we have seen, the same problem is evident when Eliot tries to 'locate' a poem. As a document a poem is an object, an historical object, while the reader is a contemporary subject. However much historical background information he may acquire to aid his appreciation, when the reader actually experiences the poem he is lost in the immediacy of

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[1] T.S.Eliot, <u>Knowledge and Experience</u>, 21-22. (Square brackets mine.)

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., 22.

the word. The full meaning of the poem communicates itself in these moments of immediate experience, where 'feeling' is not distorted by consciousness. Unlike consciousness, feeling is homeostatic and self-contained. The potential for self-awareness is minimal: there is only awareness, having no tendency to develop into a subject with feelings (or thoughts, desires or even illusions) about an object. In poetry, the immediacy of language, resurrected from its stillborn condition on the printed or written page, can resuscitate that primitive power of the spoken word for which:

History is now and England.[1]

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[1]T.S.Eliot, "Little Gidding," v. 24.

CONCLUSION

The High Victorian ideal of Culture and Carlyle's response to his own Condition-of-England question present reflex intellectual images testifying to the same underlying impulse: the need to preserve an holistic sense of human society in the face of industrial, political and intellectual forces felt to be working ever more decisively towards specialisation, fragmentation and incoherence. By an effort of introspection, sustained by the tradition in which they were working, the Sages traced these external developments back to a revolution in the relations of thought and feeling, intellect and emotion, head and heart, within the individual sensibility.

To our twentieth-century modes of cultural analysis, the simplistic reduction of the complex technological and organisational changes which were destroying the last vestiges of the medieval order, to a troublesome tension between thought and feeling in the individual sensibility, seems an aberration or delusion. We might be apt to characterise it as a flight from political and economic actualities to a mystical or aesthetic preference for some 'traditional' ideal. To do so would be to impose our own categories on an area of Victorian experience which precedes them.

The Sages belong to a more primitive intellectual milieu than is generally appreciated: to that fluid amalgam of poetry, criticism, religion, politics and economics which made up the mid-Victorian world of letters. This "irregular,

massive synthesis"[1] as G.M.Young calls it, was more than a precursor of the inevitable trend towards intellectual specialisation. It represents a transitional stage where the borders between the burgeoning specialisms are still mobile, their relations shifting and undefined. Moreover, the prospect of the individual retaining a lively sense of the unity within this diversity remains a precious possibility. At stake is the survival of an adequate rapprochement between the individual intellect and the movement of society as a whole. The work of the Sages provides ample evidence of the alarm occasioned by the vision of a society running away with itself under technological, bureaucratic and political imperatives only tangentially related to the stable past. More than by the urge to understand these changes, the Sages were impelled by a need to maintain an equilibrium in the face of them, to preserve some assurance that there <u>is</u> a natural view of the world which could accommodate the changes - not in detail, not in specifics, but in general - thus leaving the individual free to act according to his best insight, and in harmony with his fellows. Without this 'implicit' or 'unconscious' rapprochement, the individual cannot feel 'at home' in the world. His dominion is at stake, and ultimately, his sense of identity.

The response of the Sages was to recommend the restoration of a proper balance between thought and feeling: between Carlyle's 'mechanical' and 'dynamical' thinking, Newman's 'explicit' and 'implicit' thought, or Arnold's Hebraism and Hellenism. Unity and wholeness in the individ-

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[1]G.M.Young, <u>Victorian England:Portrait of an Age</u>, 160.

ual sensibility must, in some measure, be reflected in a whole and unified society. The difficulty in appreciating such a position has arisen, at least in part, because there has been no satisfactory conceptual framework available for describing the relations between an holistic world view, and an individualistic outlook fragmented into subjective feeling and objective thought. Such a framework is implicit in T.S. Eliot's controversial coinage 'dissociation of sensibility,' and a major concern of the present study has been to elucidate this concept in relation to the work of the Sages.

The Sages evidently saw a steadily intensifying rift between thought and feeling as the root of the individual's alienation from the world. It tended to be assumed that where thought and feeling operate as a unity, the nexus between man and man is complete, society is a whole, and men can 'believe.' However, where thought begins to be emphasised over feeling, this nexus becomes progressively attenuated. The locus of authority gradually shifts from the unconscious belief of a community, relatively homogeneous and static, to the shifting, self-conscious beliefs of the individual. Thought comes to be seen as logical and demonstrable, while feeling is non-logical and private. From this it is not far to maintaining that feeling belongs to the individual, thought to the world; that feeling is inward and subjective, while thought is external and objective. Dissociation of sensibility has set in.

The High Victorian ideal of Culture and Carlyle's response to the Condition-of-England, represent partly conscious strategies whose aim is to counter, and if possible reverse, this process of dissociation. Carlyle requires a sharp repudiation, almost a moral revulsion, from mechanical

thinking: this will reveal the whole world of organic unconsciousness, ever-present but largely unrecognised. With Arnold, cultural salvation takes precisely the opposite course. Wholeness and harmony depend, for Arnold, on the capacity to translate stock notions and habits to the abstract realm of intellectual consciousness, where they may be measured against the enduring standards of Culture. Feeling, both religious and poetic, is already taken as subjective, divorced from society as a whole, because it is unrelated to the new knowledge which must be accepted as objectively true. Only by reinterpreting these feelings so that they express the new intellectual basis being forged in society, can the individual expect to feel whole and at one with his community. Newman remains serenely poised between the modes of intellectual consciousness and implicit experience, illustrating the balance for which, in different frameworks, both Carlyle and Arnold were striving. However, he recognises with sad clarity that society, already in the grip of abstract notions, is probably incapable of following his direction.

The underlying assumption that a realignment of thought and feeling in the individual sensibility will restore a sense of wholeness in man and society strikes the twentieth-century reader as awkward in the extreme. We are no longer used to making the connection. Karl Popper, for instance, supposes that holistic views of society belong to a pre-scientific period - an opinion which would place the demise of holism squarely in the seventeenth century.[1] But there is an obvious need to account for the persistence of

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[1]Karl Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 76.

the holistic outlook in industrial society, even where the reverence for 'mechanism,' specialisation and calculative rationality seems paramount. For although, with the honourable exception of J.C.Smuts' Holism,[1] the formal expression of such views has in our own time been in obvious retreat, the Victorian Sages expended their considerable energies in full measure to defend the holistic presupposition. As we have seen, this defence was impelled by more than a cool regard for truth: it could involve, as in the case of Carlyle, a struggle which bordered on the suicidal, and it therefore seems impossible that the ideal of Culture and Carlyle's Condition-of-England question can be understood as merely a synthesis of received ideas, or as a deduction drawn from the external development of society. The threat to wholeness was felt on the pulses.

It is here that the speculations of Goody and Watt prove useful in providing a theory which explains the persistence of the conflict between head and heart, intellect and emotion, in the western literate tradition. Not only does this theory suggest a possible 'cause' for dissociation, and eliminate the various historical and conceptual anomalies in Eliot's theory which baffled critics like Bateson and Kermode, but it draws into focus the divergent impulses between 'consciousness' and 'unconsciousness' in the process of cultural modification. If literate and non-literate modes coexist in the literate western sensibility, it seems obvious that allegiance to the values of wholeness and harmony could lead to an emphasis on one mode or the other, in order to

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[1] J.C.Smuts, Holism and Evolution (London:Macmillan and Co., Limited,1926).

eliminate the competition between the two. Arnold chose to emphasise literate 'consciousness' (at great cost to his poetic gifts), while Carlyle, with stronger roots in the oral mode, tried to expunge it. Newman remained deftly poised between the two modes, moving easily between them, although it is evident that, for him, authority finally rested always in the personal, unconscious mode. Newman's creditable achievement was to approximate, both in theory and example, Eliot's notion of the unified sensibility.

Of course, he could not exemplify it exactly because he accepted the primacy of the subject/object contrast: the language of literature is personal and subjective, the language of science is impersonal and objective.[1] But not surprisingly, of the three major figures we have been examining, it was Newman (with his Cardinalatial motto of Cor ad Cor Loquitur) who came closest to anticipating the contrast between the oral and literate modes as outlined by Goody and Watt:

> When words are in demand to express a long course of thought, when they have to be conveyed to the ends of the earth, or perpetuated for the benefit of posterity, they must be written down, that is, reduced to the shape of literature; still, properly speaking, the terms, by which we denote this characteristic gift of man, belong to its exhibition by means of the voice, not of hand-writing. It addresses itself, in its primary idea, to the ear, not to the eye. We call it the power of speech, we call it language, that is, the use of the tongue; and, even when we write, we still keep in mind what was its original instrument, for we use freely such terms in our books as 'saying,' 'speaking,' 'telling,' 'talking,' 'calling'; we use the terms 'phraseology' and 'diction'; as if we were still addressing ourselves to the ear.[2]

Having insisted upon this close relation with oral communication, Newman draws his remarks to a close with the

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[1] Newman, Idea, 229-32. [2] Ibid., 229-30.

famous definition of style - a definition which could serve to epitomise the undissociated sensibility at work:

> Thought and speech are inseparable from each other. Matter and expression are parts of one: style is a thinking out into language. This is what I have been laying down, and this is literature; not things, not the verbal symbols of things; not on the other hand mere words; but thoughts expressed in language. Call to mind, Gentlemen, the meaning of the Greek word which expresses this special prerogative of man over the feeble intelligence of the inferior animals. It is called Logos: what does Logos mean? it stands for reason and for speech, and it is difficult to say which it means more properly. It means both at once: why? because really they cannot be divided, - because they are in a true sense one.[1]

While the Victorian Sages evidently experienced at first hand the contrast between the oral and literate modes, their reflections upon this experience were limited by the assumptions of their 'culture' (using the word, this time, in its general sociological sense). The explanatory hypothesis presented by Goody and Watt goes beyond anything the Sages could have imagined, because it is rooted in the ethnological study of non-literate cultures. In a sense, then, the contribution of this hypothesis to the present study corresponds to the latter part of A.N.Whitehead's requirements for a satisfactory explanation:

> . . . the sheer statement, of what things are, may contain elements of why things are. Such elements may be expected to refer to depths beyond anything which we can grasp with a clear apprehension. In a sense, all explanation must end in an ultimate arbitrariness. My demand is, that the ultimate arbitrariness of matter of fact from which our formulation starts should disclose the same principles of reality, which we dimly discern stretching away into regions beyond our explicit powers of discernment.[2]

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[1] Ibid., 232.

[2] A.N.Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, 115.

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